



Office of the Archbishop
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2030
312.534.8230
archchicago.org

April 30, 2026

St. John Henry Newman Parish
1615 Lincoln St.
Evanston, IL 60201

Dear St. John Henry Newman Parish Family,

As I promised earlier, I am now offering you an update on the leadership of your parish. First, I want to thank Reverend Gerald Gunderson for coming out of retirement to serve as your administrator until June 30. By now you have discovered that he is a very capable pastor who loves being a priest and is generous in his service to people.

Having considered the particular needs of your parish at this time and after new consultation, I have decided to appoint as your pastor, Reverend Wayne Watts. This will be effective on July 1, 2026. Father Watts is already familiar to many of you as the dean, but I know that he has a past history with many of your parishioners. Father Watts will continue as pastor of Saints Joseph and Francis Xavier Parish. He has proven himself to be more than able to serve both parishes well and I will be assigning two new associate pastors to assist him beginning July 1, 2026.

It is also important for you to know that I am very concerned that the recent developments that uncovered administrative and financial mismanagement of the parish have harmed the faith life of many. This saddens me greatly. Once again, I assure you that I take seriously the need for our pastors to be transparent and accountable. My hope is that you as a parish family will do everything possible to come together in a unified way under the leadership of the priests assigned to serve you.

As I have assured you earlier, you continue to be in my prayers and I appreciate yours for me and our priests.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


Archbishop of Chicago