

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to document the current and future church building needs of the parish based on a parish-wide workshop held in October 2012, and discussions with numerous members of the parish, held prior to the parish-wide workshop.

As part of the process of the functional needs assessment, the architect met with the parish staff and a small group of parishioners involved with liturgy & Faith Formation to determine the needs of the parish at the current time and for the future. Ministries that were represented at that meeting include the Liturgy Committee, the Music Ministry, the Funeral Ministry, the Environment & Art Committee, lectors, Eucharistic Ministers, *el Ministerio Hispanico* and Christian Faith Formation. The intent of this portion of the report is to summarize the needs as stated by the Committee, in a way that will foster discussion pertaining to the future of the parish and its worship facilities. The following needs assessment is a summary of all of this gathered information.

FUNCTIONAL BUILDING NEEDS ASSESMENT

The parish has developed the following goal statement for their worship space:

The St. Vincent Martyr Vision Statement calls forth a worship environment that should reflect that we are:

- *a Eucharistic community*
- *a welcoming community responsive to and inclusive of culture, age and tradition*
- *a Catholic community*

while reflecting both a physical and historical unity of interior and exterior and a harmonious design within, allowing for reverent movement which supports the spiritual development of the individual and the community through sacramental worship and devotion.

To assess the various aspects of the current worship space, we will compare the current arrangement of the worship space to both the Vision Statement above and the guidelines set forth in Chapters One & Two of *Built of Living Stones* (BLS). Each topic begins with a paraphrase of a section of this document followed by a description of how the current worship space responds. If the Bishop of the Diocese has a specific directive relative to this portion of *Built of Living Stones*, that is also noted.

The Eucharist

1. *The celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is the appropriate starting point for understanding the demands of space, sound, and visibility made upon a church building. (49)¹*

Each weekend, the Sunday Eucharist is celebrated six times. A vigil Mass is held at 5:00 PM on Saturday. The average attendance is approximately 400. Sunday Masses are held at 7:15 AM, 9:00 AM, 10:30 AM, 12:00 PM and 5:00 PM. Estimated attendance at each Mass is, respectively, 200, 400, 400, 300-400 and 100. The 5:00 PM Mass on Sunday is in Spanish. At Easter and Christmas Masses, the church is typically filled to capacity or overflowing. Concurrent Masses are held in the school auditorium to handle the overflow crowds.

The 9:00 Mass is a family Mass that includes a separate Children's Liturgy of the Word. The chapel space is reserved before the Mass for this purpose. During the Liturgy of the Word, around 35 children in Kindergarten through Grade 2 gather in the chapel for their

¹ Numbers in parentheses refer to paragraphs of *Built of Living Stones*.

own Liturgy of the Word, after which the chapel is opened up for seating for latecomers. With only 30 chairs in this space, some of the children must sit on the floor.

Children aged 3 through 5 have the opportunity to participate in a "Get Ready" program called Catechesis of the Good Shepherd for the duration of the 9:00 Mass. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd is rooted in the Bible, the liturgy of the church, and the educational principles of Maria Montessori. Children gather in an "atrium," a room prepared for them, which contains simple yet beautiful materials they use to help them absorb the most essential proclamations of the Christian faith. This program is currently being held in the basement of the rectory next door. Up to 25 children attend on any given Sunday (except when school is not in session). Ideally, space for this program would be in the same building as the church. Since not all families participate in this program, the 9:00 Mass tends to be noisier than the other Masses because of the number of young children attending this Mass.

Based on the current arrangement of chairs in the church, the current seating capacity is 447 in the nave and 30 in the chapel, for a total of 477, including seating for the Music Ministry. Typically, when a church reaches 80% of its seating capacity, it feels full and visitors often get the sense that there is no room for new parishioners. Eighty percent of 477 is 382. Attendance at three of the six Masses is around that number; therefore, those Masses most likely feel crowded. Nonetheless, the Committee does not desire additional seating in the church; they also do not want to see the seating capacity reduced. If there were a possibility of accommodating overflow crowds in a Gathering Space, that would be worth considering.

Another issue applicable to both the Sunday Eucharist and Daily Mass are distractions due to the configuration of the church. Because many people enter the church through the doors on the parking lot side and seating on that side is limited to 85 seats, latecomers to Mass often need to walk around the altar platform to find a seat. There is also the added distraction of people needing to use the toilet room throughout the Mass. Since there is no other route than around the altar platform from most of the seats, those heading for the toilet room are quite noticeable to everyone else and often quite distracting, particularly during the Liturgy of the Word. When there are several people needing to use the single toilet room, a line forms in the chapel, in front of the people seated there for Mass. This happens most frequently when there are people traveling from out of town for a baptism, wedding or funeral. These are most certainly not comfortable situations for those needing to use the facilities.

