

# Linking font and altar

Whenever we post pictures at St. Anne Parish on Facebook, friends around the country, especially those involved in ministry, invariably offer a comment about our baptismal font. “I love that font!” chimed in Columba from Minnesota last week when we posted pictures of our final baptism celebration before Easter.

Another friend would maintain we cannot love inanimate things such as baptismal fonts. We can only love God and people! But, I still responded to Columba that I *love* our font too.

The baptismal font takes on a rather ambiguous role during Lent. Obviously, we can’t remove it or hide it, and we don’t celebrate baptism during Lent except in emergency circumstances. Furthermore, the font’s flowing and plentiful waters contradict the Lenten motifs of desert and dryness. To better convey that symbolism, some parishes empty their fonts, and I’m told that’s happened here in the past as well. A friend sent me a picture of his church’s font filled with stones.

In addition to what they convey about Lent, such efforts also enhance the prominence of the font at Easter. Our closing song during Lent addresses that integral connection of the ashes given last Wednesday and the accompanying pledge of repentance to the new life and renewal in the “living font” of Easter.

The prominence of our font is something our Pastoral Council subcommittee on re-imagining our church has been studying. Assisting them in their study and consideration has been *Built of Living Stones*, an instruction published by the U.S. Catholic Bishops in

2000. The bishops testify to the significance of the font in as much as Baptism is the first of the Christian sacraments. “The baptismal

font and its location reflect the Christian’s journey through the waters of baptism to the altar.”

The Bishops go on to encourage that

churches be designed in such a way so as to demonstrate clearly that “integral relationship” between font and altar.

How to better establish that connection in our church is something our committee has been discussing, while also investigating how other churches have attempted to accomplish that ideal of linking the altar and font.

The relationship of the font to the altar also comes into play when we consider our processions at Mass — how we get from one to the other; as well as the ability to integrate the font into our celebrations of weddings — do processions move from the font into the church, again conveying the origins of our lives as Christians — and, even more significantly, our funeral rituals, which rely so heavily upon baptismal imagery of water, white garment and being claimed for Christ by being signed with the cross. Again, these are aspects being considered in our re-imagining deliberations as well.

— Fr, Tom Lindner  
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