

*O God, who on the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul
give us the noble and holy joy of this day,
grant, we pray, that your Church
may in all things follow the teaching
of those through whom she received
the beginnings of right religion.*

(Collect for the Solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul, Apostles)

My Dear and Precious Friends,

As we celebrate this Solemn Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, it is with a very heavy heart that I write to you today to announce my early retirement due to my failing health. On May 18th, I celebrated the 40th Anniversary of my Ordination to the Priesthood. Our church was filled with parishioners, family and friends for the celebration of my Solemn Mass of Thanksgiving, at which time I promised I was “not done yet.” Two days later, the Vicar for Priests and our Archdiocesan Nurse Practitioner met with me to tell me that they believed the time had come for me to retire early so that I could take better care of myself. I love my priesthood, and it breaks my heart to know that even though I was not ready to retire, people thought it was time for me to turn the page and enter this new chapter of my life. Over the past three years I have fallen deeply in love with our new parish family. Many people have thanked me for being such a powerful example for them as they struggle with their own disabilities. I have assured Father Edmond that he may continue to schedule me as much as he needs to for Masses and the celebration of other Sacraments. I continue to be blessed with the help of our parish ministers and sacristans, and especially our Acolyte Jim Cameron and most especially on weekends when my dear friend and care giver Deacon Gary Michael can assist me in getting to and from church and on the altar for Mass. I thank God on my knees for the gift of my dear friend Gary Michael who visits with me every day and helps me take care of myself and my home. Thanking God for all of this love and good help in my life, I hope to continue my priestly ministry as best I can for many years to come because, as I said at my anniversary Mass, “I’m not done yet!”

Because of my inability to safely navigate stairs, I have never lived or kept an office at our parish rectory. I will be continuing to live and work from my private home in Worth. It is a 20 to 30 minute drive to and from our parish so, like many of you, I must commute in order to “get to work.” That work is by God’s grace my vocation, the love of my life. Please pray for me that I will continue to have the strength and grace that I need to, as Saint Paul wrote to Timothy, “run

the good race.” In my retirement, I plan on expanding my online ministry, including a return to “Father Ralph’s Neighborhood.” New episodes will begin to drop in July, so I hope that you will subscribe to my YouTube channel so that you will not miss any of my episodes. I am also always available to talk to you over the phone. I remember the telephone being my mother’s life line to her family and friends, and I would be overjoyed if you would keep my number on “speed dial”: (773) 203-2330. Also, please email me at FrRalphZ@mac.com, and be sure to send mail directly to my home at 11643 South Natchez Avenue, Worth, Illinois, 60482. While I have a box filled with your loving good wishes from my Anniversary Mass which I read over and over again, I look forward to reading your emails, cards, and letters, and to talking with you when you call. Until then, may the Grace and Peace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God our Father, and the Communion of their Most Holy Spirit be with you all! May the Lord send his angels to watch over you and all those you love! And always remember how very precious you are to me and how very much I love you!

In Awe and Wonder of the Power of God’s Love and Divine Mercy, your friend
and brother always,

Father Ralph

