

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

To begin, congratulations are in order to all of you! For those of you who have been with us from the beginning you might recall that this is our fifth year of this ministry. For five years your prayers have sustained this parish in love and made possible all the great ministry and work that goes on here. You have been ambassadors of the Holy Spirit for all of us and through your constant care and concern for the needs of our parish and the world, you have held us up these past five years.

We are most thankful to Liz Wallace and her team for keeping this ministry going and for all the time they give. Please pray in a special way for Liz as she makes her final profession as a Secular Third Order Discalced Carmelite this month. After years of study and prayer, she dedicates herself to God in a more profound way by taking on their spirituality and deepening her commitment to prayer. Each of you are to be commended for the time you spend in prayer and contemplation, helping us to live out our mission as a parish of Jesus Christ. Congratulations on five years!

This summer was a busy one. It was hard to say goodbye to Fr. Hickey as he moved into the next phase of his life: retirement. For seven years he gave himself in service to the people of OLPH and for forty four years to the people of this Archdiocese. We are most grateful to him and the faith and devotion that he gave to the service of God's people. I'm told by people that have seen him in recent weeks that he looks twenty years younger! However, we are most happy to be welcoming Fr. Jerry Boland. Some of you might have gotten an opportunity to meet him and say hello. He is so enthusiastic about this parish and its people and he brings new life and energy to this place. We look forward to getting to know him in the coming months and years as we make him part of our OLPH family. Please pray for both Fr. Hickey and Fr. Boland as they adjust to their new homes and ministries.

This summer I had the opportunity to travel to South Korea and see the vibrant life of faith and the explosive growth of Catholicism in that country. Though I missed the Pope by a few days, it was inspiring to see the faith of the Korean people. Unlike most nations, Korea was evangelized totally by lay people. For many centuries they had no priests but encountered the faith through lay men and women who traveled to China to learn about Jesus Christ. Their faith was strong and despite persecution they grew by leaps and bounds. Pope Francis recently canonized over a hundred men and women martyrs who had given their lives for Christ. Just in the past few decades Catholics have gone from two to eleven percent of the total population and are baptizing, confirming, and catechizing thousands of men, women, and children every year. It is a good reminder to all of us that Christ's message is alive and well in today's world. Please pray for the growth of the Church in Korea.

Any time we turn on the news, we see how much our world needs prayer and the healing power of Jesus Christ. Today more than ever we must pray for persecuted Christians throughout the world, especially for the ancient Churches of Syria and Iraq who find themselves facing persecution and even extinction at the hands of Islamic extremists. We also must pray for the people of Ukraine, that peace and freedom might come to that troubled corner of Europe and that the dignity of all nations and peoples is respected by the international community. On a more positive note, we also want to pray for all of our children who have returned to school. May this be a year of growing in spirit and mind and may they come to know God's love for them.

Thanks for all you do and know of my prayers in the risen Christ,
Fr. Elliott Dees