

## **Announcement re: Fr. Neil Pereira – October 2024**

In recent days, we have received some inquiries, primarily through our parish schools, regarding Fr. Neil Pereira, currently the Associate Pastor at St. Mary's Parish. To ensure rumours and innuendo are dispelled, I would like to share the announcement below, which was publicly communicated in April 2024 when Fr. Neil joined our parish community, ultimately as Associate Pastor:

*“Today, I'd like to introduce to you, Fr. Neil Pereira who was ordained at St. Michael's Cathedral Basilica in 2020 and was previously the Associate Pastor at St. Isaac Jogues parish in Pickering. Fr. Neil is currently living in residence at our parish and will be assisting with liturgies over the next few weeks. He has also been appointed by Archbishop Leo as Associate Pastor here at St. Mary's starting June 26th.*

*It has been a very stressful last year for Fr. Neil. In July 2023, the Diocese of Peterborough where Fr. Neil had been in ministry on loan, received an allegation against him. As a result, a thorough criminal investigation took place with Fr. Neil removed from ministry during that period of time. Both the Archdiocese of Toronto and Diocese of Peterborough made public statements regarding the situation and stressed that Fr. Neil was entitled to due process.*

*At the conclusion of the investigation, in February 2024, the Office of the Crown Attorney in Peterborough withdrew all charges against Fr. Neil. Following the criminal investigation, as part of the standard church process, the Archdiocese of Toronto launched its own ecclesiastical investigation, and in April 2024 concluded that there was no substance to the allegations made. Subsequently the Archdiocese of Toronto has restored Fr. Neil to full active ministry.*

*The Archdiocese of Toronto feels the responsibility to accurately reflect the situation and restore the reputation of Fr. Neil.*

*I am very pleased to have Fr. Neil join our community here at St. Mary's Parish since I have known him since he was a seminarian Intern with me in my previous parish in Bolton. I look forward to him being an important member of our pastoral team. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to speak with me. At this time, I invite you to pray for our new associate pastor and join me in welcoming Fr. Neil to St. Mary's.”*

In addition to the statement shared in April with our Catholic community, I would like to point out the following:

- The Archdiocese of Toronto has clear guidelines for addressing any allegation of misconduct by a member of the clergy. These can be accessed online at: [www.archtoronto.org/safeenvironment](http://www.archtoronto.org/safeenvironment). In this case, beyond the criminal investigation, which cleared Fr. Neil of any wrongdoing, the archdiocesan investigation included analysis and recommendations from a Review Board, consisting of between six and eight persons, which include the following members:
  - a) A psychiatrist or psychologist with appropriate clinical experience;
  - b) A person experienced in counseling victims;
  - c) Two or more parents;
  - d) A person with experience as a Child Protection Professional;
  - e) A priest with extensive parish experience;

Our procedure was clearly followed and the Review Board fully supported Fr. Neil's return to ministry.

I pray that our community will not fuel gossip, rumours or speculation and focus on the facts in a spirit of charity, justice and kindness. As I have said in the past, if anyone has concerns, they are most welcome to speak with me or schedule a time to discuss further.