



PRESENTATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PARISH

November 7, 2020

Dear Friends,

I came to serve this parish in July of 2016. It was a difficult time since a popular and charismatic priest, Fr. Leatherby, had just been removed. His faculties were withdrawn by the Bishop after accusations were made of his improper behavior and conduct. At that time, the Diocese initiated an investigation to examine these accusations.

Reflecting back, my experiences here at Presentation Parish was that of a divided community and a great cloud of uncertainty that hung over us. It was indeed difficult. My approach was that of prayer and patience to sustain us.

It has been a long journey, but I believe that the events that have unfolded now lead us to bring this saga to an end. I do believe that much healing has already taken place for many and still much more is necessary. I am grateful for the many who have returned to our parish to celebrate the Eucharist as one community. With time we will all come to know God's gracious healing.

Over time I heard much of what had happened, indeed I have encountered those who reached out to me.

I wish to draw your attention to two events that have taken place.

First, after his faculties were suspended, Fr. Leatherby began to celebrate Masses, gave spiritual direction and was hearing confessions and denying the legitimacy and authority of the Holy Father, Pope Francis. By these actions he excommunicated himself from the Church and at the same time caused schism. Those who followed him separated themselves from the Church which became a source of great scandal and wound that was inflicted upon all of us. The Bishop communicated this grave situation in his letter of August 2020.

The second event that was just communicated this week in a letter, was that Pope Francis granted the request of Fr. Leatherby to be laicized from the priesthood. This means that Fr. Leatherby is no longer a priest and by this action all responsibilities and privileges of a priest were removed so that he is returned to a lay state. Any Sacraments that he might attempt to celebrate are both illicit and invalid. Again, Jeremy Leatherby requested this.

Over the years I have spent much time reflecting on this. I must confess that indeed it has been a painful time for so many, but being a person of hope I trust that the Lord has been with us through it all. In the words of Sr. Clare Crockett, "His providence guides my life".

I wish to take this opportunity to ask forgiveness from all of you who have suffered abuse from ministers of the church, at this time or any time in the past, here at Presentation Parish, within the Diocese of Sacramento or the church at large. Indeed, we must safeguard and do all that we can to never allow this to happen again.

Recently, someone made this remark to me. "Father, there might still be some people in your pews who were abused and suffered. They deserve to know of our concern and prayers for them during their healing process."

As we continue our journey, I ask you to join me in prayer for the healing of the victims of abuse and renewal of our church.

With God's Blessings,

Fr. Stanley Poltorak
Pastor