

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Dear Parishioners:

So, here we are again in the month of January, or is it two months? One dear friend insists that January, because of its cold days and long nights, actually lasts sixty days. In any case, January is naturally a time of new beginnings and planning for the future. Whether it's a renewed commitment to a better diet and more exercise, a vow to spend more time with the Lord in prayer or simply planning the family summer vacation, our thoughts in this first month of the year invariably look forward to the months ahead.

This is as it should be. A well ordered business, parish or family depends on future planning. Additionally, planning for the future is a wonderful form of time travel although it can leave one feeling a bit disoriented. This week for example I spent several hours going over the parish schedule through June. In my mind Confirmation, First Communion and the eighth grade graduation were all celebrated joyously although in reality we are still in the Christmas Season. Fortunately, such disorientation is quickly corrected. However, there is another hazard of future planning that may not be so easily overcome. That is the failure to live in the present. We can become so focused on what we would like to see happen, or worse, what we fear will happen, that we miss the best part of what is happening now. As our minds stretch forward to anticipate the future we overlook the beautiful people and events that the Lord is placing in our lives in the present. Currently I am re-reading a spiritual classic called *Abandonment to Divine Providence*. Although this little book by Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade was written three hundred years ago, it still contains many timeless truths. One of these timeless truths is that people of faith need not be slaves to either regrets of the past or fears of the future but instead should learn to recognize the Lord's presence in every moment of our lives. A passage from this wonderful book follows and with Fr. Caussade's encouragement I'm resolved to try harder to enjoy the blessings of the moment. And since January has sixty days, there will be twice as many of these moments this month.

With my prayers,

Fr. Conley

Excerpt from *Abandonment to Divine Providence* by Fr. Jean-Pierre de Caussade

All creatures live in the hands of God. By our senses we can see only the action of the creature, but faith sees the Creator acting in all things. Faith sees that Jesus Christ lives in everything and works through all history to the end of time, that every fraction of a second, every atom of matter, contains a fragment of His hidden life and His secret activity. The actions of created beings are veils which hide the profound mysteries of God. After the Resurrection, Jesus Christ took the disciples unawares by His appearances, showing Himself to them as if disguised and then appearing when He revealed Himself. And it is this same Jesus, ever living and ever active, who still surprises us if our faith is not strong and clear-sighted enough. There is never a moment when God does not come forward in the guise of some suffering or some duty, and all that takes place within us, around us and through us both includes and hides His activity. Yet, because it is invisible, we are always taken by surprise and do not recognize His operation until it has passed by us. If we could lift the veil and if we watched with vigilant attention, God would endlessly reveal Himself to us and we should see and rejoice in His active presence in all that befalls us. At every event we should exclaim: 'It is the Lord!' Nothing could happen to us without our accepting it as a gift from God.