

FREQUENTLY ASKED, EVER GENEROUS

In his May 26 Bulletin column, “Less Facility, More Home”, Fr. Walter reported on our Parish community’s faithful stewardship of Parish buildings and grounds, commenting on an extensive portfolio of recent physical improvements and noting that, while most of the projects were either funded by Offertory giving or donated by generous parishioners, one project, the new Parish Center roof, necessitated a targeted Parish-wide appeal.

Fr. Walter then listed a number of “ordinary” projects forthcoming that will be undertaken year-by-year as Offertory funds become available and ended with a summary of two immediate Parish Center needs that will require supplemental funding—the HVAC system and the doors.

The HVAC System

Most of the Parish Center HVAC equipment is vintage-2003, dating to completion of the building. The 2003 system comprises five roof-top units (RTU), each providing heating and cooling to a specific section of the building; a pair of large air-handling units that move conditioned air through the ducting network; multiple zone controllers and thermostats that regulate temperature and air-flow throughout the building; and a central “supervisory” controller that monitors and controls the entire HVAC system. There are three smaller heating and cooling units that were added post-2003 and are not in need of replacement.

Last Fall, the RTU serving the Alderman Road classrooms and adjacent spaces malfunctioned due to age-related parts deterioration; much of that wing became extremely overheated as temperature controls would not shut off when the set temperature had been reached. While “band-aid” repairs bought time, our HVAC service provider advised that our vintage-2003 equipment is near the end of its service life and that we should anticipate serial failures of other system components over the next several years. They subsequently concurred in our judgment that, rather than replace individual elements as they fail, it would be prudent, in order to minimize cost and avoid the hassle of repeated disruptions, to replace the entire vintage-2003 system with new technologically-advanced, energy-efficient equipment and controls.



In anticipation of a positive response to this appeal, priority aspects of the HVAC project are already underway. Even before being fully integrated, the new high-tech central controller enabled us to quickly diagnose and correct a problem with two additional RTUs caused by the recent electrical storms, thereby avoiding what might previously have been a lengthy trial-and-error process requiring multiple service calls. When fully integrated, the computerized graphic interface of this “nerve center” of the system will allow for both on-site and remote monitoring and regulation of the many system components; the new controller will also reduce future maintenance costs while maximizing the efficiency and service life of the new equipment.

The Doors

There are four metal-framed “storefront” doors at the courtyard entrance and four at the back driveway entrance. Two at each location are partially or completely inoperable due to failure of the interior push-bar mechanism and other mechanical components. The plan for now is to retain the existing doors, replace and upgrade all of the mechanical components, allowing for softer closure of the doors, and install an automatic opener for one set of the courtyard doors. The estimated cost of doing so is manageable within next year’s Parish operating budget and is, therefore, not included in this appeal.

The courtyard entrance is clearly the main point of entry to the Parish Center and the church. Our hope is that, in the not-too-distant future, there will be Parish financial support for replacement of the metal courtyard doors with attractive church-style wood doors as part of a full renovation of our dreary lower narthex,

including resurfacing of the floor and stairs with a more appealing alternative, certainly not a high bar. These enhancements would offer a warm, aesthetically-pleasing welcome to our Parish-community home.

The Funding Need

The estimated cost of full replacement of the 2003 HVAC system rounds to \$300,000, the same as last year's roof replacement project.

One reason for the success of the roof appeal was that the first \$150,000 came from a portion of the proceeds of very generous bequests from two deceased parishioners. Members of the Parish were then challenged to provide the matching \$150,000, which you did in less than a year! We now have an opportunity to run that same play again.

Inspired by Fr. Walter's May 26 treatise, three anonymous lead donors have come forward with an offer to match dollar-for-dollar the first \$150,000 of donations to this appeal. When we reach \$150,000, the matching gifts will bring total donations to the \$300,000 needed to complete the project. We are confident, mindful of our Parish community's decades-long history of extraordinary giving, that you will respond with enthusiasm to this latest challenge. Frequently asked, ever generous.

Your donations can be by check payable to St. Thomas Aquinas Church, noting HVAC Appeal on the memo line; online via the link on the front page of the website; or by scanning the QR code here.

May God bless you ten-fold for your steadfast generosity.

Fr. David Mott, O.P.
Vicar for the Physical Plant

Sam Nicholson
Facilities Supervisor

Tom Laux
Finance Council Chair

