



## **From the Office of the Pastor of Divine Mercy Parish Reverend Father Robert T. Cooper**

### **A Time of Farewells and New Beginnings**

On behalf of His Excellency, the Most Reverend Gregory M. Aymond, Archbishop of New Orleans, I have been asked to communicate the following announcement:

1. Effective July 1<sup>st</sup> of this year, Fr. Paul Clark will be departing as the Parochial Vicar of Divine Mercy Parish in Kenner, Louisiana. The Archbishop has assigned Fr. Clark to become the new pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Hahnville, Louisiana.
2. Deacon Luis Duarte, currently serving as a transitional Deacon at Divine Mercy Parish, will become our new Parochial Vicar after his ordination to the Priesthood.

“Some people come into our lives and quickly go. Some people move our souls to dance. They awaken us to a new understanding with the passing whisper of their wisdom. Some people make the sky more beautiful to gaze upon. They stay in our lives for a while, leave footprints on our hearts, and we are never, ever the same.” – Flavia Weedn

Flavia Weedn was a well-known illustrator, especially of children’s books. But when she stated the above, she might have been talking about Fr. Paul Clark and his impact on our lives and the life of our Divine Mercy community. After serving as our Parochial Vicar for the past four years, Fr. Clark will depart July 1<sup>st</sup> for a new assignment – his first pastorate at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary Parish in Hahnville. As we bid him farewell, there is a bit of heaviness in our hearts, but that is a feeling that is shared in part by him. Farewells are never easy, and as Catholics, we fully understand that this type of farewell to a beloved parish priest who has served us and ministered to our needs is the way of life in the Church. Farewells have an even deeper meaning for us as Catholics. In a homily given at the end of the Easter season last year, Pope Francis said, “The atmosphere in these final days of the Easter season is an atmosphere of farewell. Farewells can be dramatic, but our faith tells us they are never permanent. In the Acts of the Apostles, St. Paul bids farewell, and says, ‘If only I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord, which is to testify to the Gospel of the grace of God.’” Fr. Clark’s priesthood is a testament to that same grace.

And so, asking the Lord to bless Fr. Clark as he accepts his first pastorate, I offer this prayer composed by Pope St. Pius X, that great parish priest, for Fr. Clark’s reflection: “Lord, grant that I may realize what my Christian and priestly vocation demands of me, somewhat in the way in which I shall see it immediately after death...In your mercy, grant me the grace to fulfill with love whatever You expect of me for the salvation of those souls whom I ought to help, and to suffer with generosity whatever sorrow You have permitted from eternity for my Sanctification before I eventually reach

You in heaven. I ask, in particular, that I may work with zeal for the salvation of all those souls whom, in accordance with Your will, I ought to help. For that purpose, I join the personal sacrifice of my life with the unbloody sacrifice of Your Son, superabundant and of infinite value, and with the immense merits of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Amen.” Father Clark, we pray for you, and we thank you for being such a noble part of our lives.

As we prepare to bid Fr. Clark a very fond farewell, we welcome the announcement from Archbishop Aymond, that Deacon Luis Duarte, currently serving as a transitional Deacon at Divine Mercy Parish, will become our new Parochial Vicar after his ordination to the Holy Priesthood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I have every confidence that the “future” Fr. Luis will be a great priest and a holy example of the Risen Christ to all of us. I also have every confidence that you will welcome his presence with open arms and with open hearts; I ask you to love him, to support him, and to work with him as he transitions into priestly life and ministry so that the Kingdom of God may continue to flourish in this beautiful parish family.

My prayer is that Our Lord will bless both of these men in great, hidden ways. I know that they will be men for others, for the salvation and sanctification of all mankind. And, I encourage them to pray often the words St. Teresa of Calcutta taught her Sisters for times of difficulty and struggle: “Mary, Mother of Jesus, be a mother to me now and always.”

While I had hoped to deliver these remarks in person, the current COVID-19 pandemic dictates that I correspond with you by means of this communiqué. Be assured of my prayers and spiritual solidarity as we walk this journey together.

Let us hold each other in prayer in this time of farewells, transition, and new beginnings.