

Dear Parishioners, Alumni and Friends,

Sunday is our end of the year 11 AM Mass in the Marymount Auditorium, followed by our annual St. Patrick's Parish Wide Farewell Picnic and Barbecue. This Mass will conclude with our traditional blessing for departing families and individuals, whom we will miss very much. Of course we will have our special blessing for fathers as it is also Father's Day. For the picnic and barbecue, we need lots of help with the set up, barbecuing and clean up. And we need everyone to bring either a side dish, such as salads, pastas, chips, corn on the cob or celery, etc., OR to bring a wonderful dessert. We will provide the hamburgers, hot dogs and drinks. We will also have our regular St. Patrick's Masses as well.

This past Sunday we had our final Parish Council Meeting for the year. With my reappointment, I want to improve some of our programs, events and services in order to help make us a better parish community. For example, this past Spring we had lower attendance at both the Sunday 10:30 AM Mass and the 11:00 AM St. Patrick's Parish Mass in the Marymount Chapel. I am especially concerned about the latter, though I know that with nicer weather people tend to go away for the weekend. However, this has been true for the past two months. There is absolutely no question of the importance of continuing this Mass, but our costs have increased and often the weekly collection does not cover what is needed. We will also increase our visits to the local hotels around St. Patrick's. Every two months, parish council members and other volunteers go to a multitude of hotels closest to the Church and leave a packet of Mass schedules with map and directions. Still Sunday concierges quite often give out misinformation. Eventually the news will sink in, but it is very frustrating as we have been doing this since last August.

It has been mentioned that I am not often seen at St. Patrick's because I have been at Marymount, and that you never know who the priest is going to be at the 10:30 Mass (or indeed who he is). No one is more frustrated than I am. But remember that we did not have a permanent Vice Rector this year, which made it more difficult for me to be in two places at the same time. Maybe these and other issues are the reasons people are attending less. In September we plan to do an anonymous survey to find out why people are going to Mass less and perhaps ask other questions about your needs, wants and critiques.

Others have asked why we keep asking for more offerings to take care of renovations and other expenses. "What renovations?" "What expenses?" "The Church is fine as it is, why keep asking for money?" This newsletter is not to ask you to increase your offerings, but it is to let you know the facts. The move from Santa Susanna cost us a great deal of our income and savings. And moving into St. Patrick's required immediate renovations to the spaces below the Church and within the Church: New walls and plastering, painting, heating and A/C, library creation, trees pruned, locks replaced, telephone, internet and alarm systems installed, church lighting changed, platforms built, entire sound system renovated, and we bought new heating lamps which necessitated changing the electrical outlets (that project alone cost about 13,000 euros). Despite this, there were still complaints that the Church was too cold this winter. We do have an estimate to putting in a solid gas heating system, but we cannot install it because there is a lien against the Church building for past works, and the owners are waiting for a condono. If we put in the heating system now, without this "pardon" and someone reports us, we would have to both pay a fine and remove the system. The condono might be granted next week or in five years. So please be patient. We also needed to renovate Rosanna's office, the sacristy and are trying to fix the plumbing, wall damage and constant mold in the sacristy, Tara Hall and library. Some of these things we have been paying for in installments, including the TFR (pension) payments to our employees as a result of transferring from Santa Susanna to St. Patrick's.

Add to all this the ongoing salaries, electric bills, INPS and countless other costs that appear out of nowhere. We talked about these and many other issues at the Council Meeting, including a return to our original post-10:30 AM Mass hospitality in the Vestibule of the Church like we did at Santa Susanna. Next year we will also be revising or re-enlivening our Religious Education Program, the St. Nicholas Charity Serata, my spiritual walks and parish trips, Bible Study and adult education, As Romans Do, wedding facilitation and sacramental records. So there are more creative ideas and possible changes to come and I very much look forward to working with all of you, and to welcoming Fr. Bernie Campbell, our new vice rector, in the fall! Hope to see you at the picnic! Ciao for now, Father Greg