

Chaplain's Bulletin April 28, 2024



Dear Folks,

I heard on Facebook that St. Jean's Church in Muskegon, which has been closed for a number of years, is slated to be torn down. If I remember correctly, it was built between 1885 and 1887 by immigrants of French ancestry. I was told the bishop said to Fr. LeTellier that they should throw up a temporary structure to get started since they didn't have money. Fr. LeTellier then said, "No bishop, the French people are accustomed to praying in beautiful surroundings. It will be the most beautiful church in town, and it will begin immediately. It was beautiful. I suspect the elaborately carved high altar and side altars were lovingly hand made by parishioners. The rectory was a house that used to belong to a lumber baron and was going to be torn down to build Hackley Park. The parish got it really cheaply, and it was dragged down Third Street to the church by horses, block and tackle (it was a lumber town then, and they were good at moving heavy objects, and there were no power lines or telephone wires). I heard many stories: the place was thick with history. The parish endured through some difficult times for America: the great depression, two world wars and other upheavals. When it closed, that was the end of an era. Now, I hear that the building itself will be gone.

Our Gospel this Sunday gives us Jesus' teaching: "I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower. He takes away every branch in me that does not bear fruit, and every one that does he prunes so that it bears more fruit (John 14:1-2)." What might He mean?

I see there have been churches around the diocese that have closed. How many more will there be? Might God be reconfiguring the Church in America so that we bear more fruit? Might He be testing us?

What kind of fruit is He looking for? We know that Jesus wants His Church to "make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19)." What kind of fruit are we bearing in this area? What might we do? What can each Catholic do to help the Church be more fruitful? I think God has given us everything we need to have a bold future. How we respond could have a lot to say about what that future will be, and everyone has a role.

Blessings,

Fr. Jim