

Pastor's Column for January 27, 2019

Bishop Fisher Will Bless our Renovated Hall: Come and Join Him on Saturday, February 2nd at 9 AM

We are honored that Bishop Michael Fisher has accepted our invitation to bless our renovated hall Saturday on February 2nd (just a week away!), the Feast Day of the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple. You are all invited to come at 9 AM sharp to join Bishop Fisher at the entrance of the hall. Mark your calendars! Be on time!

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple is a very important Feast for the entire Church. Joseph and Mary are following the Jewish tradition to present to the Lord their first-born son 40 days after his birth, and they choose to do so in the Temple of Jerusalem. Luke (chapter 22: 22-38) provides a detailed description of this presentation which takes a very special meaning as the baby Jesus is both human and divine: for the first time ever, the "Glory of God" enters the temple of Jerusalem. This extraordinary event is recognized by Simeon who had been visited by the Holy Spirit and told that he would not die until he has seen the Messiah!

"Simeon was a righteous and devout man, awaiting the consolation of Israel and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25). There is a famous painting by Rembrandt which shows how the light of the baby Jesus shines upon the face of Simeon. Rembrandt is inspired by Simeon's beautiful prayer to the Lord (Luke 2: 29-32) when looking at Jesus held in his arms:

"Lord now let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled:
My own eyes have seen the salvation
Which you have prepared in the sight of every people:
A light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel."

This prayer, known as Simeon's canticle, is recited by every priest and religious before the end of every day as part of the "Night Prayer" (the fifth and last prayer of the daily Liturgy of the Hours). Since my entering the seminary in September 2005 (over 14 years ago!), I have prayed Simeon's canticle every night before going to rest: a great reminder that "Jesus is my light, my peace, and my salvation." Also, all of us who pray the daily Rosary are reminder of this important presentation of the Lord twice a week when reciting the fourth decade of the joyful mysteries (Mondays and Saturdays).

The Church tradition has been to bless candles and have a candle-lit procession before the Mass (called **Candlemas**) celebrating the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. We have been doing so every year at OLHOC on February 2nd. This year, it will take a more solemn form as it will be combined with the blessing of the renovated hall and our main celebrant will be Bishop Fisher. We will also unveil a portrait of Father Narcisse Martin (see our column of last week announcing the renaming of the social hall) and have a display of pictures/information regarding the legacy of Fr. Martin, single pastor serving the entire community of the Waldorf area for 29 years: 1894-1923. Here is the proposed plan for the entire celebration:

- 9 AM Blessing of the Candles and the Father Martin Hall,
- Candlelit procession to the Church and Mass
- 10 AM Reception in the Father Martin Hall (meeting with Bishop Fisher, light breakfast and presentation by members of the Father Martin Society)
- 11 AM Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament in the church, followed by the Rosary.

On behalf of our Parish and Finance Councils, I would like to take this opportunity to express my own appreciation to all of you who have been supportive of our on-going capital campaign. We can all praise the Lord that we now have a renovated church (place of worship) and a renovated hall (place of faith formation, retreats, learning, and community activities). You will recall that in addition to the church renovation, we had originally envisaged a 2-story multipurpose learning center (to be built adjacent to the hall), a perpetual Adoration Chapel, and a new steeple. In the coming weeks, we will come back to you with an update on the design/costs of the proposed remaining activities under the capital campaign. What we achieve together will depend on your continued support to the capital campaign over the next twelve months (most pledges you made were over a three-year period).

Let us pray to God that like Simeon, we will all continue to see in Jesus Christ our Light, our Peace and our Salvation, and that we will keep our strong desire for evangelization, sharing the Good News of our Lord, Jesus Christ! Let us pray that like Simeon we will be all inspired by the Holy Spirit! Let us pray that filled with Hope, our parish will pursue a Spiritual Renewal in the coming weeks and months! Let us pray that our renovated hall will help strengthen our Faith/Spiritual Formation Programs for children, youth, adults and entire families! Come Holy Spirit! Fill our hearts with the Fire of your Love!

One in Christ,
Fr. Alain