

January 29, 2010

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

For several years now the Parish Pastoral Council (PPC), the Parish Buildings and Grounds Commission (BGC) and the Parish Finance Council (PFC) have been discussing the condition, upkeep and use of our parish properties with an eye to the future and the pastoral demands that may be made on Holy Family Parish as the diminishing number of priests continues to impact pastoral planning across the archdiocese.

(By "parish properties" I refer to the church building, the rectory, Monument Hall and the parish office in West Concord.)

Please be assured that no long-term decisions have yet been made with regard to the use or disposition of parish properties, nor will such decisions be made unless and until proposals for any changes have been placed before the people of the parish for their response.

In the past year the Parish Council has been working on gathering more concrete data to help inform its discussions. While working with an architect to determine possible uses of the spaces in our church basement, we learned that mold continued to be a problem and that the presence of asbestos, too, needed to be taken care of. It's important to note that apart from any other discussions or plans these two problems needed immediate attention.

Thus, over the past several months, literally everything was removed from all spaces in the church basement. Most items have been stored in a trailer while items to which we might need to access have been stored in the rectory. Nothing was given away, nothing was thrown out. All spaces in the lower church have been stripped and in some cases walls have been removed to get at mold.

To date, the cost of this project has been \$85,300. I don't yet have figures on the cost of refurbishing the stripped basement and that question is part of what prompts this update.

At its last meeting, the PPC designated a Long-Range Space Planning Committee charged with collecting data and information on the present use of our parish properties and our projections for the future. With that information we will be working with a professional planner so that we might prepare and bring proposals to the parish at large for comment, feedback and response. Ann Marie Connolly is the chair of this committee which currently includes Kevin Dupont, Kevin Feeney, David Thorp, Tom Valle and me.

Over the next week or so members of this committee will be calling on parishioners to join them in this work. We will also be accepting calls from parishioners who on their own initiative are interested in working on this committee. Please understand that joining this committee means joining a working group for long range planning. We know that individuals and groups will want to have an opportunity to speak for a particular space or need and you may be assured that just those kinds of opportunities will be made available.

On a more practical and immediate level... Presently, the space in best shape in the church basement is the choir room (first room on the right as you enter the church basement by the stairs on the parking lot side of the church building). It's our intention to put some inexpensive carpet in that room that it might serve two purposes. First, it will provide a space in which children can gather at the Sunday 9:30 a.m. Mass for their Children's Liturgy of the Word. Second, it will allow the choir to return to its space for warm-up and rehearsal just before the Sunday 11:30 Mass, thus leaving the upstairs sanctuary freer for quiet and prayer as people arrive for Mass. The baby grand piano used in the choir room is presently stored in the rectory. For the time being, the choir will rehearse with an electronic piano.

It's my hope that within two weeks the choir room will be ready to serve these two functions. Please note, however, that the rest rooms in the church basement are still "out of order."

Fortunately, we have the upstairs sanctuary available for the celebration of daily Mass while this long-range planning is in process.

This is a time of challenge for our parish as we work to face the responsibility of preparing for the future of the Catholic community in Concord. In these first five years of our history we have been laying the groundwork for that future by coming together in prayer, faith formation and outreach as we have adjusted to the changes that have gathered the Catholic people of Concord into one parish. Now is the time to look ahead and to begin to shape ourselves as a people and the properties entrusted to us for a mission and ministry that will make many demands on us all for the sake of those who will come after us.

The decisions to be made will be made by the parish, not by its present pastor. One day I'll be gone and the work of the Church will remain in your hands and hearts. I encourage you to embrace this process as a sign of the vitality of our parish and to give yourselves to it as generously as you do to all things.

And on a completely different note! Please look around your house for any palm branches you brought home last Palm Sunday. **Lent** is around the corner! **Ash Wednesday is February 17** and we need old blessed palm to burn to make ashes for that day. Please bring your palm branches to church. Baskets to receive them will be found at the church doors.

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

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