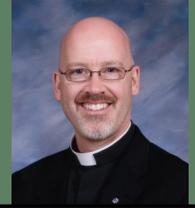


A Letter from Our Cathedral Rector



Dear Parishioners,

One of the blessings of serving in the Diocese of Phoenix is that, after ten years of ministry, a priest can request a sabbatical—an extended time of study and rest. In late 2017, after 11 ½ years of ordination, I requested a sabbatical from mid-January through the end of April of 2019, knowing that we would have just completed our six-month phase of the diocesan evangelization and discipleship campaign in December 2018.

This past July, when I was thinking about the timing of publicly announcing the sabbatical to the Cathedral parish, the sex abuse and episcopal cover-up scandal broke in Pennsylvania just weeks after the perverted crimes of former cardinal Theodore McCarrick had come to light. It took a moment for the timing of all of this to sink in...and then I thought to myself, "Oh, dear God! I'm going to announce my sabbatical to the parish just as this scandal is breaking in the Church. My parishioners are going to think I'm being sent away!"

Let me begin by saying that if your initial thought was, "Oh, no. What's going on with Fr. Lankeit?" I don't fault you for a moment. In the current climate of confusion in the Church—I would have asked the very same question. But those two things—the scandal and my sabbatical—are not connected in that way. In fact, God's hand is clearly at work in the details!

Let me explain.

For starters, I want to share with you what I will be doing during this time. First, I will be learning the Extraordinary Form of the Mass (sometimes called the "Latin Mass" or the "Tridentine Mass"), studying under a respected instructor in Michigan. Everyone in this parish knows of our Cathedral's unwavering commitment to beautiful, reverent liturgy as the bedrock of our faith. Since the Eucharist is the *"source and summit of the Christian life"* (cf. Lumen Gentium, 11), my immersion in the Latin Liturgy will deepen my own encounter with Jesus in the Holy Eucharist and prepare *me*—as your spiritual father—to better lead *you*—my parish family—into deeper spiritual renewal.

In addition, I will continue studies in pastoral theology that build on the Contemplative Spiritual Direction certification that I completed in early 2018. I will also take a 30-day silent Ignatian retreat led by a renowned spiritual director. Finally, I hope to visit the Holy Land, as well as the French hometowns of two of my favorite Saints—St. John Vianney, and St. Therese of Lisieux.

Since the scandal is, at its most fundamental level, a crisis of fidelity to Jesus Christ, our intentional re-commitment to our Eucharistic Lord in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is crucial to usher in the reform and renewal so desperately needed in our Church today. I didn't realize how providential this particular aspect of my sabbatical would be at the time I made my plans late last year, but God did! As I've said many times before, I never cease to be amazed at God's perfect timing.

I wholeheartedly believe that Ss. Simon and Jude Cathedral parish is destined to be a powerhouse of holiness and spiritual renewal at a time in the Church's history when both are desperately needed. I can't wait to experience the graces that the Lord plans to pour into my soul during this time of renewal. And I can't wait to share the fruits of those graces with all of you when I hit the ground running again at the Cathedral on May 1.

I will certainly carry all of you in my prayers and ask your prayers for me. In fact, I will offer my first Extraordinary Form Mass for the parishioners of Ss. Simon & Jude Cathedral!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

God's blessings, my prayers...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Lankeit". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Very Rev. Fr. John Lankeit

Rector