

**Message to Parishioners**  
**from Fr. Gerry's Good-bye Party**  
August 15, 2004

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I am absolutely delighted to be back at Christ the King, to be surrounded by all these familiar faces, and to be in a place I dearly love. I want to begin by.... Well, where do I begin? It was back three years ago the diocese assigned me to Christ the King as my first assignment as a priest, and what a blessing that was! I could have been sent anywhere, eighty-nine parishes in the diocese of Oakland, and I get to come to Christ the King which has a very high profile in our diocese, an exciting, vibrant, wonderful, wonderful parish. And I get to come here for my first assignment, and to be matched up with Father Brian, our pastor. As you well know him better than I know, he has tremendous, tremendous talents and gifts in leadership as a priest and his energy and his vision. So, I have learned from Father Brian and I thank him sincerely for his mentoring, his friendship and his love and guidance over the past three years. And I also thank Father Brian Timoney who is in residence in our rectory when he is not off at some exotic part of the world, on a cruise liner or whatever, and Father Mike, our wonderful friend here and consistent help here at Christ the King, not only at weekend Masses but when we need help on vigils and so on, and Father Tom Burns. I also thank our staff. I had a wonderful team to work with. I've learned a lot from them. I thank our administrative people over in the office, Marilyn and Barbara and so on, and of course, Maida and Elizabeth, our housekeepers who keep us well-fed and look after us, keeping body and soul together.

Yesterday evening, I shared, and this morning at our Masses, a little story about one of our parishioners, Vi Murphy. Many of you probably know Vi Murphy. She is one of our long-time senior parishioners here at Christ the King. I was just here maybe about one week and she came into the rectory one morning and she said to me, "Now, Father Gerry, you are the new kid on the block. I want you to know I am watching you very closely. In fact," she said, "you are on six month's probation. So, I am really keeping a close eye on you." ....That was quite a sobering moment for me.

About two weeks after that, Vi came back to me one morning after Mass and she said, "Now, listen, Father Gerry, you need to loosen up. You're just too stiff up there on the altar. Relax! Loosen up!" I said, "Well, Vi, you know, I'm not in the entertainment business! What do you want me to do, dance around the altar or something? I'm a priest and that's serious stuff!" She said, "No. No. Tell a few jokes. Relax. Just be yourself." Well, anyway, I passed my six months probation. So, obviously, I loosened up. And here I am.

I was thinking of a way to sum up my three year experience as associate pastor at Christ the King. And this is what I came up with. About seven years ago, I was teaching back home in a

high school in Dublin. I was teaching an introduction to philosophy to two high school classes. And at the end of the course that I taught I wanted to come up with a creative lesson plan. So this is what I came up with. I said to my students, "I want you to take a moment now and just imagine there has been this tremendous earthquake, and everyone in this class, except me, has sadly perished in this tragedy. So, now you have all crossed over. And you are lined up outside the pearly gates, and along comes St. Peter. So, St. Peter addresses my class and he says, "This is how it works around here. Now, the boss has asked me to interview you each individually in my office and I have to put to you two questions. If you can answer "yes" to both of these questions, then you can come right in, and free admission and free room and board in paradise and heaven for eternity." So, I asked my students to suggest to me what those two questions might be. And we had a lot of fun with that. And eventually, I said to them, "These are the two questions St. Peter will ask you about your life. Number one, did you make a difference, and number two, did you have fun?" So, we spent the class discussing what I meant by those two questions.

I used those two questions. I applied them to myself, as I thought over the past three years. Now, the first question, "Did you make a difference?" It's not really for me, I think, to itemize the ways I made a difference at Christ the King. I was given certain gifts and talents by God and I used them in various different capacities to serve you and to minister to you as a priest. I was honored and blessed to do that. And whatever ways God's spirit worked through me to bring healing and life and transformation into your life, I thank God for that. I am humbled and I am blessed by that. But I will say this. Being associate pastor at Christ the King made a huge difference in my life. I grew up as a priest. I refined my gifts and skills as a priest. I learned a lot from you, and I have been enriched by being your priest for the past three years. So, certainly, for me, being at Christ the King as associate pastor made a tremendous difference in my life. Number two, did you have fun? Well, what do you think? I think Father Gerry had a lot of fun... in many, many ways, from playing his bongos to being dunked in the dunk tank during the festival to acting as a pastor for three months when this guy takes off around the world. That's when you and I had a lot of fun!

Let me conclude with my parting words, three little points or words of encouragement. I use three because Father Brian always teaches in a trinity of points. So, I have learned that from him. Number one, there is only one thing God asks of everyone, only one thing. That is to be who you are. So I encourage you always to be completely who you are and let your light shine for all the world to see. And number two, and this is pretty similar. Don't die and leave this earth with your music still inside you. And last of all, wherever you go in this life, wherever you end up, always remember, don't let the devil steal your joy!

So, thank you, Christ the King. Please pray for me, and I will always remember you!