



DIOCESE *of* LACROSSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

21 September 2021

Dear Brothers in Christ:

May the Lord give you peace.

In our world where social media has a pervasive and far reaching influence on our lives it has become important to share essential information truthfully and directly with the people of God. Today I share with you that we continue to provide Father James Altman our love, fraternal encouragement, clarity and the strength of our prayers as he works through a challenging chapter in his ministry.

As his Bishop, I want to be clear that Father Altman remains a priest of the Diocese of La Crosse. He has not been fired, laicized or defrocked. On the contrary, I still consider Fr. Altman to have the qualities of a good priest.

While the Diocese does reaffirm its earlier decrees to remove him as Pastor of Saint James the Less Parish in La Crosse, and suspended some of his priestly faculties, Fr. Altman continues to be appropriately compensated according to diocesan policies as we work our way through the canonical review process.

St Paul instructed the people in Ephesus (4:31) that all bitterness, fury, anger, shouting, and reviling must be removed from you, along with all malice. Although this scripture applies to all followers of Christ, it applies as a heavy weight to the Lord's ordained ministers. Therefore, a priest should avoid angry, blanket condemnations, no matter how righteously intended. It is not productive to silence the gospel, nor is it productive to present divine authority and engage in publicly condemning individuals and entire groups of people. Rather the Church's desire is to promote the values inherent in a life of virtue and the freedom of obedience to God's command.

In our present and sometimes challenging relationship, my preference is to work with Father Altman as a brother in Christ, directly, not in the blinding lights of social media. I thank you for your prayers, devotion and love. They mean so much to me and all of us who serve in the vineyard of the Lord, including Fr. Altman. Please continue to pray especially for Fr. Altman that he might hear the appeal and will do what is necessary to restore the fullness of his priestly ministry within our Diocese.

May God bless all of you and may he continue to guide and protect you.

Bishop William Patrick Callahan
Bishop of La Crosse