

Fr. Jason's Wishful Thinking... Rain, Rain, Go Away!

In early January, the "Big Three" (that would be Deacon Jimmy, Deacon Leon, and myself) met on the back field of St. Joseph Church to mark the place where the new rectory would stand. Jimmy shot the elevation, and we determined that we needed 55 loads of clay to get the rectory as high as it needed to be, considering the Flood of 2016. Well, here we are, starting the *month of March*, and the weather has not cooperated with us. It seems to rain every day for at least two hours, usually with a downpour. Meanwhile, we need about 15 loads of dirt at Head of Island to build up the foundation for the new chapel. While we are hampered with the dirt and moving forward on NEW construction, we have been steady at work on OLD projects. So regardless, we keep moving forward.

The St. Joseph Parish Hall is painted, and the remaining ceiling tiles along the walls have been replaced. There are new LED security lights in the hall that are designed to stay on at all times, just like we installed at St. Stephen Hall last year. We have a wedding this Friday night (March 8th) with a reception in the parish hall, and then it will be time to replace the vinyl tile floor with commercial porcelain tile. The old tile has been coming up by the doors, as well as the right side of the hall. So, we will finish the parish hall renovation by replacing the 4,000 square feet of flooring and our two parish halls will match well. In case some of you folks question where your collection dollars are being spent, the St. Joseph Parish Hall has gotten \$23,000 of attention since the beginning of February. That includes the new wall treatment and crown molding (and installation labor), all of the paint (and volunteer painters' lunches), the remaining ceiling tiles, new light fixtures, switches and receptacles, and the cost of the porcelain tile. I want to once again thank Halpin's Flooring America for giving us the flooring at a great price, since we will be installing it ourselves! The parish hall has been our main project in February, but it's looking spectacular.

Meanwhile, Deacon Leon, Jason Cates, David Hoover and myself went on a little adventure Tuesday. We journeyed to Madisonville to the home of Curt and Mary Burns. Curt and Mary have an interesting hobby—collecting furniture, statues, and other treasures from closed churches in the United States as well as Europe. I went to visit the Burns the week before with Fr. Paul McDuffie from Ponchatoula. Fr. McDuffie is renovating the old St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula to make it a daily Mass chapel. The Burns have a 28' tall altar that is being divided between three homes: Fr. Paul is getting the main altar/tabernacle for the old St. Joseph Church in Ponchatoula. Staci and Glen Gulino are getting two side pieces of the altar to put in the old Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel, located in their backyard in Baton Rouge. Staci hopes to use these pieces as a measuring and cutting board to make liturgical vestments for priests and deacons. And we are receiving two beautiful wooden alcoves that will be renovated and placed in the two transepts of our new church to house the statues of Mary and Joseph. We went Tuesday to pick up the massive alcoves (measuring 8.5 feet tall and 5 feet wide). Deacon Jimmy let us use his truck and trailer for this moving project. Unfortunately, the Burns yard does not have a gravel driveway going to their warehouse, so let's just say that the truck and trailer were stuck for about 90 minutes in the mud as Deacon Leon, David Hoover, and Jason tried their best to get unstuck. I prayed to St. Anthony of Padua the whole time, hoping that we would find the right spot in the yard that we could get the truck and large trailer out. Providentially, we did, but only after Deacon Leon was mercilessly sprayed with mud from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. But I can now testify that he can sprint when he wants to! Unfortunately for him, mud travels faster through the air.

We loaded up the alcoves by carrying them across the yard, and they are now safely stored in the Fireworks/St. Vincent de Paul Building. I would to thank the Rosary Group for volunteering to have a sanding wood party next week to get the alcoves ready for repair and repainting. Deacon Leon and I have also made good progress on getting the St. Vincent de Paul office painted and shelves installed. We're almost ready to move them from the conference room into their new home.

