

January 18, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We just received this note from a parent who participated in one of last week's Faith Festivals: *I wanted to pass along to you that this week's Faith Festival was one of the best yet. Not only was the topic interesting, relevant and something we could probably all stand to examine more closely, but the format for the children was fabulous. My two told me they had loads of fun downstairs and they are still talking about the various things we believe. It is great to see them take so much away from the session and it sparked some great conversation among all of us in our house. I just thought you should know that all of your team's hard work in planning this was well worth it.*

The "topic" or title for our Faith Festivals last week was, *Am I A Catholic? What Do I Need to Believe?* We chose that subject because those are questions that I am continually asked by parishioners. Yours truly was the presenter for adults and high school students at all four sessions and I'm pleased that the feedback was so very positive. The reports from "downstairs" (where the children go for their grouped-by-grades catechesis) were very positive indeed!

My only regret is that more parishioners didn't avail themselves of this opportunity to take a look at some questions and issues that I know are on the minds of so many.

Another opportunity for growth in faith and spirituality is coming up and I hope that MANY will take part in it. *LENT* begins very early this year with *Ash Wednesday* on February 6<sup>th</sup>. That week we will have a parish *mission*. What's a parish *mission*? It's a time set apart for parishioners to refresh and renew their commitment to Christ. Our parish mission will be led by Fr. Harry Cain, SJ and Virginia Blass, D.Min. The mission will be held on Mon, Tue, Wed and Thu, February 4-7. The mission will include a daily 9:00 a.m. Mass, followed by a talk. That same talk will be given in the evening of each day at 7:00 p.m.

The theme of the mission is **HOPE** and that's certainly something that all of us need refreshed and renewed given the state of affairs in the world, in the Church and in the hearts of many of us.

A parish mission would be a blessing at any time of the year, but certainly it's a great opportunity to begin the season of Lent! There is no charge for participating in the parish mission but there is a price: you will need to "spend" about an hour a day in this effort. In a community like ours, time is one of the most precious commodities we possess. The question will be, then, as we begin Lent, "Will I pay the price of an hour or so to enrich and deepen my relationship with God?"

Because Easter is a "moveable feast," determined by the first full moon after the spring equinox, Ash Wednesday moves about the calendar, too. The earliest possible date for Ash Wednesday is February 4<sup>th</sup> so Lent's start on February 6<sup>th</sup> this year is "about" as early as it gets. This also means that the "ordinary time" between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent is also very short: this year, only three Sundays! So the green vestments come out of the sacristy closet for a brief time before the purple drapes our sanctuary again for 40 days of preparation for celebrating the Resurrection. From a pastor's point of view, a longer "breathing space" between Christmas and Lent is a welcome one - but that just isn't how the heavenly spheres are lined up this year. I will be away for a few days this week, "spending" some of my vacation days from last summer which are still "in the bank" and taking a "breather" in this short span of ordinary time.

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming

**REMINDER:** *Bring old palm branches to church next week so that we can burn them to make ashes for Ash Wednesday!*