2. *A pluralism of symbolic, artistic, and architectural expressions of the varied languages and ethnic backgrounds of parishioners enriches the community. (43)*

The worship style at the Spanish Mass varies slightly from the other Masses. Because there is a tradition of only receiving Communion if the Sacrament of Reconciliation has been recently received, a smaller percentage of the congregation receives the Eucharist. Congregants at this Mass also prefer to kneel for the consecration, despite the lack of kneelers. On Palm Sunday, the procession begins outside the church. There is also a strong devotion to the Blessed Mother, which is not necessarily respected by the relocation of her statue for seasonal displays.

The Building

1. *Is a sign and reminder of the immanence and transcendence of God. It is an image that proclaims the heavenly Jerusalem while actualizing the mystery of the communion between man and God. It is clearly expressive of the unity of the entire holy people. (50)*

The 1970's renovation of the church resulted in an improvement in one of these areas and a loss in the other. The unity of the entire holy people is expressed in elements such as the centrally located altar platform and the open setting of the tabernacle. The sacristy space is shared by the priest and the lay people involved in the liturgy. The Reconciliation Room is an open room shared by the priest and the penitent. To quote this section of BLS, "the church building manifests the baptismal unity of all who gather for

the celebration of liturgy and ‘conveys the image of the gathered assembly.’² The primary exception to this is the 30 seats in the Chapel, who are completely segregated from the rest of the gathered assembly.

On other hand, while for some parishioners, the current worship space conveys a “warmth and closeness that people enjoy”³, which they feel should be preserved in any rearrangement of the worship space, it can also be argued that the renovation resulted in more focus on the immanence of God and less focus on the transcendence of God rather than the duality called for by this paragraph.

The Congregation’s Area

1. *The nature of the liturgy demands that the congregation as well as the priest celebrant and ministers be able to exercise their roles in a full and active way. (52)*

While the current arrangement creates a certain unity between the priest celebrant and the congregation, it also creates a challenge for the full and active participation by both. With members of the congregation positioned in front of, on the sides and behind the priest celebrant, interacting with all members of the congregation requires a great deal of movement by the priest celebrant. It is almost impossible for him to include the people seated directly behind him during either the Liturgy of the Word or the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The human eye has a peripheral spread of vision of about 130°. With a 360° encirclement of the priest, as exists at St. Vincent Martyr, 230° of movement would be required for the priest to make eye contact with every worshiper in the church. Such an amount of movement is not only very difficult but also very distracting, as people do not normally rotate even their head to this degree while speaking. For some priest celebrants or lay readers, any significant movement is very difficult, particularly while preaching. In such a case, only 63% of the congregation has eye contact with the priest or reader.

The original design of the nave, with its structural columns supporting the central portion of the nave, also interferes with the full and active participation of the congregation. Our analysis of the space shows that 98 of the 445 seats in the nave have obstructed views of either the altar, the ambo or the Presider’s chair. That means that more than one out of every five people in the nave is prevented from full and active participation because of the location of their seat relative to the columns.

The body of the church

1. *Each part contributes to the unity of the space by proportion, size, and shape. (53)*

The large, centrally located altar platform with its rather massive altar tends to divide the assembly space into four separate areas. This detracts from the unity of the space for the assembly. However, this same arrangement makes a significant contribution to the unity of the holy people. (See “The Building” above.)

The Sanctuary Area

1. *Expresses the relationship between the unique quality of the actions that take place there and the actions of the entire liturgical assembly. (54)*

² General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM), no. 294: “The people of God assembled at Mass possess an organic and hierarchical structure, expressed by the various ministries and actions for each part of the celebration. The general plan of the sacred building should be such that in some way it conveys the image of the gathered assembly. Thus it should also allow the participants to take the placemost appropriate to them and assist all to carryout their individual functions properly.

“The faithful and the choir should have a place that facilitates their active participation.”

³ Quote from a member of the Renovation Committee.

Being elevated yet accessible from all four sides, it is both separate from and a part of the entire liturgical assembly. However, due to its large size, parishioners and visitors alike have been known to walk through the sanctuary area rather than around it. This typically results in a lack of proper reverence being shown for the altar.

2. *Must be spacious enough to accommodate the full celebration of the various rituals. (54)*

While the altar platform measures over seventeen feet square, the 5'-6" square altar reduces the useable space of the large platform. Typically, the 6, 7 or 8 Eucharistic ministers line up on two sides at the foot of the altar platform.

Sanctuary Furnishings

1. *Constructed of substantial materials that express dignity and stability. (55)*

While the altar certainly meets that criterion, the same cannot be said of the ambo and Presider's chair. The precarious location of the ambo certainly does not provide a sense of stability for those using it.

