



## from *Jacob's Well*

Dear Friends in the Lord,

Thanks to all who took part in the blessing and dedication of the memorial garden and bench honoring the legacy of Fr. Ron Lewinski and the Good Shepherd monument that honors all the deceased pastors and all who have been shepherds to the people of Saint Mary of the Annunciation. I am very grateful to Lino and Donna Cordoba who designed the garden and provided the materials and labor for its construction. Fr. Ron's family members attended the dedication and they were very grateful for the hospitality and support that were offered to them. I myself found a sense of closure and a profound sense of gratitude for the ministry of so many who helped shape and form me as a priest for the Archdiocese, especially Fr. Ron.

These past three years we have been blessed with the ministry of Fr. Matthew Alexander. He is a gifted and passionate young priest and I hope that he knows how much we have loved serving with him. I will miss him greatly but know that his new role at St. Joseph College Seminary is an essential one. Please pray for vocations to the priesthood and for those in our parish who are currently discerning a calling to service in the church. Fr. Matthew will preach at all the Masses next weekend. Thank You, Fr. Matthew, for sharing with us the gift of your priesthood.

This coming week on July 4<sup>th</sup> we celebrate Independence Day. I think it is important not to take for granted the right to worship freely. This is America's first freedom, codified in the First Amendment to our Constitution. Safeguarding religious freedom is fundamental to the founding principles of the United States. It is who we are as a people and a nation. The U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, Calista Gingrich, stated: "America's Founders understood religious freedom not as the state's creation, but as an inalienable right from God." I pray that as Catholics we too come to understand the essential role of this freedom to living the Christian way of life. As Catholic Christians, we believe in the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. We believe that we were made in the image and likeness of God and since God is love, we too are called to live according to the law of love.

To live our faith, to live with a sense of being called by God to a certain way of life, requires a certain attitude or intentionality. We live in a time where there is a growing lack of civility in our politics and in our ability to listen to one another. It is quite challenging when moral issues become so deeply politicized that the mere mention of them spurs anger or concern. This is certainly evidenced by reactions involving the immigration crisis in our nation. The immigration issue is complicated and there are no easy answers. I certainly appreciate the complexity but there are moral issues at stake, specifically the humane treatment of innocent human life, especially children. It is in that spirit that I share the Cardinal's statement this week. If we cannot speak about moral issues within the context of the Church engaging society, then I fear we have already forfeited our religious freedom.

Let us pray for one another,  
Fr. Jerry

