

Greetings from our new Pastor Fr Jim Berning – Part 4

This week, I continue with another segment of my life; part 4, with the hoped for outcome that parishioners have a better understanding of their new pastor. I encourage that parishioners do the same with each other!

By revealing more about your lives in the course of the last several months, together we develop an attitude of openness, such that, becoming acclimated to life beyond the pandemic. We proceed with renewed faith, energy and vigor to live St. Benedict's mission "as signs and bearers of God's love".

What was the transition from employment with Dowell Chemical to the Salesians like?

When I graduated from university, I was hired by Dowell Chemical as a field engineering representative. The line of work was both exhilarating and satisfying, and having transferred three times with the oilfield service company for two years, I continued to pursue the vocation promptings which brought me into contact with a number of diocesan and religious priests, religious sisters and lay leaders. While working in Ohio, I met a transitional deacon named Fr. Dennis Donovan, who later that year was ordained a Salesian priest. We enjoyed a long brunch after mass one Sunday and he filled me about the charism of St. John Bosco as well as the intercessory role of Mary as Help of Christians. I stayed in contact with Dennis and various vocation directors. Eventually I visited Salesian summer camps, their formation house, and subsequently resigned from Dowell Chemical and began teaching grade 10 English at a Salesian school in New Orleans, Louisiana. The year was one of great adjustment since I was living in community and had not been trained as an educator, but with the hearty school and satisfying community life, I found the overall experience to be akin to what I had discerned. The next year I went to the Salesian formation house, and later that year in 1985, I made my first profession as a Salesian.