

January 19, 2007

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I've just spent a week with my sister and brother-in-law, Ruth and Bob Hamilton in Castle Rock, Colorado. (I'm very grateful to Fr. Jacquineau, Fr. Butler and Fr. Murray who covered the weekend Mass schedule and funerals while I was away. ) No, there wasn't much snow out there in the Denver area. Most of what fell during the recent blizzards had melted and in my week there was no snow apart from a few inches on Sunday. While visiting, we received word that Bob's niece's husband, Christopher Macaulay, was one of the two men killed in the tragic train accident in Woburn. I've included Chris and the other victim, James Zipps, in our prayers of the faithful at the weekend liturgies. Chris was only 30 and married to his high school sweetheart, Sandy, and together they were the proud parents of an 18-month-old daughter, Baylee. I had never met the Macaulay's but they had visited with Ruth and Bob this past summer. Toward the end of my week in Colorado, Ruth and Bob flew back to the east coast for Chris' wake and funeral. I remained in Castle Rock to welcome my cousin and his wife who had planned to come out to Colorado to ski.

While in Colorado I also received word that Jack Tague had died on December 11. Jack was the husband of Susan Tague who served as Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Associate at Our Lady Help of Christians Parish for a number of years. Susan and Jack moved to North Carolina several years ago. A memorial Mass for Jack will be celebrated at St. Patrick Parish in Stoneham (Jack's home parish) on January 26 at 7:00 p.m.

Those of you who read my letter about New Year's resolutions will remember that one of my resolutions was to quit whining about things in 2007. So far, so good: let me know if you hear me whining! While away last week I read an interesting quotation on a blog which I'm also trying to incorporate into my life in the New Year: "When it's not necessary to speak, it may be necessary not to speak." Over the years I've learned (unfortunately, too slowly) that keeping one's mouth shut is often the wisest response one can make. I'm not advocating total silence here, but I know that I often open my mouth too quickly when a moment's silence might allow for a more thoughtful and helpful response or when silence might, indeed, be the better choice. For what it's worth...

January is a time when the Catholic bishops call us to pray for respect for life. In our parish we do this every week of every month in the intercessions when we pray "For respect and reverence for life in all its shapes and forms and for the wisdom to conserve the gifts of creation, let us pray to the Lord..." Recently, at a parishioner's suggestion, we added another intercession "For children waiting to be born, for the mothers who carry them and for the families who will receive them, let us pray to the Lord..." The parishioner's wording of this prayer is masterfully inclusive of many different situations. Respect for life, of course, embraces a wide spectrum of people and concerns: we are a nation at war... our environment is tested and endangered in many ways... the balance between individual and collective rights is too often weighted by whim and uninformed opinion... the media (and blogs and talk radio in particular) often evidence little regard or respect for persons or positions disagreed with... anger and prejudice and resentment keep us from the growth that forgiveness and acceptance and humility can offer... *For respect and reverence for life in all its shapes and forms, let us pray to the Lord...*

This week the millionth person asked me when I'm moving into the rectory in Monument Square! The answer to the question is that I will be a resident there no later than February 1. The

work on the pastor's quarters has been completed. It consisted of installing a modest new bathroom, refinishing the hardwood floors, painting and repair of windows.

Within a few weeks you will be receiving in the mail a report on parish finances from our parish Finance Council and word about our Grand Annual Collection for 2007. While I believe you will be encouraged by the response many have made to our fall mailing and invitation to pledge, you will also see that a more broad base response from our parish households is necessary to fund adequately the life and ministries of our parish. Pledge forms are still available at the doors of the church. We now have 80 households contributing through EFT.

Lent is around the corner! Ash Wednesday is February 21. The church calendar (as some will remember) used to mark the approach of Easter and Lent by naming the Sundays before Lent as Septuagesima, Sexagesima, and Quinquagesima (each being approximately 70, 60 and 50 days before Easter). The First Sunday of Lent was known as Quadragesima (forty days) Sunday. These names were selected in the late sixth century of the Christian era in Rome. This year, February 4<sup>th</sup> would be Septuagesima Sunday if such nomenclature were still in use. (Note that these terms *approximate* the time before Easter and are not an actual count.)

This month's theme for Generations of Faith is **PRAYER**. And since prayer (along with fasting and caring for the poor) is one of the three principal exercises of Lent, January Generations will offer a good preparation for the Lenten season. Please join us - especially if you have not joined us before!

I'm glad to hear that the Winter Pot Luck Dinner was such a success, enjoyed by so many: my only regret is that I missed it! My thanks to the Events Committee for sponsoring such a fine affair.

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming