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“We pray for those who bring offerings and do good works in this holy and all venerable house, for those who labor and those who sing, and for all the people here present, who await Thy great and rich mercy.”
—from the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom

Dear Friends of Unity Acres,

At eleven this morning, a group of worshippers had gathered at Unity Acres – both residents and folks from near-by – for Sunday Mass. It was a cool, brilliant sunny morning. In the gardens just in front of our chapel, early spring flowers are in evidence: the crocuses are perhaps even a little past their peak, the daffodils and tulips are yet to bloom. Today is Palm Sunday: at Mass we listen to Luke’s account of the culmination of Christ’s journey to Jerusalem, a triumphant entry (19: 28-40) swiftly followed by the Passion (22: 14 – 23:56).

Our little chapel, dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, is located on the ground floor of our Main Building, which we commonly refer to as ‘B’ Building – I’m not quite sure why. It is here that we gather for Sunday and week-day liturgies, and for communion services on those weekends when Father Jones is unable to be at Unity Acres to celebrate Mass with us. Whether it’s for big celebrations, for Anniversaries, holidays or Holy Days, whether for funerals or for picnics, or whether simply for regularly scheduled Masses, it is the gathering of the people which counts. The people so gathered are themselves ‘living stones’ in *this* temple of the Holy Spirit.

Still, the place in which we gather has become quite special and dear to us, through the efforts of those who have come before, and the efforts of the *present* community: those who labor, and those who sing, those who do good works in this venerable and holy house.

The Main Building at Unity Acres, back in the days when this property was the Oswego County Tuberculosis Sanatorium, had been the Children’s Building, and the space which we are now using for our chapel had once been, we’ve been told, a school room for the young TB patients then living at the Sanatorium.

We’ve been told as well that our chapel had not always occupied its location in B Building. A few years ago, while searching for a dress coat suitable for a deceased member of the community whose funeral we were preparing, one of our staff discovered in the back room of the clothing room in the North Wing, a beautiful mural painted on a west facing wall. Our chapel, it seems, was once situated in the North Wing, before being transferred at some later moment to B Building. This mural, painted by Jim Homer, had been hidden behind a rack of

donated suits for several, several years. Subsequently the section of sheetrock containing Jim's mural was cut out and framed by Mark Coon, and it now hangs in the hallway leading to the current location of our chapel. The mural itself is a depiction of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, of the embrace of father and son (Luke 15, 11-32), which incidentally was the Gospel read at Mass two weeks ago today.

The chapel had been moved into the North Wing, in the spring of 1978 and was finally moved to its present quarters – I'm not quite sure when. The pews, the altar, the statues, the Stations of the Cross – all were given to Father McVey for use here at the Acres, when a hospital chapel, somewhere up north in the Ogdensburg Diocese (so I was told) had been shut or was itself completely renovated. Our Stations are labeled in French, '*Jésus tombe pour la première fois*', and so on, so perhaps these came to us somehow from some French-Canadian parish.

In years gone by, there have been a few occasions when it was necessary to make certain repairs and improvements to our chapel. I recall that when Father Jones, Peg McCarthy and I were first becoming involved with Unity Acres, that Fred Petell was busily occupied with refurbishing the statues of Saint Joseph, Mary, and the Sacred Heart, as well as the altar. The statues needed repainting, and had been put into Fred's care and custody for the duration of the project.

Some years later, in late 1994, a fire broke out in one of the rooms directly above our chapel. Thanks be to God, no one was injured at the time, but extinguishing the fire caused serious water damage to the chapel below. At that time, Father Ted Sizing was at Saint Francis Farm, and was able to offer to organize teams of volunteers – college students doing week-long retreats at the Farm – putting up new wallpaper, repainting damaged wood-work and so on. Still later, a leaky roof – since fixed – caused damage to the chapel's tin ceiling panels, and these had to be repainted.

But now the time has come again for a renovation of our well-loved chapel. Mark Baker has written a fine description of the work currently under way (see p. 3). Please visit our website, unityacres.org, to view photos documenting the renovations in progress.

