



THE PASTOR'S DESK

July 26, 2009 - Pastor's Greetings

Dear Parishioners,

As I was packing-up to leave Our Lady's Church and to come here, I came across a book about St. John Neumann. I don't know where or when I got it, but it seemed to be appropriate that I read it during my vacation. It is a short paperback by James J. Galvin, C.S.S.R. John Neumann grew up in a devout, Catholic family near Budweis, in what is now the Czech Republic. He excelled in school and knew at an early age that he wanted to be a priest. He also knew at a young age that he wanted to be a missionary in America. He was intrigued by the stories he read about the frontier life. He also knew that a lot of German-speaking immigrants had moved there. His pastoral charity drove him to seek to serve these Catholics who were virtually without pastoral care in that strange land.

Fr. Neumann arrived in Buffalo, New York in the summer of 1836 after crossing through Germany and France overland, the Atlantic Ocean aboard ship and the Erie Canal aboard a barge. His first pastoral assignment was in Williamsville, New York, an area that was still very much frontier territory. There was a Catholic Church in town but, unfortunately, it had no roof! His parishioners were German, French, and Irish immigrants scattered all over the countryside.

Fr. Neumann traveled extensively on foot to visit the sick, often walking for miles through wilderness, threatened by thieves and anti-Catholics. One time he was on the verge of being lynched when some parishioners on horseback scared-away the gang. In all of his hardships, he never complained. He considered all the faults of his parishioners as his own fault. If he were holier, more charitable and patient then his people would also be holier, more patient and charitable. He offered Mass that summer in his roofless church. Soon, we was also teaching not just catechism, but, being the only educated man in the vicinity, all the other school subjects as well.

As I look to the life of St. John Neumann, I can only wonder at all the hardships he endured. As I have gone through all the difficulties of making this change in my life, I have frequently asked St. John to pray for me, realizing that none of my difficulties come close to his! When I arrived I was relieved to find that the church had a roof. But more

importantly, I found a wonderful, loving congregation. This past weekend, I was overwhelmed by your kind welcome. Everyone greeted me so warmly. Each age has its own challenges to the life of faith and to the fulfillment of the gift of divine charity given to us in Baptism. Our age is not different. I can only hope and pray that I can share some of the pastoral love and patience that John Neumann had.

As I said last week, I will need your prayers. I look forward to being your Pastor for many years. I hope to build upon the foundation laid by the pastors who came before me. I had a priest friend tell me that I now had a powerful patron in St. John Neumann. May he intercede for all of us here at the parish named for him, that we may all come joyful to the Heavenly Kingdom where he prays and waits for all of us.

**God bless,
Fr. LaHood**



Prayer to St. John Neumann

*St. John Neumann, servant of God and man,
your desire to bring all souls to Christ
inspired you to leave your family, home, and country.
Ask for us the grace to live worthily
in the spirit of our Baptism,
so that all our thoughts, words, and actions of every day
will bring God, Our Father, greater honor and glory.
Ask for us the graces necessary to help and
serve the poor, the suffering, and the oppressed.
May we live as you lived, persevering in every difficulty,
to know and to do God's Holy Will.
In this life may we share your intercession,
the protection of Mary, and the grace of Jesus Christ,
Our Lord and Redeemer. Amen.*