

# A Pastor's Heart

Thank you for the warm welcome you have given me over the past two weeks as I have moved in. I am happy to be here. Since my retirement my parish work was limited to “weekend assistant” at Holy Child Jesus Parish in West Rogers Park, Chicago. I missed being with a praying community more regularly. I believe St. Patrick will fulfill that need.

This past week I had a “meet and greet” meeting with leaders of parish groups. I will follow up with individual meetings as needed. I plan to meet regularly with the parish staff. In the coming weeks I will continue the process of getting to know you, the parish, and its activities.

In today's first reading the prophet Amos explains that he was merely a shepherd before he was called to be a prophet. “The Lord took me from following the flock and said to me, ‘Go to my people.’” Similarly, God “chose, destined, granted and made known” our role in God's plan, says the Letter to the Ephesians. The apostles are sent as pairs to every town and village where Jesus intends to go. Called and sent aptly describes anyone who responds to the vocation of Christian.

I do not have the title “pastor,” but I want to assure you that I have a pastor's heart. My previous experiences as pastor have shaped my pastor's heart. I say this because a parishioner wrote me a letter expressing concern that St. Patrick now has an administrator and not a pastor. I think others may have a similar wonderment.

The mass texts for this Sunday are not just coincidental. In them God is speaking to his people now and here in this place. They remind me that from an early age I have been responding to a call. I have been taken from among God's people and ordained for their service. Similarly, each of you is called and sent to bring the gospel to this time and to every place. I believe I have a pastor's heart and hope that you will soon see that.

I like to put my thoughts into writing. Good leaders communicate well. I hope to use the bulletin and other media to let you know what is on my mind and in my heart as we journey together in the year ahead.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Jerry Gunderson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fr. Jerry Gunderson