

Father Dean Writes

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

As the days go by and the time to begin my assignment at St. Benedict and St. Catherine draws closer, I'm filled with excitement and joy for what this next chapter of my ministry has for me and for each one of you. I have a tradition to end my Lauds and Vespers with a short litany of the saints I'm devoted to and recently added two saints to the list. I don't think I even need to tell you their names. I have also been praying for your intentions through the intercession of Our Lady of Perpetual Help.



A bit of info about me . . . I was born and raised in Zambia in 1982. Zambia was a British colony until 1964. There are 72 dialects and six main languages spoken, and English is the official language. When my parents married, my father had two daughters and my mother two sons from previous marriages. Together, they had three sons and five daughters. Yes, your math is correct, I come from a family of twelve! My father, one brother, and three sisters are deceased. The rest of my family, except for one older brother who lives in the UK, all live in the capital Lusaka with my mother.

I became Catholic at 13 and served Mass at my home parish during high school. It was through altar service that I developed an interest in the priesthood. In 2000, I joined the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), a religious order many of you at St. Benedict know well. Next time you are in church, look at the stained glass window in the choir loft which is representative of the Oblates who served St. Benedict Parish. The longtime and much-loved former pastor at St. Benedict, the late Fr. Paul Waldie, was my Novice Master in Johannesburg South Africa. It is a small world!

I was an Oblate for six years before discerning a vocation to the diocesan priesthood. It was during that time, in 2007, that I met Fr. Steve Sallis (former pastor at St. Benedict) and some parishioners visiting their sister-parish in western Zambia. Through Fr. Steve's recommendation I was accepted as a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Seattle in 2009. I graduated from St. Patrick's Seminary and University in Menlo Park (Archdiocese of San Francisco) in 2013 with a Masters of Divinity and a Bachelor of Sacred Theology.

I was ordained a priest on September 9, 2014, at St. James Cathedral. My mother, brother and late sister travelled from Zambia for my ordination. It was a very joyful day for many reasons. My first assignment as Parochial Vicar was at St. Charles Borromeo in Tacoma. I was reassigned to St. Joseph in Vancouver, St. Thomas Aquinas in Camas, and Our Lady Star of the Sea in Stevenson a year later. In 2016, I was appointed Priest Administrator at St. Columban in Yelm and St. Peter Mission in Tenino.

The last nearly seven years of serving as a priest in the archdiocese have been the happiest years of my life. I have made many friends. I have lost count of the number of infants I have baptized. It has been a blessing to be a part of people's lives, both in the joy and pain, and each of these has made me love my priesthood even more. I'm blessed!

As far as hobbies go, I'm a big soccer fan and watch a lot of English Premier League and La Liga. I'm a Liverpool and Barcelona fan (sorry Manchester United fans). I'm into fitness and biking. I love the outdoors and do a bit of outdoor photography. I have an Instagram @dean_3214 for those interested in seeing some of my photos. I also have a second account dedicated to my priesthood @reverendfather.

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I love reading, but I'm a very slow reader (if you lend me a book give me about two months). I love water, but can't swim. Food-wise, I have a missionary stomach (ask me about it). I can't play any musical instrument, but love the organ. I organized five concerts for internationally acclaimed Austrian organist Lukas Hasler in Washington in 2019 and 2020. God willing, I would love to invite him visit to our parishes in the future. I stopped celebrating my birthday nine years ago after dedicating it to aborted children who never get an opportunity to celebrate theirs. My favorite colors are red and blue, Including English, I speak three Zambian languages fluently. Lo siento, no hablo español!

Ministry-wise, I believe my experience serving multiple parishes will help me to be an effective minister to you. I always remind my parishioners that Catholic churches are divided into parishes and not congregations. This means you are free to attend Mass at whatever location you choose, as long as you fulfil your stewardship at the parish you are registered. This is what I invite you to keep in mind and in prayer as you adjust to this pairing. Together we can make it work. Let us place our shared faith before our personal preferences as we work together for the future of our parishes.

In regard to our parochial schools, I was happy to learn that both are doing fairly well, despite the challenges posed by the pandemic. The dedicated leadership and staff deserve our gratitude for their hard work ensuring the schools stayed afloat and our children safe. As pastoral leader, I will support our schools and will promote their Catholic identity, an identity that makes them unique but welcoming to other faiths as well. Our principals are already brainstorming how the pairing of the parishes will be used to the advantage of the schools, and I'm looking forward to working with both of them and their staff.

Finally, I would like to end by asking for your prayers for my parishioners at St. Columban and St. Peter as they prepare for my departure and welcome a new pastoral leader. We have been praying for you. And please pray for me, that I may faithfully and effectively serve you, so that together, as followers of Christ, we may at the end of our earthly pilgrimage receive the reward of eternal life promised to those who live by his commands. Until I see you on all in July, I send you God's blessings.

+MJ+
Fr. Dean

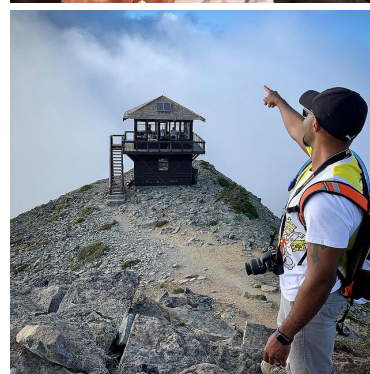


Photo credit: Fr. Dean Mbuji from
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