2. *Their design should make it clear that they are related in the one eucharistic celebration. (55)*

There is little consistency in the design of the altar, ambo, font and chair, which consist of different designs and different materials.

3. *The altar should be centrally located in the sanctuary and the center of attention in the church. (58)*

Altar must be visible from all parts of the church but not so elevated that it causes visual or symbolic division from the liturgical assembly. (59)

The current altar certainly meets the first criteria. If not for the columns, it would be visible from all parts of the church.

4. *Altar and ambo should be accessible to ministers who need wheelchairs or have other disabilities. (59)*

Neither the altar nor the ambo is wheelchair-accessible due in part to being on an inaccessible platform. In fact, the ambo is barely accessible to able-bodied people, as getting up to it and down from it takes a fair bit of dexterity and care.

5. *An appropriate placement of the chair of the priest celebrant allows him to be visible to all in the congregation. (59)*

There are approximately forty seats in the nave from which the chair is not visible.

6. *Since many people share in the ministry of the word, the ambo should be accessible to everyone, including those with disabilities. (60)*

The ambo is not accessible to those with disabilities nor to the children involved in the ministry of the word at the 9:00 Mass, due to its height.

The Baptistry

1. *Location of the baptismal font is in a prominent place that reflects the Christian's journey **through** the waters of baptism **to** the altar. (66)*

The current location of the font on the altar platform does not reflect this journey, as it is within six feet of the altar.

2. *Font is visible and accessible to all who enter the church. (67)*

While the font is within sight of most people entering the church, its color and design are so similar to those of the building columns that it has a tendency to blend into the background and not be seen by many people entering the church. Its elevated location makes it inaccessible to all who enter the church.

3. *Since baptism in Catholic churches may take place by immersion in the water, or by infusion (pouring), fonts that permit all forms of baptismal practice are encouraged. (69)*

The current font allows for infusion of both children and adults. It is not part of the catechesis of this parish to baptize by immersion. Infant baptisms occur either during a Sunday liturgy (typically the 12:00 Mass) or at 1:00 or 1:15 PM on Sundays.

The Reservation of the Eucharist

1. *The Eucharist is reserved in a part of the church that is distinguished, conspicuous, beautifully decorated and suitable for prayer. (72)*

The area where the Eucharist is reserved is none of these things. It appears to be in a corner of the nave, it is not particularly conspicuous, the area has no special decorations and, being in the midst of seating areas and having only one *prie-dieu*, it is not particularly suitable for prayer.

2. *The bishop is to determine where the tabernacle will be placed and to give further direction. (73)*

Bishop Serratelli has directed that the tabernacle be located behind the altar. The current location is not in keeping with the Bishop's directive.

Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum

1. *The liturgy of Palm Sunday requires space for a procession that recalls Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:1-11) (81)*

Typically, the entrance procession is from the sacristy, through the nearby entry doors, around the altar platform and up to the altar. For "high church" days, such as Palm Sunday, First Communion, Confirmation, etc., the procession starts from the Green Village Road entrance doors. To get to those doors, the priest and liturgical ministers will typically walk around the exterior of the church but in inclement weather, they must walk through the entire body of the church. The vestibule at that entry is too small to accommodate a very large processional group. If better situated and more accommodating, processions down the longest aisle of the church would be more common, as they would be a more formal gesture than the current practice.

Seating

1. *Members of the congregation should be able to see the ministers at the altar, the ambo, and the chair. (85)*

As previously mentioned, only 349 members of the congregation are able to see the ministers at the altar, the ambo and the chair.

2. *Kneelers should be provided so that the whole congregation can easily kneel when the liturgy calls for it. (86)*

Kneelers are not currently provided.

3. *Seating arrangement calls the congregation to active participation and avoids any semblance of a theater or an arena. (86)*

While any space with seating and an elevated stage can have the appearance of a theater, most theaters are arranged with a single audience area that faces the stage—not unlike the original layout of the worship space. The current arrangement, with seating on all four sides, resembles a theater-in-the-round. Theaters-in-the-round are designed to minimize the distance between the audience and performers. The same principal would tend to encourage the active participation of the congregation.

4. *No seat located beyond a point where distance and lighting level of the sanctuary severely impede the view of and participation in liturgical actions [60 feet]. (87)*

The furthest seat is located 60' from the altar.

Music

1. *Music is integral to the liturgy and helps set the tone for each celebration. (88)*

Music is an integral part of every Eucharistic celebration, except for the 7:15 AM Mass. While the basic musical style is the same at each Mass, there are variations among the Masses. The Children's Choir sings at the 9:00 Mass and the Adult Choir sings at the 10:30 Mass. Smaller contemporary choirs provide the music at the 5:00 Masses.

