

Steeple Talk

Volume 3, No. 1

February 22, 2009

News from the STA Mass communities:

7:15 Daily Mass: Fr. Gene Konkel from St. Patrick's Seminary and Msgr. Gene Boyle share presider duties on alternate weekdays.

7:30: Fr. John Hester faithfully presides at this Mass. He is chaplain at Stanford Hospital as well.

8:45: The Liturgy Committee of this Mass is planning the February 25th Ash Wednesday Mass at 6:00 pm at STA. Msgr. Gene Boyle will preside.

10:30: This Mass is the favorite for new parents who bring their babies for Baptism—a good time of day for baby and family to gather and welcome new life into the Church.

12:00: On Ash Wednesday at 8:00 p.m. the St. Ann Choir and congregation will sing a Gregorian Mass with Renaissance motets. The celebrant is Fr. Michael Barber, S.J., professor of theology at St. Patrick's Seminary in Menlo Park.

12:15 Daily Mass: A good place to spend the lunch hour.

Thomas House progress:

Reporting at the Pastoral Stewardship Council in February, Jim McLaughlin of the parish Building and Maintenance Committee said that, if the timeline for planning and construction holds true, the Thomas House will be ready for occupancy by January 2010.

This is good news for the worshipping communities at St. Thomas Aquinas Church! We look forward to an accessible room for post-Mass hospitality gatherings, smaller spaces for evening meetings and study groups, a kitchen and dining room for the occasions when food preparation and eating are desired, and classroom space for children's religious education. The parish will benefit from the renova-

tion of the second floor into three studio apartments which will become rental units.

The Thomas House used to be the rectory for the pastor and his assistants when St. Thomas Aquinas Church was the only Catholic church in Palo Alto. The three suites on the second floor provided comfortable quarters for many priests during at least half of the 20th century.

An important part of the coming renovation is to assess the electrical and heating systems in the house and bring them up to meet today's safety standards. The configuration of rooms on the main floor is generally perceived as adequate for the planned uses by our various Mass communities and other parish groups. A handi-



St. Thomas Aquinas Church capped-accessible bathroom will likely require some rearrangement of the current space, as will the construction of an access ramp off the back of the house.

The Site Committee is looking forward to the day when its meetings can be held inside a warm and cozy house, easily accessed by all who wish to attend.

STA Site Committee plans:

Monthly Meeting:
4th Wednesday : Baumann home,
151 Coleridge Ave., Palo Alto

NEXT MEETING:
Wednesday, February 25
7:30—9:00 pm

Tentative agenda:
1. Thomas House update
2. Church interior update
3. Garden needs

Monthly newsletter:
Sunday before 4th Wednesday

Editors: Kay Williams, 650-328-2781, kaywill@pacbell.net; Jane Bahr, 650-967-8246, bahrjunior@comcast.net

Homer Street sidewalk strip needs attention:

What would you do with the long strip of bare earth alongside the Homer Street side of the church building?



Recently the City of Palo Alto replaced the sidewalk in that location. The planting strip remains bare; plans for planting three trees in the earth strip are underway. (Check the curb side

for white dots—the proposed locations for the three trees.) It is up to us to plant or pave the rest of the strip.

What treatment of that strip of earth

would you suggest? Brick pavers? Flag stones? Grass? Fine gravel? Considerations include: providing safe footing for those exiting parked cars; aesthetically pleasing to enhance the church building; ease of installation; economical materials; and durability.

The Site Committee has been approached by a young man who needs an Eagle Scout project. Perhaps this is it! We need a parish volunteer with experience or interest in such landscaping work who could guide the Scouts.

Please search your bag of tricks and talents and offer them to Helen Baumann, 650-327-9236, or hbbaumann@aol.com.

**NEWSLETTER OF THE ST. THOMAS
AQUINAS CHURCH SITE COMMITTEE**

751 Waverley Street
Palo Alto, CA 94301

St. Thomas Aquinas Site Committee:

Jane Bahr	Helen Baumann	Phil Coates
Lorraine Dabney	Bill Mahrt	Bob March
Kieran McCarty	Mike McMahon	Mario Veloro
Kay Williams	and occasional others	

Mission Statement: The Site Committee for St. Thomas Aquinas Church works to encourage community-building within our six individual Mass communities, among our Mass communities, and within the larger parish community. We do this by enhancing our liturgies, exercising responsible stewardship of our facilities, and working to improve communications at all levels of our parish community.

Site committee meetings are held the 4th Wednesday of the month in the basement hall of the Thomas House. All are welcome. Contact: Helen Baumann, 327-9236, hbaumann@aol.com.

From the church steps:

• **The portico floor** of the church which meets us as we walk up the front stairs is under scrutiny by the STA Interior Task Force. Perhaps you've never actually looked down as you hurry through the church doors. You will see three quite different tile patterns under your feet. Which do you like? Let Bob Foley know; he's looking at options and gathering suggestions: bob.foley@gmail.com.

• Information on the **needlepoint upholstery of the two kneelers** used at weddings and in the confessionals has been gathered from the original artist who designed and stitched the needlepoint. The kneelers were used originally at Our Lady of the Rosary Church. The suggestion was made that the needlepoint should be cleaned first—a simple step that may be all that is necessary to bring the lovely designs back to life.

• Investigation into installing an **automatic bell ringer** in the bell in the church steeple is underway. This adaptation would make it possible to ring the church bell easily—and hence more frequently. One Midwestern company quoted a price of \$6100 to do this job, an amount that is beyond our current budget. More research will be done.

Pastoral Stewardship Council February meeting highlights:

Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on February 7 was attended by 230 STA volunteers, plus staff who prepared and served food.

Ministry reports:

• The **Liturgy Board** is planning to offer a workshop on music ministry by well-known composer Bob Hurd. Watch the parish bulletin for future notice.

• The coordinator of **RCIA (Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, aka "Initiation Ministry")** reported that 18 adults are seeking Initiation sacraments this spring: 5 for Baptism, 4 for reception into the Catholic Church, and 9 for Confirmation.

• The principal of **Seton School**, Sr. Adella

Armentrout, presented slides about the school and its students. This year the 248 Seton School students are 82% Latino, 7% African American, 2% Asian, 9% other; 52% are English language learners; 85% are Catholic. Seventy percent of families are below the poverty line; six families pay the full tuition of \$2800.

Emergency First Aid

training for ushers in all of the parish churches was urged by Jim McLaughlin of Building and Maintenance. [Mike McMahon of the STA Site Committee is recruiting volunteers from STA to attend training on March 28, given by the City of Palo Alto. Contact Mike if you could serve our community by taking this training: m-mcmahon@sbcglobal.net.]

STA Interior Task Force considers altar:

Members of the Interior Task Force, Bill Voorhees and John Arnold, met with a representative of SB Builders, Inc., to discuss remodeling the church altar. The inspection of the altar itself revealed that it is a sound piece, well built with good redwood. Consideration is being given to the possibility of lowering the altar 6"-12", thus reducing the need to have so many levels of steps leading up to the tabernacle. The steps are a safety hazard to priests and Eucharistic ministers who move around the table during Mass.

Some Task Force members are concerned that lowering the altar too much will diminish its positive visual

impact for the congregation.

The cost of such a remodel is a serious consideration as well. Bill and John will review the bid from SB Builders, clarifying every line item.

The next meeting of the Interior Task

Force is Wednesday, March 18, 7:30 p.m., at St. Albert the Great Hospitality Center. Come and voice your opinion, or just sit back and listen. This church building welcomes us all; all are welcome to participate in this planning.

