

Letter to Parishioners

Please quit talking about your previous girlfriend. You have a new girlfriend now.

That advice was given to me not long after I arrived at St. Christopher nearly six years ago. Unfortunately, I didn't follow it. I was not happy leaving my previous parish and coming here. I did not apply for this parish, and I did not feel called to be here. I kept unfairly comparing St. Christopher and its people to what I left behind at Sacred Heart in McCartyville. I was unhappy. And everyone knew it. For that I sincerely apologize.

When a priest is reassigned, and neither he nor the parishioners want it to happen, there is a deep grief for both. It's a bit like a boy and girl being in love for many years. Then all of a sudden, his father forbids him to see the girl anymore. He has arranged a marriage for his son with someone else he deems more suitable. Their hearts are broken. And so was mine upon coming to St. Christopher. I told myself that I would never again fall in love with a parish or its people. It hurts too much when the next inevitable reassignment occurs. I carried that for a couple of years, but gradually I let my guard down and opened my heart. The only way I could do that was because you had opened your hearts to me. You taught me that loving was worth the risk of a broken heart. For that I am forever grateful.

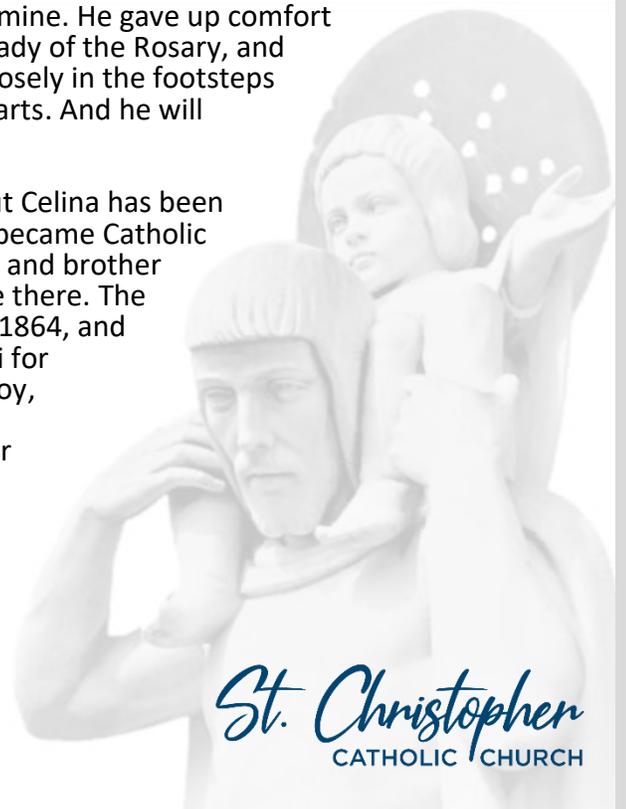
Sometime in the last several months you may have remembered a homily I gave where I said that I had never received my first choice of assignments as a priest. However, the assignments always ended up being where I needed to be and where the people needed me, too. I also said that even though at first, I didn't want to be there, in the end I didn't ever want to leave. That is true once again. If given the choice, I would have chosen to stay and pastor this new Family of Parishes. However, that was not the way the assignment process worked this time. For most of the priests, there were no conversations with the Personnel Board before being assigned. But we trust that the Holy Spirit was with the Board in the assignment process and will continue to be with priests and parishioners alike as we move forward together in faith.

So...did they get it right? Fr. Kyle Schnippel is a good friend of mine. He gave up comfort and security last year to become the pastor of St. Peter, Our Lady of the Rosary, and Holy Cross at a difficult time in their history. Fr. Kyle follows closely in the footsteps of Jesus. I know you will welcome him with open arms and hearts. And he will welcome you.

As for my new assignment: I was born and raised in Sidney, but Celina has been my second home since I was six when my dad moved there. I became Catholic at Immaculate Conception parish in 1982. My dad, step-mom, and brother are buried there, and I have nieces and a nephew who still live there. The Society of the Precious Blood has been ministering at IC since 1864, and now they turn over the parish to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for priestly ministry. I guess God is thinking that the 18 year old boy, whom he inspired to become Catholic, whom he called to the priesthood, is now ready to return home and fulfill yet another calling. Please continue to pray for me, as I will continue to pray for all of you.

Love,
Fr. John

For I know well the plans I have in mind for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare, not for woe, plans to give you a future full of hope. Jeremiah 29:11



St. Christopher
CATHOLIC CHURCH