

December 16, 2021

My Dear Friends,

This note is long overdue but please know how much I miss all of you. I've wanted to write this letter so many times and then got distracted or Snoop wanted to go for a walk and I never got back to the letter. First of all, thank you for the incredible send-off from both parishes. I was and still am so overwhelmed by your goodness and generosity. Your cards, gifts and so many warm sentiments will be carried with me for many years to come. I don't expect I will ever find any community like we had. We shared so much joy and goodness in the midst of the struggles of life in these last years.

My days now are pretty different from my life in Detroit. I am involved in a Spirituality group (run by those Jesuits) and meet with a Spiritual Director once a week while going through the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises. I am trying to pray and do some work on my crazy self! These days, I also get to have long walks with Snoop throughout the day and that's usually peaceful unless he decides he doesn't like a dog he sees...then all hell breaks loose! Long Beach has a dog on every corner. Lastly, I am volunteering at Homeboys a few days per week. Although they have enough help with the Trainees, they have allowed me to come a few days per week. I am more in the way than anything but it is pretty amazing to see all that is produced by so many good people. I also have been able to get to know Fr. Greg Boyle and he's about as silly as I am but we are kindred spirits when it comes to the Gospel.

I wish I could tell you I am doing exciting things but my life is pretty quiet right now and that's fine with me. As hard as my leaving was for all of us, I am convinced that God is still in the midst of it all, helping us to grow and heal.

Please know as you come to celebrate another Christmas, I will be thinking of all of you and remembering our past Christmases with our wonderful children re-enacting the Nativity story during the Gospel. It didn't matter how well the play came off because they were all so cute (especially the sheep!) This Christmas will be different for all of us but the most important part of this Feast remains the same. We will hear the story, once again, of how our God came to be with us out of His deepest love. We will hold the truth of the Incarnation in our hearts and remind ourselves that Christ is born again and again and again whenever we love one another. You have shown me the face of our beloved Christ so many times, and I will carry all of you in my heart. Have a Blessed Christmas and a new year filled with all good things and know that your brother misses all of you!

With much love,

Your brother,

Ray