



E-NEWS – Sermon November 29, 2015 – Statues & Stations

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.

Statues & Stations

Two of the sentences Jesus spoke in the Gospel were: '*on earth nations will be in dismay*' and '*pray you have the strength to escape the tribulations*.'

This is #5 in my series of nine sermons on our new church; the topic for today is: Statues and the Stations of the Cross. The '*dismay*' and '*tribulations*' of Jesus' Gospel words are portrayed in his own life in the 14 Stations of the Cross. Even though the Stations are a devotion for Lent, I will use them as a lesson today in Advent.

There are a traditional 14 Stations found along the walls of any church. We are meant to walk from Station to Station, the Way of the Cross, even though it is not a long walk. Here is the traditional list:

- First Station: Jesus Is Condemned to Death.**
- Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross.**
- Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time.**
- Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Sorrowful Mother.**
- Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross.**
- Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus.**
- Seventh Station: Jesus Falls a Second Time.**
- Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem.**
- Ninth: Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time.**
- Tenth Station: Jesus Is Stripped of His Garments.**
- Eleventh Station: Jesus Is Nailed to the Cross.**
- Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross.**
- Thirteenth Station: Jesus Is Taken Down From the Cross.**
- Fourteenth Station: Jesus Is Laid in the Tomb.**

In 1991 on Good Friday Pope John Paul II offered a different list of 14 Stations. They were more closely based on the accounts of Jesus' passion in the four Gospels. Here is that list:

- First Station: Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane**
- Second Station: Jesus, betrayed by Judas, is arrested**
- Third Station: Jesus is condemned by the Sanhedrin**
- Fourth Station: Jesus is denied by Peter**
- Fifth Station: Jesus is judged by Pilate**
- Sixth Station: Jesus is scourged and crowned with Thorns**
- Seventh Station: Jesus bears the Cross**
- Eighth Station: Jesus is helped by Simon the Cyrenian to carry the Cross**
- Ninth Station: Jesus meets the women of Jerusalem**
- Tenth Station: Jesus is Crucified**
- Eleventh Station: Jesus promises His Kingdom to the Good Thief**
- Twelfth Station: Jesus speaks to His Mother and the Disciple**
- Thirteenth Station: Jesus dies on the Cross**
- Fourteenth Station: Jesus is placed in the Tomb**

The Stations represent for Jesus '*dismay*' and '*tribulation*' for his own life. All of us have known such days, though we hope not this Thanksgiving weekend. There are plenty of examples from our contemporary world where people experience national or regional tribulation.

When the Stations are displayed in a church they are sometimes elaborate with very detailed figures. Other churches have very simple Stations. They can be as simple as a cross with a Roman numeral.

A few years ago when I visited friends in Vietnam I was fortunate to see in their parish church Stations of the Cross which were carved from wood by some disabled woodcarvers. Mostly the carvers were hearing impaired men. This picture is the sanctuary of that church:



The pastor told us the place of the shop where the statues were carved and we visited. There I also saw a crucifix and life size statues of Mary and the Child - and of St Joseph. These are traditional statues found in the sanctuary area of churches.



I learned the wood used for the carvings goes by the local name Po Mu, also known as Fokienia, a wood native to South East Asia and used often to make furniture.

For the E-News version of this sermon here are illustrations of the statues and Stations. I was able to commission the crucifix, two statues and 14 stations to be shipped to us for a total of \$14,000. The statues are life size. This carver's shop has exported his work to Australia, but never to America.

Many of personally carved statues from Italy cost over \$25,000 for just one statue. Cost comparisons will show one reason why I pursued the opportunity when I saw these statues in that local parish. The cost of human labor is very different in different countries.



Our Financial Needs

We do not need to talk about money right now, do we? Well, we do, but I will just give the brief mention, as I did last week: I ask: pay attention to mailings, website, E-News, weekly bulletin - and then be as generous as you are able to help our endeavor.

We are within sight of some activity on the ground. Especially we would like to ask and hear from the 43% of the parish we have not heard from in the last 2 years.

Statues & Stations – Part II



Our Stations and Statues are of very reasonable costs, but our construction costs in Apex have changed much in the last year or so. Steel and the bricks and the concrete and the heating and air conditioning and the public address and other electronics - those costs are higher than anticipated.

And the people who will work, the laborers, - they need to be compensated, and this cost is not inexpensive. Workers have more choices of jobs right now. When we began two years ago, conditions were different.

Personal Preference & Taste

A different topic: Have you heard the Latin saying: *De gustibus non est disputandum?* It means "*In matters of taste, there can be no disputes*" The implication is that everyone's personal preferences and tastes are merely subjective opinions that cannot be right or wrong, so they should never be argued about as if they were. Our personal tastes about art and decorations are not the same.

Great art, wood carvings or marble carvings or paintings, are in museums. Michelangelo's Pieta is in St Peter's in Rome, though I expect today a 3D printer could make us one. I can tell you that I can find shops on tourist streets on which you can buy a Picasso or an El Greco that fools me.

One such store person once told me: *'I can make you anything you want.'* I will be more specific and show you an example in my Christmas sermon.

One of my personal tastes is that church statues and Stations and pictures not be the same as we can find in many other churches or we can purchase from church catalogues which are in any parish office. I prefer a gifted human being to create something with his/her God given talent.

It is a fascinating issue to explore: how is it determined - and who determines - what creative art is worthy of a museum? And what is judged as at best - refrigerator art? What is creative and what is just ordinary?

There are people who have talent and study such matters and their opinions are respected. But sometimes the conversation just ends with that Latin saying: *'De gustibus non est disputandum.'*

A Final Word

This issue of taste and of what is treasured can also apply to human beings, not just to objects. In a ceremony in Rome last week Pope Francis said something unusual about us priests:

He said: *'Priests are not mushrooms which sprout up suddenly in the cathedral on the day of their ordination.'* Mushrooms? He went on: *'A priest is a man who is born in a certain human context: there he learns the primary values, absorbs the spirituality of the people, grows accustomed to relations.'* We priests, like everyone, are all individuals, all different.

Our universe, our world, is also a place of difference - and a place of beauty and creativity. This coming week the United Nations will begin a Conference in Paris on our environment and its climate.

Pope Francis in Kenya on Wednesday urged the people of that nation to care for the wonderful environment God created for them. Part of the Serengeti is in Kenya. I suspect many have seen videos of the incredible migration of the wildebeest through the Serengeti.

God has created for us all the whole universe and our own earth. It is very different and very beautiful everywhere. It is as different as the lush rivers such as the Amazon and the Congo. Or as stark and empty as a desert or Antarctica. God's creation is not ordinary. God's creation is not a copy from some other universe. Creation is unique and creation is beautiful.

We sing a hymn *'For the beauty of the earth; for the love which from our birth over and around us lies.'* Psalm 23 presents the picture of the beauty of *'green pastures and still waters.'* In Genesis after each day of creation there are the words *'And God saw that it was good.'*

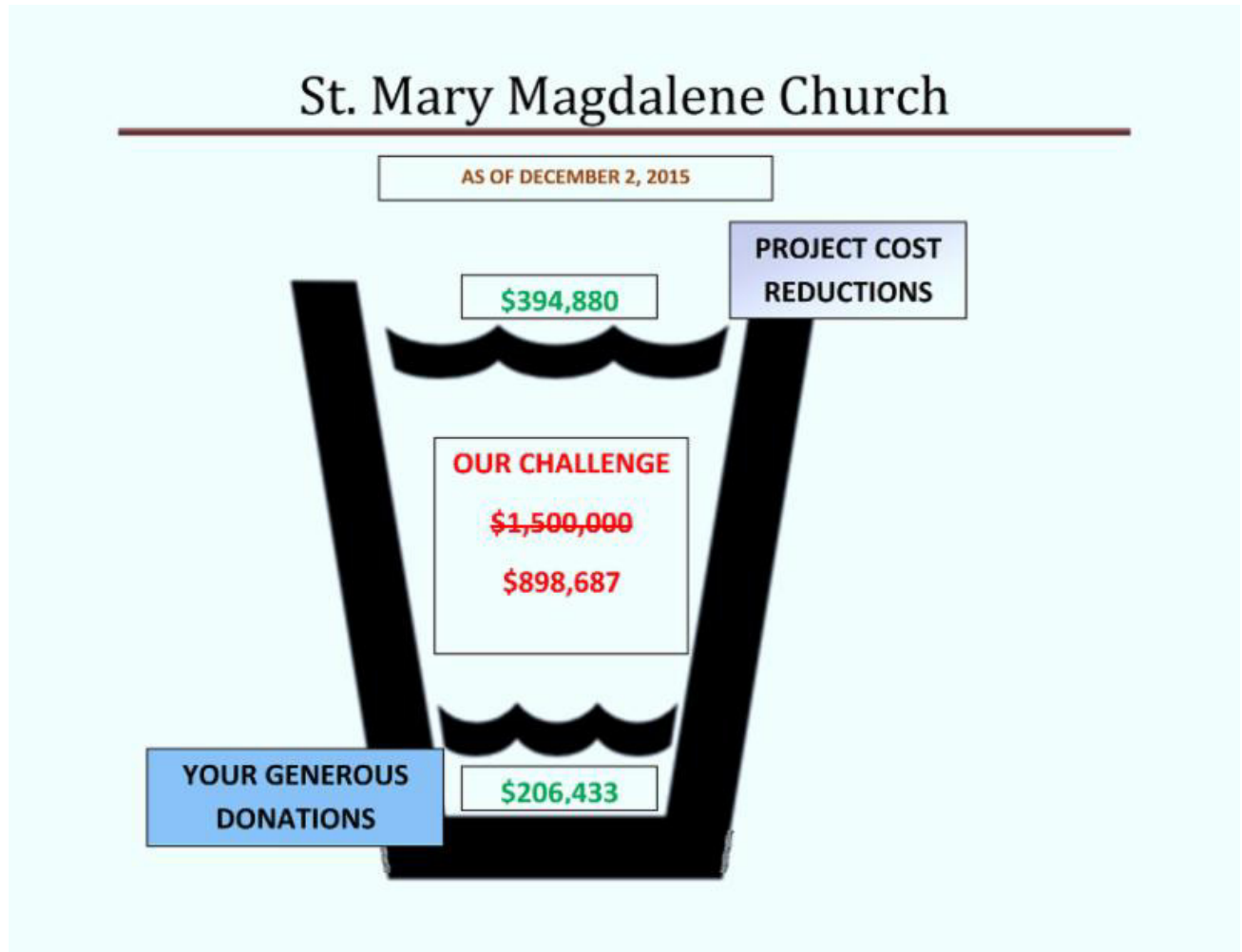
In our world there is tribulation and dismay.
In our world there is also beauty and creativity.

In between the tribulation and the creativity there is the struggle we have to move away from tribulation and toward creativity.

Advent has themes and words which encourage us in that struggle: waiting, hope, promise, watch, awake, longing, renewal, expectation, surprise, ready, and the hymn *'O come, O come, Emmanuel.'*

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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.