

March 1, 2007

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I write this letter remembering that it was 13 years ago today that I came to Concord as the new pastor of Our Lady Help of Christians Church. One of the first phone calls I received was from Fr. Murray, pastor of St. Bernard Church. I would never have expected then that the future of those two parishes and my ministry would take the path they have but I am grateful to God and to all of you that I continue to serve the Catholic community in Concord as pastor of Holy Family Parish. Generally a pastor is appointed for a six-year term which is renewable for a second six-year term. I was appointed pastor of Holy Family in October 2004, having served 10 of my potential 12 years at OLHC. My appointment to Holy Family began a new "six year clock" which will run out in 2010 at which time I and the archdiocese will consider the possibility of a second term.

As you know, our Grand Annual Collection has begun. All registered households in the parish received a letter from me and a report from the parish Finance Council on our fiscal standing and needs. If you have not yet registered in the parish, copies of my letter and the report are available at the church doors. Some have asked me in the past few weeks, "How do you figure out how much to give in the Grand Annual?" That's a good question and perhaps next year we will offer a formula to help you determine your annual contribution. For the time being I can tell you that it's our hope that your Annual contribution will be as *generous* a *sacrificial* offering as you are able to make. As my letter and the FinCom report indicate, your parish needs your generous assistance to maintain and develop its ministries and properties. A report on the Grand Annual appears in this week's bulletin. The total thus far received includes a \$10,000 contribution from one household. As your pastor I am grateful for the sacrificial offering every household makes, regardless of the amount. My hope is that every household will participate and will participate as generously as possible.

Last Sunday night we celebrated our first Evening Prayer for Lent 2007. I was very pleased at the turnout and particularly happy that many of those present had come to Evening Prayer for the first time. I hope that our four part series in the bulletin on this prayer was a catalyst for many. I heard from many first-timers last Sunday night how beautiful and peaceful they found the time to be... if you need some prayerful peace and quiet, some candlelight and song in your day, please join us on Sunday night at 7:00. (A practical note: you'll be on your way home no later than 7:45 p.m.)

Just got my copy of the Concord Journal so I'm pleased to be among the first to congratulate Dot Higgins of our parish who has been named Concord's Citizen of the Year for 2007. Congratulations, Dot!

On the reverse side of my letter is the second installment of *Simply Living Lent*. This is a weekly aid for living the Lenten season. It includes a morning and evening prayer each week and a check list for fasting and caring for the poor. If you're like me, when it comes to being faithful to Lenten exercises, you need all the help you can get!

In this week's bulletin is an insert with an outline for how to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Lent is a time for us to consider our failings, rejoice in God's mercy and pray for the strength to turn our hearts away from sin and towards the Lord's love. Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation is, of course, the best way to do this. Confessions are heard on every Saturday

beginning at 4:00 and ending at 4:30. Our parish Lenten Penance Service will be on Tuesday, March 13 at 7:00 p.m. Several priests will be available for confession that night.

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming