

ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO



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Dear Parishioners of St. Alphonsus, St. Clement, St. Josaphat, and St. Teresa of Avila,

In light of changing priest assignments in your parishes, I am writing to share background on the changes and where we hope to go in the upcoming years. For those unfamiliar with me, my name is Bishop John Siemianowski, and I serve as Cardinal Cupich's Episcopal Vicar for Vicariate II, the area of the archdiocese that covers the north side of the city and near north suburbs, as well as pastor of St. Juliana Parish in Edison Park.

Priest Assignments Effective July 1, 2026

St. Alphonsus Parish and St. Josaphat Parish:

- Fr. Steven Bauer has been appointed pastor of Prince of Peace Parish in Lake Villa.
- Fr. Brett Williams has been appointed to succeed Fr. Bauer as pastor of St. Alphonsus while retaining duties leading St. Josaphat Parish. He will formally become pastor of both parishes on July 1, 2026.
- Prior to the pastor placement process last week, Fr. Jesus Raya was among the associate pastors in the Associate Pastor Pool to receive a new assignment effective July 1. Because Fr. Raya is a bilingual priest, his skills make him suitable for parishes with predominantly Hispanic ministries. The Priests' Placement Board prioritizes matching a priest's unique talents with the specific needs of the wider Church in our archdiocese; as such, it is anticipated that his next assignment will be in a parish where those language skills are most needed. Both Fr. Raya and the Placement Board view this transition as an important step for his ongoing ministerial growth and pastoral experience. Please note associate pastor assignments are decided after Easter and take effect July 1. A new associate pastor will replace Fr. Raya to work with Fr. Williams to serve both St. Alphonsus Parish and St. Josaphat Parish.

St. Clement Parish and St. Teresa of Avila Parish:

- St. Teresa of Avila Parish has been on the list of parishes to receive a new pastor July 1, 2026, upon the retirement of Fr. Frank Latzko.
- Through the pastor placement discernment process, Cardinal Cupich approved the recommendation for Fr. Peter Wojcik to be assigned as administrator of St. Teresa as of July 1, 2026. A strong candidate with the gifts to serve St. Teresa well was not identified through the discernment process.
- Fr. Radley Alcantara will continue to work with Fr. Wojcik and serve both St. Clement and St. Teresa of Avila as associate pastor.
- One of the priests will move into the residence at St. Teresa of Avila when the transition is finalized.

Priest Placement Process

The archdiocesan Priests' Placement Board, the Auxiliary Bishops, and Cardinal Cupich meet every year around this time to discern priest assignments for July 1. This group considers the needs of each parish, the gifts of each priest, and the overall situation of the archdiocese as we face a future with fewer priests. In a given year, there are about 20-25 parishes needing a pastor.

Each year, there is a pool of pastors who indicate they are looking to transition to a new assignment. However, there are typically a few parishes that need priests with certain skills who had not put their name in the pool. That is when we ask a priest who had not been planning to move if he would be willing to take on a new assignment because his gifts fit the needs of the other parish. This is what happened with Fr. Steven Bauer with Prince of Peace, Fr. Brett Williams with St. Alphonsus, and Fr. Peter Wojcik with St. Teresa.

Looking Ahead – A time to collaborate for renewal

While these changes are prompted by priest availability challenges, they offer a moment to set a fresh course of collaboration across the four parishes (and other nearby parishes) for renewal. There are great signs of renewed interest among younger adults, as evidenced by growth in your parishes and surrounding parishes. Your parishes have also served as fertile ground for recent priestly vocations. Organizing pastoral leadership of your four parishes under two pastors provides an opportunity to set and implement plans for evangelization and fostering vocations that cross your parishes.

The people who live in Lincoln Park and Lakeview are highly mobile and go to the parish that meets their needs. Coordinating ministry across the four parishes (plus St. Vincent de Paul) will provide the best path for engaging the most people in your shared territories. Each of your parishes has its unique charisms to build upon. This is not about consolidating or combining parishes – this is about most effectively working for evangelization among the people you serve in common.

Gratitude

I would like to express my gratitude to both Fr. Steven Bauer and Fr. Frank Latzko for their pastoral leadership of St. Alphonsus and St. Teresa of Avila, as well as Fr. Jesus Raya for his ministry at St. Alphonsus. I am also grateful to Fr. Brett Williams and Fr. Peter Wojcik for saying yes to Cardinal Cupich's invitation to add St. Alphonsus and St. Teresa of Avila to their pastoral responsibilities.

There are great things happening at all of your parishes as we move into this time of change. Please know of my support and prayers for all of your priests and parishes in ensuring a smooth transition. Please pray for me, and I will be praying for all of you.

Sincerely,



Most Reverend John S. Siemianowski
Auxiliary Vicar, Archdiocese of Chicago