



## Tearing Down and Building Up

This May I had the joy of blessing the new entrance to Blessed Sacrament Church in Ontario. It is a wonder to behold. The entire front wall was dismantled and moved forward toward the street to make room for a spacious new vestibule and an elevator accessible to wheelchairs just a few steps from the driveway. A wide new central stairway reaches down to the sidewalk, inviting passers-by to ascend to God's House.

The new addition is the culmination of a campaign led by Father Jose Thomas Mudakodiyil which began (and was continuously renewed by) parish prayer for direction and inspiration. That prayer was soon answered. Scores of volunteers stepped forward, especially some with valuable construction experience. Committees were formed. Designs were drawn up. Parishioners were continually updated on project developments. Fundraising brought in a generous sum from a multitude of donors.

Other parishes would do well to note the role of *Catholic Extension* in Blessed Sacrament's undertaking. Instead of granting seed money at the beginning of the project, *Extension* capped it off with a grant when the parish raised an agreed-upon amount, thereby stimulating local fundraising along the way. As a result Blessed Sacrament did not have to go into debt to accomplish its much needed renovation.

Nor did St. Mary's in Pendleton for the construction of a new wheelchair ramp—a project carried forward by Father Kumar Ugandala with the impressive cooperation of the Knights of Columbus.

Until now, since the elevator to the church only went up from ground level, people with walkers or wheelchairs could not get down the stairs to the parish hall for coffee and doughnuts or funeral receptions. Now it will be easy for them to do so. The easy-to-reach ramp is right off the elevator and runs back and forth through the stage at the end of the parish hall.

To build the ramp it was necessary to tear out the existing stage and cut a doorway through a very thick wall. This preliminary work left a lot of heavy debris, but it wasn't there long once the Knights of Columbus put their hands to the task of carting it away. No doubt they have lent their time and strength in other ways since I visited in mid-May. You couldn't miss the look of satisfaction in their eyes. It is a satisfaction their fellow parishioners will rightly share.

To proclaim the Gospel effectively the Church needs to make the House of God accessible to those who seek His face in worship. In this Year of Mercy Blessed Sacrament and St. Mary's have shown us how to do precisely that.