Greetings to my new parish families at Holy Family and at the Cathedral. By way of introduction, let me share with you a few things about myself.

A native Detroiter, I grew up in the City and lived there until moving to Ann Arbor to study at the University of Michigan. During my growing up years, I loved Motown music, and also loved attending the annual concerts put on by Motown recording stars in downtown Detroit at the Fox Theater during the Christmas break from school. My friends and I would even have “talent shows” in my family’s basement, at which we would sing Motown songs. The guys would pretend we were the Temptations singing “My Girl” or the Four Tops singing “Standing in the Shadow of Love.” The girls would perform songs by the Supremes, such as “Stop in the Name of Love,” or “My Guy” by Mary Wells. I have some unforgettable memories around music.

I received the gift of faith from God, through my parents, especially my father. Dad was a devout Methodist Christian and leader of the congregation’s faith formation program. His example of living and teaching the faith influenced me enormously. I learned to pray from watching him and through his teaching on prayer at the middle school boys Sunday School classes.

My high years were a moment of political, social and cultural awakening. My eyes were opened to the presence of deep injustice in the nation and the world. Seeds of hope were planted in my heart at this period, regarding the advent of a new world, a transformed world, free of racism and social injustice, a world where the human dignity of all was respected and safeguarded. It was only later that I learned that only Jesus Christ could make such a cherished future a reality.

Some Evangelical Christians at my high school were the first to speak to me about the possibility of having a life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ. Through these student friends, I learned that the Lord loved me personally, and that he was offering me a personal relationship with himself. it seemed too good to be true, until I actually experienced the truth of all my friends’ claims. Relationship with God has been a gift beyond my dreams.

Ann Arbor, Michigan became home for many years after high school. There, I studied at the University of Michigan, and after graduation continued to live there for many years, devoting myself to the service of God in lots of ways, especially campus ministry. It was during my years in Ann Arbor that I had my first serious exposure to Catholic Christians and to Catholicism. It was also there that I began to embrace a life of special consecration to God, as a member of an ecumenical brotherhood of men dedicated to advancing the mission of Jesus Christ in the world, and devoting ourselves to celibacy, simplicity in possessions, and common life. My time with this ecumenical religious community profoundly marked my life.

Graduate studies for a period of time in Chicago provided the Lord with an opportunity to urge me to consider becoming a Catholic Christian. He used the compelling power of truth, the extraordinary beauty of liturgy, and the ongoing presence in the world of the apostolic ministry established by Christ, to persuade me, heart and mind that the Catholic Church was meant to be my home.

In 2008, Archbishop Robert Carlson bestowed upon me one of the most precious gifts I have ever received, namely, a share in the ministerial priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Priesthood inspires me, but it also humbles me, for who could ever be worthy to act “in the Person of Christ” in the world. Undeserving as I am, I can only say to the Lord: “My all for you. All else left behind. Single of heart. Single of mind. Single of vision. Consumed with a single goal. To know and love and serve You, with all my soul.” These are the words of a song a dear friend wrote some years ago. They capture in lyrical fashion the deepest aspirations of my heart.

I want you to know that I am grateful to the Lord to be with you. I am likewise honored to serve as the new spiritual father of our two parishes.