

A Message of Deepest Gratitude

On the Occasion of my 58th Birthday and Second Year as Pastor

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ, Parishioners of Christ the King Parish,

As I pause to reflect on the double blessing of celebrating my 58th birthday and completing my second full year as your pastor, my heart is filled with a profound sense of gratitude to Almighty God and to each of you. In the quiet moments of prayer, looking back over the landscape of these past two years, I am deeply moved by the way the Holy Spirit has moved within our community. To shepherd a parish is a sacred trust, but to shepherd a community so vibrant, faithful, and loving as Christ the King is a rare and beautiful gift.

Reaching the milestone of 58 years of life naturally brings a period of contemplation. Scripture reminds us in Psalm 90 to “number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Every year added to our journey is a testament to God’s enduring mercy and grace. As I celebrate this birthday, I do not merely count the years, but rather the countless blessings that have filled them. Notable among those blessings is the privilege of being called to serve as your spiritual father. The ultimate joy of the priesthood is found not in isolation, but in relationship—in walking alongside you through the sacred peaks and valleys of human existence.

These past two years have flown by with remarkable speed, yet the roots we have planted together run deep. I still vividly remember my first weeks here at Christ the King—the mixture of excitement and holy trepidation that accompanies any new pastoral assignment. From the very moment of my arrival, you opened your hearts to me. You welcomed me not as a stranger or a mere administrator, but as a brother and a guide. Your patience during my period of transition, your gentle guidance as I learned the unique traditions of this parish, and your enthusiasm for our shared vision have sustained me daily.

Together, we have cultivated a true sanctuary of faith. I look back with immense joy on our liturgical celebrations—the reverence of our Sunday Masses, the beauty of our holy days, and the quiet, transformative power of the sacraments. To baptize your infants, to witness the holy matrimony of your people, to grant absolution in the confessional, and to stand by the bedsides of your sick and dying have been moments of profound grace. In each of these encounters, I have seen the living face of Jesus Christ mirrored in your devotion and resilience.

Beyond the walls of our church building, I have watched with pride as our parish family has put faith into active motion. Through our religious education programs, our liturgical and other ministries, and our simple gatherings of fellowship, you have demonstrated what it truly means to be the hands and feet of Christ. Your generosity, both in stewardship and in volunteer service, ensures that Christ the King remains a beacon of hope and charity in our wider civic community. You do not simply attend church; you are the Church.

Of course, leadership also comes with its challenges, and no journey is without its trials. Yet, whenever difficulties arose or heavy decisions needed to be made, I was never alone. Your collaborative spirit, your wise counsel, and above all, your prayers, have been my constant anchor. I cannot adequately express how deeply a pastor feels the prayers of his people. On days when exhaustion knocked at the door, it was your intercession that provided the renewed strength to keep pressing forward. Your faith strengthens my own, and for that, I am eternally indebted.

As we turn our eyes toward the horizon and begin our third year together, I look forward with great anticipation to what God has in store for us. There are still many hearts to touch, many souls to bring closer to the sacraments, and new ways for our parish to grow in holiness and community. I pledge to you anew my total commitment, my pastoral care, and my deep love. I will continue to labor alongside you to make Christ the King an even brighter reflection of God's Kingdom on earth.

On this day of personal and pastoral celebration, I ask you for one specific birthday gift: your continued prayers. Pray that the Lord grants me the wisdom of Solomon, the courage of the Apostles, and the humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Pray that I may always be the pastor you deserve and the shepherd Christ desires me to be. Rest assured that you, your children, your elderly, and your loved ones who have gone before us are constantly lifted up in my daily Masses and private prayers.

Thank you once again for your warmth, your love, and the beautiful testimonies of faith you share with me every single day. May the Lord bless you and keep you; may He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; may He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

Yours in Christ our King,

Father Zaldy B. Norba, SSS