



Franciscan Friars
Third Order Regular of Saint Francis
Province of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

Minister Provincial

Sunday, March 19, 2023

Dear parishioners of Saint Maria Goretti Catholic Church,

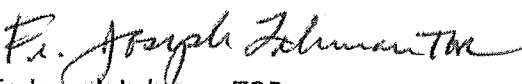
Although it is Laetare Sunday, a time when the Church is invited to rejoice in anticipation of the victory Christ has won for us, I address you with sad news. Despite our Province's profound fondness and love for the parishioners of Saint Maria Goretti, I write to inform you of the voluntary departure of the Third Order Regular Franciscans from this parish later this summer. We will continue to serve within the diocese at St. Andrew Catholic Church in Fort Worth and Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Colleyville.

This decision was not easy. It was made after much prayer, reflection, and discussion by the Provincial Council, and in consultation with the Diocese of Fort Worth. The primary reason for our departure is simply the declining number of friars in our community. In 1987, when our Province assumed the pastoral care of Saint Maria Goretti parish and school, we had approximately 180 friars. Ten years ago in 2013, we were down to 129 friars, of which 88 were in active ministry. Today, we have a total of 91 friars of whom 64 are in active ministry. Simply stated, although we continue to attract vocations to our community, we no longer have sufficient friars to staff and sustain all of the ministries that we have served in the past.

The Diocese of Fort Worth was notified of the Province's need to withdraw months ago and I am confident there will be a smooth transition as they assume the ongoing pastoral care of the parishioners, students, and staff of Saint Maria Goretti parish and school later this summer. Although we are sad to depart, we are deeply appreciative of the love and support the people of Saint Maria Goretti have shown us over these past thirty-five years. Together we have journeyed through both challenging and blessed times. On behalf of all the friars who have ministered here, THANK YOU!

In the spirit of this Laetare Sunday, may the Lord grant you peace and joy not only today, but throughout the future.

Sincerely in Christ,


Fr. Joseph Lehman, TOR
Minister Provincial

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