

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Agnes,

Blessed Laetare Sunday and feast of St. Joseph! As this weekend's bulletin indicates, we are inviting everyone to join us in observing the Seven Sundays Devotion to St. Joseph for the intention of discernment, movement, and just settlement regarding our cafeteria. This, then, is a fitting time to give an update on that and other projects in the parish.

Organ: I will start with the area where there is some clarity. In recent months we established an *ad hoc* Organ Restoration Committee that communicated with three companies, two of which submitted proposals for restoration of our historic Casavant organ. After consultation with local organists, the committee recommended that the parish proceed with Casavant Freres. We are awaiting their final proposal and contract, but the cost should be around \$650,000-\$700,000. That is a large sum, but it is well worth it to preserve the beautiful organ that we have here at St. Agnes. Moreover, it seems the Lord is blessing this endeavor since we have received in recent months a donation of \$270,000 and several donations of \$10,000 earmarked for this project, in addition to the \$60,000 that we had already received toward the project before my last update. We are unsure about the start date and there are numerous details that still need to be addressed with the project, but the urgency of this work steadily increases. Once we have the final proposal, we will communicate the cost and timeline, together with information on our 'Organ Donor' Campaign.

Church Roof: As previously reported, negligence on the part of FPS Roofing and their subsidiaries resulted in our having to pay approximately \$90,000 from our Building Fund to reroof the entire church and bell tower. Legal proceedings are moving, though slowly, and I ask your continued prayers for a resolution that restores to us the costs of the damages.

Cafeteria: Next Saturday will mark eleven months since the gas explosion that caused extensive damage to our cafeteria and injured Mr. Eric Leduff. While we see no real progress on site, there is MUCH that has taken place since then. In short, nearly every party involved in the project has retained legal counsel, causing communication of the smallest of details to take weeks to convey from one party to another. There has been a continuous stream of new information as we investigate further and understand more fully what happened on April 25, 2022 and the days preceding. A full assessment of the building should be done within the next three weeks. I report that with hesitancy because I was told the same last August, September, December, and January. May Saint Joseph help it all come to pass truly this time! Once we have that assessment, we will know the total valuation of the damages done to the cafeteria, the scope of work required, and what our options are moving forward. We have already been assured that the building is structurally sound; what is unclear is the extent of damages, cost for repair, and timeline for the same.

Now, a curve ball: In the midst of our conversations with our insurance company, concerns were expressed about finding a qualified contractor willing to take on repairing the cafeteria given the uncertainty of the previous contractor's work and extent of unseen damages that cannot be assessed (inside the walls, for instance). On February 6, a joint meeting was held between the Pastoral Council, Finance Council, and Building Committee to discuss this fact and whether to consider other options. One option discussed was reallocating the funds from the insurance claims to renovate the Gym into a usable larger meeting space for the parish. We have begun

initial assessments of the Gym to determine viability and possible costs for such a project. That option leaves the question of the cafeteria. Possibilities moving forward include full restoration, demolition, and several options in between. I am currently working to establish a Master Planning Committee to help with this discernment process, which will include consideration of various options, gathering of parishioner input, and formation of a Master Plan for us moving forward.

To be honest, it was not a thought in my mind to renovate the Gym anytime soon, but it seems that the delay in the cafeteria project and other factors coming together have brought us to a unique opportunity to reflect on our hopes for the present and future of St. Agnes Parish and move forward in pursuit of that vision. I do not want to move hastily, nor do I want to drag feet any more than has already been imposed upon us by outside elements. With that in mind, I will be gathering the Master Planning Committee in the coming weeks to begin this process and urge each of you who has a heart for St. Agnes to join in praying for this endeavor and to take part in the gatherings that will be coming in the near future. I need your input. I am not coming to the table with a master plan already in mind. We have options, but it is for parishioners — not Fr. Brent — to decide what will best serve our parish and how we can best serve our community and the diocese for years to come.

There is still much uncertainty at this point, but there is one thing of which I am absolutely certain: God is with us! Our community is growing in grace and in numbers; new parishioners and families are signing up regularly, and God is doing beautiful things in many hearts. I have confidence that the Lord, Who has allowed all of these things to take place, will continue to be with us each step of the way. *Deus providebit!* God will provide! As always, my door is open if you have questions, concerns, or ideas. God bless you all!

Our Lady of Prompt Succor, hasten to help us! St. Joseph, pray for us! St. Agnes, pray for us!

In Corde Jesu, per Mariam,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fr. Brent Maher". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized script.

Fr. Brent Maher

March 17, 2023

Feast of St. Patrick and St. Gertrude of Nivelles