ST. DOROTHEA RENOVATIONS, 2025

Greetings Brothers and Sisters! The purpose of this newsletter is to lay out all the projects that have happened and are still going to take place so as to repair, upgrade, and beautify the grounds and buildings of the parish.

The first thing people might wonder is how are we affording all these improvements. Well, thanks to your generosity to the parish, and, in part, to the rental income of the school building, the parish has no debt and over $500,000 in savings. So, we're "paying cash" for all these projects. Our Parish Finance Council, which was reconstituted after the pandemic, has been overseeing all these parish expenditures.



COMPLETED TASKS

There have been lots of smaller projects that have been ongoing for the past year or two, mostly repairs because of the age of our buildings and some deferred maintenance no longer being deferred. You may have noticed the outdoor lighting and parking lot lights being upgraded to LED lights. I also had the outside of the rectory, church, and school power-washed to remove decades' worth of mold and dirt. Also, some of the brick-work and concrete pathways were repaired or replaced.

The most notable change happened this week: The crucifix over the altar was replaced, and a new statue of the Resurrected Christ was added to the worship space.

THE CRUCIFIX

Before Vatican Council II, all Catholic churches had a cross with a "corpus" on it. "Corpus" is Latin for "body." This is called a "crucifix" since it represents death by "crucifixion." With the changes that Vatican Council II brought about, old churches underwent major renovations to have an altar that was no longer built into the wall of the sanctuary, but a free-standing altar that was also reminiscent of a table in order to bring out the character of The Mass as a memorial of The Last Supper as well as being a sacrifice of the Lord Jesus.

At that time, The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), instructed that when furnishing and decorating the church, there should be a *"cross on or close to the altar."* Many parishes took that to mean a simple "cross;" that is, a simple cross beam without a corpus. Other churches, such as St. Dorothea's being built shortly after Vatican Council II, became a bit artistic by having a cross that also pointed to the resurrection.

