

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

Office of the Archbishop



Post Office Box 1979
Chicago, Illinois 60690-1979

June 11, 2013

Dear Parishioners of St. Barbara Parish,

I am writing to you about a difficult decision I had to make as your Archbishop. Recently I spoke with Father Dennis Ziomek to ask him to become pastor of St. Catherine of Alexandria Parish in Oak Lawn effective September 1, 2013. A significant pastoral need arose in this large parish when the pastor, Father Patrick Henry, died suddenly.

Your own pastor was reluctant to leave St. Barbara Parish, which he loves and is dedicated to, but I explained that it is precisely because he has done such good priestly work at St. Barbara that the Diocesan Priests' Placement Board, the Episcopal Vicars and I believe he could take on the responsibility for this larger parish which is in a difficult moment of transition.

After much prayer and discernment, I have asked Father Dennis to accept this appointment and he has agreed. This was not an easy decision for him and I am sure it is a difficult one for you to hear.

Father Dennis has been with you for the last twelve years, first as a resident while he was teaching at Archbishop Quigley Seminary, then as administrator and finally as pastor. I am most grateful for his calming and healing presence in your parish. He has developed and demonstrated the excellent qualities of pastoring that are now needed at St. Catherine's. I would ask you to pray for Father Ziomek during this time.

The Diocesan Priests' Placement Board has recommended that Father Wojciech Arthur Marat become your next pastor. Fr. Marat is currently assigned as associate pastor of St. Thecla's Parish on the northwest side. With more than twenty-five years of priestly service, Father Marat will bring a wealth of pastoral experience to the Community of St. Barbara's.

I will be praying for your community during this challenging time. St. Barbara Parish has proven time and again, in their century-old tradition, the resilience of the People of God. I know that this parish is a beacon for the surrounding community of Bridgeport and for all who see this beautiful church from the expressway. This faith community will continue to grow as you journey with God through this time of adjustment.

I want to express again my gratitude to Father Ziomek for a job well done and for his willingness to embrace this new assignment. You and those you love are in my prayers; please keep me in yours.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Francis Cardinal George".

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago