

***This is the text of the announcement that was made at Old St. Mary, Our Lady of Divine Providence, SS Peter & Paul and Three Holy Women Parishes the weekend of May 8-9, 2010.***

For the past several years, the parishes of Old St. Mary, Our Lady of Divine Providence, St. John Cathedral, SS. Peter & Paul and Three Holy Women have worked together collaboratively as the Riverbank Catholic Communities. Together we sponsor our parish school, Catholic East Elementary, as well as a variety of programs, ministries and outreach efforts.

Up until now, five priests have served these five parishes. For almost twenty years now, we have been predicting that the day will come when there will not be enough priests available in the archdiocese for each parish to have its own priest. That day is now here.

On June 30<sup>th</sup>, Father Jerry Hessel, pastor of Our Lady of Divine Providence will retire from active ministry. We are grateful for the contributions he has made, not only to Our Lady of Divine Providence, but to Catholic East and to all of the Riverbank Catholic Communities. With Fr. Jerry's retirement, a significant change will occur for all of us.

Beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>, Father Tim Kitzke, Father Brian Mason and Father Michael Michalski will receive a new assignment among our parishes. Archbishop ListECKI has appointed all three priests to serve as a pastoral team to serve Old St. Mary, Our Lady of Divine Providence, SS Peter & Paul and Three Holy Women. This means that all three priests will be pastors of all four parishes. So, how does this work?

In forming a pastoral team, the three priests will work together as three equals; this is not a configuration of a pastor with two associate pastors. Each priest will assume responsibility for overseeing and supervising a particular area of parish life and administration in all four parishes. For example, one priest will oversee finance and property, another human concerns, another ministry to the Hispanic Community. We will make those areas of responsibility known to you in the weeks ahead. The pastoral team will work together closely, coming to decisions through consensus.

All three priests will begin rotating between the four parishes for weekend masses, weekday masses, baptisms, confessions, weddings and funerals. On the weekends, one priest will cover all of the masses at one parish. This will mean that every fourth weekend, each parish will have a guest presider to cover masses. It will take a while for us to get to know one another, but that will certainly come with time. Because the entire life of our parishes is centered on

the Eucharist, the pastoral team will make it the highest priority to provide good preaching and presiding at all four parishes.

This new configuration will also reach beyond the three priests and the coverage of sacramental celebrations. With three co-pastors leading our parishes, we will enter into a new way of being a Catholic Community in our part of the city. While respecting the unique identity and history of each parish, we will find new ways to work together to support Catholic East and East Side Child and Youth Ministries. All four parishes will share the cost of priest salaries resulting in a savings for all four parishes. We envision our parish councils learning new ways to work together for the good of all the parishes.

It is also important for you to understand what this configuration will *not* mean. No parish is closing. No parishes are being merged. There will be no co-mingling of parish finances. This new configuration is not a first step to doing any of these things.

This will be new for all of us: parish staffs, parish councils, parishioners and priests. None of us have ever undertaken something like this before. We will not be able to predict now every possible circumstance or issue that will arise in the future. All of us will learn together. It is inevitable that some mistakes will occur and some ways of doing things will need to be rethought. What Father Tim, Father Brian and Father Mike ask is for your trust and your patience as we move forward. Archbishop ListECKI told us that he wanted a long-term commitment on the part of the priests to this new configuration. We are thrilled to be able to serve our four parishes and we do make a commitment to serve each and every one of our parishioners. We want to have four strong, vibrant and faith-filled parishes who work together to continue the mission of Jesus Christ in our Riverwest, East Side and Downtown neighborhoods. We want the larger community of the City of Milwaukee to know that the Riverbank Catholic Communities are a force for goodness and Christian justice and that we live out our faith in Christ each and every day.

As we move forward, questions will inevitably arise. Please direct your questions to the pastoral team so that we can answer and address them for the good of all. We ask that you please keep our four parishes and our three priests in your prayers. We ask your support and your help as we move into the future.