

Beloved,

If you were at Mass last weekend, you heard me announce my retirement effective this June. I cannot tell you how sad I am to have to take this step, but it has become necessary for health reasons.

First, I want to tell each of you how proud I am of you. Over the past few years, you have come together in love and unity. I take great pride in your spiritual growth just as a father takes pride in his children. That makes my news even more painful to share.

Many of you have become aware of, and probably frustrated by, my memory issues since my bout with Covid in the Fall of 2020. I have forgotten your names, missed appointments, and been generally confused. Altar Servers are aware of my difficulties remembering how to say Mass and have done an excellent job of guiding me when necessary. What you are not aware of are the struggles I have remembering how to do simple tasks like operating a faucet or turning on the car. (Hint: push the button.)

As priests generally retire between 70 and 75, I had counted on at least two more years with you. However, when Monsignor Perkins (Vicar General of the Ordinariate) visited the first Sunday in Lent, he was immediately aware of my impairment and recommended I retire this summer rather than waiting until 70. Objectively, I must agree with him that I am no longer capable of serving as an effective pastor. I also heard from him the concern of a spiritual father who wanted me to have the chance to enjoy my family while I still can. Cheryl and I told him we would prayerfully consider this idea.

I have been undergoing neurological tests for several months. The good news is that my brain appears very healthy on the MRI. For that reason, my doctors believe this is a case of long Covid brain fog. However, because my cognitive and memory issues continue to increase, further scans and tests this summer will determine if it is actually Covid induced Alzheimer's.

In late March, I discussed Monsignor's recommendation with both my neurologist and my internist. They concurred that stress reduction would be helpful for my recovery, as long as I stay mentally active, which I hope to do by devoting myself to prayer and writing. I then discussed it with my family who were also supportive. I submitted my request for early retirement to the Bishop of the Ordinariate about three weeks ago; he accepted it immediately. I held off on a public announcement until after Easter as I did not want to produce a dark cloud over our celebration. Bishop Johnston is aware of the situation and in a few weeks will appoint a new priest to serve here. I have been told that my situation will not affect the diocese's decision about the future of Guardian Angels.

You have often heard me say that we are a family. Within that framework, I see you as my spiritual children. I have cared for your well-being for almost three years and have held each of you close to my heart daily. I have watched you band together as a strong family who can face any and all adversities with the strength of your community. I am thankful that you are on the solid path to rebuild Guardian Angels to the parish God intended over 100 years ago.

There is nothing to add except for you to know that you will all always be dear to me and kept in my prayers. Please pray for my family and me.

Carry on.

In Christ,
Fr. Ed Wills

4/25/22