

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In a few days I'll be leaving for two weeks' vacation on the Cape. Upon my return from vacation folks often ask, "So, what did you do on vacation?" My answer is always the same, "I did as little as possible!" Vacation for me means getting up in the morning (at any time I choose) and not having to look at my calendar to see what my day holds in store. The glory of an unscheduled day is, for me, a gift beyond compare. I also vacation by myself; I'll not be traveling with friends. As much as I love all the people in my life, I also enjoy time alone and, as should be expected for someone in my line of work, that's something I don't get much of when I'm here in Concord. No, I don't consider vacation as a religious retreat - that comes in early December each year. Still, there is more time for prayer and reflection and I appreciate those opportunities, especially when the beautiful environs of the Cape become my "chapel." When the good weather finally came this past spring I moved off my treadmill in favor of walking outdoors. Many of you have seen me on one of the several routes I take for my daily walk. I'm looking forward to new paths and more time to walk when I'm away these two weeks - and I hope I'll be doing that in plenty of sunlight and in fair weather!

While I'm away for two weekends, Fr. Charlie Gallagher, SJ will celebrate and preach at the weekend masses - I'm grateful to Charlie for his help year round and especially for these two coming weekends. Another thought: as much as I love the weekends and preaching, I won't find it difficult to settle into some free time on a Saturday and Sunday. It's amazing how different Thursday and Friday feel when the composition of a homily isn't hovering over my thoughts and activities.

Having mentioned Fr. Gallagher, let me say again that Fr. Myles Sheehan, SJ has left us as his work with the Jesuits has brought him to New York. Efforts to schedule a "last Sunday" with us before he left didn't work out but we're hoping to do that in the fall on a weekend when he's in the Boston area.

Moving off the main topic here, I've been meaning to report to you the sad news that at Easter time some of the gifts returned for our Easter Giving trees were stolen from the collection sites at the church doors. We can only hope that things were taken by those who really were in need. Come Christmas, we'll need to work out another system for receiving your generous support for this effort and a more vigilant method for collecting what you have left at the trees. More on this as Christmas approaches.

By now you've likely read or heard the tragic story of Cardinal McCarrick and his history of abusive relationships. I referred to this in my homily last weekend. While minors were not involved in these situations, they are nonetheless a betrayal of trust and an abuse of power and authority. We need to pray for the healing of those who were abused, for the restoration of trust and confidence in this broken Church of ours and for God's help to see that such incidents become fewer and fewer and that when they do occur that the Church act swiftly and openly in reaching out to the abused and dealing with the offenders.

Back to vacation... I'm aware of and grateful for the opportunity I have in the two weeks ahead and I know that many find themselves in circumstances that, for one reason or another, preclude taking such a break. This might be a good time for all of us to look around and see where and how we might offer some summer respite to those who can't make or take time off for vacation...

Sincerely,  
Fr. Fleming

P.S. I'll not be writing a letter in the bulletin for the next two weekends!