

Saying Good-bye – An Excerpt from Fr. Jim’s Farewell to the People of St. Hyacinth Parish, Amarillo, Texas

When I arrived at this parish, someone mentioned that St Hyacinth’s was a small church...with a big heart.

How true that turned out to be!

It has been an honor to shepherd of such a friendly and faith-filled community!

With your enthusiasm and support,

--along with God’s mighty help and merciful blessings—

a lot of good work, growth and improvement has taken place over the last six years.

It will not be easy for me to move on.

Leaving a parish is hard for a pastor.

It also creates anxiety within the parishioners.

So, why is it necessary?

Why are pastors routinely re-assignments to other parishes?

To answer that question, it helps to step back and ask ourselves,

“What do we most value in life?

What do we hold closest to our hearts?”

What do *you* hold closest to your heart?

I would venture to say that, for most people,

the deep desires of the heart are summarized in the words,

“I love you.”

We humans love to hear those words.

And we long to speak them.

Gosh, when we have people in our lives

with whom we can share those words

and mean what we say,

it is then that our life feels complete,

worthwhile

and deeply valued.

We long to hear the words, “I love you,”

more than any other words in the English language.

This holds true for most people, but not for all.
I dare say that priests are among those
for whom this is not the case.

Rather, for priests, the most important words we ever hear
—the words we strain our ears to hear again and again—
are the words, “Come, follow me.”

...

Looking back on my life,
I always wanted to be a priest.

I realize that, when it comes to one’s vocation,
some folks are inclined to try on many pairs of shoes
before deciding which pair they want to walk in
for the rest of their life.

It was not that way for me.

You might say I already felt the pull of those words,
“Come, follow me,” when I said my bedtime prayers as a boy.

I heard that mysterious call in the winter wind
that buffeted the old farm house in which I grew up.

“Come, follow me.”

I felt the tug of those words
as I worked in hay fields
and corn fields
in the heat of the summer sun,
and felt the stab of wheat stubble on my bare feet,
(knowing it was nothing to the nails that stabbed His).

“Come, follow me.”

In due time, those words would lead me up altar steps
Inside a cathedral on the day of my ordination
From there, they beckoned me down country roads and city streets,

along hospital corridors and into prison yards.

Eventually, those words drew me to Texas,
a place of open plains and red rock canyons.

“Come, follow me.”

I love of the sound of those words.
And I am grateful—grateful *beyond words*—
that the Lord’s call
led me to a town called Amarillo
and a parish named St. Hyacinth.

What a wonderful parish you are!

God bless you!

God bless you always!