

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The "Preface Prayer" at Mass comes just before the Eucharistic Prayer and leads into our singing the "Holy, Holy, Holy!" There are preface prayers for liturgical seasons, particular feasts and for ordinary weekdays and Sundays. One of my favorites includes these lines,

***All things are of your making, all times and seasons obey your laws,  
but you chose to create us in your own image, setting us over the whole world in all its wonder.  
You made us the stewards of creation, to praise you day by day  
for the marvels of your wisdom and power...***

I especially like to use this preface as we pass through the changes of the four seasons. Here in New England those changes are palpable and they permeate not only the atmosphere but also our lives, our emotions and our schedules. On the liturgical calendar right now we are in the 27th week of Ordinary Time - the liturgical season won't change until the beginning of Advent on the last weekend of November. But more's changing than the color of leaves - our hearts are changing as well as we leave summer behind and walk the autumn path to winter.

As I get older, I find myself more and more sensitive to seasons' changes and to all the beauty and power, promise and loss they hold for us. For several years now I've written a weekly *Monday Morning Offering* on my blog, *A Concord Pastor Comments*. I share with you here two recent *Offerings* (numbers 108 and 112) Perhaps they'll find a place in your heart, a place looking to pray as these "times and seasons obey God's laws..."

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming

### ***Good morning, good God!***

A friend reminds me it's only early spring "down under" - but of course, you know that, Lord! Still, on this side of the equator the sun sets a little earlier each evening and Labor Day's approach begins to eclipse these august days... So, I'm wondering, Lord: why must good times come to an end? The good times sometimes come too seldom - and then, they're gone... And as wonderful as memories are, they are, well, memories... Why, Lord, must the good days come to an end? Why are memories not enough? Why does the fall-filtered beauty of light and leaves seem not enough to let me let go summer's warmth and pace and peace?

Of seasons there are four... but yet a hundred seasons more, in my life alone, Lord: seasons of presence, seasons of pain; seasons of sadness, seasons of gain; seasons of sunlight, seasons of rain; seasons of comfort, seasons of strain; seasons of planting, seasons of grain; seasons of waiting and waiting for seasons to break the seasons' chain...

So many seasons, Lord, and letting go of summer is not easy... I should be grateful for autumn: your gentle preparation of everyone and everything for the dying winter will surely bring... Still, letting go of summer is not easy... You know the seasons better than I, Lord, and no season changes 'round me or in me but that you know first how the changes will change me...

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Be with me, Lord, in all the seasons of my life and be with me in between the seasons, when moving from one to the next is a season of its own...

I offer you my heart this Monday morning, Lord, and every morning this week edging me to Labor Day and the end and the beginning of so many, many things... Help me let go of what is slipping away...

Take my offered heart and open me to what is new and changing in the weeks and months ahead...

You are the source of all seasons, Lord, and of the strength I need to live in them and through them... Be my guide and walk with me through this day, this week, through this summer-fall season's changes... Amen.

### ***Good morning, good God!***

You've sent a few perfectly warmed days our way here but the cooler nights tell the truth of fall's arrival - not to mention your colorful signature on the trees all around...

I've been watching the squirrels scurry, storing up for winter what summer has left behind and their wisdom tips me to do the same, Lord:

storing up nuggets of summer memories to tide me through the months ahead...

So I offer you my thanks and praise for pieces of summer still fresh enough to savor one more time, sweet enough to store for times when summer's memories fade and I long for the hope that only spring will bring...

- When hurried, harried days become the norm, remind me, Lord, of the lazy days of summer and the freedom of taking my time to do what I wanted, when I wanted to do it - or not...

- When my house is closed up to keep out wind and chill, remind me of open windows and curtains waving a breeze across my bed in the morning...

- When hats and coats and scarves and gloves become my daily wear, remind me, Lord, of sandals, shorts, short sleeves and summer's warmth upon my face...

- When the sun sets oh-too-early and bared branches trace a leafless pattern on November skies, remind me, Lord, of lush, green growth and shade, beautiful shade, shielding me from sun and heat I'll soon be longing for...

- When meetings and Masses, classes and councils fill my planner to overflowing, remind me of those days on the Cape, Lord, when my schedule was as free as the waves at the shore...

As the cooler days keep me from my beloved porch, Lord, my place of peace and prayer, draw me to my prayer room with its windows and warmth, its quiet sanctuary for time with you...

Fill my heart, Lord, with nuggets of a summer past,

as August becomes a mist, a wisp and fall turns to frost and frost to cold and winter snows me in...

Be my warmth in the weeks and months ahead, Lord: squirrel me away in a corner of your heart and keep me, as you always do, with thoughts of summer past and promise of April, soon to come...

And in this season of change, warm my heart to the seasons of the hearts of those whose paths cross mine today and through this week...

Amen.

*(You can find my blog online at [www.ConcordPastor.blogspot.com](http://www.ConcordPastor.blogspot.com))*