

September 26, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Many things have changed in the Catholic Church over the last 50 years. One of the greatest changes is our renewed understanding of God's people in Christ as the substance of the Church. One of the things that hasn't changed all that much, however, is what's sometimes called the **80-20 Rule**, referring to the reality that about **80%** of the work in a parish is done by about **20%** of the people. (A similar equation applies to financial support for a local parish and it's important to note that the **20%** in that case is not a reference to folks in a particular income bracket but rather to the households across a broad income spectrum who faithfully and sacrificially support the parish.)

The month of October will be ***Volunteer Month at Holy Family Parish***, a time to bring a little more balance to the **80-20** equation! On each weekend of October, representatives from our many parish councils, commissions, committees and ministries will be at information tables in the Gathering Room after each Mass to speak with anyone interested in their particular efforts and to offer take home information.

This coming weekend (October 4/5), the tables in the Gathering Room will feature our ***Faith Formation programs, Children's Liturgy and Youth Ministry***. On the weekend of October 11/12, we'll feature the ***Safety Committee, Special Events Committee, Baptism Preparation Team (for parents of infants) and Ushers and Collection Counters***. . (When possible, we're trying to group together opportunities that are related to one another.)

If nothing else, I hope you will take a moment to stop at a table or two and simply offer a word of thanks to your fellow parishioners who work so hard to provide service, programs and outreach to your parish.

I try to inject some humor in my announcements about our need for teachers in our faith formation program. Perhaps that's an error on my part because it's a shame that at this point in the year (every year) I am still begging for folks to help raise our children, their children, *your* children in the faith.

I thoroughly understand that many parishioners find it impossible to stretch their time any further than they already do – but not all are in that situation. We have a number of parishioners who volunteer in several ways and many parishioners who may have never stepped forward in their lives as Catholics to lend a hand in their own parish.

Over the past year a married couple in the parish approached me about Holy Family Parish sponsoring a drive to put together "care packages" for men and women in the military serving overseas. It took us some months to get the effort off the ground but with one or two meetings, some email correspondence and a lot of good will and determination the program paid off just a few weeks ago with our drive at ***Crosby's Marketplace*** for "comfort and junk food" to send overseas. Working with ***Crosby's***, we distributed flyers at church and advertised in the local paper. Volunteers (some sporting their old uniforms) stood outside the store on two consecutive Saturdays, handing out flyers to those not yet aware of the drive. The volunteers received the donations as customers left the store and did an initial sorting of the contributions.

We collected the kinds of food the government doesn't issue but for which there is a real hunger overseas. In addition to edibles we were happy to receive batteries, hand cream, playing cards and other small items to make life "*over there*" a little more comfortable.

From our collection post at the store, volunteers brought the goods to a collection center run by *Local Heroes* in Wilmington, MA. where donations were separated and sorted and "care packages" put together. The boxes were mailed to individual local service men and women whose names have been submitted by family and friends in Massachusetts.

After the first Saturday drive **97** boxes were mailed and after the second Saturday, **86** more: that's a total of **183 Care Packages!**

In addition, the effort collected **\$1,300** in cash donations which helps with the postage. (No, the government does not ship these boxes for free.)

Finally, a number of the care packages included a homemade greeting card of support crafted by the children in our Vacation Bible School in August!

That's what can happen when two parishioners start something from scratch! Our *October Volunteer Month* involves opportunities that are already organized and ready to go, with all of the preparatory work done!

*(For photos related to the care package drive and for a link to **Local Heroes**, visit my blog at ConcordPastor.blospot.com)*

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

PS: For the next several weeks work will be done on the parking lot stairs into the church. While the work is being done we cannot use the stairs. However, there will be access to the church via the handicap access ramp and the door at the turn on the ramp. Entrance to the church from the front stairs (Monument Square) will not be affected. Thanks for your patience as we improve the stairs on the parking lot side of the church