



## **Our Lady of Lourdes Parish**

*A ministry of the Order of the BVM of Mercy –Mercedarian Friars*

**September 21, 2018**

*Feast of Saint Matthew*

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

It is with many emotions that I depart from Our Lady of Lourdes and from my time in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. I first came to the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy in 1997 as a newly professed religious to begin my studies at St. Charles Seminary. In my time as a seminarian, I worked Thursday apostolates at Saint Donato School and Church, Our Lady of the Rosary School and Church (at 63<sup>rd</sup> and Callowhill, which later became Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament), Msgr. Bonner High School, and St. Helena in Blue Bell. In my 4<sup>th</sup> year of theology and as a deacon, I spent weekends at St. Charles Borromeo in Drexel Hill. After two years of study in Rome, I returned to Overbrook Farms where between 2004 and 2015, I spent time working in formation living at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy, and later Our Lady of Lourdes Church and School, and then once again at the Monastery of Our Lady of Mercy as superior. Over those 11 years, in addition to helping occasionally at Our Lady of Lourdes on weekends and holy days, I primarily served as regular weekend supply at Saint Donato, Holy Family in Manayunk, Saint Charles in Drexel Hill, chaplain for the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, and many other parishes that, on occasion, needed assistance. I fully expected to move from Philadelphia in 2015, but then—to my surprise—I received the assignment as parochial vicar at Our Lady of Lourdes. So, it did not come as a shock to me that I was to be transferred to an assignment in one of our other communities.

In summary, 19 years of my life have been spent living in Overbrook Farms. That represents 38.8% of my entire life, 61.3% of my adult life, and 82.6% of my religious life. It is safe to say that this native Wisconsinite has become a fully fused Cheesehead-Cheesesteakhead. Packers, always. But, also E-A-G-L-E-S, EAGLES!!! Go Phillies, Flyers, 76ers, and all of our universities' teams!

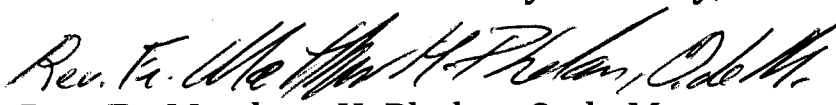
Over the years, we have lived many joyful and sorrowful, fantastic and frightening, confusing and enlightening, wearisome and wonderful times together. I would love to mention all of you by name and tell of the many memories, but this would quickly turn into a book rather than a letter. I do feel obliged to thank all of you, from the depth of my soul, for helping to make me a better person, a better man, a better religious, and a better priest. I have never ceased to be inspired by your faith, courage, humility, generosity, and love. I ask for your forgiveness for the times in which I could have worked harder, listened more carefully, been more patient, and been less selfish.

It is a small world and you are all part of our extended Mercedarian Family. I am sure we will keep tabs on social media and that many of our paths will cross again in this world. However, it is likely that some of us will not meet again until we are with our Father in heaven. Let us pray for one another.

I now go to serve the wonderful people of Leroy and Bergen, New York. Please pray for them as their beloved pastor, Fr. Michael Donovan, and their wonderful parochial vicars, Frs. Justin Freeman and James Chia, move to their new assignments. (Fr. Michael Rock was their pastor before coming to Our Lady of Lourdes.) On behalf my confreres, I can assure you that they are wonderful people that you would love, and they are people who would love of all of you.

Until we meet again, may Christ the Redeemer keep you close to His Heart, may Our Lady keep you under the protection of her mantle, and may we remain united through the Mystery of the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Yours in the love of Our Lady of Mercy,

  
Rev. Fr. Matthew H. Phelan, O. de M.