

Fr. Jason's Wishful Thinking... New Year's Resolutions

I want to thank everyone who made our Christmas celebrations such a success over the last few weeks! I really enjoy seeing how beautiful our churches look for the Christmas Masses, as we have some talented folks who make it all happen... so, if you helped with assembly and take-down, a big THANK YOU!

As we move forward full speed ahead into 2018, I wanted to place in the bulletin—in writing—some ambitious goals that our two parishes have in mind. I have been your pastor for eight and a half years, and as time moves on, I often wonder what I need to accomplish before the time comes for me to be re-assigned somewhere else. We never know when that will happen, but hopefully, it is not soon! Regardless, there are certain things that need to be finished before that day arrives. Before we get to that wish list, I want to thank everyone for their generosity and support in 2017. While September, October, and November are difficult months due to football season and a strain on our budgets (decreased offertory), we always catch-up by New Years thanks to a few fundraisers and year-end charitable donations. This year was a great year for charitable giving, as the stock market continues to break records. THANK YOU to those who remembered your church parish in a special way. Meanwhile, 2017 will be the year that we made a wise move to set up endowments for both of our parishes: for St. Stephen, a general endowment that will continually grow to provide more and more operational income as the years go by. St. Joseph has established two endowments to fund the perpetual care of our mausoleums and three cemeteries. Over time, the grass-cutting and maintenance needs of our cemeteries will be totally covered by the interest earned on our endowments. We have a few more years to reach that goal, but thanks to the continued generosity of our parishioners who contribute to the cemetery fund each month, we will do it! Meanwhile, the seed money of the endowments will never be touched or used for projects that it wasn't intended for.

Here is a list of goals for 2018, so we are all on the same page:

1. Our first goal of 2018 is in the works... we have ordered the additional **pew cushions** needed for St. Stephen at the cost of \$5,400 and they are paid for! By the end of February, they should be ready and installed.
2. Our second goal was completed this week... to replace the last original **HVAC unit** at St. Stephen in the sacristy. The heating components were rusted out and the pilot light would not stay lit. Therefore, we will have a brand-new unit on the right side of the church.
3. **Concrete around the new storage building** at St. Joseph, to allow access to the new St. Vincent de Paul office and pantry, and provide a permanent place to park the bus. At the same time, **fix some of the major potholes in the old parking lot.**
4. **Replace the second old HVAC** at St. Stephen Hall. We replaced the first unit about 18 months ago, and it is now time to replace the other unit, as the heating components do not work and the A/C is on its last leg.
5. February 2018—**Buy-back the remaining crypts of the St. Joseph Mausoleum.** Acme Mausoleum is going out of business and has offered us the ability to buy the remaining inventory of the new Mausoleum built four years ago. There are approximately 27 spaces left in our mausoleum, and I would like to sell them at 20% off the original prices. All proceeds of the sale will go to the new cemetery and mausoleum endowments, instead of going into Acme's hands. If you are interested in one of these crypts, please let us know, as you won't find a better deal on Mausoleum burial space anywhere else.
6. Spring 2018--**Finish concreting the parish hall parking lot at St. Stephen, and transport the excavated dirt over to St. Joseph for the new rectory.**
7. Spring 2018--**Opening of the Eucharistic Miracles exhibit in the old St. Joseph Church.** Thanks to a generous grant from Team Heaven, there are five new wood display cabinets being made to house the exhibit.

The exhibit will include stories and color pictures of several Eucharistic miracles from around the world to educate and inspire us to think about what Jesus gave the Church at the Last Supper and what has always been the source and summit of our Catholic worship.

8. July 2018--**Begin the new St. Joseph rectory.** Despite several articles about the new rectory and even some homilies/announcements about these details, people still ask me, "Where will the new rectory be built?"

Answer: We will build it on the north side of our existing St. Joseph property behind the large oak tree, and before the creek. St. Joseph Parish owns a larger tract of land on the other side of the creek, which is a wooded area that runs parallel to Highway 444. All of this property can be seen when looking north from the new church parking lot. We have already completed some groundwork to cover a drainage ditch in preparation for the new rectory. Some people have asked about the old rectory... what will happen to it? The answer is that it will continue to be the office and would allow our parish staff to have their own offices by moving some of them upstairs. Right now, there are three of them crammed into one room.

I am still exploring the best options and floor designs for the new rectory, but I want to ensure that most of it will be handicap-accessible in the event that we ever have a retired priest who has mobility issues decide that they want to live here to assist the pastor. We have several retired priests who like to live in community with other priests, if only the rectory were designed to facilitate this option while giving both men some sense of privacy and space. I have drawn up some plans, and I am looking at other plans. By July 2018, we should have the funding in place to fully construct the new rectory without any debt.

9. Start cemetery improvements at Our Lady of Perpetual Help with **a new fence along the front of the property.** While not immediately on the radar, St. Joseph Parish recently received a \$5,000 donation towards a new memorial chapel in Head of Island, which I have envisioned to replace the old Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church (similar to what we did in Port Vincent). I have already designed this chapel, and went to the cemetery to do preliminary measurements to ensure it will fit. It will be slightly larger than the one in Port Vincent, and it will be made of standard wood framing materials and Hardi-Plank siding on the outside. It will feature five stained glass windows-- two larger ones with Our Lady of Perpetual Help and the Resurrected Jesus, and three smaller ones featuring our parish cluster patron saints: St. Joseph, St. Stephen, and St. Vincent Ferrer. While building the chapel in Port Vincent, I quickly found out that the stained-glass windows and the gothic window casings and the main door were the most expensive parts of the construction project! So, if anyone would like to donate towards the cost of any of these windows, please let me know. Stained glass art costs roughly \$400 per square foot today, but everyone loves the beautiful windows in Port Vincent, and it's well worth the investment. The three smaller windows in Head of Island will be 2 x 4 feet (approximately \$3,200 each) and the two larger ones will be 3 x 6 feet (\$7,200 each).

It will be a busy year as we start to get these things underway. Pray for good weather that we can move forward and improve our parishes. Happy 2018!!

As we look ahead to the week of January 28 – February 2, I will be in Las Vegas, NV with 12 of our parishioners from both parishes. No business or conferences will be conducted that week—it's just regular vacation!

Wishing you a peace-filled week,

Fr. Jason