

Fourth Sunday of Easter

Pope Francis has accepted the resignation of our bishop, Robert Finn, in accordance with a provision in the Code of Canon Law. Bishop Finn is 62. A bishop normally retires at the age of 75, but he may resign earlier for reasons of ill health or grave cause. The Vatican has not identified the grave cause, but it is presumed that it pertains to the way the bishop handled the case of a local priest taking pornographic photos of young girls. At the moment, we have no bishop. However, in a case like this, the pope appoints an interim leader for the diocese. Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City in Kansas is our apostolic administrator. Archbishop Naumann already has a demanding ministry in his own diocese, but he has generously accepted the request of the Holy Father to help us as well. No one knows how long this interim will be. Most likely it will last some months. The pope has a group of advisors, the Congregation of Bishops, to recommend new shepherds for every diocese. Archbishop Naumann believes that this congregation will consider our diocese a priority. In the meantime, he says that the pastoral care and ministry of our parishes will continue as usual. He does not intend to start any new initiatives because that should fall to the new bishop.

The previous week Bishop Finn announced new assignments for some of our priests, effective June 1, and Archbishop Naumann says that these will remain in place. Only one of them concerns our neighborhood. Felipe Suárez is a seminarian originally from Colombia who moved to the United States a few years ago and became a parishioner of St. Anthony's. He was ordained a deacon last year and will be ordained a priest next month. He will be assigned to work with Father Jason at Holy Cross Church and will help at Our Lady of Peace as well.

What will Bishop Finn do? Where will he go? We do not know yet. However, Archbishop Naumann has invited Bishop Finn to ordain the new deacon and priests for our diocese next month, and he has accepted. So Bishop Finn will ordain Felipe Suárez to the priesthood.

Bishop Finn was also to celebrate numerous confirmation masses over the next few months, including the one at Sacred Heart/Guadalupe, where young people from St. Anthony's will be confirmed. Archbishop Naumann has delegated the two priests who serve as vicar general and chancellor of our diocese to assist. So either Father Ken Riley or Father Charles Rowe will confirm our youth on June 17.

All of these people deserve our prayers. Bishop Finn has expressed how privileged he feels to have served our diocese. Archbishop Naumann is sacrificing time and spiritual energy to help us in our need. Those who have suffered from sexual abuse by clergy need continued signs of support. And whoever becomes our new bishop, we should already start praying that God will grant him the gifts to follow in the footsteps of Christ, the Good Shepherd. In today's first reading Peter addresses the people with a message central to our faith, a message we always need to hear but especially in times of transition, loss and expectation: Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. "There is no salvation through anyone else, nor is there any other name under heaven given to the human race by which we are to be saved." Let us pray that our diocese will always rest secure on the foundation of Christ our cornerstone.

Sunday, April 26, 2015