FR. SCOTT WALLISCH'S PASTOR'S CORNER

Dear Flock,

Happy 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time.

As you can see at a glance, the Pastor's Corner this weekend is a whole page. I wanted to share some news with you that will take longer than the typical Corner. Admittedly, this is not the sort of announcement that I would have wanted to make in my first four months. So, what is the news? We have decided to purchase a new house to serve as the rectory for the priests in the parish.

Now, again, this is not the first big decision that I wanted to make here. I understand if it looks like I am saying, "Hey, the rectory you provided for me is not good enough, so I am making you buy another house." I get it if this is your initial reaction, but please give me a chance to explain more

The current rectory is a fine place to live. It is true that there are five split levels, and there is no bathroom or bedroom on the main floor, which would be a challenge if one of our priests were unable to navigate stairs. (That is not an issue for any of our priests now, of course.) It is also true that for the current house to be the rectory long term, the parish would need to continue to pour money into it to make it a livable space.

That being said, there is enough space (my living quarters upstairs are huge), and there are all the amenities that we need. This decision to purchase a new rectory is not about needing to live in a new rectory. I would be fine continuing to live where we are (especially now that we have figured out which thermostat controls which spaces.) This decision is instead based on the needs of the parish.

The parishioners from the first 35 years of our parish have blessed us with a campus that puts our church, school, offices, parish hall, gym, and meeting rooms all in one building. (The parish I came from had seven separate buildings, so it is nice now to not have to go out in the rain when I leave the office to celebrate Mass or visit a classroom.) But these parishioners have also left us a very active and vibrant parish that is sometimes cramped in our current building. For the last couple years, the parish has been studying the current space allocation to figure out how to accommodate all the needs of the parish and school. Solutions are limited, because we are landlocked on all four sides.

A potential short-term and long-term solution presented itself when a house with a backyard that adjoins our property became available. The parish has been in conversation with the owner for months, well before I arrived. Even before this house came available, both of my immediate predecessors, Fr. Gary and Msgr. Tank, looked into purchasing houses next to our property. They believe this is a good decision for the parish, as does the finance council.

What will we do with the rectory we are vacating? Temporarily, we can use the current rectory for up to three small group meeting spaces at once. It also will provide space for storage and a work garage for our maintenance team. Ministries can host small dinners, as well, or use the patio and fire pit. (The parish staff will be working on how ministries can reserve the space once it becomes available.) If we ever needed to host another priest, there is still a suite on ground level that could be used as an apartment (albeit without a kitchen on the floor).

As we make long term plans, the current house gives us the flexibility to either repurpose it, use the space for a new building, or create parking so that expansion could happen on the main campus. This is a long-term vision that has not yet been developed, admittedly, but without the new house, we would be handcuffed and limited in the possibilities for that vision.

When will we move? The hope is to make the move by the end of the year.

So, what is the cost? Fair question. We are paying $800,000, which is coming from the capital fund portion of our reserves. This is understandably a big number, but for this neighborhood, this is a very fair price. Other houses just doors down are going for similar costs, but also need at least $100,000 in renovations. The parish's new house was completely renovated over the last couple of years, and is laid out to accommodate the three priests and a seminarian on internship.

I appreciate the parish for the many ways that you have welcomed the priests to the community. We are grateful that you provide housing for us. We feel that this decision positions the parish well for the future. Thanks for your support, but if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Have a blessed week.

In Christ's Peace,

Fr. Scott Wallisch