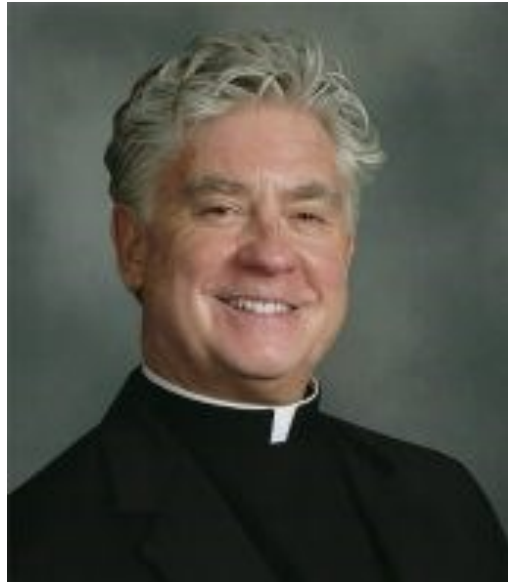


# *WELCOME TO ST. JAMES,*

## *FR. DON!*



Don Farnan was born on August 17, 1959 near Richmond, Missouri, the seventh of eleven children born to C. A. and Helen (Spire) Farnan. He graduated from Rockhurst College, Kansas City, in 1981 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Secondary Education. He received a Master of Divinity degree from The University of Saint Mary of the Lake—Mundelein Seminary, Chicago, and a Master of Christian Spirituality degree from Creighton University, Omaha.

He was ordained to the priesthood on June 13, 1987 for the Diocese of Kansas City-Saint Joseph. He served as parochial vicar at Visitation Parish (1987-92), pastor of Saint Therese Little Flower and Saint Louis Parishes (1992-2001), Saint John Lalande (2001-2006), Saint Thomas More (2006-2016), St. Charles Borromeo Parish (2016-2022). He also served in diocesan positions: Director of Vocations (1991-96), Director of Priest Personnel (2005-2013), and the College of Consultors (2004-2014).

In the mid-90s he established The Upper Room, a nondenominational inner city literacy program for youth and their families, and has served on the board of directors for numerous educational and service institutions in and around the Kansas City area. His writings include *At the Crossroads of Hope: A priest's inner (city) journey*, *This Bold Prayer: A collection of spiritual essays*, and *A Parish for All Seasons: A year in the life of Saint Thomas More School*.

In a blog entitled “Team Spirit” that Fr. Don posted on June 12, 2022, he wrote of his new assignment:

It has been said that you can tell how good a coach or manager is at his job by how well the team plays after he departs. The same is true for bosses or pastors. If they bring a winning attitude of faithfulness, success, and confidence, it will remain after they leave. I arrived at Saint Therese Little Flower Parish at 58th Street and Euclid Avenue in Kansas City’s urban core thirty years ago and left twenty-one years ago. In 1995, that parish was identified and praised as one of twelve successful Catholic communities in America in a study by Father Ron Lewinski, a renowned liturgist/researcher from Chicago. It was known for its meaningful worship and loving community, its deep engagement in the surrounding area and great respect for all members, from the very old to the very young. The parish has floundered in more recent years, perhaps reflective of the neighborhood it is in. Last month, diocesan planning officials informed the community that it has two years to turn things around or suffer closer, going the way of numerous other inner city faith communities through the decades. It doesn’t speak well of any long-lasting impact I or other pastoral leaders made.

Returning to Little Flower Parish next month to assist the community as its priest, I am also being assigned to Saint James Parish in the 3900 block of Harrison Street. Established in 1906 on the outskirts of Kansas City, Saint James is now located at the epicenter of urban life. Former diocesan bishop, Raymond Boland, once commented that by all measures of parish viability—location, population, and income—Saint James has been a candidate for closure numerous times but refused to die. He said that, from survival to a mini renaissance, it could be an example to help others usher in a brighter future. It exists as a destination parish that clearly welcomes all people of good will, especially immigrants and those who seek refuge in God’s loving arms. It achieves Father Lewinski’s top criteria for successful parishes: a clear mission and purpose that people know and celebrate.

While my commitment to these parishes will be in addition to my job at Rockhurst University, campus leaders and Bishop Johnston believe that there will be much overlap and great opportunity for the Rockhurst Family throughout Kansas City to engage in the church’s universal commitment to put faith into action where the local need is greatest. I am very excited about the opportunity that lies ahead for students, alumni, friends of the university, and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods. It reminds me of stories told about the Catholic community of Kansas City soon after the Second Vatican Council and bishops at the time, most notably Charles Helmsing and John Sullivan, who had an enduring commitment to the poorest regions of our diocese. Helmsing was truly enveloped by the Holy Spirit at the Council and returned here to the nation’s heartland a changed man. Sullivan, who succeeded him, helped our diocese realize that God’s Spirit is not limited to ecclesiastics but present in the People of God, even those struggling in the heart of inner-city life. If they were alive today, I suspect they would eagerly embrace the current Synod on Synodality that Pope Francis ushers in. Like good coaches, their spirit of hope still lingers.

It is my hope that the spirit of the council and synod flourishes at these gritty parishes because they have a lot to offer our city, our diocese, and the Body of Christ. It is my hope that all our parishes perform like teams with coaches who impart a dauntless spirit, much like Jesus imparted the Holy Spirit as His enduring gift of love to the world.

**St. James Parish welcomes Fr. Don Farnan with a spirit of hospitality, justice and neighborhood presence for which our community is known. May we work together to serve the people of God at our corner of 39th and Troost as well as anywhere that Jesus’ mission and the Spirit of God’s power sends us.**