

Fr. Luan Tran

Weekly Bulletin Notes

2019

January 6, 2019: My Dear Parishioners

2019 is here, finally! Not that I was eager for it to come this quickly! New Year, new resolutions? May I suggest that you include a new prayer routine in your daily life in this new year of 2019? Perhaps you have been praying daily already. Perhaps you have been wanting to devote more time to daily prayers. Perhaps you haven't had time . . . whatever the situation you are in, please consider a renewed effort to pray daily in this new year! Daily prayers are necessary for the soul in the way oxygen is for the lungs. We may be going to Sunday Mass faithfully, but without daily prayers the graces we have received in the Sacraments do not have chance to grow, to blossom, to produce fruits in our lives. Daily prayers are critical for spiritual growth and spiritual growth is nothing other than a deepening of our friendship with our Blessed Lord!

I am looking at various options for a prayer book to recommend to you. And please remember, the family that prays together, stays together!

Have a Blessed New Year!

January 13, 2019: My Dear Parishioners

This weekend Tom McClung speaks to you about the last phase of the restoration project that was started by Father Nathan several years ago. It was a critical project to save the church building from literally disintegrating because of its age and the material from which it was constructed almost one hundred years ago. The total cost of this last phase of the project is about \$275,000, including the re-sealing of the exterior parts that have already been restored.

I always loathe to speak on the subject of money, but this is not about money. This whole project has always been about preserving a unique architectural accomplishment that has lasted almost 100 years - a unique structure that is more than just a building because it has been the church in which the worship of God has been carried out for almost a century. This church building that is St. Agatha's is a monument to the faith of the early generations of Catholics who had settled in this part of the city and who went to extraordinary lengths to build a beautiful edifice to serve as the house of God for themselves and for their children. Now it is up to us to keep up and maintain their legacy. Because this is our legacy!

Thank you and God bless you!

January 20, 2019: My Dear Parishioners,

I have been having the privilege to co-teach one period of religion to the Eighth Graders with Mr. Arnaud Prevot (on three Thursdays of the month). And it has been a tremendous joy to be able to help our young people in their journey of faith to discover the beauty and the profundity and the joy that the truths of the Catholic Faith bring to their lives. I have heard from them their biggest concerns, and I have begun to have a slightly better appreciation of the life of young people in these times. Young as they are and busy as they are, they have not neglected the deepest questions of the heart. And in spite of many distractions around them, these young Catholics have paid attention to the yearnings of their hearts and endeavored to pursue the answers to these most significant desires. I am very proud of our school and our children. But I am also aware of the

snare and the dangers awaiting them on the road of life as they prepare for the next step. In the end, we entrusted them to God's protection and the Blessed Mother's maternal solicitude and St. Agatha's intercession! FLT

January 27, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

Today there is an article in the bulletin by Tom McClung summarizing what is being asked of you for St. Agatha's Preservation project. Please take some time and reflect on what you could do. And please pray about everything. I know you are under constant pressure to give to this cause or for that. This is not a cause, because it is about preserving the spiritual home of all of us.

Please ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten your heart and your mind so that you may confidently decide! In the end, I entrust this whole endeavor into the hands of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph, and St. Agatha. God bless you! FLT

February 3, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

We are looking for potential adorers who would sign up to keep watch with our Eucharistic Lord in the Adoration Chapel. The benefits of an hour with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament are beyond measure. Just ask one of the veteran adorers such as Emma Bosco or Elizabeth Meyer! Lately, some regulars are no longer able to fulfill their commitments due to illness and age-related problems. Their hearts ache to be here but their bodies cannot comply! That is where you would come in!

Please look at your schedule and ask yourselves if you could find an hour a week to keep watch with the Lord, to keep company with Him, to seek His consolation, at the Adoration Chapel. May God inspire you to say YES!

February 10 & February 17, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

Our parish along with all the parishes of the Archdiocese of Portland will take up a special collection for the Archbishop's Catholic Appeal at all the Masses of the last weekend of this month, February 23-24. This Appeal is very crucial for funding's for the Retired Priests and for the Education and Formation of Seminarians. By participating in this Appeal, you and I (Yes, I am also contributing this this Appeal!) are making a statement! We will not abandon our elderly priests who have given their lives in service to the Church in Western Oregon. At the same time, we also keep our eyes fixed on the future by assisting with the cost of educating our Seminarians. You have been asked to help with many things and causes and programs - all worthwhile, including our Preservation Project! But please look interiorly and pray, so that your hearts may also have affection for these two groups of people: the Retired Priests and the Future Priests! Please say YES to the Archbishop's Appeal, so that our Shepherd, Archbishop Sample, may have the resources to take care of those have given their whole life to God in serving you and those who are embarking on the journey toward the same ministry of priestly service in the future.

