



Dear brothers in Christ,

September 13, 2018

I trust your Fall is off to a good start in the parish.

Father Joseph LeClair (Father Joe) has finished his pastoral assignment in the Diocese of Hamilton and has returned to the Archdiocese of Ottawa. As you can imagine, this is a challenging transition and we would like to support his return to ministry here in Ottawa. His reintegration into active ministry may generate attention so I am writing to you to clarify his living arrangements and current ministry. We are working together to provide support and accountability in his reintegration into ministry here in Ottawa.

Father Joe is now residing at the Saint John Paul II Residence.

As you are aware, we have a need for priests who can cover daily Masses when the pastors are away or engaged with other liturgical commitments. The number of retired priests helping with this important ministry has been declining but the need for assistance has remained the same.

I have asked Father Joe to be available to help with Masses in parishes, to help with funerals (especially the growing number of requests for a funeral with a Liturgy of the Word in funeral home chapels), hospital on-call ministry in the evenings and weekends and other opportunities to provide ministerial assistance. He is eager to serve and wants to support the pastors in any way he can. Father Joe has a long history of providing compassionate pastoral care to parishioners and I am confident that his skills and availability will be of great assistance. At the present time, this on-call availability will be his assigned ministry.

We are all aware of his past behaviour at Blessed Sacrament Parish that resulted in criminal charges, a conviction and time in the correctional system. It has been a difficult experience for not only Father Joe but also for parishioners and many others in our archdiocese. At this moment in time, together as a Christian community, we can model forgiveness and support a brother in his desire to be of priestly service to God's people.

We recognize that there may be challenges ahead once word of his return and reintegration becomes more widely known; if you are contacted for a comment by the media, please refer them to Deacon Gilles Ouellette who coordinates our communication with the media.

Thank you for your prayers and support of a brother priest.

May God bless you.  
Sincerely in Christ,

✠ Terrence Prendergast, SJ  
Archbishop of Ottawa