

(Regis weekend: 5 years? 10 ? 20 ? 29? Paint-shop?)

Thirty years ago when Father Jackson oversaw the building of St. Regis church, he cared not just for our spiritual needs, but also our social needs. He added an outside door downstairs on this side of the building, which today opens onto a classroom. Before we had a school, that room served another purpose. (Anybody?) It was where the men of the parish could gather, talk, play games, and socialize. A wonderful thing, right? This may shock you, but once in a while, people say some inappropriate things. Someone asked Father Jackson, "Wait a minute! How come the men of the parish get their own room? Why don't the women of the parish have a room?" Father Jackson graciously replied, "The women of the parish do have their own room. It's called the kitchen."

We don't talk like that any more. We had a lot of growing to do as a parish, and we still do. But we've come a long way since those early days--we have a wonderful school and childcare center, a strong council system, thousands of volunteers throughout the year, we have sister communities at St. James in Kansas City and Ita Maura in El Salvador, Fr. Lyons gives us the shortest homilies in the diocese, and on certain days if you look real hard you can actually see men in the kitchen--where we gather, talk, play games, and socialize.

We still have a long way to go: We seek a deeper prayer life, a better understanding of the Bible, a closer community, we still seek priesthood or religious life for one of our own members, more generous giving, a new church, and improvements to our school--better facilities and a better education. We seek racial tolerance, and a deeper commitment to our neighborhood. We seek more members who'll come every Sunday throughout the summer, sing loudly, and stay clear to the end of Mass.

Sometimes we get discouraged. We ask for an additional \$40,000 and people give \$1300. We spend months working on a revised plan for the new church and people like the old one. We spend years making friends in our neighborhood, and then they move away. Couples commit to a lifetime of marriage and then find their pledge is hard to keep. We get discouraged.

So did the people for whom St. Mark wrote his gospel. They believed Jesus was the messiah, but they couldn't convince everyone. They thought once you were baptized you'd remain faithful, but folks drifted away. They thought the world would welcome the gospel, but their own government murdered their leaders. They got discouraged. So Mark retold for them one of the parables of Jesus: He said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, the sower does not know how. The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come." It takes time, Mark said to his community, it takes time. Don't get discouraged. The grain will grow, even while you sleep.