



# THE ARCHDIOCESE OF KANSAS CITY IN KANSAS

OFFICE OF ARCHBISHOP SHAWN MCKNIGHT, S.Th.D.

13 December 2025

Dear parishioners of Queen of the Holy Rosary,

I am blessed to be able to deliver the good news that your pastor, Father Jerry Arano-Ponce, is returning to serve your parish, effective December 15, 2025. With the conclusion of the civil and canonical investigations determining no civil or church laws were broken, it is possible for me to reinstate him, with several requirements which are intended to strengthen your parish's bonds of fraternal care for one another and others.

Father Jerry has many gifts. I appreciate his deep care and concern for you and your families. Many of you have expressed how you have missed your spiritual father. Thank you for sharing your affection for Father Jerry.

To make our Church the safest place it can be, we ask everyone to speak up when they see something concerning. When such matters are raised, especially those regarding actions not in line with our archdiocesan abuse prevention policy and codes and standards of conduct, I have a responsibility to address them. That responsibility includes fairness to the subject of the issues raised, care for those who come forward, and due diligence for the good of the whole Church. In the past, our Church has been criticized harshly, rightfully, and to the detriment of our communal bonds, for not addressing such concerns adequately. I take very seriously my responsibilities to resolve these situations in justice, fairness, and compassion for all who are impacted.

It certainly pains me to see a brother priest undergo such a trial, as well as to witness the uncertainty, confusion, and hardship it can place upon a community. In moments like these, it is essential we remain united as a true sanctuary of mercy, committed to listening carefully and responding with charity.

When matters are brought forward in good faith, it requires courage to speak. The initiator of the concern can find the process itself to be difficult, along with the person involved and the community. These situations often place the individuals who voiced their concerns at the center of controversy and can strain relationships. How a community responds matters; reactions that lead to isolation or ostracism can cause lasting harm and deter others from speaking out. For this reason, a thorough and deliberate process is essential, so that truth may be found and a fair and just resolution reached for all involved.

## **Concerns and Review of those Concerns**

Less than five months ago, I was made aware of serious concerns regarding Father Jerry's ability to uphold good boundaries, according to our policies, best practices and training. Our training teaches us that when serious boundaries are crossed, a suspicion of grooming or abuse follows. The concerns I



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received regarding Father Jerry include perceived favoritism of certain minors and families, use of the rectory to meet with minors without other adults present, giving substantial gifts (primarily money) to children, not following normal procedures for awarding scholarships, and taking pictures of minors without permission or knowledge of their parents. Father Jerry has maintained his innocence throughout the situation.

Perhaps some of you question whether this kind of behavior warranted my response. I can assure you it was necessary. Because these concerns involved minors, we were required by law to report them to civil authorities. The seriousness of these concerns led to the initiation of an investigation by local authorities.

Furthermore, for justice to be realized, law enforcement must be able to conduct an investigation without any interference. That meant the civil investigation had to conclude before we could begin investigating if any actions were against Church law, which required considering the spiritual and moral implications of the behavior. Our spiritual leaders are held to higher standards in this regard.

### **Going forward**

During our archdiocesan review of the situation, I asked experts from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis to assist our local experts in the Office for Protection and Care to help expedite the process. In that investigation, we realized that there are some particular realities at Queen of the Holy Rosary that must be addressed.

Some of these realities require the entire parish to re-establish policies that meet the Church's standard for the protection of our children, as well as your pastor, from potentially harmful situations.

To address these, I am requiring the following:

1. There are to be no minors allowed in any part of the parish rectory. This will require the parish to no longer use the rectory for youth gatherings or for other parish activities. Your pastor should have a private home.
2. The pastor must not provide gifts of any kind to individual children. Small gifts to groups (such as First Communion mementos or other appropriate tokens) are acceptable, as gifts from the parish to its parishioners.
3. Father Jerry is not to take any pictures of minors. If the parish uses images of children in its publications (digital and print), signed consent must be given by the children's parents or guardians, in keeping with our archdiocesan policies. In today's world, parents are rightly concerned about the use of their children's images. The digital space offers no real privacy. Additionally, having images of children on a pastor's mobile phone puts him at risk for suspicions or misperceptions regarding his intent.



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A public update announcing the conclusion of the civil and canonical investigations and reinstatement of Father Jerry will be made on Monday on the Archdiocese's "News" section of the website and in the next available issue of The Leaven.

### **Renewal from the Heart**

I am profoundly grateful to all who participated in this process. Even though it has been painful, I believe God can use this pain to foster a renewal in your parish if we choose to listen to each other. In listening with the heart, we will realize that all of us have the same goal: To be a safe haven for all and a place where we bring our community closer to one another and to Christ.

Your desire to make Queen of the Holy Rosary a more welcoming parish by expanding your school and building a new church tells me you are listening to the Spirit. In this growth, please prioritize the needs of our young people for proper places to meet, and the need of your pastor to have a true home.

Remember, dear parishioners, the reason for these buildings and your plans. Our God desires, as we hear in today's Gospel, that "the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them." In everything we do, including building campaigns, let us remember we do it to fulfill Jesus' great commandment: "Love one another as I have loved you."

Let us rejoice, not only that your pastor has been restored, but rejoice that Christ is coming and is calling each of us to be healed and restored.

As we conclude this Jubilee Year of Pilgrims of Hope and begin a new chapter in the history of your parish, may you be inspired by the celebration of the birth of our Savior. I am

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Rev. Shawn McKnight, S.Th.D.  
Archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas