

## From Your Pastor

*How Can I Help? ~ St. Columbkille Volunteer Fair ~ May 30-31, 2009*

*“The ecclesial community, while always having a universal dimension, finds its most immediate and visible expression in the parish. It is there that the Church is seen locally. In a certain sense it is the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters.” (Christifideles Laici, 26)*

*“As far as possible the lay faithful ought to collaborate in every apostolic and missionary undertaking sponsored by their own ecclesial family.” (Christifideles Laici, 27)*

These quotes come from an Apostolic Exhortation written by Pope John Paul II entitled “The Lay Members of Christ’s Faithful People.” The late Holy Father wrote this exhortation following a major meeting or “synod” of Bishops that took place in Rome in October 1987. The purpose of the synod, which followed three very full years of preparation, was to reflect upon and to discuss anew the vocation and the mission of the laity in the life of the Church.

Two important truths about Catholic parishes are illuminated in these brief passages. First, the parish *is* the Church for most Catholics. Though the Church has more than a billion members worldwide and is rooted in an apostolic preaching that has borne the test of time for two thousand years, almost every active Catholic judges the value of the Church by the experience of his or her parish. If that experience is positive and uplifting, the Church is a welcome home and an anchor. If it is not, the Church will have little to do with a person’s life or value system; and, sadly, that person very often will leave the active practice of the faith.

Second, a parish is as vital as its parishioners are active. Like any home, a parish is more than a house. The parish is a bundle or community of activity – with the Eucharist at its center – that leads every member more fully to Christ. To the extent that the able members of the parish contribute, to that extent

is the parish alive in Christ. This is why Pope John Paul urges the lay faithful towards a full and active participation in “their own ecclesial family” or parish.

We are blessed in Brighton to have a very long and distinguished history of active involvement by the laity in our parishes. One cannot read the accounts of the parishes of St. Columbkille (1871), Our Lady of the Presentation (1909-2004) or St. Gabriel (1934-2006) without being taken by the talent, leadership and generosity that has been manifested by the lay faithful over the years. I have on my desk, for example, a clip from the July 27, 1893 edition of the *Boston Daily Globe* recounting a field day for Brighton Catholics at Spy Pond Grove in Arlington that involved some 3,500 people!

In an effort to strengthen the participation of our parishioners in the activities of the parish, the Parish Pastoral Council is sponsoring a Volunteer Fair that will take place at all of the Masses on the weekend of May 30-31. The purpose of this Volunteer Fair is to bring to your attention the wide variety of activities that go on at St. Columbkille and to invite you, if you are able, to consider seriously making a commitment to one or more of our parish activities. This weekend, different members of the parish community who are already active in the parish will speak a brief word of encouragement following Communion at each of the Masses. They will also provide you with a small brochure which lists and describes the many activities available for your consideration. I know you will be impressed with the number of activities we have.

Though I am very much aware that these are difficult and busy times for so many of you, I encourage you to think carefully about engaging in one of the activities of our parish. As happens so often, your gift of yourself to another will frequently become one of the best gifts you give to yourself. It’s just one of the many, many ways God rewards a cheerful giver.



God bless each of you.

*Mrs. Fay*