



ARCHDIOCESE
OF
SAINT PAUL &
MINNEAPOLIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

September 11, 2021

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This weekend, I am especially happy for you to meet your new pastor, Father Charles Lachowitzer. I have worked closely with Father Lachowitzer the past six years and know that he is one of our very best priests. His service as Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, and guiding us through challenging times with a firm moral compass, was exceptional. I know that he is excited to be returning to parish ministry and to be assigned to St. Gerard. I look forward to joining you on October 17, 2021, when he will be formally installed as your new pastor.

At this time, I also want to update you about Father Joseph-Quoc Thien Vuong. As you are aware, Father Joseph-Quoc took a voluntary leave of absence earlier this summer when questions of financial irregularity were raised. The investigation into these questions continues, with the purpose of seeking the truth and obtaining justice and fairness for everyone involved. I know that many of you have come to love Father Joseph-Quoc. That certainly is reflected in the petition that you sent to me for his return.

I need to share with you, however, that both the length of the ongoing investigation and a reassessment of parish needs in light of the change of pastor prompted me to bring Fr. Joseph-Quoc's assignment at St. Gerard's to a close, effective September 2, 2021. I met with him last week, presented him with a few options for residence during his ongoing leave of absence, and have approved his decision to move to the rectory at St. Columba parish in St. Paul until the investigation concludes and a new assignment is considered. I am grateful to Fr. Joseph-Quoc for his patience and collaboration at this difficult time.

The change in Father Joseph-Quoc's assignment and residence should not be considered as any determination of innocence or guilt. We await the conclusion of the investigation. The Archdiocese's Office of Ministerial Standards and Safe Environment will keep you updated about any developments in the matter.

While Father Joseph-Quoc will soon be moving from St. Gerard's, please know that the Vietnamese Mass will continue at your parish with Father Tan Phong Le assigned as sacramental minister. I am very grateful to Father Phong for his willingness to assist the parish.

Finally, I know that this parish community, as a result of some extraordinary circumstances, has seen a number of transitions in leadership in recent years. I can only imagine how difficult this must be for you. I am confident that Father Lachowitzer's arrival and leadership will bring you the stability you need as together we work toward a bright future focused on the Kingdom of God. Please continue to pray for Father Joseph-Quoc, Father Lachowitzer and all of our priests.

With the sincere promise of my prayers for the St. Gerard community, I remain,

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis