

April 11, 2008

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The last several weeks have been very busy and I've not had time to write my weekly letter. I'm glad to be back to this task! Since I've not written since Easter I want to thank all of those in the parish who worked very hard to make our celebration of Holy Week the beautiful, prayerful, life-giving time it was. My thanks to our high school students who participated in proclaiming the gospel of the Passion on Palm Sunday at the 9:30 and 11:30 a.m. liturgies. My thanks to the music ministry of our parish (directors, keyboardists, instrumentalists, cantors and choirs) whose work never fails to make of our prayer a moment of grace. My thanks to ministers of word and sacrament, to those who prepared our children and adults for the Easter sacraments of initiation, to those who work in the sacristy and other nooks and crannies behind the scenes, to our ushers and our green-thumbed flower arrangers – and to all of you who came to celebrate! We had a number of visitors over the course of Holy Week and I have heard from them in notes and email. Our visitors were very moved by and drawn in into our parish prayer during this most sacred time. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

My thanks to our parish Service and Justice Commission and St. Vincent de Paul Society for their work in arranging our outreach to those in need year 'round and especially at times like Easter. In addition to the Giving Trees, at the beginning of Lent we distributed containers for you to take home for collecting the fruits of any sacrificial practices you took on in preparation for Easter. As you'll recall, we announced that the proceeds would be sent to the St. Boniface Haiti Foundation to help support their nutrition programs. The total received to date is **\$6,665.71**. An article in the Boston Globe on Wednesday, April 9, reported the high cost of food in Haiti and reiterated something I wrote about in this space at the beginning of Lent: many Haitians are living on "cookies" made from dirt, salt, and vegetable shortening. No, it's NOT too late to turn in your container or make a contribution. (Baskets will remain at the doors of the church for another couple of weeks.)

We recently held a First Communion Retreat Day for our youngsters preparing to receive the Eucharist for the first time this spring. It was a great day! Thanks to all who made this day possible. And please pray for our children preparing for this important day in their lives of faith.

Our Faith Festivals last week were wonderful and I'm grateful to our religious education staff for a fine piece of work. My part was to lead the session for adults and high school students and our topic was "The Parish in 2018." I was particularly pleased at the level of involvement in the "Talk, Squawk and Balk" portion of our discussion. (Sorry, you'll have to ask someone or come yourself the next time 'round to find out what T, S and B means.) In all the GoF sessions and Faith Festivals I've been part of over nearly four years, never have I seen such great response from so many!

As you know, we now have a Parish Property and Business Manager, Bill Sharkey, and his presence and work have made a great difference in getting things done at Holy Family: thank you, Bill! I'm especially grateful that Bill has assumed responsibility for a number of things that have languished on my desk for some time. Such positions are becoming common place in parishes and will be more and more necessary as time goes on. It's great to have someone on the parish staff to whom I can direct a number of concerns and tasks that impact parish life. I'm doing my best to work at making sure that I delegate what I can, making me freer for tasks I cannot delegate. So, don't be surprised if you hear me responding to some requests with, "I think you need to ask Bill" or "I think you'll need to speak with so-and-so" or "I think it would be best to be in touch with..."

Over the next several years, the archdiocese is offering a program of parish renewal called **ARISE!** If you experienced a program called **RENEW!** in other dioceses where you have lived, **ARISE** is a similar program designed for use in the Archdiocese of Boston. The program is centered in small groups, meeting in parishioners' homes. We have gathered a leadership team for introducing **ARISE** in our parish and that team is being led by Gregory and Marilyn Burch. The team members have received some initial training from the archdiocese and I recently took part in their first meeting here in the parish. My experience with this group only served to double my hopes for what **ARISE** might be for our parish. You'll be receiving more information as time goes by – the program won't "hit the street" until the fall – but I wanted to give you some information on what's being planned.

As you know, the pope is coming to the United States, April 15-20. A message from Cardinal O'Malley on the papal visit is an insert in the bulletin. Voice of the Faithful is circulating a petition in light of the papal visit and I've included that below, along with directions for how to sign the petition.

### **TO POPE BENEDICT XVI AND HIS FELLOW BISHOPS**

#### **On the occasion of the Pope's April 2008 visit to the United States**

*Please join Voice of the Faithful (VOTF) in calling all Catholics to transform our Church. Join your voice with thousands of others who must raise our voices through petition because the Pope has scheduled no discussions or listening sessions with ordinary laity. Will he hear the concerns of the faithful without such conversations?*

**We Catholics are still addressing the clergy sex abuse scandal, one of the worst crises in the history of our Church. One-third of those raised Catholic in the U.S. no longer call themselves Catholics, according to a recent survey. Numbers of priests are declining; many parishes and schools are closing; we face massive financial crises.**

**Voice of the Faithful, with more than 35,000 members, proposes concrete solutions to address this crisis:**

- 1. Treat survivors of sexual abuse with the justice and compassion our faith demands.**
- 2. Hold bishops accountable to the people they serve.**
- 3. Embrace full participation of Catholic men and women in Church decision-making.**
- 4. Require full financial transparency and accountability in all governance matters.**

**We believe these steps will produce:**

- An open, transparent and accountable Church**
- A participative Church embracing the gifts and talents of the baptized**
- A Church governed by compassion, informed by justice, empowered by equality, and animated to act collegially**

**We urge all clergy to listen to the voices of the faithful as we join together to inspire our Church to become a community of believers worthy of our founder, Jesus Christ. We pledge our energy toward realizing these changes.**

(You can access and sign the petition at [www.votf.org/petition](http://www.votf.org/petition) Signatures will be accepted through April 30, 2008)

**Message from Cardinal O'Malley**

*As you know, the Pope is coming to the US, April 15-20. Cardinal O'Malley has asked all pastors to share with you his message regarding the pope's visit:*

April 2008

Dearly Beloved in Christ,

Throughout the history of salvation, God has raised up individuals to lead His people. Christ assigned a special role of leadership to St. Peter. After Christ's name, it is Peter's name that appears with the greatest frequency in the New Testament. The testimony of Early Christian writers and the witness of the martyrs demonstrate that the Pope's role has always been a crucial part of God's plan for the Church. Jesus said the words to Peter: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church." It was Jesus who gave Simon the new name, Peter, meaning the Rock. Jesus also bestows on Peter the power to forgive sin and to loose and bind on heaven and on earth.

To me one of the most moving experiences of my life has been to visit the tomb of St. Peter under the Basilica of St. Peter on the Vatican Hill. St. Jerome says that Peter was Bishop of Rome for twenty-five years until his martyrdom by Nero. Peter was nailed to the cross upside down because he insisted that he was not worthy to die as Christ did. The New Testament does not hide Peter's human weakness, but the Acts of the Apostles describes Peter as he boldly proclaims Christ's resurrection, announces the Gospel message and leads the young Church in the face of so many challenges. Guided by the Spirit, Peter chooses a replacement for Judas and carries on the mission that Christ entrusted to him. That mission has continued in the Apostolic Succession handed on from generation to generation by the laying on of hands and the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ has not left us orphans. The Holy Spirit still guides the Church, and makes the ministry of Peter present in every generation. The Pope's ministry is a gift from Christ that promotes the unity and the Catholicity of our Church with over one billion members in every part of the world.

In the New Testament, St. Luke describes how the early Christians laid their sick by the side of the road so that Peter's shadow might touch them. Catholics throng to where the Pope is for the same reason, to be near the Vicar of Christ. It is the way we express our love for the Lord Jesus, who has given to His Church this ministry of Peter to guide us and to confirm us in the Faith.

I write this letter to ask you to pray for the spiritual success of the Holy Father's visit. At the same time, I urge all my fellow Catholics to listen attentively to the message that the Pope will address to us. The Holy Father is not a celebrity or a rock star. He is a Shepherd and represents Christ, the Good Shepherd, who commanded Peter: "Feed my Sheep." Pope Benedict is coming to feed us in our hunger for God and for truth.

Let us receive our Holy Father with loyalty and affection. May his presence among us help us to grow in our love for Christ and for one another. May his words renew us in our commitment to be faithful disciples in Christ's Church.

Assuring you of my prayers and pastoral love, I remain

Devotedly yours in Christ,  
+ Cardinal Sean  
Archbishop of Boston