

We are happy to announce that this past weekend, the Archbishop returned Fr. David Barrett to public ministry in our parish. Fr. Barrett took a voluntary leave of absence last November, when the Archbishop determined that it would be necessary to conduct a review of Fr. Barrett's past conduct and other contents of his priest file. Archdiocesan officials reported that Fr. Barrett was gracious and cooperative as they conducted a long and thorough process of review that included the assistance of the Ministerial Standards Board, a group of lay professionals and priests, as well as Fr. Reginald Whitt, O.P, the Episcopal Vicar for Ministerial Standards, to whom the Archbishop has entrusted with advising him on whether a priest is suitable for ministry. After an outside firm called Kinsale Management, which has expertise in reviewing priest files, reviewed Fr. Barrett's file for potential risk factors or inappropriate activity, they provided a report to the Ministerial Standards Board. In the report it was noted that Fr. Barrett had some inappropriate sexual misconduct with non-parishioner adult females more than a decade ago. Fr. Barrett self-reported his misconduct at the time and asked for help.

Since then, he has been committed to ongoing growth in his personal and professional life. He has undergone many years of assessments and successful therapy. The Ministerial Standards Board used the Kinsale report, their own review of the file, updated reports from Fr. Barrett's supervisors and health professionals, and letters from those who have worked closely with him to make their recommendation that Fr. Barrett return to ministry without delay. Also notable is that many letters were received from parishioners in their support of returning Fr. Barrett to their parish.

The Ministerial Standards Board congratulated Fr. Barrett on the personal progress he has made in areas where he has had difficulties in the past. They noted that there have not been any new incidences of misconduct in over 10 years, and that Fr. Barrett was remarkably candid, humble, and aware of his needs and limitations. Given his current limitations, the board did give some conditions on Fr. Barrett's return. In essence, they have required that Fr. Barrett continue to comply with his treatment and monitoring programs, and that he maintain a healthy and supportive living situation, such as what he currently has in place. Also required by the board is that he maintain his many support systems, and that appropriate disclosure of Fr. Barrett's past misconduct be given to the parish, which we are doing by way of announcements made at Masses and this posting on the website.

The Archbishop supports Fr. Barrett's return to ministry, and believes that the parish he serves will continue to benefit greatly from his ministry. The good people of these communities of faith will continue to be the eyes, ears and hearts of the Church to support Fr. Barrett in his priestly ministry.

Fr. Barrett has offered the following statement:

"I am filled with gratitude, being able to be back ministering to God's people. I want to fully acknowledge my past inappropriate behavior and ask forgiveness from everyone who was negatively affected by what I have done. In the past, I have used the behaviors of angry outbursts, inappropriate staring at women, and inappropriate sexual misconduct with non-parishioner adult females, which was over a decade ago. I acknowledge how wrong I was, have repented, received help, and now I ask your forgiveness.

"Even though I take full responsibility for my actions, childhood bullying and treatable mental illness were factors. I self-reported and sought help that was so graciously given to me. I received many hours of therapy, and have made great strides as noted by evaluations. I keep working hard to live a healthy, happy and holy life. The Ministerial Standards Board found me worthy to continue with the right kind of support and stable living arrangement, and the many levels of support I have at the parish I serve and the broader community.

"I am grateful to the Archbishop for giving me the opportunity to continue my priestly life. I want to thank Fr. Kevin Clinton, my pastor at St. Wenceslaus, along with Deacon Bob Wagner with whom I work very closely. I would like to thank the outstanding parishioners who worship with me at St. John and St. Scholastica, in addition to the whole of St. Wenceslaus parish and the surrounding communities for all the support they have given. I have confidence that with the support of family, brother priests, other friends and all of you I can continue to live a healthy life. I now live life one day at a time and rely on a God who comforts me."