

Bulletin September 19th and 20th, 2009

From Father Jim Lafontaine, SJ

The biggest challenge for me in becoming pastor for an even larger community next summer is that of being able to build relationships with individuals. The key to being a “pastor” in its best sense is to know well the persons the Lord has given to your care so that you can address their needs with generosity and compassion. The more people given to your care, the greater the challenge becomes. This problem is exacerbated by the necessity of administering the business of the cluster, managing its finances and personnel, seeing to the capital maintenance of so many buildings, and attending to long-range planning. Things like roofs, parking lots and new boilers demand so much attention of a pastor that he faces the danger of becoming further and further removed from his people. To my mind, this is a significant weakness inherent in the clustering of parishes in the Diocese of Maine – there simply is not the time and wherewithal to have a desirable level of relationship with all the individuals and families given to your care.

Although I have worked hard this year to get to know people at St. Pius, St. Patrick’s and St. Brigid’s (and a few at St. Joseph’s too!), each day I feel the frustration of knowing that I have barely scratched the surface of relationships before having to rush off to another place, another meeting. I also know that this is not only my issue. As our community becomes larger and more diffuse, we all face the challenge of getting to know each other – the key to our successfully coming together, in trust, as a community of faith.

Thus one of the most important aspects of our Cluster 28 transition planning this year will be to make sure we do not lose sight of the fact that strong relationships are the key to a strong community. The Lord is calling us all to a new level of generosity – an openness, a willingness, to give the time and effort to reach out to each other with patience and understanding. This is our shared vocation here and now. As the Church has called me (and my Jesuit brothers) at this time and place to serve the community of Cluster 28 in Portland, Maine, so are we all called to serve each other. Only in this way, together, can we build a strong community and a strong future.

As always, I and the members of the transition committee pledge to communicate with you in a regular and transparent manner about our planning. We will utilize the bulletin, school news notes/letter, and websites as the first means of this communication. If at any time you have input you wish to share, please feel free to speak with one of the committee members – you can call your parish or school office for contact information. Please continue to keep us and this process in your prayers.