

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

ENDINGS AND NEW BEGINNINGS...

I heard a story about two parents who were talking one day. One asked the other what their son was taking in college. Came back the reply, "He's taking every penny that I have!" Well this is the time of year that young people are starting college and when parents have to say "goodbye" not only to the kids but also to some of their hard earned money!

In mid-August, my nephew Steven entered the State University at Binghamton, New York. The last few weeks my brother and his wife were very busy getting ready for his leaving-buying all the necessary items for dormitory living like bedding, sheets, and pillowcases! My brother told me it was kind of a bittersweet experience because his son has to leave home and there's one less now in the "nest."

I think we can safely say that life is all about changes. What Cardinal John Henry Newman said is still true: "To live is to change and to be perfect is to have changed often." Change is never easy for anyone of us. Yet in order for life to proceed smoothly, we have to change and make changes. Even we priests and pastors have to change from time to time as you all know!

Recently, I read a very moving letter from an incoming college freshman to her parents. The letter read: "Dear Mom and Dad, first of all I want to say thanks. Thanks for helping me get this far; there's absolutely no way I could have done it without your constant support. You were the ones who stayed up with me as I slogged through mountains of homework, who drove me to and from school, sports, music lessons and birthday parties. You were the ones who bought me ice cream when I succeeded and who offered constructive criticism when I failed. You were with me through the adorable little-kid years, and "angst-y" high school years. You've done everything for me and never asked for anything in return, and I can't even begin to express my gratitude. And now, you're about to do the hardest thing parents can do; You're letting me go!"

I suppose that "letting go" can be a scary experience on both ends. Parents have to trust in their children and the kids have to now learn to be out on their own and learn to do more for themselves like laundry and other essential tasks. When I entered the seminary back in 1980, it was the first time I really had been away from home. I confess that I did not know anything at all about how to do laundry and to iron clothes. The first time I tried to iron I burned an indelible "imprint" of that iron on a pair of dress pants!

Life is made up of all kinds of learning experiences like that when you think about it. One thing I reminded my nephew before he left for college was to get to Mass on Sunday and he promised he would. Catholic colleges of course have Mass on a regular basis, but even the secular universities have Newman Centers where there is a chaplain and services are offered late in the evening to suit the student's schedule.

Finally, thanks to modern communication and the cell phone any "homesickness" can be alleviated by simply giving a call. As a new school year begins this week, we pray for our students here at Saint Charles and especially for those starting anew in college. Yes, one era is ended but another one is about to begin. Congratulations and good luck!

*Sincerely in Christ,
Father Jerome*