In Exodus, when Moses first hears the voice of God, God's word to Moses is: "Moses, Moses ... Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Exodus 3: 5, Third Sunday of Lent) We are perhaps inclined to regard our humble little chapel, tucked away in this unlikely corner of a disused TB Sanatorium, in Orwell, New York, also as holy ground. It has pleased God for forty years to cause His Name to dwell here, and He has sojourned among us here. Yes, this has indeed become Holy Ground.

Steve Dickhout

Sacred Heart Chapel Renovation

About seven months ago, Father Jones and I discussed the condition of our Sacred Heart Chapel. The wallpaper was peeling, pew benches and kneelers were worn, floor tiles were coming up, and the tin ceiling needed painting. We agreed that it would be a good winter project. It was also noted that the chapel could be brighter with the right paint tones. After careful budget considerations, paint color and floor tile type, Steve Dickhout gave the green light to start the renovation. In order to accommodate the people who attend Mass here, we split the work into two phases. One half now, and the other half to begin when all the work on the larger half of the chapel is completed.

Although the wallpaper was peeling in spots, it didn't peel too easily for our guys when it came down to stripping it. With the use of paper tigers, wallpaper stripper, sharp scrapers, we were able to remove it. A good portion of the walls had to be refinished or 'floated' with joint compound and then sanded. In one area under the wallpaper we discovered a wall mural that looked to be painted by children. Many years ago, during the time of the old Oswego County TB San, this space was once a school room. All the walls and paneling were primed, and then painted in soft earth tones. Many of the men here got involved with the work and did a great



job. Many thanks and appreciation go to Mark D, David H, Bill W, Paul J, Dan G, and Fred L for all the prep work and painting.

A little at a time, the pew benches and kneelers were brought down to the A Building wood shop for repair and refinishing. Fred L is stripping the old varnish from the pew benches, moves them over to Eddie D for needed repairs, sanding staining and varnishing. The twelve that are complete look absolutely beautiful. The

light stain that Eddie used brings out the natural beauty of the wood. Fred and Eddie's efforts are much appreciated for the professional job they are doing.

Because the floor was in such bad shape, we decided to lay half-inch plywood over the existing subfloor to insure a good bonding of the floor tile. Steve D is doing an excellent job laying the floor tile and should have it completed in a day or two. We are all excited to see the results once everything is back in place! It was my pleasure to be part of this project and very pleased with the support and enthusiasm from the men.

Mark Baker

March Prayer: Renovation – Renewal – Our Chapel
Repentance – Renewal – Ourselves

“We thank You for this house of prayer, in which You bless Your family as we come to You on pilgrimage.” – *Preface Prayer / Dedication of a Church*

“All powerful, ever-living God, fill this (chapel) with Your love, and give Your help to all who call on You in faith. May the power of Your word and sacraments in this place bring strength to the people gathered here.” – *Prayer, Mass of Dedication*

We thank You, O Lord, for our Chapel, graced by Your Spirit. Always a Holy Place, it is now being renewed. Thus it will be an even more fitting house of worship, prayer, peace and reflection.

Your Spirit moved hearts and minds to carry out the extensive and needed renovation. Many of our men – Your men – have worked long and hard with great care. Our Chapel, beautifully restored, will convey Your welcome. We thank You for Your grace, and the loving response to it by so many.

“One thing I ask, this alone I seek: to dwell in the house of the Lord all my days.” – *Psalms 27, 4*

“If the Lord does not build the house, then in vain do the builders labor.” – *Psalms 127, 1*

“Whoever is in Christ is a new creation; all things are made new.” – *2 Cor 5, 17 – 4th Sunday in Lent*

We thank You, Lord, for this holy season of Lent. You call us to repent – to turn back to You. By prayer, fasting, almsgiving and good works, may we be in Christ, and so become a new creation. Amen

“Each year You give us this joyful season when we prepare to celebrate the Paschal Mystery (Easter) with mind and heart renewed.” – *Preface Prayer / Lent*

Father Robert Jones