



Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I am Fr. Joseph Le, your new Pastor. It is my great joy to greet all of you who are my new family. Since the moment I received the official assignment to come to St. Alphonsus Church, even though I have had all kinds of feelings and thoughts, my heart has been

overwhelmed with joy and excitement because of this new mission.

When I started my priesthood vocation, I pictured myself being a pastor for a small church in Vietnam. Now, after twenty five years, I am here with you. It is true in my own vocation journey, "God draws straight with crooked lines."

I was born in South Vietnam during the Vietnam war. The war ended in 1975 when I was four years old. The end of war meant the end of our freedom and our basic human rights. The whole country now both the North and the South were under the cruel communist regime. Oppression, starvation, poverty, fear and persecution were part of our daily life.

After the war, my father lost his teaching job at the most popular private school in town. To feed his nine growing children, he became a farmer who had little land, primitive equipment, zero experience and limited strength.

Fortunately, my father was the person of strong faith. In the darkness of our family life, he brought us together to pray every night and went to church daily. Trusting in God and God alone was our last hope. That strong faith really brought us together as a family as we slowly went through the tough time. Growing up in the situation like that, I had to go to schools run by the communists which I really hated. But I loved my church. It was like my second home, my refuge where I could grow and learn many good things. I spent a lot of time at church being involved with many ministries like Altar Serving, children's choir, catechism program, etc...

I heard God's call to the priesthood when I was twenty-two years old. But because of the communist's control and interference over the Church, I could not get into the seminary. Hoping and waiting for my chance to get into the seminary with much frustration for about six years, one day my Bishop asked me whether I wanted to go to America, to join the seminary there. That call is the reason why I am here today.

I came to America in 1999. After studying in a college seminary in Iowa for one year, I was sent to Mundelein Seminary where I spent seven more years. When I finished the formation training at Mundelein, I was ordained a priest with my classmates at Holy Name Cathedral by Cardinal George.

My first assignment was at St. Raymond in Mount Prospect where I served for five years. In the last six years, I worked at St. Joseph Church in Libertyville. With the encouragement of a lot of priests and bishops in Chicago and the permission of my Bishop in Vietnam, I officially joined the Archdiocese of Chicago five years ago. I became an American citizen in 2014 and used my Christian name, Joseph, as my first name. **I prefer you to call me Fr. Joe.**

I would like to inform you that I will officially arrive at St. Alphonsus Church to embrace my new duty as the Pastor on Monday July 2.

I will say my first Mass on Tuesday at 8:15 am, and preside at all Masses this coming weekend except the 11 am Mass at which Bishop Edward Slattery presides and baptizes his great nephew. I hope that I can see many of you this coming week.

I am fully aware of many challenges waiting for me as the Pastor of this church. I need God's help and count on your love and support. Please keep me in your prayers as I also pray for you and your families.

May God bless St. Alphonsus Family always,
Fr. Joseph Le