

Homily by Father Becker

Second Sunday of Easter – April 28, 2019

“Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them ...”

Friends in faith, welcome as we celebrate the octave of Easter – the “Eighth Day”; a day devoted to God’s merciful heart, and the power of forgiveness shared with the church.

St. John’s gospel today takes us back to the Upper Room.

You remember it from Holy Thursday: Jesus told his disciples to approach a man in Jerusalem, who would lend them his lodgings for the Passover meal.

And now, they re-gather there, a week after Easter, to take stock with Thomas at what has taken place since the tomb was found empty.

You can still visit the Upper Room today, in Jerusalem; a simple but beautiful shrine that recalls the apostles who gathered there with the Lord, who reclined with him at table, and who rejoiced as he appeared in their midst – risen from the dead.

I think of that Upper Room today, as we launch the effort for a new home for our priestly apostle in Plainview.

For over a century, over 20 priests have lived in the rectory at St. Joachim. And as I’ve been telling you for two years or so, the time is coming to replace it.

20 years ago, Father Connelly and the parish leadership decided that there was no point in trying to maintain the current rectory any longer.

And it has fallen into disrepair with the years. It’s 101 years old. Some of you have been inside, to help with cleaning; and you know its condition first-hand.

It’s livable, but not very suitable. There’s no insulation; windows are old and drafty; the roofs leak at times; wiring and plumbing is old, as is carpeting, flooring, window coverings, etc.; bats inhabit the building seasonally; and so forth.

It’s also too large: its utilities alone cost almost as much as the entire Parish Center building, which is used by over 250 people each week.

Our parish councils are convinced, the rectory has outlived its usefulness. The most cost-effective option, is to take it down once we have a new one.

You can’t move it, unless you replace the roof first, due to asbestos; and that would cost even more than taking it down. And we can also salvage anything saleable, like woodwork, etc.

(I should add that our parish offices moved to the Parish Center 6 years ago, so we could eventually replace the current rectory. It’s now a residence only, which is more appropriate.)

In recent months a committee has formed to guide the fund drive for a new rectory (or priestly home). Tim Scanlon, Tom Deming, and Cathy Reiter are co-chairs, along with myself and Don Dose from the Finance Council.

Over the next 3 years, we seek to raise at least \$250,000 for a new home on parish grounds; and we hope to do even better if possible.

Now, if you haven't built a house in a few decades, that sounds like a lot of money; and it is. But builders and realtors tell us it's quite realistic: It's expensive to build.

But it's not going to get any cheaper if we wait. It just gets more expensive.

The good news is, we're already about 1/3 of the way to our goal: several folks have promised their generous support; and some have already sent in their pledge card, including me.

When we hear back from a few more, I expect we'll be closer to half the goal. So we're off to a great start already, and I'm very grateful.

We will also be asking folks at Conception to support a fund for furniture and appliances for the new rectory. We need those too.

If possible, we'd like to keep the rectory on campus, like 90 per cent of our diocesan priests, to avoid him shuttling back and forth by car during the day.

It would be a single-story townhome or ranch home, to avoid stairs.

In fact, our simplest option would be to build on the vacant lot east of the Parish Center, the site of the old Dickman home. Utility hookups are still there.

Your priest could remain in the current building until the new one is built; and perhaps allow for some communal park space next to the church itself.

And some day, if Plainview grows along with Rochester, you may want to expand the church a bit to the east, especially when the Parish Center gets older.

But, if we can't raise the money to build, we may need to move the priest to a home somewhere off campus, instead.

We'd rather not, because then we invest in extra property that we don't really need; we have plenty of room right here on campus.

Soon you'll be receiving more information on this effort in the mail. You may also be invited to a meeting to learn more, or be contacted by phone.

We'll also have information at our website. And we hope you'll choose to support this effort generously. It's been needed for a long time. It's been delayed long enough.

As the old joke about the priest says, "I have good news, and I have bad news. The good news is, we have the money. The bad news is, it's still in your pockets."

In the past eight years, we've spent over \$400,000 fixing up the rest of our campus – the Church, the Parish Center, the Parking Lot and so forth.

Everything from roofs to heating and cooling units, to outdoor lighting and signage. Details are on the carport bulletin board. And now it's time to address your apostle's home.

Your priests have lived in the current rectory for over a century, to do what Jesus and the apostles did in the Upper Room, 20 centuries ago:

Break the bread of life for you, pour out the cup of faith for you, and share the Spirit who forgives sins.

We hope now, that you'll consider giving back for your apostle here at St. Joachim. For when we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim his death until he comes. In the Name...