

Local priest, Robert Baffa released from duties

NORTH BENNINGTON — The Rev. Robert J. Baffa, pastor of St. John the Baptist Catholic Church since 1993, has been released from his duties for health reasons, effective June 19, Bishop Kenneth A. Angell of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington announced Monday.

"We're sad to see him go," said David O'Brien, a lay minister with the parish. "He was well-liked, and a great liturgist, and we had great Sunday celebrations."

The priest's duties are being filled temporarily by the Rev. Douglas Hawkins until a new priest is hired, according to Gloria Gibson, communications director for the diocese.

Baffa had been on leave for health reasons for about two months prior to being released from his duties, Gibson said.

The Rev. Wendell Searles, vicar general of the diocese, said Baffa asked to retire five or six months ago.

Asked to elaborate on the reasons for Baffa's departure, Searles said he would "respect confidentiality."

He declined to comment further.