

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER**¡BIENVENIDO DE NUEVO, PADRE LUIZ!**

Welcome back to St. John's, Padre Luiz! Fr. Luiz is the priest with whom we set up our twinning relationship with Santa Cruz Parish over 15 years ago. He has remained close to us when parishioners visit our sister parishes, although he has been long gone from Santa Cruz.

NOT EVERYTHING IN THE CHURCH IS SPIRITUAL; SOME THINGS ARE CONCRETE

You may have noticed that the front steps of the church look something like the land used for bombing exercises. For years, like bad plastic surgery, we have tried to lift and tuck, even the wrinkles, and hope it would hold. Unfortunately, the concrete is just too tired out to hold up. This week we will begin to remove the old steps and sidewalks and replace them. I ask your patience during the time of this project and ask you to use different entrances. The handicapped entrance will NOT be affected.

YOU KNOW THAT \$#@ ASSESSMENT WE PAY THE ARCHDIOCESE?

Do you remember the hail storm we had this past winter? From the ground, it appeared that our roofs were free of damage. On the advice of an astute parishioner, we had the roofs examined because damage is not always visible from the ground. In fact, the rectory, the parish office, and the youth house roofs sustained significant damage, as well as the sky lights in the Park Avenue school building. The archdiocesan insurance inspector agreed, and the roofs will be replaced at only the deductible for one roof. (We must have got him on a good day!) Our insurance is part of the assessment we pay the archdiocese. An extra benefit of this is that we were planning on replacing two of the roofs this fiscal year.

THE SEEDY SIDE OF THE GOSPEL

Today's Gospel (Matt 13: 1-23) not only gives us a parable, but also the Parables for Dummies explanation by no less than the author of the parable himself, the Lord Jesus. He gives an interpretation of the parable. Parables by their very nature invite reflection over and over again. We know from Jesus' interpretation of the parable that our souls are the soil on which the seed (the word of God)

falls, and the quality of the soil determines the future of the seed. What we may not appreciate is the fact that we are also the plowman/plow woman of the soil. The soil of our soul as it is at this moment is not what the soil is destined to be. The soil is meant to be changed by our taking action to improve it. It is within our control, with the guidance and help of the Holy Spirit, of course, to be continually cultivating the soil so that the word of God we hear can not only survive, but bear much spiritual fruit in our lives.



So, how do we become cultivators of our soul's "soil"? First, by being aware that it is in our ability to change it. (With God, "That's just how I am, does not apply.") Second, by examining our life to see if we have a soul that is so hard packed with self-righteousness, or uncritically accepting the values of the world, that the word of God cannot begin to penetrate it. How do we break the hardened soil? By comparing our opinions and beliefs to those of Christ in the gospel, and by realizing that God is not made in our image, but we are to measure up to Him. If we find that our soul is cluttered with rock, debris, and thorny weeds that do not allow for the word to take, then we must engage in the sometimes back breaking work of removing the obstacles for the roots of the word to spread and flourish: greed, resentment, prejudice, self-righteousness, materialism, dishonesty (with ourselves and others), political positions that are not rooted in justice and peace, not only for our own country, but for all people. With souls softened, plowed, and cleared by the power of the Holy Spirit acting in us, we will find that the word does indeed become fruitful beyond our wildest imagining. Happy Gardening! – Fr. Jeff