

## So...What's In This New Church of Ours?

First and foremost, we hope... The Body of Christ... You!

As light was shed on the evolution of the new Master Plan early in July, your questions began to circulate on what the interior of the Worship Space would be like. Your focus was especially keen on what the seating layout would be, given that we had just completed our second temporary layout and the survey which almost 300 parishioners returned in the mid-June timeframe; for which, thanks!

We reported truthfully that the layout decision had not been solidified – but we are getting close. We do know that it will be one that draws all 1,200 faithful as close to Baptismal Font, Ambo and the Altar as possible. Architects and Church designers suggest that no one should be more than 65 feet away from these primary furnishings in the Chancel area. A few modifications of our most well-known layout should accomplish that goal and retain the intimacy we have enjoyed for over 15 years as a parish community.

The Musician's Space will be much larger than we enjoy today, and most likely near the top center of the Worship Space, with the musicians integrated a bit more into the congregational seating area. We hope to have a limited amount of risers available to help with sound projection from larger groups. We are planning to have space for instrumental support and are making provisions for either an electronic or a pipe organ.

Fixed seating will have kneelers (the Archdiocese of Dubuque requires this in larger Churches). The Tabernacle will be visible from the Worship Space, set aside in its own devotional space called a Eucharistic Reservation Chapel (a separate space is heavily recommended by the Archdiocesan Church Design & Renovation Commission). This devotional space will facilitate Rosary groups, individuals in search of a peaceful place to meditate, and (we hope!) larger faith-sharing groups who have grown accustomed to using this space during intercessory prayer.

We anticipate having a life-sized corpus of our crucified Lord Jesus on the primary crucifix in the Worship Space, one of many features that underscore the overall "Noble Simplicity" of the design of the space. A small number of devotional shrines are also being planned, including the Holy Family and our patron St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (the relics that we have will most likely be displayed prominently in the Gathering Space). If we are lucky, these devotional spaces will also provide a small amount of privacy that facilitates individual confessions during communal celebration of the Rite of Reconciliation (a separate Reconciliation Room is also in the plan).

Architecturally, we anticipate that the outer perimeter of the interior space (called an "ambulatory") will have a lower ceiling height than the much taller space over the seating (called the "nave"). The ability to easily depart the Worship Space setting is the first element of our "Cry Room" design; fewer numbers of pews along an egress path should support this. The ambulatory accentuates the privacy of the devotional shrines and provides a transitional space for parents who may need to calm crying children during the Mass. The spaces set aside for the shrines are co-located in this ambulatory space, and may afford a prayerful respite (for Mom/Dad) or quite possibly, an interesting sight (for baby) with their votive candles, artwork and accent lighting. The transitional path leads to the formal "Cry Room," which is the Gathering Space (the "Narthex") itself. This space provides comfortable seating, plentiful restroom facilities, audio (and quite possibly video) linkages to the ongoing Mass activity, and visual sight lines into the Worship Space (which lies behind quiet-closing main entry doors with associated clear window appointments). The first floor nursery (off the Gathering Space) also provides a means for parents to address those uncomfortable years when children have not yet acquired a sense for proper worship behavior without the undesirable dose of parental discipline during the Mass.

Crying babies aside, we do indeed plan on baptizing a bunch of them in the years to come! We envision that an above-ground Baptismal Font will be sized for adult immersion during the Easter Vigil service, with an integrated infant baptismal bowl for the multitude of baptisms that occur throughout the year (flowing water will probably link the two baptismal "wombs." We are trying to get this font situated more towards the center of the Worship Space, so that we can continue to enjoy the celebration of this rite during the Mass setting. This will also provide a warm and inviting space for placement of the casket during the Funeral Rite, which reminds us that the funeral of a Christian is the final journey of a life in Christ that began in baptism.

Last, but not least, we will have a Working Sacristy situated close to the Altar. This will provide a prayerful setting for our Sacristans and Eucharistic ministers to use before and after the Mass.

All this... and probably more! As this article goes to print, we are only beginning the “schematic design” phase of the Worship Space project. We ask for your patience and continued interest in this special ministry as we know there will be hard work ahead in preparation for a possible capital campaign later this fall. Interact with the Liturgical Design Committee and we will help you to understand the rationale for our decision-making; it is tied in many ways to the Liturgical Program document that you helped us generate, with the professional help of Dr. Michael DeSanctis. It is constrained, too, by Archdiocesan norms and Catholic Church building practices (documents are available on the parish website for Our Building Project). Yet, even with all of that precedent and complexity, it is coming together!

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