

A LETTER FROM FATHER NICK

When I received the call regarding the Sendoff-Weekend at hallowed St. Francis, I was thrilled with the invitation to return to share that sacred space again. Unfortunately, retirement has a few demands, and one of them for me on Saturday and Sunday, September 10th and 11th, is to speak at all Masses at a church in Providence. Nothing beats presence, but bilocation is the gift only of saints! Therefore I regret not being able to be there to salute Kelli as her journey to God takes the definite turn for her becoming a member of the Religious Sisters of the Visitation.

Their gain is our loss! The oldest Catholic presence between East Greenwich and Pawcatuck has been blessed in a special way by Kelli's attachment, guiding hand and leadership for the past 25 of its 137 years. As the longest serving pastor in the Kelli Era, I can honestly say she handled delicate and difficult situations with grace and style, was respectful and helpful to people in their needs; and conscious of the standards of hospitality and welcome to which we were all called by our patron himself.

For several years now, what has been apparent to those of us who love her is that there has been a thirst in her that the secular just couldn't seem to quench. We've noticed and supported her quiet and prayerful search for that deeper sense of belief and belonging, for communion and community. So we share with her the genuine excitement that is obvious in her response to God's call.

A personal word to Kelli! -- Thanks for making me look good often, for all that you did for me during knee surgeries and heart attacks; and for protecting me when you felt I was going under or just needed a rest. I may no longer be your pastor, but I will always be your friend, and, like the rest of your parish family, grateful to God for our paths having crossed.

Nicholas P. Smith, Pastor Emeritus