

From the P.A.'s Desk

**Today's Gospel:**

In today's Gospel, Jesus is traveling through Samaria, which was right in the middle of Israel between the north (Galilee) and south (Jerusalem) sides. Jews disliked and despised Samaritans so much, that most of them would walk around rather than through Samaritan territory. When Jesus told this parable, it was shocking. Not only would Jews not want any contact with lepers (because it made them ritually unclean), Samaritans were also social outcasts. They were their enemies. First-century Jews looked on Samaritans the way most Americans viewed the Nazis during World War II.

It also mentions that they asked for Jesus' "pity." Over and over again in the Gospels we are told that Jesus had "pity" for those on the fringes of society, but the English understanding of "pity" (which means to "feel sorry for") is totally different than the original word for pity used in the Greek translation. Like so many words from the bible, our English translation does not communicate the power of the original Hebrew or Greek words. Our word for pity is pretty bland and sterile compared to the original Greek word we translate into "pity," and even our word "compassion" is far too weak to express the emotion that moved Jesus.

In our English language, pity means to feel sorry for someone. The original Greek verb *splagchnizomai* used in the passage comes from the Greek noun *splagchnon*, which means intestines, bowels, entrails or heart - that is to say, the inward parts from which strong emotions seem to arise. The Greek verb therefore means a movement or impulse that wells up from one's gut reaction. That is why the English translators have to resort to expressions like "he was *moved* with compassion or pity," or "he *felt* sorry," or "his *heart* went out to them." But even these do not capture the deep physical and emotional flavor of the Greek word for compassion or pity.

So when the Gospel's tell us of Jesus' "pity" for others, they are basically telling us that Jesus was so moved by the sufferings of others, that it made him physically sick. Perhaps that is why Jesus was motivated to act on behalf of others, especially those who in his society were considered worthless or not deserving of God's love. Perhaps Jesus' physical disgust at how people were treated, were his motivations for doing something about those injustices. A spiritual master once said: "If you don't meet God in the next person you meet, it's a waste of time looking for him any further." I think that is how Jesus saw everyone. Lord Jesus, help us to see and treat others the way you did!

### **Sale of St. Leo's Church**

About a week ago I signed papers for the closing and final sale of St. Leo's church building. That sale was the third sale of the property which is composed of the church building, the ball field to the west of the church, and the forest surrounding the property. St. Leo's Cemetery will forever remain a part of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and the cemetery will be ours until the end of time.

The price that was agreed upon by the majority of the Finance Council (not all agreed) was **\$47,500**. About three months ago we received a cash offer of \$35,000, and the Finance Council thought that was much too low for the asking price of \$94,000. At that time, the Finance Council agreed to lower the sales price of St. Leo's to \$55,000. Two months after that we received an offer of \$45,000, and again the Council felt that was too low, but agreed to take \$50,000 and no less. **We received a counter offer of 47,500 and in light of the anticipated cost for heating the building this winter (approximately \$2,500 plus if this winter is cold), Michigan Catholic Conference's annual insurance cost of \$600 annually for St. Leo's alone (they visited all our current buildings last Tuesday as an evaluation of our insurance premiums), and the property tax of \$1043.48 to the County, and \$357.88 to the Township, totally \$1401.36 in property taxes for the year.**

**Yes, since the church is no longer a church in use, we were being taxed by the township. In light of all these factors combined, I felt the counter-offer of 47,500 was close enough to the Council's wishes for \$50,000.**

Before I agreed to the price of 47,500, I asked for a consensus from the Finance Council, advice from the Diocese, and advice from three seasoned pastors in the area. To reiterate, in light of the heating costs for the winter, and the property taxes we would have paid, I felt the offer of 47,500 was close enough to the Council's bottom line of \$50,000.

As I mentioned earlier, this sale concludes the final process in the sale of the property we were responsible for. **As a matter of full disclosure, the sale of St. Leo Ball Field was \$13,561.60 for 7.66 acres, St. Leo Woods for \$8,340.60 for 4.94 acres, and St Leo Church for \$47,500.00, totally, \$69,402.20 for all three pieces of St. Leo's property.**

Recently I've learned about the sale of Catholic church property in the Rosebush/Leaton area, and their church, which is comparable to the size of our property, went for \$60,000. That information told me we were in the ballpark of what other church properties were being sold for, and what was reasonable to ask for.

**The money collected from the sale of St. Leo and the surrounding property will all go into the St. Leo Cemetery fund.**

This month, the CEO from the Diocese of Saginaw will be visiting us to talk about our parish mandate to establish both an operating fund for each cemetery, and a perpetual fund for each cemetery. Each of our three cemeteries will always keep their own funds, and there needs to be both an operating (yearly cost to maintain the cemetery) fund, and a perpetual care fund for each cemetery. The interest earned by the perpetual care funds are set up to only maintain the cemetery when it has no lots left for sale, and no income is coming in.

Some people have asked who bought the property. The church itself was purchased by an early middle-aged couple who have a variety of possible uses in mind. They mentioned doing some possible weddings and funerals there, so they must have a background in faith and religious matters. They also talked about using it as a studio for art classes. Without wanting to pry into their affairs, they obviously have both an interest in faith matters and artistry.