

Happy Easter to you!

What brings you to Easter Mass this year? Perhaps you're a regular churchgoer and so this Sunday finds you at Mass as on any other Sabbath. Or perhaps you're an occasional church-goer but one who senses that some days are "higher" on the calendar than others and so you've made sure to worship this weekend. Or, perhaps as happens in many of our own families, you come to the family table (the Altar) just on holidays and special occasions and so you've "come home" this weekend to pray and be with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Then, too, it's possible that for one reason or another you took leave of your Catholic family a few, or many years ago and chose this Easter Sunday to visit again and claim again the place that will always be yours among us.

Whatever brings you to Easter Mass this year, please know how very welcome you are – and even *more* so if you've been away from our prayer for one reason or another. Our reunion with those we don't see all the time greatly enhances the joy of holiday gatherings in our family gatherings and this is just as true in the household of our faith and prayer.

Of course, it's not just our coming together that's the source of our peace at Easter – it's *why* we gather that makes this day such a joyful one. We gather this weekend to celebrate in a special way what we celebrate every Sunday. In fact, it's a tradition in the Church to speak of every Sunday as a "little Easter." Every time we gather to celebrate the Eucharist (whether on Sunday's or weekdays; for Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, Weddings or Funerals) we celebrate the death and resurrection of Christ. Over and over again, all through the year and on special days, too, we gather at the Lord's Table to celebrate what Jesus offered on the altar of the Cross and offers us now in the Sacrament of his Table.

Whatever brought you to Easter this year, by whatever route you came to Holy Family Parish to pray, let this be a time for all of us to renew our relationship with Jesus and with our brothers and sister in Christ in the church.

And since this bulletin will reach a larger audience than a typical weekend... let me take this opportunity to say a few words about an item that appears on the warrant for Concord's Town Meeting which will begin on Monday, April 24.

This item concerns the sale of our parish office in West Concord (55 Church Street) to the Town of Concord. Let me recap for those who may not have read and heard all that led us to this point. In 2004 when Our Lady's Parish and St. Bernard Parish became Holy Family Parish, it was the recommendation of the new parish Buildings and Grounds Committee that we sell 55 Church Street and repurpose the rectory at 70 Monument Square for parish office and meeting space. I did not accept that recommendation at the time.

Over the years, however, it has become increasingly apparent that it's not fiscally responsible to try to maintain 70 Monument Square (3 floors of living space) to house one individual (yours truly). Deferred maintenance issues are also an issue with the rectory. After several years of discussion with the Parish Pastoral Council, the parish Staff and the parish Buildings and Grounds Committee, we made a decision over a year ago to sell 55 Church Street and to use the money from the sale (along with some parish savings) to repurpose the rectory as the parish office and meeting space. This is part of a three-phase plan. Phase one was the conversion of the lower church to the large hall, café and choir room that we presently use and enjoy. Phase two is this conversion of the rectory and phase three will be the

rehabilitation of Monument Hall (our largest meeting space outside the sanctuary in the church and located next door to the rectory in Monument Square.

The Town of Concord has long been interested in 55 Church Street as a place to unify the offices of town social service agencies. We have been working with Town Manager Chris Whalen and his staff towards this end. The item on the Town Meeting warrant will seek approval for the expenditure of \$1,060,000 to purchase 55 Church Street. It is my hope that this will be approved at Town Meeting and I ask your support in this regard.

Because many have already asked, let me be clear that the entire amount of money generated by the sale will go to Holy Family Parish, not to the Archdiocese. If Town Meeting approves the expenditure, we expect to pass papers in July 2017. Shortly thereafter, the larger portion of the hall on the lower level of the church building will be converted to temporary office space for the parish staff while work begins and is completed in repurposing the rectory. I will move to another rectory in the area. Once the work is completed, the pastor's residence will no longer be at 70 Monument Square - he will live in another local rectory (most of which, like our own, have empty rooms from a time gone by!).

That's a summary of where we've come from and what's ahead. These were not easy decisions to make and I took my time in making them. I'm grateful to the Parish Council, the parish Staff and the Buildings and Grounds people for their patience with me over the years! The decisions here are not insensitive to the feelings of those involved but are made with a necessary long look into the future and to what will best serve the needs of Holy Family Parish and its people. ***If you are a Concord resident, please support this article at Town Meeting!***

Happy Easter!
Fr. Fleming