

Under Construction

Fr. Michael Tracey

One of the big talking points around Bay St. Louis these days is the condition of our streets. Basically they are all torn up. It is because of progress, they say.

You can leave your home in the morning to go to work and hope and pray that you will not only get out of your driveway but also out of your street to work. You may return in the evening, hoping to get home but you may not get into your own street or even driveway.

Driving around the city is like driving around in a maze. Along the way, you encounter, “dead-ends” in the form of “Construction – street closed,” signs. You detour another way, hoping that the arrow will point you out of the maze. Then, you encounter another detour. And continue to get turned around again and again in the maze. It not only tries your patience but also your shock absorbers and reminds you that it is pointless washing your vehicle because it will be messed up even worse the next day.

Breaking water pipes is a daily occurrence. No water for showering, cooking or bathroom use is more the usual than exception. Schools are hard hit. It has omens of the aftermath of Katrina still.

Pundits would comment on how one group would dig up the street, put down a utility and close the street up again. Some time later, another group would come, dig up the street again, put down another utility and close the street up again. Finally, another group would come and dig it up again, put down another utility and close it up again. In some places the final closure generated some interesting accomplishments – the sidewalks were either lower than the street or they were higher than people’s property with the result that people had to anticipate unwanted pools of water in their yards when it rained.

Recently, the company doing the construction, closed off the beach boulevard in front of our schools and church. On Friday morning, they carried their huge “Under Construction” signs to the various entrances to the beach and readied them for early on Monday morning when work was to begin.

The company engaged in the reconstruction of the beach road, indicated that the road would be closed for a period of sixty days. The disruption to schools and church services and access to both is frustrating. Obviously, we will be counting down the sixty days and not holding our breath. We know that, based on other such accomplishments, sixty days will be expanded with all relevant excuses.

The whole experience reminds me of Lent. Lent is an opportunity for each of us to hang around our necks an “Under Construction” sign. We are in process, always “Under Construction.” A short time ago, we began a New Year with some New Year’s Resolutions. Most of us have fallen short on them or forgotten about them since then.

Now, we are about to embrace Lent and do some more pruning and growth under the umbrella of “Under Construction.” Like all construction efforts, there are lots of disruptions along the way to our comfort levels and routines. We dig a little deeper into the bowels of our road through life. We check its foundations. We replace the broken promises; the life streams that run through the pulses of our lives are cleaned out. The plaque is flushed out through new arteries of endeavor and hope. Our outer appearance will resemble the outer shells of our dirty vehicles as we embrace an Ash Wednesday Cross to remind us of our need to be always “Under Construction.”

Maybe, in a way, we will be glad that Lent is only 40 days even though we may falter and fall along the way in our interior makeover.

Secretly, I hope and will continue to count on the sixty days disruption as construction continues outside my door. In the meantime, I know that my Lent will be extended and my patience stretched.