2. *Space for musicians clearly expresses that they are part of the assembly of worshippers. (89)*

As they occupy one of the four seating areas around the altar platform, they are clearly part of the assembly of worshippers. However, from an acoustical point of view, some risers within the choir area would allow them to be better heard. Given that there is no separate rehearsal room for the choir, they use this space up to four days a week for rehearsal and use the Chapel for warming up before Sunday liturgies. A separate rehearsal room would free up these areas for other uses at those times.

3. *Song leaders should be visible to the entire congregation. (89)*

The song leader leads from the altar platform and is visible to a portion of the congregation. On the other hand, when the bell choir performs, their location in the back rows of that section of the church makes them visible to very few members of the congregation. It seems that those who cannot see the choir are not bothered by that fact.

Other Ritual Furnishings

1. *There should be a crucifix "positioned either on the altar or near it, and...clearly visible to the people gathered there."⁴ (91)*

There is a large, wall-mounted crucifix near the altar but it is not clearly visible to the people. A processional cross is used but there is no location on the altar platform where it can be positioned near the altar and be clearly visible to the people gathered there without obstructing their view of the Priest celebrant.

The Gathering Space or Narthex

1. *Provide a place of welcome that helps to make the transition from everyday life to the celebration of the liturgy. (95)*

The Committee has identified the following problems with the current Narthex space:

- It is too small for the amount of traffic that goes through it before and after the weekend liturgies.
- People tend to use the church for connecting rather than the Narthex.
- Rather than being used as a place of welcoming, it is used as a place for collections of food, school supplies, baby items and so on; as a place of sales for the school and local charities; as a place of giveaways at various times of the year; and as a space for the distribution of bulletins by the ushers.
- On occasion, it is used in combination with the Chapel for small receptions after special liturgical services, such as All Souls Day.
- Because there is no other suitable space, it is used as a place for liturgical ministers to sign in and gather. A dedicated space for this purpose, separate from the Priest's sacristy, would be ideal.
- It is difficult to do anything non-traditional during the special seasons since there is no additional break out space or hospitality space attached to the church.

⁴ GIRM, no. 308.

A well-designed Gathering Space of Narthex would be a wonderful space for fellowship after special events, i.e. Women's Advent Evening, Lent Speakers and Missions, etc., at which time the space could be used for coffee and.....

During the winter and Lent months when the RCIA Catechumen are dismissed, they go to the Living Room at the Rectory since any other on site space is too far away and eats into the short dismissal time. A room for this somewhere below or off the Narthex would be ideal. This space could also be used for Children's Liturgy of the Word, etc.

External environment

1. *Facilitates the spiritual transition as people move to a sense of communal worship. (98)*

The well maintained exterior of the building and good landscaping both contribute to the spiritual transition. The remote, unsigned location of the handicapped entrance does not convey the same feeling to the disabled.

Sacrament of Reconciliation

1. *The place for the celebration of the sacrament of penance should be visible and accessible, contain a fixed grille, and allow for confession face-to-face for those who wish to do so. (103)*

The location behind the choir seating makes the Reconciliation Room less visible and accessible than it should be.

Rite of Marriage

1. *If it is the custom to have the bride and groom seated in the sanctuary, then the design of the sanctuary should be spacious enough to allow an arrangement of chairs and kneelers that does not impinge upon the primary furniture in the sanctuary. (108)*

It is currently the custom to seat both the bride and groom and the maid of honor and best man in the sanctuary. The large altar makes this arrangement rather tight.

Christian Funerals

1. *Doors, aisles and space consider the placement of the casket. (112)*

The removal of some of the chairs in front of the altar is required to provide adequate space for the casket.

The Liturgical Year: Seasonal Decorations

1. *Decorations are intended to draw people to the true nature of the mystery being celebrated and should be arranged to enhance the primary liturgical points of focus. (124)*

Because of the freestanding, centrally located altar with seating on all four sides, it is difficult to create a single focal point. The lack of backdrops for decorating means that decorations typically must also be freestanding and viewable from all four sides. This makes decorating the church both challenging and expensive. It also has a tendency to take up a lot of space, particularly around the altar.

SUMMARY- to be edited after the Parish-wide workshop

It is not unusual for the current building and functional needs of the parish to be beyond the fiscal resources of any given parish to implement at one time. Therefore, we believe that it is beneficial to prioritize and identify those needs that would be addressed first and those that could be postponed. Based on input from the parish, we believe that the highest priority need is to provide a handicapped-accessible worship space, including at least one accessible toilet room.

The secondary priority for functional needs has to do with updating the interior of the church so that it harmonizes with the beautiful exterior.