

Turning the Page

By my count, there have been 16 of these columns in the past 17-18 weeks that have formed something of a series leading up to the fast approaching election. Beginning with The Greatest Commandment, which is to love God and love neighbor as self, there was a series on Catholic Social Teaching, which basically echoes the teachings of Jesus in the Gospel. Following this was a series on Conscience Formation, taken directly from the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and then a couple of related topics including “Conversion, not Coercion,” and last week’s “Intrinsic,” a reflection on the meaning, scope, and application of this term.

Some 47 million Americans have already voted, and the rest have almost certainly made up their minds how they will vote. May God bless our nation with a peaceful election process and a renewed drive for civility and unity among all the people of the United States.

It’s time to turn the page. Have you noticed that our construction site now, finally, looks like a construction site? And along with this renovation project, there is a commitment, made by our pastor and parish leadership before I returned here in January, to renew the parish itself as the physical renovations proceed.

It is time to take a look at ourselves as a community of faith, and to explore some of the ways that we can prepare to enter our renewed worship space as a renewed people: to become new wine that will find itself at home in the new wineskin.

One of the “hipster” names for a physical church these days is the “worship space.” It’s accurate, but it can sound a bit clinical to some. Nevertheless, worship is exactly what that space is for — it’s literally dedicated for worship in an ancient ritual that we will experience some time next spring. For this reason, I would like to offer some background thoughts and information with the Liturgy and the Sacraments in mind.

There are two questions we can ask as a way of getting started: Who do we think we are, and what do we think we are doing? (Most of us heard questions like this from time to time as children: “Who do you think you are?” was one of my mom’s personal favorites...)

Who do we think we are? We call ourselves by several different names: The Body of Christ, the People of God, the Church.

What do we think we are doing? As the Body of Christ, with Christ as our head and the priest representing Christ in each assembly of the faithful, we think (we proclaim) that we are celebrating the Paschal Mystery (the life, death, and resurrection of Christ) by celebrating the Eucharist, which we also known as the Mass.

Where we will start: with a basic understanding of the Mass and our role in it. We will explore the Liturgical Furnishings as they represent the Sacraments and other aspects of Catholic liturgical worship.