

## Greetings and Peace Be With You!

Let me introduce myself to you, the faithful of STMMP (*St. Margaret Mary Parish*). It is with a great sense of pride that I accept the confidence of Archbishop Listecki to work for you and, with the advice of the parish leadership, to hope for the growth of our parish to bring the message of Jesus' love to everyone.

The Archbishop has asked me to share in his mission (as the Shepherd of the Archdiocese) to teach, sanctify and govern this parish in the unchanging witness of the Holy Catholic Church to the world in which we live. So, I hope you can see the enormous task ahead of me. I will need each of you to assist in my mission because if we are to be church, we need to struggle together.

As for struggling, I know it well. I was raised in Dubuque, Iowa with four brothers and two sisters. We brothers are all one year apart in age so there was a lot of struggling. Did I mention that I am a twin! We served as altar boys and in the boys' choir all through grade school at St. Patrick (1-8) and it was mostly in Latin (1958-1966). The Second Vatican Council was very exciting. I read the paperback book of the Vatican II documents in 1970. I thought I understood it until I got to the seminary. That was 2004-2009. Yeah....., I am a second career priest. That was a struggle!

I dropped out of Loras College in my junior year only to finish when I returned to college in 1993-1995 with a Master's degree in Economics. I always struggled in school. Later, I learned I was dyslexic. Then, my twin brother (Tim) who was a doctor of cardiology for 12 years went into the priesthood and at his first Mass (2000) he challenged me to enter the priesthood.

I had moved to Racine in 1980 to open a new concept shoe store for Gallenkamp Shoes at Regency Mall. I had won manager of the year (in a field of 50 stores) for two years running and had trained 10 men to be successful managers with profitable stores. The company slowly closed its 1000 stores across the USA after I left in 1983 and moved to Milwaukee. I lived in Wauwatosa on 103<sup>rd</sup> Street and attended St. Theresa's parish on Bluemound Road. I was in the choir, as was my custom in every parish I joined. I was into weight training and biking, back then, for almost 35 years. Now, I like to walk my 95 pound Black Labrador Retriever (Joseph). He is a gentle giant I rescued from the city pound in Huntsville, Alabama. He had struggled.

My brother's challenge took me by surprise but, I took the bait and figured they would reject me on sight. I was so wrong! Fr. Bob Stievater was the vocation director for the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and he told me that I was holy enough; yes he said, I needed to be a priest. Wow! That was not on my radar even though Tim

I never doubted my need for God and my Catholic faith that kept me grounded in the knowledge that Jesus could be my strength. I really struggled as a single Catholic man, loyal to God, going to Mass and confession often. Fr. Bob's challenge took me to Fr. Mike Hammer who mentored me into religious life with the Salvatorians. Somehow, though seminary studies were a struggle, I loved it and learn about the Vatican II documents as a confirmation of the church I had known – not the liberal changes so many others had told me.

Since ordination, in June 2009, I have been to Rome twice, studied Spanish in Mexico and was assigned to St. Joseph Parish in Huntsville for two years, before the seven years I have spent in St. Nazianz of Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Now I hope to be with you for the next six years. Let us work together to do great things as we live out our faith as Intentional Disciples of Jesus.

**Fr. Patrick Nelson, SDS**