

The construction of our narthex and the renovation of our church will soon begin. This week the building committee hosted an open forum after reviewing the surveys that you returned to us, and discussing different points of view with many of our members. We agreed to proceed with our original plan to add a narthex to the front with a partial basement and to improve the appearance of the church interior. This is an expensive plan, but we heard from many of you that you were willing to help pay for it. This will require sacrifice, but the rewards will be great.

The first sacrifice will be celebrating mass over in St. Rita's for the next 6 months or so. We are scheduling the move after masses next weekend – on Sunday and Monday, Labor Day. It will feel different worshipping over there, but it will be an adventure we will take on together, and who knows? It may make us stronger as a community.

When I was in Rome a couple of weeks ago, I purchased several hundred St. Jude medals, and I will give these to you after mass next week. That should help us in the days ahead: St. Jude is a patron saint of impossible causes. You may have heard the story of why St. Rita's is called St. Rita's. When the Catholics in Cameron first decided to build a school, they prayed to St. Rita for assistance because she is another patron saint of impossible causes. They got the contributions they needed. I thought we should tell St. Jude about that and let him know it's his turn.

The most impossible cause of all is much more than gathering funds or raising a building. The most difficult cause is salvation. As Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem, someone who perceived this asked him, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" Jesus dodges the question. The number is not important. How you live is important. So he answers this way: "Strive to enter through the narrow gate." It's going to be tough; you have to strive for it. The gate is narrow: Some will be spiritually too heavy, too late or too weak to get in. Some are smug enough to think they're all set to be saved, and they will be in for a big surprise. Two surprises actually: They themselves may not pass through the gate, and other people who they thought would never make it may be there. Jesus says, "People will come from the east and the west and from the north and the south and will recline at table in the kingdom of God." In effect, Jesus finally answers the question, "Will only a few people be saved?" by saying no, many will be saved, and many you're not expecting will be saved.

Luke's gospel frequently sounds this theme of divine reversal. Just when you think you have things figured out one way, God turns them around the other way. It's disorienting, but it's not always bad. You may have never guessed you would be in the job you have now, or the relationship you have now. But there you are. Our core thoughts are sometimes completely overturned. Even though we can't see it at the time, it may just turn out for the best. Salvation requires striving. In the way we help our neighbor, say our prayers and accept our challenges, we strive to show our love for God, and we prepare to face the narrow gate.