Fr. Jason’s Wishful Thinking… A Recap of Last Week’s Big Announcements

For those of you who may have been out of town last week or absent for various reasons, I read a letter at Mass, outlining some projects that I would like to complete before my assignment with you comes to an end. A lot of people keep telling me that they really dislike how I keep mentioning that I will be leaving. I want to emphasize here, right now, as I always have mentioned: I have never applied for another assignment over the last ten years. I love my assignment here. But I know that I can only serve you for a total of 12 years. I will complete my tenth year with you in June 2019. There are certain things that I would like to complete in the next two and a half years so that the next priest will not have to worry about major construction.

In January 2019, we will begin a one-year capital campaign in both parishes. The capital campaigns will temporarily take the place of the building and maintenance fund collection. At St. Stephen, we wish to raise $60,000. We have approximately 150 active families at St. Stephen (we have more families registered, but we see about 150 of those families at church on a regular basis). I believe that $60,000 is a realistic goal as we are asking each active family to pledge approximately $400 over the course of a year, averaging out to $34 per month. Some will probably give more, and some may give less. But keep in mind that it will take the place of the building and maintenance fund collection each month. At St. Stephen, we plan to use the $60,000:

1. To finish paving the rear parking lot. It is the last area left to be paved on the church property.
2. Insulate the attic in our beloved church, so it can be fully climate-controlled, year-round. We are close to that achievement, but the insulation in the attic will be great!

We have three big projects to accomplish at St. Joseph, and some smaller ones that are not attached to the capital campaign. I would like to raise about $300,000 with the St. Joseph capital campaign. We have approximately 375 active families that we see regularly, so we are asking an average of $800 over the next year, which equates to $67 per month—once again—replacing the building and maintenance fund. Some will probably give more, and some may give less. In the end, it all helps us to achieve the goal and every contribution is valuable! At St. Joseph, we plan to use the $300,000:

1. To add to the $220,000 we have saved for the **new rectory**, and move forward to build it!
2. To add a 1,200 square foot **annex to the new church**, that will house a new, larger sacristy and the storage area that our church needs for Christmas decorations, the Advent wreath, statuary, vases/urns, vestments, banners, etc. We are lacking such storage space right now. We will utilize the area under the roof of the new building (a second floor attic) for additional storage space. This building will also house the bell tower that we have been saving for.
3. To build the **Head of Island chapel**. We already have all the art, stained glass, stations of the cross and chandeliers for this building. We have paid all architectural fees, so we simply need to move dirt in, get a contractor, and build it!

We have smaller projects at St. Joseph that are not attached to the capital campaign, such as renovating the walls in the parish hall, fixing bad spots in the parking lot, and moving forward with the land acquisition for the cemetery expansion. All of these projects are on my plate already and in various stages of planning, discussion, negotiation, etc. (AKA, it never ends!) For instance, next week, I will meet with the rectory contractor to determine cost and a building time schedule. I will meet with the land appraisal guy to look at the property next door. I will be meeting with a roofing contractor to fix the roof on the new church where shingles have flown off.

It has been a while since I last wrote an article for the bulletin, but we have accomplished a lot between our two parishes. We installed a “new” high altar in the old St. Joseph Church. This is part of our ongoing restoration, to make the old church look as close as possible to its original state. Thanks to many of the Knights of Columbus who helped to unload the altar and other liturgical furniture when it was delivered from St. Louis, MO in late September, under the careful and watchful supervision of Deacon Jimmy. Jason Cates, Deacon Leon, and myself pieced the bottom together, and all was going well until we had to get the rotunda in place. Larry Cornett, Rhett Cornett, and several other men had to help with hoisting the rotunda into place. Thankfully, I took careful measurements, and we had about ¾ of an inch to spare before hitting the ceiling! The altar fit perfectly. Meanwhile, Tot Lobell took on a labor of love several months ago… to replicate an old altarpiece that we had, so that we could reinstate the two side altars. Tot did a marvelous job creating our second altarpiece, as the original is housed in the Creole Museum. I hope to repaint the high altar and the new piece soon. The old church is looking really nice these days, and Shelby & Agnes Brignac recently celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary inside of it with a renewal of vows and blessing. We also acquired a prolific statue of the scourged Jesus and I hope to one day finish the room in the back of the old church where people can sit and study the Shroud of Turin, as well as meditate on the statue of the scourged Jesus. All of this only compliments the Eucharistic Miracle exhibit in the back of church! The old church is open all day long on Wednesdays, and it is an ideal place to pray.

We installed electric devotional candles in both of our parish churches, as well as the old church. We no longer need to transport candles and keep them stocked. We create no waste with the empty glass or cardboard boxes, we are no longer creating soot and black residue, and finally, they are so much safer than traditional candles. They are also more economical—as we had to charge $3.00 for the real candles in order to make a slight profit. You can contribute whatever you would like to light the candles. At both churches, we can offer you the option of keeping a light burning for a whole year with a memorial plaque on the candle. The cost is $100 per year and it is a nice way to remember your loved one. We will start the program on January 1st. If you would like to keep a light burning for the whole year, let our office staff know.

The new St. Stephen altar arrived the week before I left for Poland. I want to thank our new maintenance coordinator, Jason Cates, who spent many long hours working on the altar to get it lit from behind with LED fixtures, cleaned up the scratches, and getting the new sound system installed and the sanctuary lamp moved. St. Stephen looks really nice with the addition of St. Faustina’s statue and relic in the new case. Thanks to Mr. Joe Hanna for building our new glass cabinets for the holy oils and the relics of St. Faustina and Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. Thanks to the St. Stephen Ladies Altar Society who purchased St. Faustina’s statue.

The St. Joseph Ladies Altar Society recently bought a statue of St. Stephen, per my request. I wanted to make sure that the new church had St. Stephen within it, as many St. Stephen parishioners attend Mass and it is good for us to have our other cluster patron at St. Joseph Church… to show our unity!

We are quickly approaching the beginning of the firework sale. We will formally start on Tuesday, December 17th, but I will be there Sunday afternoon (the 15th) and Monday afternoon (the 16th) doing various tasks. As I write this, we have already made trips to all three of our wholesalers and we are well-stocked and ready for the sale. The top shelf is stocked, and I’m putting new products on the shelves daily. We have lots of the favorites, like High Falutin’, Hit the Road Jack, Crazy Creatures, Excalibur etc. But we also have some new products and names. We carry Black Cat, Boomer, Brothers, Powder Keg, Shogun, and World Class items. Our pricing philosophy is simple: we want to give you the best products for the most reasonable prices. Half of your purchase price is the cost of the item, and the other half goes to the church building fund, to pay state and parish sales tax, and any credit card fees. We give a 5% discount if you pay in cash and save us the credit card fees. We feel that you will save about 25% to 30% by shopping with us, compared to the larger mark ups at other stands.

I’m not sure what next week holds, but this past week has been a difficult one for our churches as we grieve the loss of Gloria Dupuy Poche, Donald Porshe, Willie Saucier, and Ronald Picou. Our sympathy goes to all these families. Well that’s the update for this week. Prayers for a fruitful Advent and a joyous Christmas! Fr. Jason