



The Pastor's Page



My dear people of St. Matthew's,

As you know, I try to avoid using the Pastor's Page for mundane news items. I prefer to use it to teach the Catholic Faith. Unfortunately, this week I do have a number of ordinary news items to relate, but let us begin with a little religion, at least.

This weekend our Holy Father inaugurates a special Holy Year dedicated to the life and teachings of St. Paul the Apostle. The year 2008, the Church believes, marks the 2,000th anniversary of the saint's birth. Consequently, Pope Benedict has declared this year, from June 28, 2008, until June 29, 2009, to be a time when all Catholics are encouraged to study the readings and the life of this great apostle who wrote fully one-third of the New Testament. The Holy Father wants us to become reacquainted with St. Paul's letters, written originally to local parish communities like our own. It is difficult to get a real sense of the man, or his teaching, by the snippets we get each week at Mass. There are also special indulgences attached to spiritual practices during the year which you will be hearing more about in the future.

Now, on to the rest. Last Saturday morning, there was a lightning strike in the neighborhood, which cut our power and blew one of the two compressors that power our air-conditioning system in the church. We are investigating whether this is covered by our insurance. It is a shame that we have to go to the trouble of repairing this when we have plans to install a completely new system, but we cannot survive the summer without air-conditioning in a church built without windows. The repairs are set to begin, but the next weekend or so we will be only half-cooled.

You will have noticed a new shrine being built opposite the front doors of our church. The various shrines in the parish have been built over the years through the skill and generosity of Angelo Cortina, a long-time parishioner. Last year, Angelo's wife, Anna, died, and this shrine is his gift to the parish in honor of St. Anne, the mother of our Blessed Mother, and in memory of his wife, Anna Cortina.

In addition, thanks to the generosity of some donors, after forty years we will finally have the confessionals in the church repaired and sound-proofed. The alterations will truly muffle the sound so that you can confess your sins without broadcasting the news to the entire parish. In addition, this will enable us to use both sides of the confessionals at once, reducing the waiting time for penitents. Kneeling, too, should be much easier. Nothing could be more important (or a better gift to the parish) than making it easier for people to make use of this important sacrament. The two confessionals on either side of the main doors of the church are being renovated through a special gift from Frank and Catherine Scotti, in memory of their son William, who died a few years ago. The confessional on the far side of the church is being renovated through the generosity of the Rosary Altar Society. Thanks to the generous ladies of the Rosary Altar Society, we will also be able to install some doors on either side of the sanctuary leading to the sacristy. This should cut down on the noise and eliminate distractions to you during Mass.

I am most grateful to these benefactors who have approached us, wanting to give specific gifts to improve the church and to enhance our worship here at St. Matthew's.

For the months of July and August we will welcome Fr. Eugene Hechanova from the Philippines to assist us. Fr. Eugene is a canon law doctoral student at the University of Navarre in Spain. So, in addition to helping us with Masses and our regular parish work, he will be able to assist in our Spanish ministry as well.

Many parishioners have inquired about the Mass Book for 2009. Unfortunately, I have not been able to issue the new book because the diocese has not made its final decision as to the number of priests we will have next year. As you are no doubt aware, there is a critical shortage of priests in the United States. Despite our ordination of nine men to the priesthood two weeks ago, the fact remains that our diocese has one of the worst ratios of priests to parishioners in the entire country. Sometime later in the summer, the diocese expects to be able to tell me how many priests St. Matthew's will have beginning next June. I have been told that it could be as few as two. If that were the case, it would necessitate a change in the weekday Mass schedule. This is something I have resisted, because I have always felt the Mass schedule is one of St. Matthew's strongest points, even providing a service to those beyond our parish boundaries. However, throughout the diocese for some years now, most parishes have seen a constant downsizing. Sadly, now it may be our turn. I will let you know as soon as I know.

Finally, as last year, the Pastor's Page will go on hiatus until September. So, to make your summer truly productive, over these next two months why not read St. Paul instead of me?

—Fr. McCartney