

God is good!

So it was just last week that I began to have several sleepless nights. We had just had our Bishop's visitation. He was a real gift to us. I felt that St. Anna's was really serving the people and that the people of St. Anna's were serving the city - just as it should be. But, I was worried.

How can we continue to serve without substantial resources?

How can the medical unit continue to roll without guaranteed funding?

How can we continue to provide a venue for community health without grants?

The old historic building is really suffering and we must repair it soon! Due to subsidence and rot we need about \$150-200,000 to preserve the building for later restoration. Or, we risk demolition due to deterioration which would not be serving the people.

In a perfect world I had hoped that partner parishes would pledge a monthly amount that would fill all the gaps.

Then it was Tuesday March 11th. I opened my email that morning to find a message from St. Francis in Stamford. A list-serve was finished! Thanks to them we are now connected and can communicate as a real network of parishes all vested in social justice.

Next I opened an e-mail from St. Francis only to discover that they had been taking up a 'second collection' all of this time and were prepared to send us a 'grant' in support of parish work.

Later that day I opened a letter from attorneys representing the estate of a deceased member only to find a very substantial gift likely enough to get us started in repairing the old building. At least enough to keep us out of trouble and continue to serve.

I went into Diana's office excited and relieved and reminded that God does bless work devoted to his name. She simply smiled broadly and told me that two years ago she had made a leap of faith. That in those two years she clearly saw God work and provide for us. She said that when I had told her of my concerns for the medical unit she was not in the least concerned because she KNEW that God would provide! She acknowledged that for her practical mind this was a radical shift - abandoning ourselves to the Lord. God is good.

I am asking all who receive this to offer, very intentionally, prayers to God in thanksgiving. We are blessed. We are blessed by you our supporters, by our church family, and the grace of our Savior.

Green Space

Recently St. Anna's hosted a group of nurses that had come to New Orleans to volunteer their services. Most were from Baltimore but some were from northern California. It was our usual Wednesday night concert-resource-supper evening. We treated over a two dozen locals with acupuncture, massage therapy, health screens, gave a lady a place to sleep for the night, and we were finally closing it down when I happened to chat with the group of nurses. We talked about the difficulty of explaining the continuing need for assistance.

I asked one of them where they were housed and they said that they were staying in the Lower 9th Ward. I asked what they thought of it. One young lady said that it was not at all what she expected. She had anticipated a panorama of devastation. But instead she thought that the Lower 9 was really not bad at all. Many or most of the occupied homes were well kept. She was very impressed with the large green spaces dotted with trees. She liked the fact that there seemed to be a lot of grassy areas and that it was not over crowded.

Ironically, what she was describing were the several blocks of scoured landscape that is now green. It was a bustling neighborhood with literally dozens of homes. Those homes are now, for the better part, demolished. If you drive the streets you can see the occasional cement steps to nowhere. But, in general, the landscape is green.

If one drives around New Orleans East, largely a suburban cityscape, one sees several homes on each block reoccupied with lawns well tended. There still are no major grocery stores there, nor are there dry cleaners and many of the large apartment complexes that once stood there are still being repaired. Slowly, people are coming back. Our population is floating around 300,000+.

The state is now figuring out how to spend almost \$1Billion Dollars in revenue surpluses for recovery. Most of the monies, we are told, will go toward capital projects like rebuilding roads, wetlands restoration, and levee rebuilding.

Yet, we still have no major public health system; schools are still not what they should be; we still have over 13,000 homeless people; and we are still killing people at about four per week.

The landscape has indeed changed. Maybe green is better. But, where do we go from here. Who will join the recovery? Where are the folks that occupied those dozens of homes that are now green space?