

Saint Elizabeth Roman Catholic Church
Upper Uwchlan Township, PA
An Overview of the Archdiocesan Process
for the Retirement of a Pastor and the Appointment of a New Pastor
February 19, 2024

- 1) In keeping with the *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 538, #3), a pastor is asked to submit a letter of resignation from pastoral office to the Archbishop by September 15 of the year prior to when the priest will complete his seventy-fifth year of age. The same canon directs that after considering all the circumstances of person and place, the Archbishop is to decide whether to accept or defer the resignation. The Archbishop is also responsible to provide suitable support and housing for the resigning pastor.

[In compliance with this archdiocesan norm, I submitted my letter of resignation to Archbishop Nelson Perez on September 5, 2023. On February 15, 2024, I received a letter from the Archbishop accepting my resignation as pastor and granting my request for retirement, effective in June of 2024.]

- 2) The Office for Clergy has responsibility for convening the Priest Personnel Board and drafting for the Archbishop a slate of recommended assignments for pastors, parochial vicars and those in special ministry (education, hospital chaplaincy, etc.). In preparing a slate of proposed changes in assignment for the Personnel Board's input and recommendation, the Secretary for Clergy and his assistant have individual interviews with the retiring pastors and any other priests who request a change of assignment (by letter to the Archbishop no later than January 15 each year).

[I had an initial pre-retirement interview with the Secretary for Clergy, Fr. Michael Hennelly, this past August. More recently, I also had a follow-up interview with the local Dean, Fr. Stephen Leva, in mid-February, to discuss my plans after retirement.]

- 3) Saint Elizabeth Parish is part of Deanery #4, for which Fr. Leva, currently the pastor of St. Joseph Church in Downingtown, is responsible. As part of the Dean's periodic parish visitation, Fr. Leva met with members of the pastoral, finance and stewardship councils and the parish administrative staff last May. As is customary, Fr. Leva submitted a formal report of his visitation to the Archbishop and to the Office for Clergy.

[Given my anticipated retirement, that conversation with the Dean included a consideration of the transition to a new pastor and what is needed to guide Saint Elizabeth Parish in the immediate years ahead.]

- 4) The current practice of the Archdiocese is for the Archbishop to meet in person with those being appointed as new pastors during the third week of May, and then to announce the assignment of new pastors on that Friday, with the publication of the entire list of clergy changes the next day, after the ordination of new priests that Saturday morning. These changes are typically effective on the third Monday of June (following the close of most Catholic elementary schools around the Archdiocese).

[For 2024, absent any changes to the Archbishop's personal calendar, the announcement of new pastors is likely to be made on **Friday, May 17, with the effective date of Monday, June 17**. All things being equal, my successor will assume responsibility for Saint Elizabeth Parish on June 17, 2024.]

- 5) It is also Archdiocesan policy that a retiring pastor is not permitted to continue residing in his former rectory, to ensure that the new pastor has the freedom to lead the parish community without interference or undue dependence upon the retiring pastor.

[While I am more than happy to support and assist my successor in any way that he would find helpful, I am quite aware of my responsibility to step aside and allow God to work in and through the new pastor for the ongoing good of the parish community. As the saying goes: “I must decrease, and he must increase....”]

- 6) Upon his retirement, a pastor may opt to arrange with another pastor for a hospitality residence in a parish rectory within the Archdiocese or to arrange for a private residence of his own choosing, within or outside the Archdiocese. A \$500/month housing allowance is provided to a retired pastor living in a private residence.

[At this point, I plan to have a guest room in St. John Chrysostom rectory in Wallingford, PA, and to secure an off-season (September-May) rental apartment in Sea Isle City, NJ.]

- 7) Last Fall, a team of parishioners and parish staff was formed to plan for a parish farewell for me as the outgoing pastor and a parish welcome to the new pastor. The date of **Sunday, June 2, 2024** has been reserved for a farewell Mass at 11:30 AM, to be followed by a reception in the parish social hall. A parish welcome to the new pastor is still being arranged.

[My sole directive to this planning team is to ensure that whatever is envisioned for the parish’s farewell to me as pastor does not overshadow the more significant celebration of the parish’s twenty-fifth anniversary in the summer of 2025!]

A personal reflection upon writing my letter of resignation to Archbishop Perez:

In my almost 49 years as a priest of the Archdiocese, I have been richly blessed and am deeply grateful for the wonderful opportunities for priestly service that have been provided to me, including my eight years as a parochial vicar, my graduate studies in Sacred Scripture, my 13 years in seminary & priestly formation, and especially my soon-to-be 24 years as pastor at Saint Elizabeth.

I am equally grateful to the parish staff and parishioners of Saint Elizabeth for their faith commitment, for their inspiring practice of a stewardship of time, talent and treasure, and for their active collaboration with and personal support of my pastoral leadership over the years.

God has indeed richly blessed all of us here at Saint Elizabeth Church, and I am confident that under the leadership of a new pastor in 2024, the Lord who began this great work here back in July of 2000 will continue to bring it to fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

Unless the Lord build the house, we labor in vain who build it! (Psalm 127:1)

Fr. Tom Mullin