

June 13, 2008

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

If you were away over one or both of the past two weekends you may have missed my announcement regarding the ordination of parishioner Gregory Burch to the diaconate – and his assignment to Holy Family Parish. I had made a request that Gregory be assigned here but deacons are no longer always assigned to their home parishes and so I was pleased to hear on May 30 that we have a new deacon for Holy Family. As you know, Chuck Clough is assigned to Holy Family Parish and we also have two senior deacons, Frank D’Ambrosio and Al Murphy. (For the curious: not many parishes have such a wealth of deacons!)

With Gregory’s assignment the “preaching pool” grows larger. On a regular weekend we have four Masses, on a summer weekend three. With Gregory on board we have five potential preachers each weekend and six on those weekends when Fr. Michael Medas is able to assist us. In light of this, I have changed the preaching rotation and will now schedule myself, Chuck and Gregory, including Fr. Medas on those weekends when he’s with us. I have spoken with both Frank and Al about this change and have told them that while the rotation is changing I will, on occasion, in the course of the year, invite them to preach. All four of the deacons will continue to be scheduled to assist at the altar and with the proclamation of the gospel on a regular rotation.

In the fall, we will have a celebration to mark the continuing and faithful ministry of Frank and Al. Between them they have offered the Catholic community of Concord 51 years of service with Frank having been ordained in 1977 and Al in 1988. In addition to their other fine works, I am especially grateful to our senior deacons for their contribution to the transition team in the summer of 2004, the summer of reconfiguration, and for their faithfulness in these first years of Holy Family Parish.

For those new to our parish and to the ministry of deacons it might be helpful to offer a few words here. Deacons were first named in the Acts of the Apostles 6:1-7. The apostles chose seven men and imposed their hands in prayer over them, setting them apart to serve at table and in the daily distribution of food, especially to those in need.

For many centuries diaconate became only a ceremonial step in the process of a man preparing to be ordained a priest. In some eras, a man was ordained a deacon on one day and ordained a priest the next day or within a week! Only since Vatican Council II has the diaconate been revived in the Roman Catholic Church. Beginning just after the Council, men preparing for ordination to priesthood now serve anywhere from 6 months to a year as a deacon assigned to a parish. Your pastor was a deacon from May 1972-May 1973 and assigned to St. Colman Parish in Brockton (now Christ the King Parish, post-reconfiguration).

The post-Conciliar reform also restored the permanent diaconate (in contrast to the “transitional diaconate” which bridges to priesthood). Our four deacons are permanent deacons. The ministry of deacons includes catechizing, baptizing, witnessing marriages, assisting at the altar at Mass, preaching, assisting the pastor in the work of the parish and the works of charity. While a deacon shares some of the ministries of a priest, he does not celebrate Mass, absolve sins in the sacrament of reconciliation or anoint with the oil of the sick. In our own times, however, it is

frequently the case in some dioceses that a deacon might be appointed the administrator of a parish which has no resident priest assigned to it.

Most deacons serve in a parish setting but some deacons have more specialized ministry in hospitals, prisons or administration. The great majority of deacons also have "day jobs"! Deacons are not paid for their work in a parish and must continue to work to support themselves and their families.

A permanent deacon may be a married man at the time of his ordination but if he is not married at the time of ordination he cannot subsequently enter into marriage. At Gregory's ordination two weeks ago, two of the 27 men ordained were unmarried and they made a promise of celibacy before being ordained. If a married deacon's wife dies before he does, he is not allowed to marry again.

I will be meeting this week with Gregory to plan how he will minister in the Holy Family Parish community. He and his wife, Marilyn, are already coordinating our parish participation in the ARISE! program which will begin this fall and I know that this will be a substantial piece of his work in the parish. Gregory (and Chuck) will be celebrating the majority of our monthly Sunday afternoon baptisms and I will occasionally share that rotation with them. While we have a number of baptisms at Mass, the majority of our infant baptisms occur on the second Sunday of the month at 1:00.

I'm writing this while away from the office on my days off so I'm not sure what's in the bulletin proper, but: *please cut off the rest of this page* and put it on your bathroom mirror or on your refrigerator or on the dashboard of your car!

Sincerely,
Fr. Fleming

P.S.

I will be away the weekend of June 21-22.

Fr. Michael Medas (Sat 5, Sun 7:30 and 9:30) and Fr. Tom Mahoney (Sun 11:30) will celebrate the weekend Masses with you.



REMINDER !

Summer Mass Schedule
for Holy Family Parish:
Saturday - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday - 8:00 a.m. &
10:30 a.m.

This schedule BEGINS on Saturday,
June 28
and runs THROUGH Sunday, August 31

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