

2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Earlier this week the parish staff got our first hardhat tour inside the construction project. My coworkers were ecstatic at what they saw. After years of planning and many months of inconveniences, we got to see up close just what is coming. The staff has a special concern because our offices will be on the ground floor. We'll share that level with Morning Glory Ministries' Emergency assistance: clothes, backpacks and IDs for those in need. Upstairs there'll be an expanded gift shop and restrooms accessible also to people here inside the cathedral. But the big draw upstairs is the new Donnelly Hall, a reception venue where people can celebrate, socialize and catch views of downtown and of the cathedral itself.

The work is on schedule, but we still need good weather to make better progress. I was placed in charge of the weather, and people said I was doing a great job up until last week. I'll try to get that straightened out for you.

A building is a shell. It is designed for a purpose, but the people who enter it bring that purpose to fulfillment. The same is true of our bodies. They are a shell. They are designed for a purpose, and we bring the purpose of our bodies to fulfillment. This is basically St. Paul's message in today's second reading.

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians is so long and important that we break it into thirds and start Ordinary Time each year with several weeks of excerpts. Today begins the middle section, which we'll use each Sunday till Lent. We land on a page where Paul is characteristically blunt: "Avoid immorality," he says. God made this shell, this body of ours for redemption, in the same way that the Father raised his Son Jesus from the dead. Paul says, "The body is not for immorality." He criticizes those who use their body for lustful, sinful purposes. He asks pointedly, Don't you "know that your bodies are members of Christ? ...your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you... you are not your own." As a building on sacred property will be set aside for sacred use, so every human being is sacred property set aside for sacred use. Paul asks us to treat our bodies reverently.

We should also treat the bodies of others reverently. One reason human beings survive is that God has wired us for reproduction. We delight in the bodies of others; the process of creating new generations is usually one of the most pleasurable activities in a person's life. But these same desires sometimes go awry. They lead us into what Paul neatly summarizes as "immorality", any activity that misuses our own body, (where the Holy Spirit has come to dwell,) as well as the body of another, who has rights of privacy and responsibilities for moral behavior as well. Some people get complacent with sexual sin, feeling some remorse but returning to it again and again.

Paul holds the standard high. We are capable of better behavior, and he calls out the Corinthians who don't achieve it. Remember, he said, your body is on loan from God. He expects you to use it for its intended purpose.

We don't yet have a confirmed opening date on our new building. We hope this summer. We're all anxious to walk through the front doors and bring it to life. We will prepare for it if we spend these next months making spiritual preparations that devote our bodies for their own divine purpose. Then no matter what building we enter, we do it with a properly tuned body, a temple of the Holy Spirit.