

Here's the latest on the building campaign. Several weeks ago we received from the architect revised drawings of the church's floor plan and exterior appearance. This week I met with Bishop Finn to go over these designs. They show an addition to the front of the church, where we will have an indoor gathering space, a new reconciliation room, a vesting sacristy, storage, and the much anticipated restrooms. We also plan to freshen up the interior of the church. Bishop Finn supports the work we have done so far. He had a few requests and questions that I will bring to our committee, but nothing major. From here we will begin a more detailed plan with our architect, and then we will be ready to put our project up for bid. I want to thank all of you for your support. We receive contributions every week, and we will need every penny when we break ground. Everyone wants to know, "When will construction begin?" So let me tell you: I don't know. But it's coming closer. God has been good to us, and you are good to our parish, to God's house. Soon we'll have an even more beautiful space for worship.

The goodness of God is the theme of today's responsorial psalm, "The Lord is kind and merciful." It shows up in the lectionary today not just because God is good, but – for want of a better term - because God is romantic. We don't hear much about this image of God, but in the gospel and in the first reading, God appears as a bridegroom and a spouse. Jesus compares himself a bridegroom, to someone who is a walking celebration. In the first reading, God addresses the chosen people as a man speaks to a woman. "I will lead her into the desert and speak to her heart. She shall respond there as in the days of her youth." Then God says he will marry the chosen people: "I will espouse you to me forever: I will espouse you in right and in justice, in love and in mercy." It's the romantic side of God. Many people envision God as their Lord, but in these passages God appears as a spouse. That is how much God loves us, and how much God is ready to sacrifice for us. When we see spouses loving each other and sacrificing for each other, we see in them a glimpse of the love of God.

Not every marriage is perfect. The psalm contrasts God's goodness with our misbehavior. We have sinned; God has every reason to turn us aside. But God responds like a faithful spouse when the partner has done something wrong. God forgives. The psalm includes this beautiful image: As far as the east is from the west, so far has God put our transgressions from us. Sometimes when we offend people, they throw our transgression right back into our face. They never let us escape from our sin. They know we have done wrong, they are angry about it, and they punish us by keeping our sin ever before our eyes. God is not like that. In the psalm God does something very different. God puts our transgressions as far away from us as the east is from the west.

In doing so, God shows us how to love one another. If you want to be a good spouse or a good friend, be ready to forgive. Then people will say not just "The Lord is kind and merciful," but you are kind and merciful too.