



## E-NEWS – Sermon December 13, 2015 – Lobby

*To Members of Saint Mary Magdalene – until Christmas I will send this weekly news, adapted from my Sunday sermon, [remember it is a spoken sermon, not a literary composition]. It is my part to promote our need for additional funds to complete our church construction endeavors. Thank you for whatever you can do to help us.*

*Take a look at the end of my sermon where there is a glass design which attempts to portray simply our current challenge and efforts.*

### Year of Mercy

Last week I tipped you off that we would hear from the Old Testament prophet Zephaniah today. If you did some homework, you discovered that the book has 3 chapters:

Chapter 1 - the day of the Lord - a day of doom and disaster

Chapter 2 - the day of the Lord - a day of judgment of the nations

Chapter 3 - read today - a day of promise of mercy for infidelities; the Lord in his mercy will spare a holy remnant; those people will finally enjoy peace.

*'The promise of mercy.'* We officially began the Year of Mercy last Tuesday, the feast of Immaculate Conception, when Pope Francis opened the Holy Door at St Peter's in Rome. For my short sermon on the feast I read the 7 Spiritual Works of Mercy and the 7 Corporal Works of Mercy.

3 times in the Gospel today - the people, then the tax collectors, then the soldiers asked John the Baptist - *'what are we to do?'* What are we in this congregation to do in this Year of Mercy?

Simple answer: memorize and live the Spiritual and Corporal Works of Mercy. I noticed in the news that is what the bishops of South Africa, Botswana, and Swaziland suggested. And I am sure, many other bishops suggested the same in their statements.

John the Baptist had some more specific responses:

- To the crowd he said *'if you have two cloaks, share with the person who has none.'*
- To the tax collectors he said *'stop collecting more than is prescribed.'*
- To the soldiers he said *'do not practice extortion, do not falsely accuse anyone, be satisfied with your wages.'*

## New Church Front Image



### ‘The Gathering Space’

What are we to do - you and me and everybody who is not here? To answer that question provides me a way to transition to our topic today about our new church: the topic is the lobby, which in official church documents is called '*the Gathering Space*.'

Here are words I put on page 5 of the bulletin, words taken from Church Guidelines: *The Gathering Space helps believers to make the transition from everyday life to the celebration of the liturgy, and after the liturgy, it helps them return to daily life to live out the mystery that has been celebrated.*

We worship inside the church. We try to put into practice in our everyday world what we learned inside the church. We can learn and find ways to organize ourselves in our Gathering Space to do those 14 Works of Mercy.

Some recent church history of church buildings: Before the 1970's church buildings did not have a Gathering Space. They had a vestibule, a small entry way; vestibules were a transition between outside and inside, but there was not much room for gathering people. And it was not possible to stay in those vestibules very long because other people needed to get in and out.

In 1970's new churches began to provide a larger Gathering Space. I observed how they worked, what people did there. I also observed how our own lobby since 2006 works as a Gathering Space. It is a place:

- where we ask people to volunteer for various ministries,
- it provides opportunities to collect items of food and other gifts,
- offers religious articles for sale as gifts, such as Olive Tree wood last week
- last week also our youth were holding signs calling your attention to their offer of a pancake breakfast,
- our lobby provides space for overflow crowds; we could use 3 - 4 more lobbies for Masses on December 24

- our lobby provides a kind of what some call the '*cry room*' - a space for small children who object to coming inside and be quiet. The children's parents can watch and listen to Mass on the 2 TV's we have out there.
- our lobby is a space we can meet and chat with friends
- our Knights of Columbus uses the lobby as a place for serving people during the Lent Fish Fries.
- the large table in the lobby is a sort of communications center for news, pamphlets, various parish forms, the weekly bulletin, the children's bulletin.

Those are activities we can do all the time in a Gathering Space, not just in the Year of Mercy.

I have learned a lot from watching all that. Our new church lobby will offer this:

- it will be large, the size of the basketball playing lines in this gym,
- it will be a straight on view into the church thru glass doors and with large TV's above doors,
- there will be no side or back doors from which to leave; the pastor will be able to catch you in the Gathering Space as you come out!
- children will be able to move around if that helps them.

My expert view on 2 - 3 year old children is that they do not like to be confined; they like to have space to roam a bit.

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## New Church Side Image



## Our E-News

I noted the Gathering Space can be a sort of Communications Center. In recent times there has developed additional means of communication.

One we began last June was an ENEWS sent to your email addresses. For these 9 weeks of sermons everyone gets a copy midweek. I anticipated everyone would devour these words with great enthusiasm and with a passion to respond.

I have been on a learning curve about these emails. First, I found out a few weeks back we could find out how many opened and read the emails of the ENEWS. Answer: about half of those who received it. That was deflating to my ego. I intend to ask the Parish Council to tell me what it means.

Do you recall and did you once memorize the 6 commandments of the church?

1. To assist at Mass on all Sundays and holydays of obligation.
2. To fast and to abstain on the days appointed.
3. To confess our sins at least once a year.
4. To receive Holy Communion during the Easter time.
5. To contribute to the support of the Church.
6. To observe the laws of the Church concerning marriage.

I am going to suggest our church add a 7<sup>th</sup> church commandment for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: *Thou shalt always read thy pastor's emails.*

## Two Secrets

I have 2 confidences, secrets, to tell you today. One - I just found out last Monday I can see who in the parish opened the E-News and who did not. Who has been naughty and who has been nice. My first reaction was: there are somethings I just do not want to know.

2<sup>nd</sup> confidence - as of last Monday our official and carefully, very carefully, designed Finance Plan for construction was submitted to the Bishop and his advisors for approval, and we await with apprehension a response. We also wait *with visions of sugar plums dancing in our heads.*

It would be more fitting for me to close today with the theme of 3<sup>rd</sup> week of Advent. The theme of this week is 'joy.' In the Thesaurus there are 39 synonyms for the word 'joy.' Rather than read those 39 words, here are joyful words from the Bible readings today:

Gospel: *'the people were filled with expectation.'*

Zephaniah: *'Shout for joy O daughter Zion . . . the Lord your God will rejoice over you with gladness.'*

St. Paul to the Philippians, the community he loved the most: *'Rejoice in the Lord always . . . the Lord is near . . . the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts.'*

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Pastor asks Santa for a new church!

## Fundraiser Glass



## **Bottom Line**

**We ask each family in our parish to pledge \$5,000 over 3-4 years. If we had a 100% response we would be underway quickly. For those who have already made a pledge/gift, please consider an additional \$2,000 pledge/gift, more if you can, to help us with these new costs. You are the ones who have brought us this far, and you are the ones who will bring us to the finish line. Many thanks.**