

GOODBYE AND GOD BLESS, FATHER PEREZ

I can't ever forget my first weekend as the new Administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in West Brighton. The outgoing pastor, Father Burke, introduced me at each mass and said, "There is no formal ceremony for the installation of an administrator. But I am now going to present to Father Jerome with something he might need in dealing with all of you parishioners in the next few years." At that point, Father presented me with a big box of Extra Strength Excedrin! He was joking of course, but there is no doubt that being a Pastor or Administrator of a parish today is not easy and there might be a few headaches! When Father Perez told me that he was appointed as the head of St. Mary's Church in Poughkeepsie I was both happy and sad. Happy, because he is being promoted and will now have a chance to lead his own flock and initiate his own programs and ideas. But it is a bit sad because St. Charles is losing a very capable and effective priest. In the five years he has been here, Father Perez has worked very hard in almost every aspect of parish life. He has said many masses, buried the dead, anointed the sick, united couples in Holy Matrimony and brought communion to the homebound. Besides all these responsibilities, Father has also moderated the Teen Club, directed the Altar Servers, and Special Ministers of the Eucharist. All these duties were performed quietly and humbly- Father Perez is not one to seek the limelight! But he deserves accolades for all the good work he has done at St. Charles in this past half decade. We will certainly miss him! However, St. Charles' loss is St. Mary's gain. He will bring to that parish much needed enthusiasm and energy. A good pastor is a great gift to a parish. In other words, as leader of the flock, he sets the "Tone." St. Peter in his epistle gave wonderful advice to pastors when he wrote: "God's flock is in your midst. Give it a shepherd's care. Not under compulsion or for shameful profit, but willingly." the actual word "Pastor" means shepherd. Every priest, every pastor should model his life after Jesus the Good Shepherd. A good shepherd after the heart of Christ is more concerned about his flock rather than himself. I know and believe that Father Perez is eminently qualified to be shepherd of a parish because he has done such a great job here in this community. Continue to pray for vocations to the priesthood. There are so many needs in the church and in the 300 parishes of the Archdiocese. Yet, there are fewer and fewer priests to answer the call! Think of the good that just one person can do in the world. Just recently, I attended the Ordination to the Priesthood at St. Patrick's Cathedral. The Cardinal was thrilled because there were nine new priests ordained for New York. But really, we could use five times that number. Vocations are really everybody's business because we need good priests! How did a poet put it? "We need them in life's early morning, we need them again at its close: we feel their warm clasp of true friendship, we seek it while tasting life's woes. When we come to this world we are sinful, the greatest as well as the least, and the hands that make us pure as angels are the beautiful hands of a priest." Good luck and God bless you Father Perez!

Sincerely in Christ,

Fr. Jerome