Please do what you can to help me reach the goal of raising \$27,612 for this year's Appeal. Your prayers are critically needed if we want to succeed in this worthy endeavor and any other worthy endeavors! As for me, I shall leave the success of this Appeal in the hands of the Blessed Mother! May God bless you and reward you abundantly!

February 24 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

This weekend we take up our pledges for the Archbishop's Catholic Appeal and send them on to the Archdiocese. I am not sure if I have convinced you of the worthiness of this appeal, but I have done my best and leave the rest in God's hand! For me, it's simple: we have an opportunity to show our gratitude to those priests who had served us faithfully, and we help secure our future for our children! Gratitude and loyalty to the past help pave the way for confidence and trust in the future!

Our goal is around \$27,000. Please look into your hearts and see what you could do to help! Please also pray for our effort in this regard! It matters if you participate. Any amount is appreciated, but the Archbishop is also asking for your participation. As your priest, I am grateful that you would consider!

March 3 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

This coming week we celebrate an important monument of the Liturgical Year: Ash Wednesday. Please make time to attend Mass if you can on this day - the beginning of the penitential season leading to Easter Sunday. I would like to propose something for your spiritual plan for Lent: before you decide to do anything extra or to give up something, please consider having more silence in your life! We are surrounded by all kinds of noises that are not conducive to a healthy life - mentally, physically, and spiritually. The Psalms insist on having silence as part of our spiritual endeavors - "Be still and know that I am God!" Only in the stillness of the heart can we begin to listen to God's whisper! Before anything else, please observe silence - in the home, in the car, waiting in line! Use every opportunity you have to be still, quiet, reflective, so that you become more and more in tune with the supernatural, so that you become trained and be able to recognize what it is that God is saying to you, here and now, for your life!

March 10 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The Lenten regimen is built upon the three pillars of prayers, fasting, and almsgiving. Fr. Larry Richards, nationally-famed Catholic priest and great spiritual author and speaker, has suggested a useful way to manage the Lenten discipline to his people. I am going to pass it on to you! For each of the three Lenten practices - prayers, fasting, and almsgiving - ask the Lord for guidance on what to do in each category. List different activities for each of the three categories and pick one of each with the help of the Holy Spirit! Don't expect too much. Don't settle for the minimal. Just ask the Holy Spirit to move your heart to one particular activity in each category - prayers, fasting, and almsgiving - and run with it!

Remember how many Lents have come and gone, and ask yourselves if you have changed at all for the better? May this Lent witness your progress in the spiritual life towards greater love of God and neighbor!

March 17 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

I am excited about a new opportunity for our families at St. Agatha! I am proposing to start the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, now that we have families with younger children (preschoolers and kindergarteners) who are looking for help to pass on the faith to their youngsters. It just happened that a friend of mine of many years who is an experienced and certified catechist has just stepped up and offered to help me. Let me quote from a well-known author, Simcha Fisher, from an article she wrote for the National Catholic Register about this catechesis: "... this Montessori-based program for children has given the kids something I could never be sure I was conveying: a simple, synthesized, profound involvement with the Gospel and with the liturgical

life of the Church. Catechesis of the Good Shepherd was founded in the 50's by two Italian laywomen, one a scriptural scholar and one an expert in Montessori education. Together they conceived of a simple, attractive method for sharing the richness of the Faith with children, who are uniquely capable of accepting the beauty of God's love. The program is presented in three levels, and includes time in the "Atrium," which is a quiet environment where children learn through tactile play.

Catechesis of the Good shepherd emphasizes quiet contemplation and -- imagine this -- "the enjoyment of God." The children hear Bible stories and watch them acted out with simple materials; they learn songs and prayers, and are encouraged to play quietly with simple and meaningful objects. One mother explained that CGS "cracked the code" of the Mass for her son, as he learned to become alert to the details of the liturgy: the significance of color, the names and purposes of the various vessels and tools on the altar." Rosemary, my catechist friend, will be here this Sunday at 9:45 to speak with interested families in the Parish Hall.

