

“It is time that we turn our focus back to Christ”

After many changes and healing from past hurts, the focus of our parish can now be on living the fullness of the life that God has given us as members of the One Body united in Christ. What has anchored us throughout all these changes is the Eucharist. My first weekend was marked with surprise. When it became apparent that we could no longer use St. Vincent’s for worship, we came together for a celebration of our past that culminated in one of the largest Masses our parish has celebrated in recent memory. That was surpassed on the Vigil of Christmas. Over 850 people – many returning to All Saints for the first time in years – came home for Christmas. Again, it was the Mass, the Most Holy Eucharist, that drew us from spiritual slumber into a new awakening and a period of renewal.

I write to you this week not about a building, parking lot, or finances. I wish to speak with you about our Lord. I am proposing a restoration of the reservation of our Lord from the side tabernacle to the tabernacle on the high altar. I am convinced of the great impact this move will have on the celebration of the Eucharist, the way that we approach the Church (in particular the sanctuary), in turning our focus back to Christ.

The current reservation tabernacle was designed so that it could be accessed from both the main church and the Brennan Chapel, which was built for the celebration of daily Mass. However, all daily Masses have since been moved to Immaculate Heart of Mary to accommodate larger crowds.

Thanks be to God, our current daily Mass attendance has grown so that there is no possible way we can fit into the Brennan chapel. Today, the Brennan Chapel continues to be used for prayer, gatherings, meetings, and the children’s Liturgy of the Word on Sunday morning. Since the Brennan Chapel is now used for events that are not related to the Eucharist, a double-access tabernacle is no longer necessary.

I am also told that another intention of reserving the Blessed Sacrament in a side tabernacle was to encourage focus on the altar during the celebration of Mass. This was a common trend that began in the 1970s and 1980s and supporting Church documents allowed for this provision. However, the two-fold nature of the Mass which is Word and Sacrifice is diminished when the altar becomes the primary focus. The Mass that we know and are familiar with today was designed as a stational prayer, meaning that it moves about from place to place in the sanctuary. It is the Lord who deserves prominence and pride of place in our house and who should never be relegated to a lesser spot either as a matter of convenience or as a diminished focus during the celebration of Mass. These parts are not meant to compete with one another.

Practically speaking, the side entrance from the soon-to-be-new parking lot has become the new main entrance. This will become more apparent as all activities, attention and focus move to St. Mary’s campus. When daily Mass moves here, and as we look forward to a building project that will accommodate our current and future needs, we cannot neglect the Church that houses our most important prayer: the Eucharist. When one enters from the side or new main entrance, one of the first things that is encountered is the tabernacle. Unfortunately, it gets lost in the shuffle. It

is easy to ignore because, if you are like me, your intuition is to find the tabernacle in the most prominent place in the Church -- the sanctuary.

In addition, we have begun a new custom of kneeling before the tabernacle before the Children's Liturgy of the Word at the 9am and 11:30am Masses. Unfortunately, it seems like a stop along the way rather than a reverence toward the Lord himself, who deserves more than a nod, but prominence.

As I mentioned last week, Bishop Matano has chosen to celebrate the Evening Mass of the Lord's Supper at All Saints. His Excellency has expressed his desire that the Blessed Sacrament return to the center of the sanctuary, in the tabernacle on the high altar. As our pastor, he is responsible for determining of the placement of the tabernacle. His presence will further strengthen our understanding of the Eucharist.

In consultation with the bishop, the parish council, and the liturgy committee, I ask that you pray and consider that this move take place on the most obvious of days, the Easter Vigil. On this day, we will restore the tabernacle to the high altar. The altar of repose for Holy Thursday will be the current tabernacle of reservation. Once the Mass has concluded, the current reservation tabernacle will be removed before the Easter Vigil so that one tabernacle on the high altar remains. I do hope and pray that this move will be considered with thoughtful prayer. It is an important move as it is the Lord himself.

I know I stated earlier in this article that I did not want to speak about finances, but I was told at a meeting last week that All Saints parish is one of two parishes in our diocese that is experiencing an increase in attendance and weekly collections. Growth is clearly in our future. This truly becomes a moment of evangelization and catechesis on the Real Presence and not to be seen as merely moving liturgical furniture around. With hard work and determination, our parish has actively engaged in discussion and prayer as we consider how to navigate through the next several years. This desire for renewal is contagious and many from our parish have caught it and are running with it. The excitement has moved beyond our immediate territory and every week we welcome new parishioners who find All Saints to be an exciting source of nourishment by the Word and Sacrament. If we do not take seriously our Lord and where He dwells in our Church, how will others take seriously our efforts to bring them to worship with us? A proper understanding and celebration of the Eucharist will help us in all matters of faith.

Our Lord deserves pride and prominence of place in our house of worship. That is why it is vital that our house reflect clearly the meaning of the Catholic faith as prayed at the Mass. After several years of closings, consolidations, downsizing, etc., I believe we are all in agreement that we have reached *the moment* that is the time to move forward.

With a humble request for your prayers, I remain your devoted pastor,

Fr. Jones