

Pastor's Notes: Strategic Planning after Your Input

January 10, 2021

2020 has proved to be a challenging year, for sure. But it has also been a year of opportunity. We took the opportunity of the quieter time in our parish to tackle one of our strategic priorities: namely, facility preservation. We have been monitoring the situation of the roof for some years, but now it has gotten to the point of needing to be replaced. After having done a major patch job just three years ago, it has been discerned that a patch will no longer remedy the underlying issues, as we continue to have leakage and collateral damage to our infrastructure. FEMAC (Facilities, Engineering, & Maintenance Advisory Council) has been diligently researching the way for us to move forward, and we are getting close to signing a contract with a company to put a new roof on our church. It has been the primary impetus for our planned capital campaign to raise the funds necessary to preserve this beautiful edifice and improve our campus. In fact, the roof issue is becoming the signature project for the campaign, which will be called "Under One Roof". This name acknowledges that we are one parish under one roof, even though we can identify three distinct communities that gather under it. How very Trinitarian!

But while we resolve the issue of the roof, we also have another lurking menace to our beautiful facilities: that is the long-past-aged-out heating and cooling of the church. East Tennessee is not known for too many extremes of weather, but in the winter, when it's cold, it's cold. And without heating in the church, it would be unbearably so. To heat the church, we have been using a very old boiler system that sends steam through our pipes to radiate heat throughout the church. You may have heard the pipes clanging at one time or another as the system cycles through. Soon we will need to make some major decisions on what to do. Either we revamp the system or we re-vision how we heat the church. Likewise we have the issue of cooling the church. While we are no Death Valley or Sahara Desert, the South does get hot—and more importantly, humid—in the summertime. And without something to take the edge off the heat, it is unbearably hot. Like the boiler system, we are cooling the church with an antiquated system that is ancient of days. The air handlers were Westinghouse units installed sometime in the middle of the previous century. They were obviously retrofitted, as no one had heard of air conditioning in 1890! But this retrofit was not ideal. Furthermore, over the years, we have replaced components of the original system, and due to unrepairable things, have a reduced cooling capacity. But now we are needing to rethink the entire design of how we bring cool air into this space, and to do it in such a way that respects the space, the artwork, and the organ. Soon we will be making decisions to that end, based on quotes that we have received in the past. Stay tuned for more on that subject.

Many asked in the course of our recent feasibility study what the status of All Saints Academy is, and the question is not easy to answer. If you look back on our website, you can see the archives of these pastor's notes and various other ways in which we have tried to keep the parish up-to-date with the latest concerning the old parish school just a block away. If you recall, we discerned after long deliberation that there was no way for our parish to rehabilitate this venerable old building, as it had gotten far beyond our means for upkeep and maintenance, let alone renovation. For the past five years, we have been earnestly trying to lease the building to developers to relieve us of the burden of the upkeep of this antiquated building, as well as let it be a source of revenue for us. However, it seems this is much more difficult than we anticipated, and we have had one developer after another be unsuccessful in turning this vision into reality. We are currently in an agreement with another developer who is looking to turn All Saints Academy into office space with a potential that some of the space might be used by our own parish. However, the coronavirus has put another wrench into that and delayed the project. It is our hope that 2021 will finally bring resolution to this project.

Without All Saints Academy, our land-locked limited space has become more of an issue and has caused us to look at various solutions to the ongoing space needs of our parish activities. In the course of the recent feasibility study, we floated the idea of building a bridge building between the RE building and the nursery, but we received lots of advice and feedback saying that there was not a lot of support for this idea at this time. We have taken very seriously this feedback and will not be pursuing this as a solution to our space needs. However, we got a lot of support for other creative uses of space, and these are the things that we hope to accomplish over the next year, at much less cost. Namely, FEMAC has been looking at rehabilitating the space below the vestibule at the back end of Varallo Parish Hall, as well as doing more with the Religious Education building's unused spaces.

Of course all of these things require funding to come to reality, and it is for this reason that we are moving forward with the capital campaign that we are calling Under One Roof. In early December, the results of the feasibility study showed broad and strong support for this endeavor, and after the report was made to our parish leadership, we have decided to proceed. In the next couple of months, you will see lots more about this. For the time being, I ask you to simply pray for its success in fulfilling one of our strategic priorities of Facility Preservation. With this priority addressed, we hope to be able to continue our mission to proclaim Jesus Christ the font of all Truth, Beauty, and Goodness, and to continue His mission to form disciples from all peoples according to the tradition and patrimony of the Catholic Church.