One more thing, I am working with Communion Liberation, the Ecclesial Movement I am involved with, to bring help to some families in Venezuela. If you are interested, please let me know. Have a most Blessed Lent!

March 24, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

I have been down with a horrible cold and I am not sure how long it will last! In the meantime, there is much work to be done! I am asking for your prayers for my health - this assignment has been very hard on my physical health but has also been great for the state of my soul. And so I am limping along, hoping against hope that God give me enough hours in the day and enough days in the month to do everything!

Mr. Bill Keller just passed away this week. He was (actually he is!) a longtime parishioner here and a great supporter of the school! Please pray for the repose of his soul! I am continually surprised at the fact that so many people who have been pillars in the Catholic Church in Oregon have been members of this parish! St. Agatha's Church is truly a monument to Catholicism in this part of the city and the state. I am begging you to help me in our efforts to preserve this great church for future generations to come! The Preservation campaign for this summer is going very slowly and I am feeling a bit discouraged. But as with everything else in life, God's will be done! I must entrust everything into God's hands!

March 31, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

We are approaching the midpoint of Lent. How have we been doing so far? Prayers? Fasting? Almsgiving? Maybe it's time for you and for me to renew our resolve to not allow this Lent come and go in the way all the Lents of our past had come and gone!

May God help us with His graces to be strengthened in our endeavors to follow Him more closely in this period of time in preparation for the great Paschal Feasts of the Easter Seasons! God bless you!

April 7, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The life of a priest rises and falls on his faith in the Most Eucharist. The one thing he does that is most consequential for him and for his people is to offer Mass for them - daily. The Holy Mass is the most powerful prayers we could offer to God for ourselves and others because the Holy Mass is truly the encounter with the Living God, in which the Bloodless Sacrifice of Calvary is offered to the Father by the Son in the person of the priest in accord with God's providential design. In

this encounter we could ask God for anything! That is why I have included in my intentions at Mass all kinds of individuals and causes. But the encounter with the living God continues outside of Holy Mass itself. Adoration is the extension of the Mass where proper and meaningful encounter with God takes place without all the attendant rituals of the Mass, which can take away the concentration and the attention it deserves.

We have perpetual Adoration in our little chapel here, but true and proper Adoration takes place also before a closed Tabernacle! I encourage you to come to Mass early on Sunday in order to pay a visit to our Blessed Lord in the Tabernacle and spend a few moments with Him in preparation for Mass and to receive Holy Communion in a more disposed spirit. The Tabernacle will be relocated to its rightful place - at the center of the sanctuary behind the altar, the most significant location in the church. With the Tabernacle in the center of the church we can begin to re-establish within ourselves the centrality of Christ and the His Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. If Jesus Christ is not the center of our lives, nothing matters!

April 14 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

This week, God has shown me His face once again! My dream for St. Agatha's has been realized through His graces and the indispensable and generous work by Sean MacNeela with the support and encouragement of his family. What do I mean by this blessing? I mean the fact that the beautiful marble Tabernacle was transferred without incident to its rightful place at the heart of the church! I could never thank Sean and his family enough for all the laborious and time-consuming planning and actual work that went into this project! In the end, five Irish men, including Tim Eivers who was on hand to assist, were able to make it happen! Such dedication, such generosity, such devotion! From now on, Jesus Christ our Lord TRULY AND REALLY AND SUBSTANTIALLY PRESENT in the MOST BLESSED SACRAMENT in the Tabernacle is at the central place in our church - once again! And my prayers and hope is that He is the center of the life of each one of us at St. Agatha's. From now on, we have a focus when we enter the church even as we go down on one knee in the gesture of adoration before the Tabernacle!

I believe with all my heart that the fact the marble Tabernacle did not fall apart during transit is a sign of divine approval. I don't know any other reason why these Irish men were able to accomplish such an impossible task! May God bless the MacNeela's and Sean's friends who came to lend a hand. May God bless us with an invigorated faith in the REAL PRESENCE OF JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT! May we never forget this is why He came: to remain with us until the end of the world! Amen!

April 21, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

On this Easter Sunday, we rejoice with the whole Church!

