

The Second Anniversary  
of the Founding of Holy Family Parish

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let me begin by wishing you all a Happy Second Anniversary! The vitality of our parish is a gift from God, a gift which the people of Holy Family have nurtured to an early harvest, only two years into our history. That fruitfulness, of course, is rooted in the rich soil St. Bernard and Our Lady Help of Christians Parish provided for us over a combined total of 238 years. Having inherited such strength, Holy Family continues to serve the Catholic community of Concord and to reach beyond its own borders to serve those in need across the Archdiocese, the nation and indeed around the world.

So much has happened since the afternoon of October 23, 2004 when St. Bernard Church overflowed with those who gathered to celebrate their first Mass as Holy Family Parish. We have twice celebrated the seasons of Advent and Christmas, and Lent and Easter. Hundreds of children have been baptized, received First Communion and been confirmed while dozens of couples have married at our altar. And as all those joyful celebrations have taken place, our sanctuary has opened its doors week after week to those who come burdened by grief, seeking the solace of the church's prayer at the time of death... We began this month our third year of Generations of Faith and our registration this year is the strongest yet. Each month hundreds of parishioners, ranging in age from the very youngest to our eldest and wisest, gather for a meal, prayer and an opportunity to grow in the knowledge of our faith. What binds all of this together is God's grace as it is revealed in his Word and shared with us in the Eucharist every weekend when the people of Holy Family gather for praise and prayer.

In these past two years several significant improvements have been made to parish property. We have installed a new sound system which was the very generous gift of one family in the parish. A serious mold problem in the church basement was resolved at a cost of \$50,000 which the Archdiocese of Boston paid for. Upon the advice given by our Parish Pastoral Council, our Parish Finance Council and our Parish Buildings and Grounds Commission we installed air conditioning in the church (up and down) this summer as a capital expense for the parish of \$130,000. This project was certainly for a more comfortable environment for our summer worship but was also much needed to prevent a recurrence of the mold. In a few weeks the work on the pastor's rooms in the rectory (Monument Square) will be complete. That work includes a new bathroom and painting and refurbishing of the pastor's bedroom and study. The price on that project is \$30,000. I will be moving into the rectory by Thanksgiving at the latest. You have seen that two stained glass windows from Our Lady Help of Christians Church have been installed at St. Bernard Church. This project, costing about \$26,000, has been underwritten by parishioners' contributions made expressly for this purpose.

(Other projects await our attention. Much more work needs to be done in the rectory so that we might make good use of a large space at our disposal. The kitchen in Monument Hall needs serious renovation to serve the high demand we place on it. A long standing proposal to fashion some gathering space in the church basement for social purposes after weekend Masses awaits action. The third floor of the Parish Office Center in West Concord would make an excellent gathering place for Youth Ministry activities. Such initiatives would immediately enhance parish life and ministry but given our present fiscal situation, we are unable to begin this kind of work.)

In order to meet the pressing and ever-increasing ministerial needs of Holy Family Parish we have added two new positions to the parish staff. Just a year ago, Sr. Rose Marie Lipke joined us as a Pastoral Associate. Sr. Rose Marie has been of great assistance to the parish staff, especially in working with bereaved families, assisting me with wakes and funeral planning, coordinating our Children's Liturgy of the Word and directing the Rites of Christian Initiation through which adults are baptized and welcomed to Communion with the

Catholic Church. Just this past week we welcomed Andrea Laux to our staff as our Coordinator of Youth Ministries. We look forward to Andrea working with our young people and their parents in a work that is critical for the spiritual life of our youth and the future of our parish and the church at large. We were able to seek to fill this position because another generous family in the parish stepped forward to guarantee the salary and benefits for a year's time.

As you can see, much is happening in our growing parish! Unfortunately, our parish income is not keeping pace with our growth. This week the Parish Staff will meet with the Parish Finance Council to determine and implement immediate spending cuts in general parish work, in Generations of Faith and the parish music ministry for worship. Such cuts are necessary until we are able to "close the gap" between income and parish expenses. "Closing the gap" means being able to avoid budget cuts, being able to reinstitute the scholarship program, making a provision for additional capital spending and repairs (\$50,000) and having enough of a year end surplus to restore the position we formerly enjoyed of having 3 months of income (budgeted at \$215,000) in uncommitted cash available at all times. While it is probably unreasonable to expect that we can fully restore the uncommitted cash balance in 12 months, it should be possible to accomplish that task over a three year period. "Closing the gap" on an annual basis would require coming up with about \$150,000 per year.

If we translate those numbers into a per household, per week amount, then we need to ask each household to contribute \$7.00 over their current weekly offering. For some this would be too great a burden and I completely understand that, but for many in our parish, perhaps even *most*, this would be no burden at all. In fact, there are many in our parish who could comfortably and significantly increase their weekly contributions and I hope and pray that they will.

I have not rehearsed in this letter the reasons why church contributions are down. Ours is not the only parish in such straits. My work here is to call you to greater generosity and accountability for the community we call our parish. We must move on and I believe that you *want* to move on - and that you want Holy Family Parish to serve your needs as a Catholic. We cannot move on without your help.

This week every registered household in the parish will receive materials to help your household reassess its support of our parish, to make a pledge for the coming year and offer you the opportunity to sign up for envelopes or to contribute through an EFT process. Your pledging and contributing by parish envelopes or EFT will allow the parish to document your contributions for tax purposes and keep you informed of progress in fulfilling your pledge.

**I have absolutely no doubt that our parish can do what needs to be done to resolve our fiscal crisis and, *beyond that*, to fund our parish to expand our ministries and further develop our parish properties. I know that we CAN do it: my trust, hope and prayer is that you WILL do it.**

We are a strong parish with a strong history. I have every confidence that you will build upon that strength not only for ourselves but also for those we serve and in a special way for the young people who will come after us.

As always, I invite your comment and questions, as do the members of our Parish Councils and Commissions.

Sincerely,

Rev. Austin Fleming  
Pastor