

## 12th Sunday in Ordinary Time

When friends heard that I was becoming the new pastor of the cathedral, many of them asked, “Are you excited?” I said, “I’ve got every emotion you want. Pick one, and I’ll tell you about it.” The last five years I’ve been serving the multiethnic St. Anthony Catholic Church in historic northeast Kansas City. When I said goodbye to the people there earlier this month, I totally choked up. Moving from one rectory to another, as you can imagine, is stressful. It will take months to get boxes unpacked, pictures on the wall, and a routine in my life. So, I’m feeling grief and stress.

But am I excited? Of course, I’m excited to come here and meet you. I was ordained a priest in this cathedral 38 years ago. When I was a kid, my father had an office downtown with Braniff International. My first summer job as a student was in the Parks and Recreation office in City Hall. When I was young, getting a job downtown made me feel like pretty hot stuff. A lot of those memories are coming back.

During my years as a priest of this diocese I’ve served St. Elizabeth’s, Nativity of Mary, St. Regis, St. Munchin, and St. Anthony’s. I spent three years in Rome to obtain a doctorate in sacred theology from the University of Sant’ Anselmo. I provided lay ministry formation through our diocesan Center for Pastoral Life and Ministry. I keep active with publishers, other dioceses, and various organizations, including the International Commission on English in the Liturgy. Bishop Johnston has appointed me to two other diocesan responsibilities here: director of the office of ecumenical and interreligious affairs and director of the office of divine worship. If that sounds like a lot to you, it is. But I enjoy the work I’m blessed to do. I’m feeling excited and content.

Therefore, today’s first reading spins my head. Jeremiah is feeling something completely else. Not excitement, not grief, not enjoyment, not contentment, not even the mundane stress of unpacking boxes. No, Jeremiah is terrified that his former friends are now trying to kill him. He writes, “All those who were my friends are on the watch for any misstep of mine.” He overhears them saying, “Perhaps he will be trapped; then we can prevail, and take our vengeance on him.” Jeremiah has entrusted his cause to God, and he openly wants to witness the vengeance that God will take on his former friends.

That’s how Jeremiah felt. I’m not feeling any of that this weekend. Maybe you aren’t either. But somewhere in this world, somewhere in this city, someone does feel that way because their fear is real. Somewhere someone is justifiably worried that wicked people, former friends, are trying to hurt them.

In any parish a pastor’s main contact with his people is at Sunday mass. It’s here where we bring our faith and our hope; we praise God; we pray for our needs, as well as those of people we love. We also pray for those we don’t even know - people who may be suffering in ways we have never fully imagined. As we begin this journey together, let us be mindful of the presence of God in our hearts, and of the ways that we feel blessed. Then let us also recall the responsibility we have to be mindful of, to pray for, and to take action on behalf of those whose lives are not so blessed.

Sunday, June 25, 2017