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Following is a letter written to St. Peter parishioners from Fr. Akan Simon.

This letter was on thick, colored, glossy paper and was included as an insert in each and every bulletin the weekend after Jarmoluk left for his 3-month vacation to Australia.

At the time, Akan was assigned to St. Patrick parish in neighboring St. Charles. He had been the parochial vicar at St. Peter until June, 2004 but kept returning to Geneva.

Akan had approached the Knights of Columbus at St. Peter for money for his ailing mother. The Knights sponsored a spaghetti dinner for him which netted approximately \$14,000 cash.

At the time, Akan was under orders from the diocese to stay away from St. Peter as they had received complaints of inappropriate conduct on the part of Akan from St. Peter parishioners and, as mentioned before, he was assigned to St. Patrick.



An Open Letter of Thanksgiving to Parishioners of St. Peter Church
From a Grateful and Humble Priest
Rev. Fr. Akan Simon

Try as I might over the past few months, I've not been able to find a way to express my heartfelt thanks for the goodness, kindness, and generosity given me by the beautiful members of the faith community at St. Peter Church. This then is my attempted purpose, as I humbly write this letter of thanks to you all. And do forgive me, but in my quest I found the beautiful English language woefully lacking in appropriate words which would adequately express my deep appreciation. Put simply, I am overwhelmed by your prayerful words of praise, your beautiful gifts, and tender reminiscences of how your lives have been impacted by my presence while I served at St. Peter's.

You have shared your *Time* in the generosity of your prayers, said on my behalf and for my dear mother, and in your letters of encouragement, comfort, and support when they were truly needed.

You have shared your *Talent* as you helped in many ways with my move to St. Patrick's and also the involvement of so many kind people as I planned and prepared for the arrival of my mother from Nigeria for medical treatment, which is not available in my home country of Nigeria. In answer to your many questions and kind concerns I am pleased to tell you that my mother arrived safely, has had successful surgery, and is now recuperating and responding well to therapy and rehabilitation. She has a long road to travel toward full recovery but is on her way, and I continue to ask that you keep the prayers coming.

You have also shared your *Treasure*, and so generously, (for some I'm sure, at considerable sacrifice) which was invaluable in meeting the significant expenses involved in bringing my mother to our wonderful country. Your thoughtful personal gifts were so appreciated and certainly enjoyed. You should also know that when my mother was hospitalized she so loved the beautiful flowers sent by St. Peter parishioners. Of course, most of you did not know that flowers were sent in your name, so it is very apparent, from Pastor to staff, that St. Peter's has excellent, sensitive and thoughtful leadership. My family was so touched to know the entire parish was represented in the good wishes sent during a very anxious time.

I have always known that the people of St. Peter's were wonderful ambassadors, and I was reminded once again when I was welcomed warmly by St. Patrick's parishioners. Many told later of the kind words they had heard about the Nigerian priest who was to join them in July. I so appreciated these warm and spontaneous introductions, it made my new assignment much more comfortable from the very first day I offered Mass. I am now (almost) settled in and ask for your forgiveness in the tardiness of my sincere thanks.

I was genuinely moved by the greetings sent from the children at St. Peter's, some in drawings, some in poems, others so very simple in their honesty, "I will always remember your short masses ...", and another, "Even though your homilies were long...". Your many words of kindness and generosity touched me deeply, in particular a cherished remark sent in the simple and unadorned words of a child who wrote "Thanks for being a good priest." This is all I ever prayed for as I schooled and trained for the priesthood. Would that God be pleased as well!

A French proverb tells us; *Gratitude is the Memory of the Heart* and my heart will carry always the memories of your goodness and caring. Your wonderful Pastor, Father Joe, is blessed to have the love and respect of such gracious and supportive parishioners, and I am blessed to have shared him with you for three memorable years.

So, to the people of St. Peter Church, may I borrow the words from one of the many beautiful and thoughtful cards I received ... "Thank you, whistled the wind ... thank you, rumbled the ocean, and the words echoed from every mountain top..." Each of you shall forever remain in my heart and, I hope, I in yours. May God shed His never ending blessings upon you.

Your faithful servant in Christ,

Fr. Simon