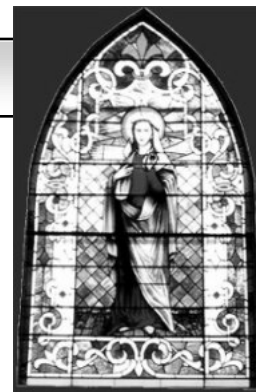


Church Renovation Update



As you arrived for Mass this weekend, perhaps you will noticed that some changes have taken place in the sanctuary over the past week:

1. The platform on which the altar resides has been raised one step higher for greater visibility.
2. Because of this new platform, the presider's chair has been raised one level so it is easily visible behind the raised altar.
3. In the choir area, movable riser platforms have been created for the back row of choir pews. This will raise one section of the choir so they will be visible to the choir director and choir members will have a less restricted view of the raised main altar.
4. As per my request, pews have been placed in the choir area to create a "finished" and attractive look, even at times when the choir area is unoccupied. But in designing these riser platforms and pews to be both movable and, when necessary, removable, due consideration has been given to the choir's request that seating be "flexible."

A Brief Summary of the Process used in Reaching this Decision

Although the desire to move the choir from the "Choir loft" to within the "Assembly" had been first discussed in 2001, I first spoke to the parish at a Town Meeting held on June 14, 2006. At that meeting and also through a six page bulletin insert, the reestablished "Church Renovations Committee. Proposed a two-month Church Renovation Trial that would begin in mid September.

After the Trial commenced, several options for the placement of the altar, ambo, presider's chair and choir were tried. But when the trial period was scheduled to end, and following the second Town Meeting on the Renovation Trial, several parishioners asked the Parish Council to extend the trial so that the choir might try singing from an alternative location to the side of the altar. But, before this alternative location could be agreed upon, it was decided to take a hiatus from weekly changes to allow the parish to attend to the observance of Advent.

In January, following a busy Advent and Christmas Season, the choir took a month off. When they returned in early February, the choir fulfilled the Council's request by singing on Ash Wednesday and the First Sunday of Lent from an alternate location on the "Tabernacle" side of the church.

Now, after six months of discussion and experimentation, it was time for the Parish Council to make their final recommendations. But before they did so, the Choir was asked to discuss the pros and cons of each location and offer their input to the Council.

On Tuesday, March 13th, the Council:

- listened to proposals from the choir,
- reviewed the parameters that I had previously set concerning pew seating, and
- addressed the frequently expressed request that the altar platform be raised to improve the visibility of the priest as he said the Eucharistic Prayer.

The changes that you see this weekend were recommended to me by the Parish Council at the conclusion of its March 13th meeting. But, because of some challenges that arose following the meeting, the Council requested that I delay the announcement of their recommendations (and the subsequent construction of the altar and choir platforms) until after its April 24th meeting.

Now, after over six month's of trials, and prayerful consideration of the ideas, suggestions and concerns of parishioners, I am pleased to announce the end the trial renovation period and my acceptance of the final recommendations of our parish council.

Over the next few weeks . . .

- I'll review with you how well we were able to keep renovation costs to a bare minimum.
- I'll also express my hopes for finishing the job including cost estimates for carpeting, improving lighting and sound, and bringing the organ down from the choir loft.
- And, I'll discuss with you several ways that we might pay for these remaining renovations, while addressing several other buildings and grounds issues that have revealed themselves over the past few months.

But for today, let's celebrate the progress we have made and the way that we have stayed focused, prayerful and, by and large - TOGETHER - during this very difficult process.

Our faith teaches us that God is always in our midst. As we experience Jesus this weekend through the person of our priest at the Eucharistic table, let's pray that the person of Christ might also be ever more visible to us, in each other.

Through Him, with Him and In Him . . .