

PLACE

Re-imagining the church in which we worship

Hopefully, one of the helpful realities of new pastors is that we bring new perspectives and priorities to the parishes to which we are assigned. One of the inconvenient realities of new pastors is that we bring new perspectives and priorities to those same parishes.

This reality of perspective and priority comes into play as we consider how best to refashion our church. I arrived with preparations in process for a renovation of the church's sanctuary. A committee had been meeting, a capital campaign was conducted and, thus, significant funds earmarked for such a project. At the same time, there were no concrete plans and several significant areas of concern, such as sound and lighting, had not been fully addressed.

While I agree wholeheartedly with the intent of such a project, I also wonder if necessary consideration has been given to fundamental principles of Catholic worship. Have we been expansive enough in reviewing ideals of worship, in addition to immediate needs? I wonder if we have allowed ourselves, those involved in the immediate discussion and planning, as well as the larger parish, to "re-imagine" the church in which we worship.

Liturgy — environment, music, preaching, participation — is a major priority of mine as pastor. What we do in terms of our church's interior and how we proceed on such a project are among the most significant decisions made by a parish and its pastor. While some decisions had already been made, many had not, and I'm not eager to move forward without stepping back a bit to gain a more clear, well-rooted understanding as to what is best for us to do — for our community today and the parish of St. Anne 50 years from now. Regrettably I come to this after the game is

already under way, but still in early innings. In the end, as pastor, I need to be on board with whatever we do, and so I think it would be helpful for us to do a bit more re-imagining.

After conversation with parishioners who've been involved in planning thus far, as well as the Sacred Worship Commission, the Finance Council and Pastoral Council, I've asked some of those same groups and individuals to engage in further discernment regarding ideals and priorities of liturgy and liturgical environment, and then to consider how we best honor those ideals and priorities in our church.

Fr. Frank Corradi, a senior priest of our diocese living in Chipewa Falls, will help to guide our process. Fr. Frank is an experienced pastor who, as pastor of St. Olaf Parish in Eau Claire, oversaw construction of a new church. He has a master's degree in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame. Fr. Frank also has some connection with St. Anne's, having offered presentations here when Fr. Steve Brice was pastor. Fr. Frank guided a very helpful process in my last assignment in Stevens Point, which led to the unification of St. Stanislaus and Newman parishes to form Holy Spirit Parish.

Speaking of the Spirit, we hope it will guide us in this newly re-focused process, which will necessarily include information and consultation involving the entire parish. Re-imagining is a community effort.

— *Father Tom Lindner*
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