

**Remarks of Archbishop William Lori
on the occasion of the
Final Mass of Rev. Richard Lawrence**

Dear Father Lawrence and Parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul Parish,

I regret that my schedule did not permit me to join you for this very special Mass. It did not take long after my arrival as Archbishop for me to appreciate the unique and beautiful relationship between Father Lawrence and St. Vincent's Parish. His love for the parish and its people and for the community surrounding St. Vincent's quickly became apparent to me. It is a rare gift for both priest and parish for a pastor to spend so many years leading and serving a parish family. For more than 40 years, Father Lawrence has poured all of himself into St. Vincent's, making it a place of hospitality. Long before the election of Pope Francis, Father Lawrence spoke of accompaniment and he lived it out daily in his priestly ministry, as seen most publicly by his care for the homeless and hungry of Baltimore. In his priestly service, he made it a priority to serve others in the image and example of Jesus. In recognition of his service, we have chosen to permanently display the sculpture known as Homeless Jesus (which has been donated by an anonymous benefactor) at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. This is one way of showing our appreciation for the long and loving service of Father Lawrence and his lifelong commitment to living the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On behalf of the Archdiocese of Baltimore and with heartfelt gratitude for your many years of priestly service to God's people, I wish you a restful and rewarding retirement, Father Lawrence.

**Statement of Bishop Denis Madden
On the retirement of
Rev. Richard Lawrence**

Dear Friends in Christ,

It is my great pleasure to join with you in celebrating the priestly ministry of your beloved "Father Dick." I regret I could not be with you for his final Mass as your pastor but assure you I was with you in prayer.

In addition to conveying my warmest thanks on behalf of the Urban Vicariate of the Archdiocese of Baltimore to Father Dick for his many years of dedicated ministry here in the City of Baltimore, I'd like to take a moment to note his selfless decision to retire due to his recent declining health. It is not surprising to anyone who knows Father Dick that he put the needs of the parish and the Church ahead of his own great love and desire to continue leading St. Vincent's.

This selflessness has characterized his priestly ministry these 4-plus decades that he has led St. Vincent's and is matched only by his sincere care for the least among us, as evidenced by the parish's ministry to the homeless of Baltimore City. St. Vincent's is best known for his welcoming spirit and that is true especially of the homeless. Father Dick helped to build the grounds around the parish into a "home" for those who have no true home. Answering the call of the beatitudes, he opened the doors of the parish to the wider community as if to live out the words of that great hymn, "All are welcome."

And his wisdom and leadership prevailed when he saw an opportunity to make the parish grounds an even cleaner and safer home for the poor of Baltimore who began to see St. Vincent's as their temporary house and a true House of God. He embraced the cleanup of the property and saw it as a way to affirm the dignity and humanity of those who stayed there.

Father Dick is a true priest of Pope Francis, a priest who has the "smell of the sheep," who makes the necessary "exodus from self" that the Holy Father says we all must make if we are to live as Jesus taught us to live. He is an example to each of us and in gratitude for his generous and loving service these many years may we always strive to serve in his example—as selfless children of God, dedicated to His Church and to His people, most especially the least among us.

May God bless Father Dick in his retirement, and may God bless each of you who has loved him, supported him, and committed their lives of faith to carrying on his good works.