

**This Tuesday morning I will be flying to Italy with my brother John and his family. The flight from Atlanta to Rome takes over 9 hours. John's family is going on a 1-week vacation, and I'll be starting a 4-month sabbatical. Next month I'll attend a conference on the liturgy in Dresden, Germany, and make a retreat in Engelberg, Switzerland, at the monastery that founded Conception Abbey. On September 1<sup>st</sup> I go back to Rome, where I will study Latin and Italian, write a few articles on the liturgy, research a book on how we receive baptized members of other churches into the full communion of the Catholic Church, and prepare some lectures I've agreed to give next year. I will also spend some time touring, some time shopping, and a lot of time eating. I hope to get all that done by the middle of November.**

**While I'm away, Father Aloysius will help with your spiritual needs until September, and then a priest from Conception Abbey will come on weekends. Other priests in our deanery will help out in case of emergency. But during the next 4 months, I don't want anyone to die, get sick, go to the hospital, get engaged, have a baby, grow older, lose teeth or grow taller. I don't want to miss anything. So just hold off till Thanksgiving.**

**Tammy Mallen is our office manager, and I feel very confident leaving the day-to-day parish business in her hands. Nancy Hanrahan is our director of religious education. She will continue to offer excellent programs for children, youth and adults.**

**Pat Maier will continue to serve as our music director. Pat has multiple sclerosis, and this year has been very challenging for her. But Pat continues to make work for the church her number one priority after her family. To help Pat, I have hired Maureen Foster a few hours a week to serve as our parish liturgist. Maureen will schedule musicians and ministers, and Pat will sing, lead the choir, and teach children as she is able. I cannot imagine having musical ability, a heart for the church, and an illness that makes it increasingly hard for you to do what you love. Pat Maier is determined to offer her gifts back to God with all the strength she has, even when that strength weakens. I consider her service to this parish an outstanding example of sacrifice. Every note she sings bears witness to her faith, and I hope you are as grateful as I am for everything she does.**

**In adding Maureen Foster to our staff, I'm also asking her to chair the building committee while I am away. Maureen will meet with Bill Kemper, who is the chair of our pastoral council; 3 members of the finance council: namely, Gary Highfill, Dan Tvrdy, and Joe Seufferling; and 2 members of the previous building committee, Tom Hamlet and Karen Chaney. They will meet with a representative of GLPM architects and work on the schematic design of our building project. When I come back in November, I'll review the plans, and we will present them to Bishop Finn. I know people have been anxious to get moving on our project. I want to assure you – we are**

moving. It takes a lot of steps to make a project this size happen. But we are getting there. I would like to thank the people who have served on our building and renovation committees so far. I'd like to thank Mark Davy & Associates, who conducted our feasibility study and our capital campaign. I'd like to thank the volunteers who made phone calls and visited homes to make our campaign a success. I'd like to thank Karen Chaney and Maureen Foster, the co-chairs of our campaign. And I'd like to thank all of you who together have pledged over \$428,000. Thanks to your generosity, our building project is becoming a reality. Congratulations to everyone.

When Solomon became King of Israel, God appeared to him in a dream and said, "Ask something of me and I will give it to you." You can't turn down an offer like that. The kingship had fallen into Solomon's lap. God chose this young leader to rule a vast number of people. So Solomon asked for something that would benefit not just him but the people he served. He asked for an understanding heart to help him distinguish right from wrong. God was pleased that Solomon did not ask for a long life, personal riches, or the death of his enemies. So God gave him all those things as well.

During the months ahead, I cannot think of a better thing all of us could ask of God. Not just safe travel for me. Not just the professional administration of the parish for you. But let's each ask God for an understanding heart to help distinguish right from wrong. Then whether we're on sabbatical, on the job, in a desk at school, or at the table at home, we will have the wisdom of Solomon, and that will please God.