

## Getting Started

It is hard to believe that a month has passed since I left the parish. Over the past two weeks I have finished the work on the cottage; anything needing paint has been painted, brush has been cut, gravel covers the drive and all the wood has been sealed.

At the same time I have begun doing some reading related to my project. One book is written by a skeptic, not a believer; it is entitled "*The Believing Brain*". The author Michael Shermer examines the biology and psychology of why people believe. He continues by examining the belief in God, in the supernatural, the paranormal, conspiracy theories and more. In his opinion, first most people believe and then develop reasons for their belief. It is interesting, but will probably not be a significant help to my project.

The other book I am reading is "*Wake Up, Lazarus!*" written by Pierre Hegy. It was given to me by a friend who knew about my project and thought it might be helpful. The author looks at the decline of the Catholic Church and mainline Christian Churches and the increase of among the Evangelical Protestant Churches. His main concern is the Catholic community, but he draws from the experience of the other believing communities to both explain and contrast what is happening among Catholics. In the end he offers his prescriptions for what can be done in Catholic communities to make them dynamic to the members.

Beside the reading and work, I have taken the opportunity to walk through the countryside.

The other part of my project is to begin interviewing people. My first interviews have been with lay people – friends – that I have known for years. While I have known their story and shared much with them over the years, talking about how their spiritual life evolved and where it is now has never been a part of our conversation. So I find the time I spend with them very enlightening. I am also taking advantage of this time off to reconnect with some priest friends that I have made over the years. In most cases they have been very interested in my project and have been very generous in sharing their ideas on what I might find out and on how I might use what I learn from the interviews.

This coming week I begin to hit the road. My niece will taking care of the dogs while begin doing some traveling. First I am going to visit another priest who I met on my last sabbatical 19 years ago in Rome. We have kept contact over the years, but it has been difficult to get together.