

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This past fall, the pastors of parishes entering a collaborative this coming June were asked to submit voluntary letters of resignation. This request is made so that the archdiocese can open the pastorates of these new collaboratives to candidates for those positions. Just before Christmas I received a letter from Cardinal O'Malley acknowledging and accepting my resignation, effective May 31. Neither the request for nor the acceptance of my resignation came as a surprise, I expected both. These were two more moments incrementally marking for me the approach of my departure from Concord. I was pleased that we had such a great turnout for mass on Thanksgiving morning but keenly aware of it being my last Thanksgiving at Holy Family. The annual Tree Lighting in Concord center, lighting our Advent Wreath for four weeks and then celebrating Christmas Eve and Day with you all added to those "last time" moments that my heart feels so keenly. I hope this isn't too maudlin! That's certainly not my intent. I write this because it's helpful for me to share these thoughts with you and, in some ways, I think it might be helpful for you as you begin to prepare to welcome a new pastor.

No, I don't know who the new pastor will be. I know of one priest who has applied to be the pastor of the Concord-Carlisle collaborative (a man I'd be pleased to see in the job) and I'm sure that others have applied though I don't know who they are. Representatives from the archdiocese met before Christmas with a gathering of parish staff and Parish Council members from HFP and St. Irene's for the purpose of hearing what parish leadership looked and hoped for in a new pastor.

I will write to Cardinal O'Malley and to the Priests' Personnel Board to make my own recommendations. I'm told that we should hear sometime in February who the new pastor will be and he will begin his work here on June 1.

This week the physical work on the rectory project will begin and, as you know, we're having parish meetings to bring you up to date and to solicit your support for this effort. Since the work begins this week that means I have to vacate the building that has been my home for close to 14 years. Although my rooms (bedroom, study, bath) on the second floor were very comfortable, the rest of the building has definitely seen better days! As you may know, my two favorite places in the rectory have been my prayer room and the side porch. My prayer room is on the first floor on the back of the building. It was once a small sunroom and served my desire for a house chapel just splendidly. I reserved the Blessed Sacrament there in an old tabernacle so the Lord and I have been housemates all this time - he's very easy to live with! The porch on the driveway side of the rectory was a favorite spot of mine from May through October: bright, airy, comfortable and with a great view of all the comings and goings in Monument Square. I'm going to miss those two special places - a lot!

It's too early to know where I'll be assigned when my pastorate here ends in May but I do know where I'm moving this week and that's to the rectory at St. Luke Parish in Belmont. St. Luke and St. Joseph Parishes are already a collaborative and have been for six years. A good friend of mine, Fr. Thom Mahoney, is the pastor of that collaborative and has room for another priest to live there - for which I'm very grateful. Some of you are reading this and saying, "Belmont?!?" It's only 11 miles door-to-door from Holy Family to St. Luke's and my commuting will be at times when the traffic flow is definitely in my favor. Many of my readers here would love to have that kind of commute!

Please keep me in your prayers as I experience these changes and be sure that you're in my prayers at the same time!

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming