

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

By now most of you are aware that Fr. Grace and I will be leaving OLM at the end of this month. The Bishop had seen fit to ask both of us to assume new responsibilities to other parishes. As the needs of the Diocese continue to change and evolve it is important for the Bishop to assign the priests of the Diocese accordingly. This means change – something that most of us are uncomfortable with. In some ways OLM has been a little spoiled over the years what with having Msgr. Boesel for many wonderful years and our beloved Sisters of Mercy with few changes. Now you might say, “But Fr. Steve we seem to have more changes than other parishes.” On the surface that may seem true, but Our Lady of Mercy is not being treated any differently than any other parish. Unfortunately, the world continues to change and the needs of a changing diocese are making it harder to staff our parishes the way we once did. I know how difficult this is for us as priests and for you as parishioners. It seems you just get used to having us become part of your lives and we are asked to move on. The days of having the same priests for years without change are sadly over. As difficult as this separation is, it is also necessary for us as priests to be challenged to keep growing and for our Church to ensure that the wealth of having good priests can be shared with other parishes. I have always thought of it as the most bittersweet part of our mission. Sort of like living with a heart that must always be willing to be broken and healed with each new assignment. Fr. Grace and I will officially end our term with you on June 28th. At that time he will report to Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Deer Park and I to the Parish of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs in Centerport.

I hope that you will be able to join us in thanking God for our time with you on June 25th. Fr. Grace will be celebrating at the 12 Noon Mass on the 25th and I will be celebrating the 10:30 AM the same day. The Ministries will be offering Hospitality after each Mass so that we can say our good-byes then.

I know that you will offer a wonderful welcome the following weekend to your new Pastor, Fr. John McCarthy. He is a very kind man and I know he will be a wonderful pastor to you. This brings me to a natural question that should cross your mind. Are we going to get a replacement for Fr. Grace, and if yes, who is he? In answer to the first part of that question, Yes, the Bishop has assigned a priest to take Fr. Grace’s place. Fr. Joseph Lobo has been assigned by Bishop Barres as Associate Pastor for Our Lady of Mercy. Fr. Joe has held several assignments over the years in the diocese and from chatting with him I know that is he is very honored and excited to come and minister here at OLM. I am sure that God will continue to bless OLM in the good men he has called to serve his Church.

I ask you to please keep Fr. Grace and I in your prayers as well as the men who will be coming to replace us. As I mentioned above, one of the most difficult parts of our ministry is to take on new assignments. Please pray for us as your priests that wherever God calls us, we will be affective ministers who truly know what it is to serve you and to “serve the Lord with gladness”.

Peace,

Fr. Steve