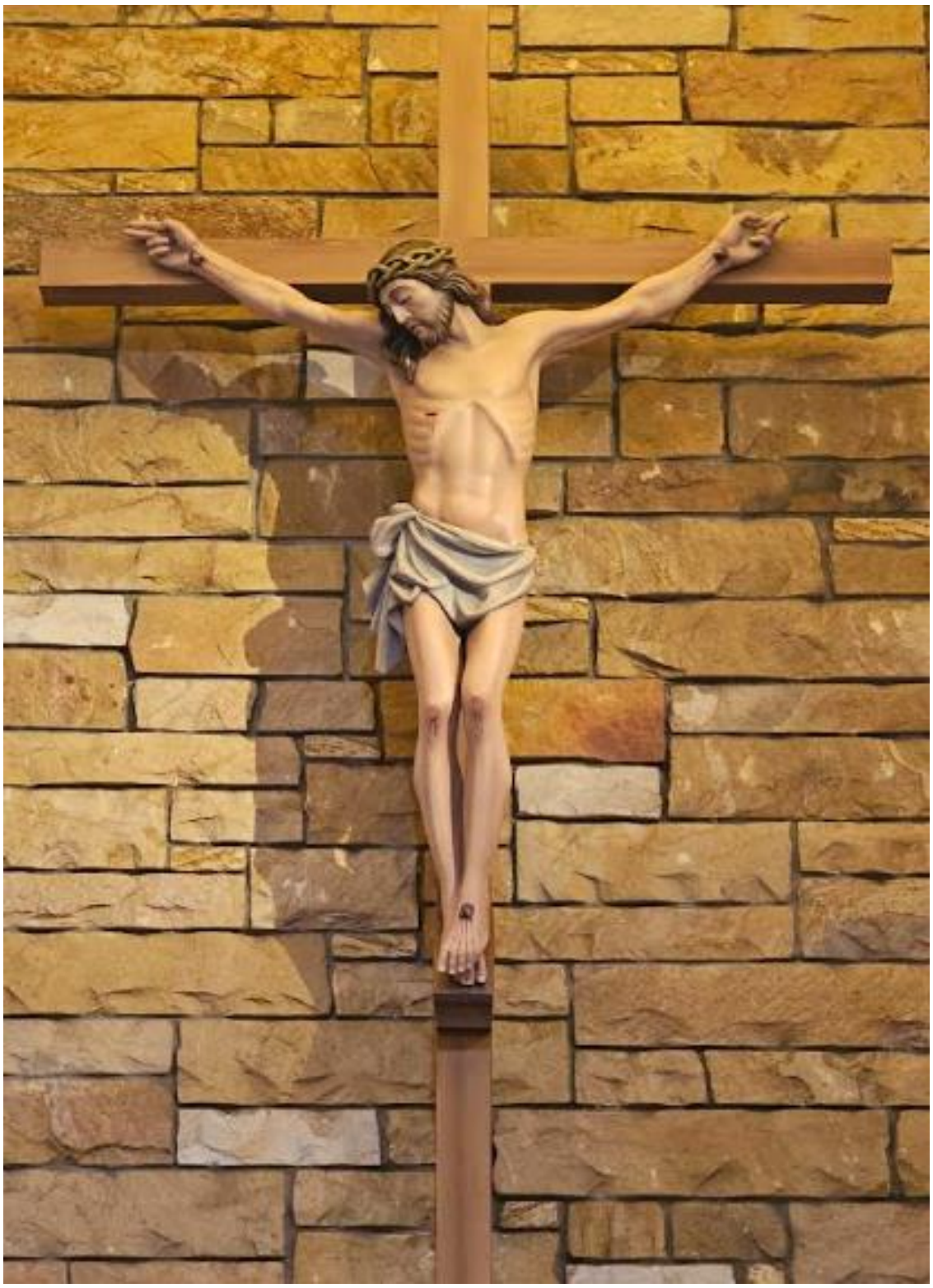


If you look at the back wall of St. Dorothea's, you'll see the original church cross which also has a representation of the resurrection. It is very "mid-Century mod" with a few bold lines and a representational and impressionistic depiction of both the crucifixion and resurrection.

Then, later, the parish acquired a new sanctuary cross which also attempted to combine not only the crucifixion and resurrection, but also the Descent of the Holy Spirit. This time, it was less impressionistic and had a bit more realism.

However, since then, the GIRM clarified what it meant for an alter cross. In the year 2000, the revised GIRM said that *"on or close to the altar, there is to be a cross with a figure of Christ crucified."* It was very clear. The powers that be were putting their foot down on simple crosses without a corpus or a representation of Christ that wasn't his death on the cross. They wanted churches to be furnished with a clear representation of The Crucifixion with a corpus. The cross we had in the church only hinted at the crucifixion with no blood, no wound in Christ's side, and no crown of thorns, no suffering… no death.

And that is why I purchased a new sanctuary crucifix which clearly represents the death of Christ on the cross.



But isn’t the resurrection important? Oh, it most certainly is. However, in the past millennia of the church, the crucifixion had been over emphasized to the detriment of the resurrection. This is why it is understandable that the last two altar crosses attempted to merge the resurrection with the crucifixion. And so, that is why I decided to add a separate statue of the resurrection. You will see it hanging over the tabernacle with a sunburst behind it to make clear that this is the glorified Risen Christ, and also, partly, to keep the statue from blending into the wall behind it.



The old crucifix is now hanging in the baptistery.



THE BAPTISTRY

"Baptistry" is the name for any building or room dedicated to the celebration of Baptism. When St. Dorothea was being built in the mid- to late-60s, it embraced the freedom afforded by Vatican Council II to use a layout that wasn't the long, narrow, rectangular building of traditional churches. Being half-way in-the-round, there is a better representation of The People of God gathered around The Table of the Lord. And, it fits a lot more people (about 800 people capacity).

However, there was one architectural element of a pre-Vatican II traditional church that was incorporated into St. Dorothea, that is, the baptistry which you can find connected to the main lobby of the church.

