



DENVER INNER CITY PARISH

Dear Friend of the Parish,

I am happy to announce that I am back to work at the Denver Inner City Parish (DICP) after a three-month sabbatical. I am so grateful to the DICP Board of Directors for this time of reflection. I am coming up on my 30th anniversary at the Parish, and it was so beneficial to have this time of contemplation.

It was at times challenging and difficult, but it was an incredibly worthwhile experience for both me and my wonderful wife Melissa. Special thanks to board members Dave Kleinkopf and Flora Jewell for all of their extra time, effort and commitment running the Parish in my absence. I also greatly appreciate the Parish's Executive Team, which also stepped up big-time in covering for me. I worry that I can't fully articulate how grateful I am for their efforts.

I have been asked by some what I did during my three-month sabbatical. It started out as a time of rest but quickly became a time of deep reflection with an emphasis on getting rejuvenated and living a healthier lifestyle. I have been spending time with daily meditation/prayer, exercise, journal writing, and pointed and dedicated time for communication with my family.

A friend recently told me of a time when he was a teenager that his grandmother signed him up for a painting workshop with the legendary, afro-sporting PBS artist Bob Ross, who liked to paint his trees with happy smiles. Mr. Ross died in 1995, but his legacy and popularity continue today. After a quick demonstration from Bob, the workshop participants were directed to paint. My friend was intently going at it with his face only inches from the canvas, carefully applying paint. Mr. Ross gently put his hands on my friend's shoulders and had him walk backwards about eight steps and then said "Now you are an artist!"

My friend's analogy had a huge impact on me. Tears came to my eyes. For almost 30 years I have had my face buried in the activities and the important work of the Denver Inner City Parish. Earlier that day, during my prayer and meditation time, I had read a passage from "The Wise Heart" by monk and author Jack Kornfield. He told the story of a woman who was an inner-city principal who, after work, would spend part of her evenings making and distributing sandwiches for people in the poorer parts of her community. She didn't do it out of guilt, duty or external pressure. They were hungry. She had food. The local media heard what she was doing and printed a story about her. Instantly she became a mini celebrity. Many people started sending her money to support her work. Much to their surprise, she sent back the money to everyone with a quick note that said: "Make your own damn sandwiches!" I have made a few sandwiches in my 30 years at the Parish, and I don't regret any of my efforts for the mission and purpose of the Parish. But, along with my tears upon hearing the Bob Ross story, a light bulb went off for me. I went home and discussed with Melissa our next steps, which she fully supports.

Last week I shared those thoughts with the DICP Board President, and together we formed a transition plan that was approved by the DICP Board of Directors. Yes, I am coming back to the Parish and very excited to do so. It will be in a full-time advisory role during a six-month time-frame to help the Parish through this time of transition and to secure the Parish's financial foundation. During the first three months I will be a part of a committee designed to craft the DICP's Mission/Vision/Purpose Plan. After that step is completed, the DICP Board will begin a three-month search process for my successor.

I am fully committed to be a part of this effort and will do my best to be an asset to the Board of Directors and the new Executive Director. The Parish will continue to be a very important part of my life. I will always have the heart of a shepherd and will care greatly for God's sheep, but it is clearly time for me to back away from the canvas and help the Parish transition towards new leadership. The Parish is in great hands with a dedicated and wise board, a staff that is second to none, and our tremendous base of volunteers and supporters. Together we will build a bright future for the Parish. If you have any questions or comments, I welcome the opportunity to talk with you.

With great appreciation,



D. Todd Clough
Executive Director, Denver Inner City Parish