

From Fr. Fleming's Desk

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I'm writing this on Monday the 13th - with just one day left in my vacation. It's been a wonderful two weeks on the Cape! The weather has been mostly perfect and for that I'm very grateful. I've been staying in Hyannis and with the exception of a day trip to Nantucket, I've spent the whole two weeks right here. I'm not sure but I suspect that "Hyannis" may be early Native American for "my happy place." The place where I stay is right on Hyannis harbor but only a 15 minute walk to the downtown area - that's a combination I like very much - the best of both worlds.

As you may know, I almost always vacation by myself. As much as I enjoy being with people, I also prize time on my own and I guess it's fair to say that I enjoy my own company. That leads many folks to ask me if my vacation's really a kind of retreat. While I always answer no that question, spending my vacation this way does offer me a lot of quiet time, time to think, reflect and pray. So while these two weeks are not the same as my annual retreat week just after Thanksgiving, these two weeks do have a way of refreshing and restoring my prayer life, too.

I've been coming here for vacation for over 20 years and in that time I've met and made a few friends in the area, mostly folks I've met in the restaurants where I have dinner. For the past two and a half years since my bariatric surgery and weight loss, I have breakfast and lunch from the refrigerator in my room and go out just for my evening meal. It's great that seafood (raw, baked, pan seared, crudo, sushi) is in abundance on the menus here on the Cape! Even as I write that it comes to my mind that I did go out for lunch one day in Dennisport with my old friends, Joe and Louise. Joe and I were in the seminary together back in the late 60's and early 70's. He's no longer in ministry but we're still in touch some 51 years since we first met. Joe and Louise moved full time to the Cape a few years ago and we have an annual reunion. Oh - and that was another trip over the Hyannis line!

One of the best parts of my vacation was my daily walk(s). Although I've been walking on my treadmill for a couple years now, this past spring I took to walking outdoors in Concord. The last couple of years I've taken a two week membership at a gym in Hyannis but this year I saved the health club fee and did all my walking outdoors - a savings and a great improvement! I walked at least an hour and a half every day and on most days I was out there for two or two and a half hours. These walks showed me how close I was to the places in town where I ate and shopped so on most days my car never left the parking lot where I stayed! One thing I'll miss when I get back to Concord is the free time to walk as much as I did on vacation!

While on vacation I took advantage of the local arts scene, too. At the Melody Tent I heard *The Piano Guys* - if you don't know them, Google *The Piano Guys* for their story and for videos of their performances. The performers are four in number but 95% of their show is handled by two of them, a pianist and cellist. They weave classical music with show tunes and popular songs along with a lot of humor, some a bit cornball, a few slight gags, but mostly really funny material. *The Piano Guys* are all from Utah and, yes, they're all Mormons. There's a leitmotif of spirituality that subtly weaves its way through the evening's performance. The spiritual theme here is general, not particularly Mormon, and thus accessible to believers of all kinds. Although the sound system at the Melody Tent was unfortunately not altogether up to the task of handling the subtleties of a piano-cello duo, it was a thoroughly enjoyable evening!

Just this past Sunday I joined some Cape friends at *Pops By the Sea*, an annual visit from Keith Lockhart and the Boston Pops orchestra, performing on the green in Hyannis center. Actor Dermot Mulroney, also a classically trained musician, made an appearance as guest cellist on *The Swan* from Saint-Saens *Carnival of the Animals* - and, took his turn with the baton directing the *Pops* orchestra in a number, the title of which, unfortunately, I've forgotten. Well done on both counts. The major guest artist was jazz singer Aubrey Logan who performed some standards as well as some of her own compositions. I enjoyed the standards much more than her own work. Her vocal range is amazing and she's also a trombonist and works that instrument into her performance. The *Pops* orchestra offered: a tribute to Leonard Bernstein in this centenary year of his birth; a truly beautiful performance of *Stairway to Heaven* and a less impressive rendition of *Kashmir* in this 50th anniversary year of Led Zeppelin's appearance in the music world; and a sing-along of Beatles tunes which, frankly, was not easy to sing-along to. The problem here was that we all know the Beatles arrangements so well that adapting to an orchestral arrangement throws us off. But I'm nit picking! Lockhart and the *Pops* al fresco on a gorgeous Sunday afternoon in August - magnificent!

Of course, as you know, the news in the Church world over these past two weeks has been very sad, indeed. We pray every week (and have since 2002) "for those who have been abused and betrayed and for the restoration of trust and confidence in the Church." I believe we will need to pray this for a long time to come...

My vacation is over and Labor Day is just around the corner. May these last weeks of summer be, for all of us, a season of God's mercy, warmth, grace and peace...

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

