



*Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Saint Cloud*

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May 6, 2025

Parishes on the Prairie ACC

Saint Francis de Sales, Belgrade
Saint Donatus, Brooten
Saints Peter and Paul, Elrosa
Our Lady of the Angels, Sauk Centre
Saint Paul, Sauk Centre
Saint Alexius, West Union

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the Church celebrates the joyful gift of hope with the Resurrection of Christ in this Easter season, I write today to update you on your pastor, Fr. Greg Paffel.

I spoke with Fr. Greg on Holy Saturday morning and am happy to report that he is doing well. He is sincerely engaging the treatment work at a facility that specializes in assisting clergy with their spiritual, psychological, relational, and physical health. He expressed his gratitude for this opportunity to address personal issues and be renewed in his priestly ministry. He misses the parishes and the routines of pastoral service. At the same time, stepping away from those routines has helped him recognize the toll the demands of leading multiple parishes have taken, and he is learning more about himself and new skills for the future.

I am so grateful to your Parish Leadership Team and other staff under the direction of Fr. Tim Baltes, parochial administrator, and Fr. Mark Botzet, your parochial vicar, along with the many volunteers who continue the good work of your parishes and Area Catholic Community.

In conversation with Fr. Greg, and with the overall recommendations of our Priest Personnel Board in considering the pastoral needs of the diocese, and in light of Fr. Greg having reached the usual 12 years of service from the start of his present assignment with you, I have determined that Fr. Greg will be given a new assignment upon the completion of his treatment, contingent upon the recommendation of his treatment team. Fr. Greg has agreed to this. His new assignment will be announced when he returns to the diocese.

I am pleased to announce that Fr. Kevin Soenneker will be succeeding Fr. Greg as pastor of Parishes on the Prairie as of July 1, 2025. Fr. Kevin is well-known to you and is excited to be with you as your pastor. Fr. Botzet will remain as your parochial vicar to continue his good and generous ministry among you.

I will provide future updates as appropriate. I ask you to keep all those impacted by this situation in your prayers.

Yours in Christ,

+ *Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.*

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Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud