

Fr. Jason's Wishful Thinking... Merry Christmas and Parish Project Updates

I hope that all of you have enjoyed the year 2019. In my humble opinion, it has passed by too fast, and it will be a year that I will never forget. I won't forget it because of my mother's health issues, my six-month fight to get the new rectory approved, and the old rectory flood... which were quite challenging and unexpected. I will also remember it because of the fact that *we, as a parish staff team, have overcome*. We have a few small details to finish up in the office—paint all of the trim, grout some of the flooring, and finish two bathrooms, but for the most part, we are back to normal in the office. As I write this, Mom is admitted at Our Lady of the Lake and she went through an angiogram yesterday and the doctor's have found blockages in both arms that are causing the lack of blood flow to her fingers. We are exploring options of how to deal with that before we continue amputating fingers. She is in a lot of pain at the moment as several of her remaining fingers are blue/black and there is no guarantee that she won't lose other ones. The vascular doctor just wants a few extra days to try to fix the greater problem.

The year 2019 will also be remembered for two good trips to Las Vegas, a trip to Walt Disney World, a trip to Scottsdale, Arizona with the Catholic Daughters State Court, and a fabulous pilgrimage to Italy to six Eucharistic miracle locations and other holy sites with 32 pilgrims. The St. Joseph Parish Hall was renovated in the spring, the St. Stephen parking lot was completed, and we broke ground on the new rectory this month.

With memories of 2019 shared, I want to let you know some good things happening RIGHT NOW. As of Friday, December 20th, we have completed the purchase of adjacent land to the cemetery. The land deal, valued at \$95,000 cash + 10 cemetery plots for the Guitreau family, will allow us to provide for burials over the next 200 years for our community. The total footprint is just under nine acres, and includes about 3.5 acres to expand our existing cemetery which is one acre, and currently full (all plots are sold).

We already have people interested in 110 plots in the new section of the cemetery—they filled out the form in the bulletin several months ago as we gauged the community's interest before asking the parish council on a vote and approval. The parish council and finance council were both unanimous in their approval for the cemetery expansion and the new rectory. We are extremely happy to complete the land deal. For those of you interested in plots in the new section of the cemetery, we will offer them at \$525 per plot for parishioners and \$2,000 per plot for non-parishioners. These rates are the standard rate set by the parish council in 2010. The only difference is a \$25 increase in the parishioner rate, since the whole purchase price will be going to fund the land purchase, and we need to put \$25 per plot in the cemetery endowment for perpetual care.

For those of you who think that these prices are “expensive”, “high”, or “outrageous”, I will say that you probably have not checked around at some of the other cemeteries in our area, where the average price for ground plots is easily \$4,000 each. It surprises me how many times we see families come in to plan a funeral and their relatives have made no preparations towards their final resting place, and are totally unaware of the costs that surround funerals. We also have fewer restrictions than most cemeteries in regards to the burial of cremains, as well as actually

“stacking” vaults so that two of them can be placed on one plot (one underground and one on the surface). Our cemetery has fewer restrictions on monuments, too.

Remember that our cemeteries and their proper maintenance is a ministry and advantage to our current parishioners and a commitment to our past parishioners. We think that you should take advantage of your membership in our church and purchase plots here, because you won't find prices any better. The parishioner rate also extends to our sister parish of St. Stephen the Martyr. There are a lot of folks in Whitehall and Maurepas who do not meet the eligibility requirements set forth by the two community cemetery boards for free burial space. We hope that as parishioners of our Catholic churches, you will see the value of purchasing plots at parishioner rate in the new cemetery expansion.

As we move into the week of Christmas, there are two good pieces of news and activity... first of all, the fire marshal's office issued an approval letter on our **new bell tower project**. This took several months, but I want to thank Mr. Richard Picou of Picou Brothers Construction and Mr. Milton Clouatre for their assistance with this. We now move to Livingston Parish for a construction permit.

The second piece of news/activity is that the slab will be poured on Tuesday morning (Christmas Eve) for the new rectory! Yeah!

The fireworks sale is currently taking place. I am happy to report that our prices have stayed the same, regardless of the threat of tariffs and the fact that one of our vendors was slightly higher this season. We kept prices the same and we hope that you will take advantage of our fireworks sale. We have 175 items in stock and 50% of your purchase price goes directly to funding the new rectory/bell tower/Head of Island chapel. Your taxes stay here, too... and you won't find cheaper prices.

Cemetery Expansion / "I'm Interested in Plots" Form
(If you have filled this out already, you DO NOT need to do this again.)

Dear Fr. Jason,
I am definitely interested in purchasing _____ plots in the new St. Joseph cemetery expansion. Please contact me with the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please drop this form in the church collection or you can drop it at the office during business hours. Thank you!