

The two questions I hear most about the improvements to our church building are, "When does our project begin?" and "Can we please get rid of the orange carpet?"

The answers are: The capital campaign begins today, and yes, we can get rid of the carpet, but first we need pledges.

When I arrived at St. Munchin Parish 4 years ago, I fell in love with the people. Some families have been here a long time, and others moved here because they liked what they saw. Some of our first members built this church over 100 years ago. Generation after generation, people have been baptized, married, and buried here, and Sunday after Sunday we have gathered here for mass.

Our church building is structurally sound. It has made the transition from the old mass in Latin to the new mass in English, and it is still large enough to hold our members – on most days. An occasional facelift helps a building like this, and it has fallen to us, to this generation, to provide one for the future.

It will require sacrifice. Sacrifice comes easily when you have love. Spouses sacrifice for each other; parents sacrifice for their children; children sacrifice for the family. They do it without thinking because of love. We love this building, we love the people who worship here, and we love the children of the next generation. On the day of his ascension, Jesus told his followers to make disciples of all nations. They couldn't have done it and we can't do it without sacrifice.

I've been meeting the last several years with groups like the parish council, the finance council, the stewardship council, the cemetery board, the building and renovation committee, and our staff. The diocesan directors of finance, buildings and worship have met with us. Bishop Boland has followed the progress of these plans, and he personally asked me about them while he was here for confirmation just a few weeks ago.

Here's the plan. We'd like to build an addition to the front of the building. When you walk in you would first enter a room where you could visit before and after mass. To the side you'd find a reconciliation room, where you can prayerfully go to confession. There will be a sacristy where ministers can vest. And there will be restrooms, so that you won't have to go out the door, down the steps, across the street, up the steps, across the hall, and down the steps. You don't have to be in a wheelchair to know there ought to be a better way.

Inside the church we'd like to rearrange and pretty it up a bit. These plans may still be adjusted, but right now here is where they stand: We'd like to place the baptismal font where the organ is, we'd like to open up this wall so the choir and instruments can move here. We'd like to open up that wall and move the tabernacle over there. We'd like a new wall behind the altar concealing a small area with sinks where we can purify the vessels

after communion. We'd like to paint the walls, improve the furnishings and decorations, and pull up the orange carpet – as well as the red one. If you've been here long enough, you remember the red carpet we had before. What you may not know is it's still there, under the orange one. All that needs to come up. If contributions are strong enough we could also gain a basement under the addition and more comfortable pews inside. There's a lot we can do, but we need some sacrifice to do it.

Over the next few weeks, a member of the parish will ask to visit you at home. They'll bring more information about our campaign, including a sealed envelope with a message inside that the visitor has not read. That message will recommend a range for the size of gift I'd like you to consider. The visitor will leave your home before you open that envelope. You look at it, pray about it for a few days, fill out the pledge card, and seal it in another envelope we give you. Your visitor will return later and pick it up. That's it.

Think of making payments on your pledge as you would on a house. If you had to buy a house with cash all at once, most people would never live in one. But if you can pay over time, you can do it. Please consider making a large gift to this campaign, one that may need some time to fulfill. Those gifts will enable us to improve our house, our church.

I want to thank all the volunteers who have helped us so far. You have made us ready to launch an exciting new day for our parish. And I ask all of you to keep this effort in your prayers, and to be as generous as you can. The time is here. The need is now. Let us hold this vision of faith together for a better St. Munchin Church. Thank you all.