



28th Sunday in Ordinary Time—B

In the Gospel of today, we have a rich young man who refused to follow Christ because he loved his material wealth more. He claimed that he observed all the commandments from his youth. But, he failed to see that he had placed material wealth above everything and everybody else. He failed to realize that his wealth had built a wall between himself and God. His wealth possessed him.

We should possess material wealth, and use it the way God wants it to be used. However, material wealth should not possess us. Jesus teaches that the blessings of material wealth are to be shared with others and the love God more than everything else.

St. Francis Xavier, who lived in the 16th Century, was a professor at the University of Paris. He left his worldly pursuit and dedicated himself to the service of God at the age of 28. What changed him was the verse in the Gospel of Mark (8:36): “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul?” He became one of the greatest missionaries of all times. Also, St. Francis of Assisi, who was the son of a wealthy business man, renounced the worldly life to follow Christ in his poverty and became a beggar on the streets.

Assisi was one of the places I visited during my stay in Rome three years ago. I saw the cross that spoke to St. Francis. I prayed in the church that St. Francis built with his own hands. I saw the room where he died. We celebrated Mass in the upper basilica in Assisi. It was a special experience.

Francis of Assisi heard the Lord’s call as he knelt underneath a large wooden crucifix in San Damiano: “Francis, Francis, go and repair my house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins.” Taking that command very literally, Francis set about physically rebuilding the little church, stone by stone. He did the same with other abandoned churches in the area having gone about begging for help to complete

his work. Only later did he understand the call in a broader sense, which we will reflect upon for our annual stewardship campaign. Today, I write to ask your help to repair the Lord’s house in the way St. Francis understood it first—a physical building—the Historic Church.

After the debt on the new 27th Street Church was paid off, I included the renovation of the Historic Church as part of my “Vision 2025.” I then formed a committee of persons with a variety of skillsets to lead the restoration and renovation efforts. As per their recommendations, we replaced the much-needed sidewalks at the front of the church and the failing wall. This has greatly improved the appearance and safety in front of the church.

The Historic Church Restoration and Renovation Committee (HCRRC) also met with Daprato Rigali Studios, a company that designed and fabricated the sanctuary of the Historic Church more than one hundred years ago. After they presented us with a beautiful design for the total renovation, costing about two and a half million dollars, we did a survey among the parishioners to get your input.

After evaluating the architect’s proposal and the parish survey, we have decided to move forward on a one and a half million dollar project that includes the renovation of the sanctuary and the stained-glass windows. The brochure that you will receive in the mail will give you the details of the renovation we intend to do. “Why do we do this?” The Historic Church is a beacon of hope and the visible landmark of the presence of the Catholic faith in Bend. It has been one hundred years since that church was built, and we want to make sure that it remains an attractive lighthouse that witnesses to the beauty of the Catholic faith for many more years, bringing people to Christ, offering them hope, and eternal salvation.

When you receive the packet in the mail, please pray and respond as generously as you can. We have extra packets in the narthex for you to pick up. There are a number of sponsorship opportunities, and pledges can be made over three years. We will not start the project until we have 70 percent of the cost of the project in hand, which is about one million dollars. With some generous support and with the Finance Council committing \$200,000 from the Capital Repairs Fund, the Historic Church Restoration and Renovation Fund now has \$500,000, leaving only \$500,000 left to raise before we can begin the work. May God bless your sacrifices to renovate and restore His house, and may St. Francis intercede for us. Thank you for your love and support of St. Francis Parish. Let us love God more than all material things.