While it's been raining, I have also taken time to paint the new meditation room in the back of the old church, getting it ready for Lent. I will be installing a statue of Jesus scourged in this room for folks to sit and meditate on, along with the framed copies of the shroud. The Burns also donated a beautiful statue of Jesus praying at the rock of Gethsemane to the old church, but it had extensive damage to the base. Mrs. Tina Guillory from Denham

Springs is repairing it for us and we should be able to place it outside of the meditation room. Deacon Leon sanded down the high altar in old St. Joseph Church and washed it down with Clorox water this week. We will begin painting next week.

St. Stephen also received a beautiful treasure that I found at the Burns last week: two reliquaries containing first-class relics of 73 saints. These reliquaries belonged to Cardinal Joachim Meisner (Cardinal Emeritus of Cologne, Germany) and the Burns obtained these relics on a recent trip to Germany after Cardinal Meisner's death. I cleaned up the reliquaries this week and they are now in their new home in the St. Stephen's relic cabinet, along with the relics of St. Faustina and Blessed Francis Xavier Seelos. First class relics are small pieces of bone from the body of the saint. Over the next few weeks, I will spotlight the lives of the saints whose 75 relics we possess at St. Stephen, in alphabetical order:

Agatha of Sicily (Virgin & Martyr) Patroness of Sicily, born at Catania in 231 and martyred in 251. Agatha was a notably beautiful Christian. Quintianus, who desired to marry her, became angry when Agatha refused his advances. Under the persecution of Decius, Quintianus sentenced her to a brothel, and then to a prison, where she was brutally tortured for refusing to denounce her Christian faith. She was stretched by hooks, burned with torches, whipped, and later had her breasts cut off, and survived starvation and lack of medical care. She died from wounds sustained from torture (being rolled over hot coals mixed with sharp objects). Her feast day is February 5. Patron saint of breast cancer patients, and victims of rape and fire.

Aloysius Gonzaga (Jesuit Novice, 1568-1591) Italian aristocrat who gave up his family wealth to enter the Society of Jesus. While still a student at the Roman College, he died while ministering to plague victims. His feast day is June 21. Patron saint of students, Jesuit novices, the blind, and AIDS/HIV patients.

Alphonsus Ligouri (Bishop & Doctor of the Church, 1696-1787) Italian saint who founded the Redemptorist order. He was a prolific writer and authored *Moral Theology*, *The Glories of Mary*, and *The Way of the Cross*. His feast day is August 1. Patron saint of Naples (Italy), arthritis sufferers, priest confessors, and moralists.

Ambrose (Bishop & Doctor of the Church, 340-397) Roman governor of Liguria and Emilia and made his headquarters in Milan. He was elected by popular vote as the bishop of Milan in 374. He was a staunch opponent of the Arian heresy, an excellent debater, and known for influencing the conversion of Augustine of Hippo and baptizing him. He was one of the four original Doctors of the Church. His feast day is December 7. He is the patron saint of Milan, beekeepers, bishops, candlemakers & wax refiners, and police officers.

Andrew (Apostle & Martyr, 6 BC-62 AD) A native fisherman of Galilee, and commonly known as the "Apostle who was First Called by Jesus", Andrew is the brother of Simon Peter. After Pentecost, Andrew preached the Gospel in Scythia, along the Black Sea, Thrace, and Achaea. He founded the Church at Constantinople. Andrew was martyred on an X-shaped cross at Patras in Achaea. His feast day is November 30. He is the patron saint of the Amalfi coast, Ukraine, Russia, Romania, fishermen, ropemakers, singers, miners, pregnant women, butchers, farm workers and protection against fevers

Angela Merici (Religious & Founder, 1474-1540) Italian nun, educator, and founder of the Company of St. Ursula (Ursuline Nuns) dedicated to the educational needs of girls. These nuns still minister today in Europe and throughout North America, including New Orleans. Her feast day is January 27. She is the patron saint of handicapped people, and those who have lost their parents to death.

Anne (Mother of Mary, 50 BC – 12 AD) Grandmother of Jesus and the spouse of Joachim, as recorded in the *Gospel of James* dating back to 150 AD. Feast day: July 26. St. Anne is the patron saint of housewives, unmarried women, women who wish to conceive a child, and women in labor. She is also patron saint of horseback riders, miners, and cabinet-makers.

(to be continued...)