SEDE VACANTE

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Dear parishioners of Effingham and Fetcham,

I know that it will be with mixed feelings that you say farewell to Fr Charles next weekend. On the one hand, you'll want to give thanks to God for his ministry among you over the last few years; on the other, you'll be sad to see him go. He has served you faithfully, and you have collaborated with him generously in the service of Our Lord and the spread of the Gospel. I will add my prayers to yours, that this time of rest brings Fr Charles all the blessings for which he is hoping, and many more besides.

As you look to the future without a resident priest, there will undoubtedly be some difficulties along the way, but together with the clergy of the Deanery, pastoral provision and guidance will support you through this time of change and offer opportunities for growth and new initiatives. The new schedule of Sunday Mass times is a good example of the whole Deanery working together to reflect on the needs and challenges of all the parishes of the Deanery and construct a comprehensive, forward-looking plan.

Many of the day-to-day issues surrounding pastoral life in Effingham and Fetcham will be entrusted to a new Pastoral Team. You are blessed in Deacon Ian who will play a key role in this team, and the team will be supported by your Dean, Fr Chris Bergin. It will take a little time for this Team to settle, reflect on responsibilities and parameters, and for good and trusted working relationships to be established. Pope Leo has expressed his conviction that we must be a synodal Church; this invites everyone to share in the journey as we accompany each other, listen to each other, and, all in the Holy Spirit, offer of ourselves, our time and talents, in humility and service for the good of all.

We do all this, as Bishop Richard often reminded us, rooted in prayer. So let us pray for Fr Charles as he begins his sabbatical; for our Bishop-Elect Stephen as he approaches his episcopal ordination and ministry among us; and for each other as we continue to grow in faith, increase in hope, and live more ardently with the love that Christ has for all.

With my the assurance of my prayers for you all.

God bless you.

Canon Jonathan Martin
Diocesan Administrator