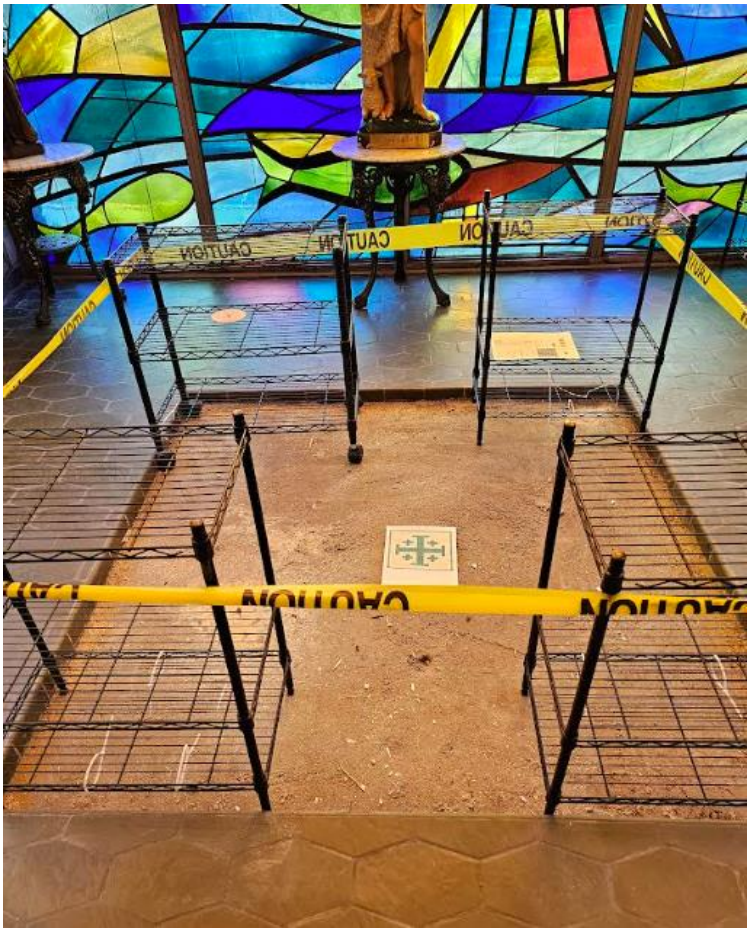


Ancient baptisteries used to be separate buildings with a built-in pool (modeled after the Roman baths), so that the priest and the adult-to-be-baptized can wade into it for the baptism.

But over the centuries, adult baptism became more and more uncommon in Europe and its colonies. With almost all baptisms being just for infants, the baptistries became small rooms with a small bowl suitable for infants. And the few adults who were baptized wound up just bending over the bowl for a few drops of water on their forehead as part of their baptism.

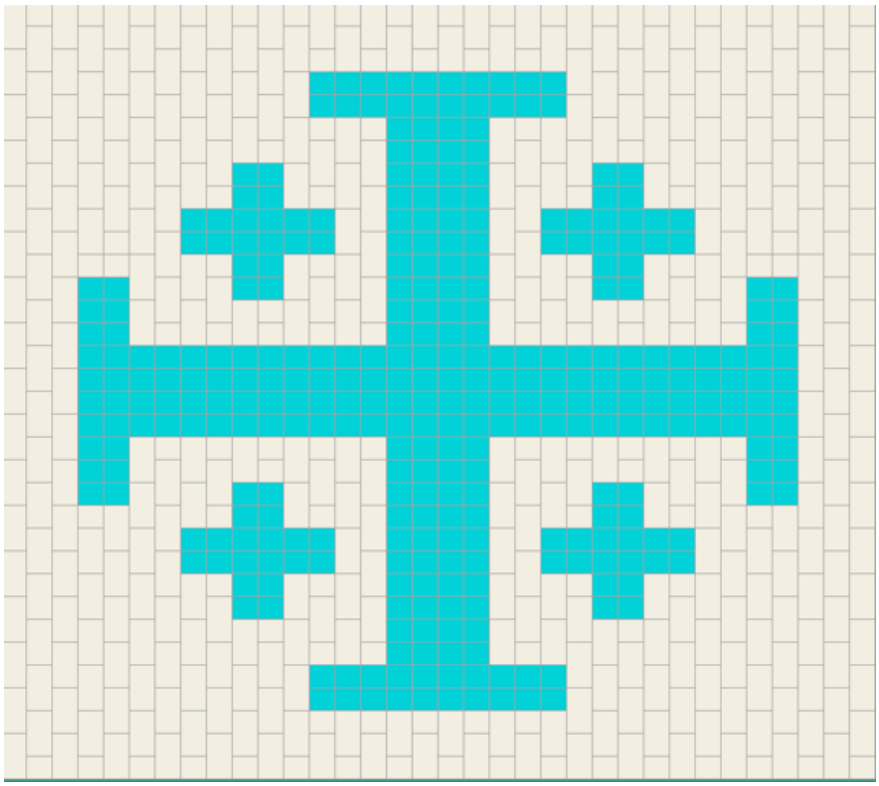
It wasn't until the 1970s with the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (now called the *Order* of Christian Initiation of Adults, OCIA) that things changed. Rather than using infant baptism as the model for adult baptism, the Church re-constituted norms for adult baptism and made infant baptism follow those adult norms.

