

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We're now in a part of the church year known as Ordinary Time. The church calendar is highlighted by the Advent-Christmas cycle and the Lent-Easter cycle. The time outside these two cycles is called Ordinary. While these Sundays are indeed plainer than the major seasons and feasts, the word "ordinary" actually refers to these days as "counted" Sundays, or ordinal days. As much as I love the major seasons and feasts, I do breathe a little easier in Ordinary Time - and welcome it! Because Easter is a moveable feast, the Ordinary Time between Epiphany and Ash Wednesday varies from year to year. With Ash Wednesday on March 1, 2017 we have a fair stretch of Ordinary Time ahead of us. I assure you, however, that planning for Lent is already filling my thoughts and taking up my time!

At the end of Lent comes Holy Week and the sacred liturgies of Holy Thursday, Good Friday, the Easter Vigil and Easter Sunday. Easter is the time *par excellence* for celebrating the sacraments of initiation: baptism, confirmation and eucharist. This year we have three adults who come seeking and who have been preparing to come in to full communion with the Catholic Church. These three have already been baptized in other Christian faith communities but now wish to complete their initiation through a statement of faith and the sacraments of confirmation and eucharist. This will be accomplished at the Easter Vigil on April 15. I'm pleased to tell you that we will welcome and accept these three candidates at the 5:00 Mass on Sunday, January 29. This welcome is a beautiful ritual and I hope you'll consider joining us for the 5:00 Mass on the 29<sup>th</sup> as these candidates begin their last months of preparation for receiving the sacraments.

Looking back to the last liturgical season... This year's Christmas Tree Pick-Up was a record-breaking success! Thank you to all who participated either as a volunteer or as a household asking to have their tree picked up by our young people and their adult chaperones. This is an effort supported by our youth ministry at Holy Family and by the Boy Scouts in Concord (and in a number of situations, the scouts are also parishioners). Over 600 trees were collected this year by a total of 101 volunteers - and this on a cold Saturday with snow falling! The proceeds (I'll give you the grand total after all expenses have been paid) go to support youth activities in our parish and scouting activities in the local troop. Well done to all our volunteers and a hearty thank you to all who generously supported this effort!

As you know, it's not always easy to strike a balance between the sound system in church being either too loud or too soft. (Much like the air conditioning in the summer: some complain that it's too cold - others want more ice!) For those with hearing aids, our church is equipped with a "hearing loop." You may have noticed a beige strip of plastic around the perimeter of the pews in our church. Concealed in that strip are wires that bring the signal from our sound system to hearing aids equipped with a T-Coil. Many hearing aids already have this. I know from what you've told me how helpful this is for many of our hearing impaired parishioners. If you have a hearing aid, consult with your hearing specialist to see if your device has a T-Coil and if it is activated. For more information on the T-Coil go to [www.hearingloop.com](http://www.hearingloop.com) and [www.assist2hear.com](http://www.assist2hear.com)

If you aren't hearing impaired but find it difficult to hear in church, please let me know. I'm aware that there are a few spots in the church the sound system doesn't reach with the volume it maintains in the larger part of the church. If you're not hearing impaired and have trouble hearing, try another seat - even moving 3 or 4 pews might make a difference. While I try to maintain the system at a constant level, the sound is affected by how many people are in church and the varying volume at which our microphoned ministers speak and sing. Please be patient and I'll try to adjust things.

A number of people have asked me why Fr. Myles Sheehan seems scarce these days. Well, he's actually here very often but other commitments have limited his availability to our schedule. He's often the preacher at the Sunday 8:00 Mass and sometimes at the Saturday 5:00 Mass. I've very grateful for his assistance and wish he could be with us for the 10:30 but he helps in another parish, too, and has to divide his time carefully.

As we move deeper into the snow season, two reminders... If the Concord Public Schools announce No School on account of weather, daily Mass (Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri) will not be celebrated.

This is an easy way for you to know whether or not to come out in bad weather. Only a severe blizzard will cancel a weekend Mass BUT: please use your common sense! If the weather is bad, if the roads are slippery and not yet plowed - stay home and wait until the Lord provides a safe and clear path for you to get to church!

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming