

## The Mission

I may have written these words already in a previous article, but I still feel a bit like Rex Harrison as the Pope in that old movie about Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel: Day after day the Pope would come into the chapel and look up at the artist on the scaffolding and plaintively ask “*When will you be done?*” to which Michelangelo (played by Charlton Heston) would respond, “*When I am done!*” Ugh! I just want to bash my head against a wall!

I can't get into all of the issues delaying the opening of our new parish hall without blowing a gasket, so I won't. The day is coming when it will open and, with it, there will open many possibilities for this parish to grow the community and to grow the faith therein. Some people opine to me that it is terribly unjust for the Bishop to move me without allowing me time to enjoy this fruit of our labors. But, this issue does not bother me in the least. The truly daunting work is yet to come. Rebuilding the community after this pandemic-year and looking for ways to bring back those who have drifted away from the practice of the faith will be the great challenge facing the new pastor and the community.

We need to find, within our parish communities, a new creativity to communicate the Gospel more convincingly and compellingly. I hope that those of you who are reading this will consider a personal roll in the rebuilding project. Don't discount your part in this crucial project. Even one act of stepping outside of your comfort zone and participating in some initiative can make a big difference. The staff will be looking for new people to get involved with Faith Formation of our children, hospitality ministry, music ministry, social action and every type of community building activity.

Most importantly, we need to learn how to be more expressive of our beliefs as Catholic Christians. For this, I think it takes more than regular attendance at Mass, (as crucial as that is). Personal development in the ways of reading, studying, contemplating and praying are key disciplines. Not too long ago I submitted a list of resources one could find on YouTube as recommendations for your personal growth. There are so many good ones which could

serve to enhance your understanding and devotion in faith. [However, there are also some not-so-good ones which can lead down a rabbit hole in the ongoing culture wars as they manifest among members of the Church).

### The Ultimate Concern:

All I am suggesting here is a shift in consciousness and prayer to the matter of ultimate concern, the Gospel of Salvation. If it is the matter of ultimate concern, then it has to be pushed to the forefront and to the top of the priority list. As the prophet says, “*My people perish for lack of knowledge!*” (Hosea 4:1)



### Expression of Gratitude & Consolation:

Over the past month I have received many cards and messages with expressions of prayer and condolences for my family at the death of my father. I wish to express my thanks to all for these kindnesses. My father would have been 89 years old on August 2<sup>nd</sup>. He spent the past several years battling problems with the valves in his heart. He was a very good man but he was also a man afflicted by many torments borne from a hard life. I hope and pray that your prayers and Masses for him will redound to his fully entering God's rest.

I have also been the recipient of many affirming messages about my pastorship over the past nine years. While I am uncomfortable being fussed-over, I do appreciate your kind words and the affirmations that I may have made some small difference or, more importantly, that I illuminated the Gospel for you in a meaningful way. I certainly will not forget you nor my time here in this beautiful place. You have given form to my life and I take it with me to my new assignment. Grace and Peace to you all.