



Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time September 27, 2015

Pastor's Column

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Jesus, Divine Redeemer and Master of the Universe



In June, I went to Massachusetts to spend a few days with Fr. Rich Lewandowski, our beloved priest who helps to “cover” for me when I am on vacation or leading pilgrimages.

While there, we travelled to Monroe, Connecticut to visit his cousin, Sr. Dulcissima, who is a member of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth.

Sister Dulcissima is living in their Marian Heights Retirement Home along with a handful of other sisters.

In June, Sister celebrated the 80th anniversary of her vows! In a few months, she will turn 100! Living in a room next door to her is another Sister who is 102!

The Sisters recently sold some acreage as well as the home in which they are presently living. It is much too large now for their needs, and a smaller facility is presently being built. The home in which they are now living will be torn down.

When a Sister finds herself going to this Retirement Home, it is like an “elephant returning to the elephant burial grounds.” They know that it is the last step, the last place they will be before they die. In a very real sense, it is “God’s Waiting Room.”

One would expect that such a place would be sad, having an atmosphere, at best, of melancholia, and, at worst, an atmosphere exuding an air of gloom and doom.

But that is not the case at all. What I experienced was the power of our Christian Faith, our belief in Resurrection.

These Sisters are creating a place of joy, peace, and solidarity. It was beautiful to see how they go through their daily routines, how they look after each other, and how they are joyfully waiting for the next step in their journey that will lead them home to our loving God.

My visit there left me inspired, and renewed in my belief in the Resurrection. The Sisters are such powerful witnesses! I pray that anyone who may be struggling with their faith, or “down” or depressed about what life may be handing them, would find a place like that to visit in order to lift them up and help them to keep the proper focus on life’s journey.

While there, I went to their Chapel and saw a magnificent mosaic, “Jesus, Divine Redeemer and Master of the Universe.” It is large: the dimensions are 16’ 7” in height and 28’ in width. The artist is Clair Leighton, a local artist in Monroe, Connecticut, and, unfortunately, she died recently.

The Mosaic is scheduled to be destroyed when the building is torn down. This will happen by the end of this year 2015.

In talking with Sister Marita, the Director of the Retirement Home, she said that the Sisters would be very happy to gift our Parish with the mosaic, at no cost. We would be responsible, though, for the cost of dismantling the mosaic, having it shipped, refurbishing it, and then repurposing it.

In talking with Brian Leahey, our Director of Construction, we concluded that the mosaic could be the centerpiece of our Memorial Garden on the south side of the Church. The Memorial Garden is the place where everyone who has helped to make our new Church possible will be named and remembered.

With that in mind, in July, Brian and I flew to Monroe, Connecticut along with Gianfranco Tassara, a mosaic artist from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who has experience in dismantling, refurbishing, and repurposing other mosaic pieces.

Together we assessed that the mosaic could be dismantled, refurbished, shipped, and reassembled here on our Parish grounds in our Memorial Garden. The estimated cost for the whole project would be about \$270,000.

The mosaic, “Jesus, Divine Redeemer and Master of the Universe,” is now offered as a Memorial Item.

The mosaic will be disassembled into 3’ by 3’ squares, shipped to the artist’s workshop in Milwaukee, where it will be refurbished, and then it will be shipped to our Parish and reassembled in our Memorial Garden, becoming the centerpiece of this area on the south side of the Church.

There will be 54 panels. So we are offering each panel as a Memorial Item. Each panel can be reserved for a donation of \$5,000. When all panels are reserved we will have enough financial resources to ensure the complete project. Presently, eight panels have already been reserved! Only 46 more to go...

Please consider helping to sponsor this project. Individuals or groups of people can come together to reserve a panel or panels. Please contact Chris Smith, our Director of Stewardship and Development, or me. We will be very glad to answer any questions that you may have. Your support will be greatly appreciated!

The Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth will be overjoyed to know that their mosaic will not be destroyed but will continue to inspire others for generations to come.

One of the Sisters said to me, “Father, please make this happen. You have no idea what that mosaic means to us! We have been praying in its presence for almost 50 years...”

Thank You!

Fr. Mike

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