



FALL RESTORATION UPDATE

The time of restoration of our beautiful and venerable Church is nearing! As you are aware, there has been much said and much work done on preparing for this necessary work, repairing many damaged areas and providing a much needed facelift in general.

This weekend, I preached at all of the Masses and updated everyone on where we stand. As stated in the letter you received back in May, the majority of the work to be done will be accomplished in January-February, and March of 2020. How quickly that time will be here!

The Parish Pastoral Council and the Parish Finance Council have been kept up to date as to developments and progress along the way. By way of bulletin announcements, and some references during Masses, as well as speaking with many of you after Masses, during meetings, and even while passing on the street, we have discussed various aspects of the project. The pews were the first to be refinished, completed in July, many favorable comments were made.

Next, perhaps this fall will be new flooring under the pews as well as installation of a new sound system. As mentioned from the start, "20/20" will be about much more than restoration of the Church. Soon I will be announcing some important initiatives into Ongoing Faith Formation and serious efforts at outreach to those in our parish and community inviting them to return or join us!



GROUNDING IN THEOLOGY

I am the first to admit, that we (the priests, the church) have done a poor job at best to share the unbelievable riches of the theology and symbolic life of the church with the faithful. For many years, it was thought sufficient enough for people to just come to Mass. We have neglected the beauty of the words contained in the 16 documents of Vatican II. We have failed at sharing the deep spirituality that each of the sacraments calls us to live out in our daily lives. Some of these sacraments, like Reconciliation, Communion, can be often received.

Recently I read that 31% of Catholics do not believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. What is that based on? Is it based on theological study? Personal experience? Or, is it based on "opinion"?

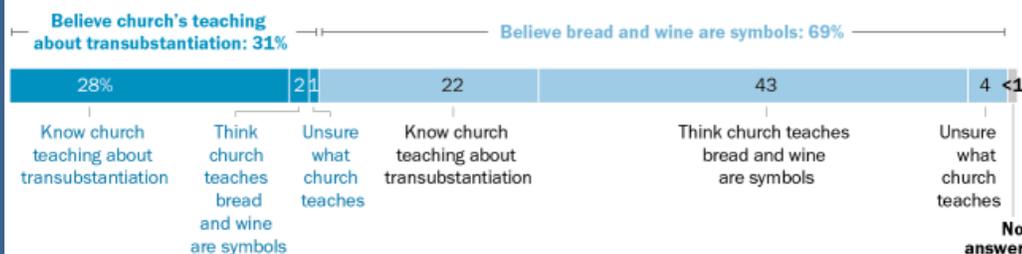
I don't have the answer to that. However, I do know that we can't base our beliefs or our practice on "opinion" alone. Opinions are important, but they are only as valid as the degree to which they are informed.

Transubstantiation – the idea that during Mass, the bread and wine used for Communion become the body and blood of Jesus Christ – is central to the Catholic faith. Indeed, the Catholic Church teaches that “the Eucharist is ‘the source and summit of the Christian life.’”

-Pew Research Center

Seven-in-ten U.S. Catholics believe bread, wine used in Communion are symbolic

% of U.S. Catholics who ...



Note: Figures may not add to 100% or to subtotals indicated due to rounding.
Source: Survey conducted Feb. 4-19, 2019, among U.S. adults.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER



BAPTISM: AN ENCOUNTER OF FAITH

Some unique opportunities present themselves during this time of restoration. One of the most impressive will be the re-styling and placement of our baptismal font. Baptism, as we all know, is the first sacrament we receive. It must be received before any other. It opens the door to us as a reminder of our sacramental lives. In general, we have underestimated the power of our baptism. We do not center nearly enough on the magnitude of that moment of grace or the life-long implications of who we are as baptized Catholics.

There are many church documents that support the placement of the font near the entrance of the Church. There are many Churches, even here in our own Diocese, of all kinds of architectural design and era that have placed this very important reality where it is visible, accessible, made of a worthy material, containing “living” water, that serves every time we enter the church to remind us of our baptism. A noted Church liturgist, a Catholic priest named H. A. Reinhold wrote nearly 80 years ago that the font should be “in the way” of the faithful as they go to church so that they could be reminded “of the one fact to which they owe their salvation.”

It is also there to remind each one of us of our Baptismal Promises by which we vowed to reject sin and Satan, become faithful members of Christ’s Church, and live out our life-long calling to holiness. As we pass by the font, we dip our right hand into the water and bless ourselves. These are the words that Jesus himself prescribed for the sacrament of baptism (Matthew: 28:19). Placement of the font then allows the faithful to see it as it is meant to be seen; as an entry into the church.

Baptism leads us to the Eucharist. Standing powerfully and elegantly as we pass by, and actually use the font to bless ourselves as we enter the celebration of the Eucharist serves as a powerful, living reality in the lives of the people who are sacramental by nature. The design of fonts in the entry way of a church provides ample space for processions, brides, and coffins. In fact, one of the most dramatic parts of having the font where ours will be located is that the casket will stop there at the beginning of every

funeral Mass. The vivid reminder of the eternal promise made to each of us at our baptism comes full circle as the funeral mass begins. We are reminded of that with the blessing of the casket or urn with holy water, not just any holy water, but indeed the water from the “font of life”, where it all began! Is there a more powerful moment to remind us where we are going and how we got there?

The octagonal shape of our new font will also be a powerful symbol. The number 8 is associated with the theological “eighth day.” Genesis speaks of God creating the world in six days and resting on the seventh day and the “eighth day” has come to be associated with the day of eternity. Since baptism is the door to this new life, the eight-sided baptistery takes on special significance.

The location of the font in the center aisle near the entrance of the Church has become common. Currently, our font located in the sanctuary is often empty, inaccessible, and forgotten. Our restyled font will make use of its current 3 pillar base with a new octagon shaped top. The top (bowl) will be filled with water at *all* times with a *slight* movement to it, indicating that these waters, into which we dip our fingers to bless ourselves are indeed “living” waters. It has been said that “we will never have people truly excited about their faith until we make as big of a deal out of baptism as we do an ordination.” Just imagine how powerful this font will make the moment that families for decades to come will celebrate the re-birth of their children in the waters of salvation!

