

Leslie Blanke's 3/1/15 campaign testimonial

Fifteen years ago last month, my husband David's firm asked if we would consider moving to Austin from a *city* and a *house* we thought we would never leave. Our first responsibility was to find a school for our then-first and fourth graders. We visited St. Theresa's, St. Louis, and St. Gabriel's, but after being welcomed with open arms at St. Austin's and then crossing the alley to receive ashes with this congregation at Ash Wednesday services, we knew we had found our *home*.

The soul of St. Austin's remains as vital as ever through its faithful parishioners, the students, faculty, and staff at the school, and the various ministries it supports. However, like any home, it requires maintenance. If you haven't done so already, I invite you to look up as you leave this evening. Our iconic cross at the top of the tower is wrapped like a mummy to prevent further deterioration, and the façade is pockmarked where chunks of limestone have simply fallen to the ground below. Not only is this unsightly, but it is dangerous, and it is our responsibility to protect passers-by and our church community from unnecessary harm.

It also is our responsibility to provide access to all of those who gather here, which means updating our non-ADA compliant bathrooms. In addition, the remodeling plan calls for converting part of the rectory into useable parish spaces.

Finally, as we know, for every dollar we put into a mortgage, there is less money to spend on other worthwhile projects, and it is the same story with our parish. Making costly debt payments on the garage takes away from our ability to more fully fund our parish ministries.

David and I hope you will join us in supporting the Faithful to Our Mission capital campaign to repair and remodel the façade, to update the bathrooms, to increase the parish's useable space, and to pay down the debt. For those of you who already have made a sacrificial pledge to the campaign, THANK YOU. Through your generosity, we have raised over \$1.5 million.

In addition, a fellow parishioner has offered a \$1million matching pledge once donations hit \$2.25 million. If we can get to that \$3.25 million amount, and with additional contributions from those of who have yet make a commitment to the campaign, reaching our goal of \$4 million looks well within reach.