

A FAREWELL MESSAGE AT CHRISTMAS - 2010

Dear St. Theresa Parishioners and Friends,

3 years ago I came to you as a stranger. As I prepare to leave with sadness, please know that I am most grateful for all that you have done for me. We came to know each other, love and understand each other by gathering faithfully at the Lord's Table day after day. I sincerely appreciate your love and support, for the opportunity to have shared so many joys and sorrows, for the moments I have prayed with you at times of child birth, during illness and at celebration of baptisms, weddings and anniversaries. Through it all, I have come to know and love you more than ever and I trust that I have been the presence of Christ to you in Word and Sacrament. I have tried my best to be a person that was consistent and pure, without agenda, honest and direct. The intention of my homilies each week was simply to help you see that I too, am struggling to cooperate with the gift and call of God, to let go of pride and fear, to accept the ways God keeps me humble.

I have come to appreciate the many gifts of our parish – your enormous sense of Cajun hospitality, how much family means to you and your generosity in serving the community through your talents and skills. Each week, it was never just about you and me. It was always about Jesus and the Eucharist. Each week, your smiles and tears inspired me for I could see the grace of God unfolding in your own lives.

How blessed are we to have great staff and tireless volunteers! Priests come and go and each of us bring our gifts and talents. Remember St. Theresa is your parish and we, your priests are vessels and instruments of Christ. Hopefully, you do not see too much of our own personalities and inadequacies, but rather always and only Jesus.

Christmas is drawing near. God made us for love and He sent Jesus into this world out of His love for us. Let us welcome His love into our hearts and our families, especially in our brokenness, where the grace of God is the best glue to put us back together again. I extend my sincere wishes for A MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A PROEPEROUS NEW YEAR 2011!

Finally I seek your blessing in the new chapter of my life as I bless you with God's blessing: May God bless you and keep you; may God shine upon you and may He show His face to you and give you peace. Amen.

**Peace and Love,
Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, M.S.**

