

## Fr. Tom Greene, SJ visits St. Francis Xavier College Church for a Parish Leadership Transition conversation

Fr. Tom Greene, SJ, the Provincial of the Central and Southern Province of the Jesuits, came to College Church to preside at our 10:30 am Mass (listen to his homily here: [youtu.be/KIZSVTConEM?t=1090](https://youtu.be/KIZSVTConEM?t=1090)) and to be part of a conversation about the transition of our parish leadership in our ballroom after Mass.



Fr. Dan started the conversation with the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*, the prayer used at the opening of Synods and Councils in the Church. Fr. Dan also gave an overview of where we are in the leadership transition process:

- A Progress Management Team (Katie Jansen, Fr. Dan White, Lisa d'Souza, Carl Greiner, Marty Lenihan, Jan Petruso, and Jeff Leonard) have been meeting monthly since February 2021.
- They helped to identify an Ignatian process to engage parish leaders and parishioners in creating a new leadership model, and to prepare parish leaders to lead the process.
- House meetings have been held to bring parishioners together in small-group conversations to pray and reflect together. Topics of conversation are our hopes of a synodal church, and the thoughts, feelings and ideas about the transition that parishioners wish to express.

Fr. Dan mentioned that our new leadership model (in which Katie Jansen will become Parish Life Coordinator), and the conversations around it, seemed to mesh well with the plans for the worldwide Synod in the Catholic Church as a whole: "That was the Holy Spirit at work."

Fr. Greene then spoke about how the province has been supportive of this change. One of the first things he did when he became the Provincial was to reach out to Archbishop Rozanski and confirm that the Archdiocese is also supportive.

The first Parish Life Coordinator in St. Louis, Fr. Greene said, came to that role in 1985. For church administration, "This is an evolving and important area."

General Congregation 36, an assembly of Jesuits from around the world which occurred in 2016, said that the hallmark of any Jesuit work is "networking, collaborating, and discerning." Fr. Greene quoted

directly from the document released after this assembly: “Collaboration with others is the only way the Society of Jesus can fulfil the mission entrusted to her...[This collaboration includes] women and men of good will, who, like us, desire to collaborate with Christ’s reconciling work.” The current Superior General of the Jesuits, Arturo Sosa, SJ, has said that Jesuits don’t have companions; rather, Jesuits *are* companions. The work of the Society of Jesus today is to continue to live into a more collaborative model.

Fr. Greene reported on changes being experienced in the province and around the world. The number of Jesuits is dropping (currently there are 326 in our province); in ten to twenty years, 80% of men in formation will come from the Global South. Ten years ago, there were 4 lay presidents of the 28 Jesuit universities in the US; this year, there were 4 Jesuit presidents. And when it comes to parish work, “It’s increasingly difficult to find pastors”—most of the men who enter end up working in education.

In the future, Fr. Greene noted, there may be more of a return to an earlier model of ministry, where instead of taking charge of a parish, Jesuits serve more directly in the community. He said that his worry is “we’ve lost contact with the poor,” and mentioned new paths of service like prison education and Cristo Rey high schools, where students combine their academic studies with professional work experience.

After Fr. Greene’s remarks, there was a question-and-answer period. Here are some topics addressed.

Q: What are the expectations for the priest that will be assigned to SFX after Fr. Dan leaves?

A: His responsibility will be the sacramental needs of the congregation. Fr. Greene assigns Jesuits to their works within the province; he consulted with Katie and Fr. Dan about the choice he has in mind. There is paperwork that needs to be signed in Rome before we can announce the priest who will be at SFX.

Q: Will you continue to send a newly ordained Jesuit to our parish for their pastoral year?

A: Not for this coming year, but this may change in future years.

Q: Does the Parish Life Coordinator have a term? Is there a succession plan that allows for future continuity?

A: Just as with a pastor, there is no set term. Discernment happens both when the Director of the Work is chosen and when someone new comes into the role. (“Director of the Work” is the terminology in the Society of Jesus for the head of a ministry.)

Q: Can you comment on the decision to move our loved retired Jesuits to Delmar Gardens?

A: As our retired Jesuits age, they need a place to live that is designed to accommodate health care needs, which Jesuit Hall is not designed to do. At Delmar Gardens they will have their own community with their own chapel, but they will also be able to foster connection with the larger Delmar Gardens community, which is something they did not have at Jesuit Hall.