

Fr. Jason's Wishful Thinking... Monsignor LeFebvre Parish Hall Improvements

This week has been a good one at St. Stephen. I found out that we will receive a digital carillon bell system (similar to the one that is installed in the old St. Joseph Church) thanks to an \$8,000 grant from the Stella Roman Foundation. On Tuesday morning, we were able to remove all of the old paneling and rotted baseboards out of the parish hall. On Tuesday afternoon, we were able to figure out why the A/C in the church attic wasn't working and had that fixed. Currently, I am working on a solution for the noisy new A/C unit in the church. Eventually, we will get rid of the old wooden panels that cover the A/C returns in church, and replace it with travertine marble to match what we already have.

I want to thank Jason Cates, Gary Cornett, Gil Delatte (and his grandson), Buck Fontenot, Gary Hanna, Danny Martin, and Hanse Poche who assisted with the demolition work on Tuesday and made it a fairly simple task. We started at 8:00 a.m. and it was done for 9:30 a.m. That's my kind of teamwork!!

I wanted to take some time to explain what will be happening over the next few weeks in the St. Stephen Hall, so we are all on the same page. While St. Stephen Hall does not receive as much wear and tear on a weekly basis as the St. Joseph Hall does, it is approximately ten years older. Everything is 34 years old in the hall, and while we have renovated the kitchen and bathrooms through the years (as well as some of the classrooms), the main hall has remained untouched. We will install new wall treatments first. The new wall panels will be painted white, and they will have a crown molding on the top. There will be about an 18 to 24 inch space between the crown molding and the ceiling (which will be painted), and we will install some LED lighting in the crown molding to provide ambient lighting in the hall. This is our first step.

Next week, thirty new LED light fixtures have been scheduled for delivery. We will replace all the light fixtures in the drop ceiling, which will brighten the hall significantly. We will be able to make those lights dimmable as well.

On Tuesday, the question came up whether we want to leave the floor and ceiling tiles untouched. I am bouncing around the idea of replacing them both, or painting the existing ceiling tiles and just replacing the floor. It will look odd to have all new everything and keep the original floor tiles that are discolored in several areas and won't match the new color scheme. I am working with Halpin's Flooring to get a super deal on 4,000 square feet of larger tiles to replace the existing floor in the hall, as well as the hallway leading to the bathrooms, and enough extra tile to create baseboards. As we pulled out the old baseboards on Tuesday, we noticed that they were rotten from years and years of mopping. So it would be better to install tiles along the perimeter of the walls. We will also replace the second A/C unit in the parish hall which is on its last leg.

When all is said and done, I estimate that the whole renovation will cost about \$50,000. Pretty good for a space that measures 3,780 square feet. That's about \$13 per square foot. The hallway to the bathrooms will be lagniappe. Once the hall is finished, we will work on the back parking lot.

New light fixtures = \$2,000
New wall treatment = \$13,000 - \$15,000
New HVAC system = \$12,000 - \$17,000
New flooring = \$12,000 - \$16,000

Meanwhile, I am getting excited about the upcoming fireworks sale at St. Joseph. I have been working in the new building to get flooring installed in the St. Vincent de Paul room, as well as laying tile in the fireworks retail area. I want to thank Mr. Bob Denny who wants to donate some ceramic tile that he has in storage to our flooring project, so I can install flooring in the last fourth of the building that we call fireworks storage. Thanks to the great blessing of SPACE and the fact that we no longer have to erect and dismantle the tables and shelving units in the parish hall, we are able to expand our fireworks selection by 20 or 30 new items, in

addition to all of our best sellers. You will soon get a price sheet in the bulletin so you begin to see what we have to offer for the July 4th fireworks season. The firework sale begins June 15th and ends on July 5th.

On a final note this week, I want to let everyone know that we are edging closer to a new opportunity for learning about our faith. Over the last few months, I have been working with Val LeBoeuf, Brent Waguespack, Aledia, Cle', and Caroline Sanchez and Bourque Printing to introduce a substantial museum quality exhibit of Eucharistic Miracles from around the world. The exhibit will be housed in the old St. Joseph Church in the open space at the front of the building. I really feel that this is an ideal place for the exhibit, as we have designated the old church as our community adoration chapel, and the old church is a great gift in our community. It should be a Catholic culture center and we should be proud of the old church and the fact that it is still with us 130 years after its construction in 1889. Soon the last display case will be erected inside the old church and it will be time to put the exhibit together.

I mention all of this to you because there has been a lot of behind of scenes work being done around here that most visitors to our campuses rarely see. As we enter these hot summer months and I mark my eleventh year anniversary as a priest (and my ninth year anniversary with you), I remain committed to moving things forward. I look ahead to the parish hall renovation and the parking lot at St. Stephen, the new Eucharistic miracle exhibit, the continued work in the firework building, some work in the parking lots and a new concrete slab for the bus, a new Knights of Columbus storage shed, and eventually a new rectory at St. Joseph. It's a busy summer!

I want to thank everyone for your continued support of our parishes which makes all of these projects possible. I also pray that you will find time with your families to rest and take a vacation during these summer months.

Best wishes this week to all of our graduates. You and your parents, teachers, and all who love you have sacrificed much to instill all of that knowledge in high school and college. As you celebrate these milestones in your life, remember to use COMMON SENSE and your CONSCIENCE to guide how you celebrate. We are proud of you and can't wait to see your light shine in the world!

Wishing you a grace-filled week,

Fr. Jason ☺