

April 16, 2009

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Last week was one of the most important weeks in the life of every Catholic parish in the world: Holy Week. Palm Sunday saw many Catholic people at Mass who do not come all that regularly and Easter Sunday saw even more home-comings as churches, including our own, were packed with people celebrating the Resurrection.

It was, as always, a JOY to have so many with us and especially those who have been away for some time - perhaps since Christmas or last Easter.

Still, the three most important liturgies on the Church calendar saw smaller, although good-sized gatherings of Catholic worshippers. I refer to the services of Holy Thursday, Good Friday and the Easter Vigil: the Easter Triduum. I am so grateful to so many in our parish who worked hard to make these celebrations as beautiful as they were: our music ministers, our lectors and ministers of the Eucharist, our sacristy and flower crew, and our RCIA team who helped prepare the 6 adults and 2 young girls who received the Easter sacraments at the Vigil and at the 9:30 Mass on Easter Sunday.

There are words, gestures, moments, symbols and songs in these liturgies that occur only once a year and they have the power to touch and transform hearts and lives in significant ways. Those who came know of what I speak. Those who have yet to avail themselves of these times of prayers have something very important awaiting them in their lives as Catholic Christians.

The Easter Triduum closes with the celebration of Evening Prayer on Easter Sunday night. Because we have a strong tradition of singing Evening Prayer on the Sunday nights of Advent and Lent, our parish is able to offer this liturgy as we did last Sunday evening. Truth be told, after the last Mass on Easter morning I ask myself each year, "Why did I say yes to having Evening Prayer tonight?" But as soon as we sing "Light of Christ" and begin the candlelight service of Easter Vespers, I am more than glad that this is part of our parish worship. This year a concert of Easter music followed Evening prayer and the music was nothing short of exquisite. Again - something wonderful awaits your participation next spring!

This weekend at the 11:30 Mass we begin a series of six First Communion celebrations at Sunday Mass. The schedule for these liturgies is in the bulletin. And on Saturday, May 2 at 10:30 AM, this year's Confirmation candidates will be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit: more celebrations of the Easter sacraments and moments of genuine joy for those receiving them, for their families and for the whole parish. To our Faith Formation staff and volunteer teachers and to the parents of these young people who have guided their sons and daughters go my thanks for the time, prayer and work you have invested in nurturing our young people in the faith.

You may remember that earlier this year there was much in the news regards the pope's lifting the excommunication of four schismatic bishops, one of whom (Richard Williamson) was afterwards revealed to be a Holocaust denier. This led to sad and unfortunate misunderstandings of what the Vatican was trying to accomplish and injured the strength of Jewish-Catholic relations. Fortunately, much has already happened to repair the damage and heal the hurt.

But there's something you can do in this regard and I hope you will consider this seriously. The town of Concord will have its 29th Holocaust Memorial Observance on this coming Sunday night, April 26 at 7:30 at the Town House in Concord center. This annual observance is part of a worldwide effort to help us never forget the horror of the Shoah. The theme of this year's observance is:

Never Again: What you do matters...

I'm grateful to have been invited to deliver the prayer at this gathering, something I've done a number of times over my 15 years in Concord.

I think back to these services in years past... There are usually about 75 people in attendance, Jews and gentiles. Why not more people? I can't say that Catholics have been heavily represented among those present. Why not greater representation from our Catholic faith community?

There was a lot of noise made over schismatic Bishop Williamson's denial of the Holocaust - but complaining about such things is easy. What a witness Catholic people could give in opposition to Williamson's views if we made every effort to attend the local Holocaust memorial observance this coming Sunday evening.

Our Jewish neighbors have never met Richard Williamson - but they know us: we are the face of the Catholic Church for our Jewish neighbors.

Shoah: we must never forget...

April 26, 7:30 p.m. at the Town House.

Will you be there?

Remember: *What we do matters...*

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

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I'm pleased to support this effort:

Networking group: Career Transitions Circle

- Have you been recently laid off?
- Are you in a career transition?
- Do you fear that you may be laid off soon?
- Are you trying to redesign your work life?
- Are you looking for a supportive environment to network?

First Parish in Concord, in collaboration with other faith communities in the area, is offering regular meetings for those who are in an employment transition. Attendees include those experiencing job loss, fear of job loss, and others seeking to transition to a new career. Most meetings have a relevant topic and guest speaker. Meetings are held at Wright Tavern, adjacent to First Parish, from 9-10 am Tuesday mornings.

Upcoming meetings with scheduled expert speakers include:

- April 28th: Networking
- May 5th: Becoming a Contract Worker
- May 12th: Hiring Today - a CEO Perspective

For more information or to be added to the email list serve, please contact Tony Gallo: tony.gallo@hawkpartners.com

Tuesdays: 9 am - 10 am First Parish in Concord, Wright Tavern • 20 Lexington Road