

Fr. Simon Sez

The Sacred Heart Parish Council has been planning for a long time to do some work on the main floor of the rectory. Many volunteers and some contractors have been working hard on it. So, it's time for a status report.

It has been disruptive in office work and living but manageable. We still have not been able to move our parish offices back into the rectory from the Mission Center, but we are getting close. The exercise room generously stocked with exercise equipment by Fr. Kopel is now available for use. No excuses anymore. People have done much hard work to keep that equipment available for me and future priests!

We replaced the carpet, linoleum and original tile flooring with modern tile and plank flooring. Much of the floor trim wood work has been refinished or replaced. We repainted almost all of the painted walls and ceilings. A contractor cleaned the central air duct system. The air conditioner and blower still has to be replaced. It is so old, the bearings are gone. Also, the old ceiling speakers need to be replaced with ceiling fans.

We thank our volunteers who have put in many hours up to this point to get us here. We need many volunteers next week to finish painting and to do a thorough cleaning starting at 1:00 p.m. this Monday. The new living room furniture arrives this Tuesday. We bought a couch, sofa, and rocking recliner. (I didn't get exactly what I wanted!) Msgr. McPhee's recliner is going downstairs. The built-in heat, massage, and phone don't work anymore. Does anybody want to sit in the old captain's chair?

Fr. Kopel previously made the old housekeeper living quarters useable as a priest bedroom and study. (Thank you Fr. Kopel!) We repainted it, replaced the carpet, and bought some bookcases. I am looking forward to having my own, private study that will end up quit messy, I am sure.

Surprisingly, we found all the furniture we were looking for scattered in three different furniture stores. We even found a mule chest to put into the Sacred Heart Parish Hall under the smart TV. With minor modifications, it will be a nice place for computer use in showing videos online and provide storage space for the Altar Society and YFF.

If you have not been involved in helping so far, please consider it. We need your help to finish this project, have an Open House, get me moved back in, and finish the rectory basement.

LENT REGULATIONS FOR CATHOLICS

All Fridays throughout the year, especially during Lent, are penitential days. Abstinence: All who have reached their 14th birthday are to abstain from eating meat on Ash Wednesday and on all Fridays of Lent. Fasting: All those who are 18 or older, until their 59th birthday, are to fast on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday. Fasting is one full meal and two lesser meals without eating between meals. Jesus said to the disciples of

John and the Pharisees: "But the days will come, when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day." (Mark 2:20)

Found Alive Again: Scott Hahn Reflects on the Fourth Sunday of Lent



Joshua 5:9–12

Psalms 34:2–7

2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Luke 15:1–3, 11–32

In today's First Reading, God forgives "the reproach" of the generations who grumbled against Him after the Exodus. On the threshold of the promised land, Israel can with a clean heart celebrate the Passover, the feast of God's firstborn son (see Joshua 5:6–7; Exodus 4:22; 12:12–13).

Reconciliation is also at the heart of the story Jesus tells in today's Gospel. The story of the Prodigal Son is the story of Israel and of the human race. But it is also the story of every believer.

In Baptism, we're given a divine birthright, made "a new creation," as Paul puts it in today's Epistle. But when we sin, we're like the Prodigal Son, quitting our Father's house, squandering our inheritance in trying to live without Him.

Lost in sin, we cut ourselves off from the grace of sonship lavished upon us in Baptism. It is still possible for us to come to our senses, make our way back to the Father, as the prodigal does.

But only He can remove the reproach and restore the divine sonship we have spurned. Only He can free us from the slavery to sin that causes us—like the Prodigal Son—to see God not as our Father but as our master, One we serve as slaves.

God wants not slaves but children. Like the father in today's Gospel, He longs to call each of us "My son," to share His life with us, to tell us: "Everything I have is yours."

The Father's words of longing and compassion still come to His prodigal children in the Sacrament of Penance. This is part of what Paul today calls "the ministry of reconciliation" entrusted by Jesus to the Apostles and the Church.

Reconciled like Israel, we take our place at the table of the Eucharist, the homecoming banquet the Father calls for His lost sons, the new Passover we celebrate this side of heaven. We taste the goodness of the Lord, as we sing in today's Psalm, rejoicing that we who were dead are found alive again.

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