

From Fr. Fleming's Desk

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In my homily last weekend I said, "*Our Church, our parish, is meant to be a safe harbor where our very gathering can help us adjust our sails, where the faith of others can help us navigate the rough seas, where, at least for a while, here on a Sunday morning, there is calm and peace, enough to hear the Lord's voice, to hear his word, and share his company at this table.*" A friend who lives out of state and heard my homily online wrote to say it's that very calm and peace that she and her husband seek that prompts them to drive 40 minutes to Mass on Sunday mornings to a parish which has become their safe harbor - rather than attend their local parish which is only a 3 minute walk from their home.

I pray that you find Holy Family Parish to be a harbor whose calm and peace help you adjust your sails when the open waters are rough and stormy. That hope is behind the banners you saw over the church doors when you came to Mass this weekend, banners inviting you to *Come find the peace within...*

As you'll quickly understand, that phrase can be understood in two ways. The banners over the doors invite you to come inside and find there the peace of the Lord's presence, his Word and the Sacrament of his Table. But the phrase also invites you to find the peace within yourself, that peace for which every human heart hungers, thirsts and longs for.

Following the lead of our Parish Pastoral Council, we've been looking for ways to connect more effectively with our parishioners and, most importantly, with those who have drifted away from the life and prayer of our parish - and those who may not yet be one with us but who are looking for a safe harbor in which to find the calm and peace of God.

Ash Wednesday is this week and my homily at all four Masses this weekend will invite us into the spirit, the prayer and the work of Lent. As you know, for a number of years now we've distributed "pocket Crosses" to help you remember in Lent whatever pledges you make on Ash Wednesday. These little Crosses bear a different inscription each year and the one you'll receive this Wednesday or next weekend will bear the inscription you see here, on the right.



I'm especially pleased that we're introducing this catch phrase in time for Lent! This annual season in preparation for Easter, this yearly retreat, a time for us to live for 40 days as we're called to live year 'round - this whole season invites us to *come find the peace within*: the peace found in our church building, the peace found in the Cross, in the scriptures and in the sacraments of Confession and the Eucharist; the peace found in personal prayer, fasting and reaching out to the poor; the peace found in "giving up" a few things to clear our inner landscape; and the peace found in our hearts where the Lord is always planting seeds of grace for us to bring to harvest.

Ash Wednesday is a time when even those who have drifted away from church might come home to pray with us. I invite you to invite folks you know (family, friends, coworkers) to *come find the peace within* as Ash Wednesday approaches. Invite others to join you, to come to church with you, to come home to the Lord. Beginning this weekend, you'll find pre-Lenten posts on my blog (ConcordPastor.blogspot.com). You might find these helpful and you might want to share a link or two with others you know.

As you probably know, our parish is running a trip to Rome beginning this Friday, February 16. I'm grateful to be going and looking forward to beginning Lent in the Eternal City. And I'm grateful to Fr. Charlie Gallagher, SJ and Fr. Myles Sheehan, SJ who will with you for Masses on the weekend I'm away. Be sure of my prayers for you while I'm there and please keep me and the other pilgrims from our parish in your prayers.

And, *Come find the peace within...*

Sincerely
Fr. Fleming