The OCIA calls for adults to be in a pool of water for their baptism, and for the baptism to take place for the congregation to witness. Well, a small room with a small bowl doesn't cut it any more. Many parishes have converted their old baptistries into prayer rooms or storage rooms.



We're in the process of converting our old baptistry into a prayer room. The old crucifix is now hanging in it. The old baptismal font (which was in bad shape) has been removed. The step-down in the middle of the room (always a tripping hazard) is being filled in, and a mosaic of a Jerusalem Cross will nicely cover that square space.

At some point in the future, I hope to add an adult font in the sanctuary next to the altar for the sake of adult baptisms. Right now, adult baptisms are taking place in the walk-in font at Precious Blood.



OTHER PROJECTS

New roof for the church: We've received bids to replace the church roof, which can leak at times. We're waiting for diocesan approval. There should be a new roof by this Summer.

New sound system: The sound system in the church isn't very good. I've been in churches with excellent audio systems, and this isn't one of them. Additionally, elements of the system keep breaking down. We just got approval to go ahead with a complete replacement of the system, and have signed a contract for the new system.

New HVAC for the rectory: The rectory's heating and cooling is a system of pipes with running hot/chilled water. It is very inefficient. And it's starting to fall apart. We already had to bypass a part of the piping which was rotting out and leaking. The rest of the pipes aren't that far behind from doing the same. The plan is to replace the building's HVAC with heat pumps. We are in the process of getting bids on the project.

Landscaping: While we've been keeping up on the normal maintenance of the grounds with mowing and trimming, over the decades, the landscape changes… and sometimes not for the better. We had bushes that were never really growing, some eaten by the deer. And in heavy rains, very large and deep puddles formed on the walkways. And so, we've contracted an architectural landscaper to address these problems. You'll see things happening this Spring.

New Lighting for the Church: Back in the 60s, track lighting with cans of floodlights were all the rage. But not so much now. The current lighting in the church is obviously 'spotty' from all those spotlights. There are some places in the church in which I can't even read the text in the hymnal because it's so dim. We obviously need a new lighting package that takes advantage of today's LED lighting and fixtures. I would also want to add some fixtures that are traditional for a church, rather than

the current ‘warehouse look.’ We received one bid for a new lighting package so far. But it was expensive. Very very expensive. We’re not going to go with that. If you all know of a lighting company that does semi-professional theatrical or large consumer spaces, please give our office a call.

Other Projects: There is a wish-list of other projects to beautify the church and stabilize or upgrade the infrastructure of all our buildings. But, we’ll finish up with these projects and then assess priorities and funding for new projects. I thank-you for your support of the parish and I hope you find these renovations – whether they be practical or artistic – to make your participation in the church more comfortable and more inspirational.

May the Peace of Christ be With You Always! – Fr. Mike