And yet our hearts are heavy as we remember what happened at the beginning of Holy Week to the Church in France. The burning of Notre Dame Cathedral is not only a wakeup call to the fact that the Catholic faith has been collapsing for a long time in Europe. The burning of Notre Dame has served also as a reminder to me and others what the greatest blessing and fortune God has bestowed on the Catholic Church: we have Jesus with us! Every Catholic Church, however humble or insignificant, is a most magnificent building in every city and town and village, because every Catholic Church houses the Body and the Blood of Christ, the Body and the Blood of God's Son! Every Catholic Church, however humble or poor, is the place where the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass takes place for the salvation of the world! Every Catholic Church, however humble or ugly even, is space in which God becomes incarnate - again and again!

Our St. Agatha's church is truly blessed to be the building in which God has resided among His people in this part of the city for more than one hundred years! May God bless us with many more years! Happy Easter!

April 28, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

My first Holy Week here was and is amazing! I thank you for making it most wonderful Holy Week for St. Agatha's by your participation, your presence, and your prayers. How many Holy Weeks have come and gone at this beautiful church? And how many of the parishioners have drawn spiritual sustenance from these amazing liturgies? I, for one, am very grateful that everyone pulled together in order to assist in the worship of God as the Church commemorated these salvific mysteries of Christ's life!

Please continue to rejoice in the risen Lord! Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

May 5, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

The burning of Notre Dame Cathedral has served as a wakeup call to many people. All of a sudden, the whole world sits up and pays attention to this great monument to France's Catholicism. To most of the experts, the cathedral was everything else. To Catholics, the Cathedral was one of the most magnificent achievements of Christians in the middle ages. For me, I am think along the lines of the Archbishop of Paris: it was built to house "un morceau de pain!" The whole majestic structure was constructed to house the Blessed Sacrament, and to be the place for the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

Here in the heart of Sellwood, we have a magnificent structure built to house "un morceau de pain!" St. Agatha is not the Cathedral of Paris, in terms of architectural or artistic values, but St. Agatha has great dignity as the House of God and the Gate of Heaven, where the Blessed Sacrament is revered day and night, and where Holy Mass has been celebrated for a century! Here, how many generations of Catholics have come and gone? How many sermons have been preached, baptisms administered, confessions heard, and weddings officiated? How many Catholics were here in the darkest days of the Second World War, the Korean War, the Viet Nam War, the two Gulf Wars, to pray for their loved ones and to receive consolation and hope? St. Agatha Church is our heritage and patrimony, and she is ailing - at least exteriorly! Her stones are crumbling on the north and west sides, and what has been repaired is now threatening to disintegrate if we don't do anything soon.

Since our appeal in January, we have received \$24,500 in pledges and donations. We have a long way to go toward the goal of \$275,000 needed to finish the project. This Sunday I am going to appeal to you once again: please help me in the critical efforts to preserve what has been handed to us from previous generations of faithful Catholics at St. Agatha! I am begging for your support in saving the church building, without which there would be no place for Jesus to stay with us - No Blessed Sacraments, No Mass, No Nothing!

May 12, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

For the month of May, please recite the following prayer every day for your intentions, your sufferings, your sorrows, your concerns, your troubles! May you have the utmost confidence in the Blessed Mother's love and solicitude for you and your loved ones. May you never doubt her most powerful advocacy for you! May you ever rely on her maternal protection for you! May you be comforted by the efficacy of her prayers for you and your families before the throne of God!

Thus, we say together The Memorare: "Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone...who fled to thy protection, implored thy help, or sought thine intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto thee, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to thee do I come, before thee I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in thy mercy hear and answer me."

May 19, 2019 Bulletin: My Dear Parishioners,

We are hiring new teachers, and the foremost concern for me as pastor is the Catholic identity of the school: how can we strengthen the Catholic faith of the school with new teachers joining the faculty? That question has prompted me to reflect on the role of family in the handing on of the faith to younger generations. In every family, the parents are the primary educators of their children in the faith. Having your children enrolled in a parochial school does not absolve you as mothers and fathers from teaching your children catechesis and prayers, from modeling a life of faithful discipleship, from living with a view toward heaven in every decision. That is why saying grace before meals, praying together as a family before bed, blessing your children with Holy Water, are some of the important practices that would help form and mold your children into future faithful Christians and disciples and witnesses.

Also, in the church, whenever you pass by the Tabernacle outside of Mass, please make a genuflection on the right knee (if you can do so physically). During Holy Communion, please stop briefly and make an act of reverence by a bow to the chalice of the Precise Blood of Christ on your way back to the your place in the pews (even if you are not receiving from the chalice).

By our gestures of reverence toward Christ our Lord in this way, we help to foster the faith of others and the parish will grow deeper in our affection and our reverence for God!