



A Message from the Pastoral Team

Peace and good! The following request to make the following changes to the sanctuary at St. Joseph Catholic Church were sent to Bishop Burbidge after the friars, members of the Parish Advisory Council, and the appropriate members of the parish staff studied and discussed the request.

We requested that the tabernacle be placed behind the altar, in the center of the sanctuary. In this way, the tabernacle would be truly prominent and in a conspicuous place that fosters the recognition of Christ's true presence in the Eucharist. With this placement of the tabernacle, the Priest Celebrant's chair would be moved to the current location of the tabernacle so that the Celebrant may be able to face the people as he presides over the gathering of the faithful during the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy.

We offered the following insights and points which as Roman Catholics, we believe that Christ's Real Presence in the Eucharist continues after Mass. For this reason, we reserve the Eucharist in the tabernacle with a candle always burning to signify the presence of the Eucharist. In the early Church, the Eucharist was reserved to bring Communion to the sick, a practice we still hold as important today. Gradually, the tabernacle took on significance as a place for the faithful to go to pray and visit with Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament.

Pope-Emeritus Benedict XVI (2007) states that "The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ's real presence in the Blessed Sacrament" (*Sacramentum caritatis*, no. 69). Therefore, the tabernacle should be visible to all who enter the Church. According to the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the tabernacle should be in a part of the church which is "truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer" (no. 314). This document provides two options for fulfilling this requirement: either in a prominent place in the sanctuary or in a suitable chapel. Whichever the case, it is necessary to take into account the architecture of the church in question, and it is ultimately the bishop's decision to determine where the tabernacle should be placed (GIRM, no. 315).

At St. Joseph Catholic Church, the tabernacle currently is in the Sanctuary to the right of the altar. Next to the tabernacle is the Priest Celebrant's chair from which he presides at Sunday Mass. In considering the design of a Church sanctuary, the Priest Celebrant's chair is one of the prominent features. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2002) says that "The chair of the Priest Celebrant must signify his function of presiding over the gathering and of directing

prayer” (no. 310). The U.S. Catholic Bishops (2000) have elaborated on this by saying that “An appropriate placement of the chair allows the priest celebrant to be visible to all in the congregation” (*Built of Living Stones*, no. 63). This is not because the priest deserves a place of honor, but so that he can lead the congregation in prayer. The placement of the chair signifies his role of praying with and on behalf of the assembly. Thus, when the tabernacle is part of the sanctuary, both the tabernacle and the Priest Celebrant’s chair (along with the altar and ambo) need to have a prominent place suitable to their function in the liturgy.

In order that both the tabernacle and the Priest Celebrant’s chair are in a place that is conducive to their intended purpose, I request your permission for the following changes to be made to the sanctuary at St. Joseph Catholic Church. First, that the tabernacle be placed behind the altar, in the center of the sanctuary. In this way, the tabernacle would be truly prominent and in a conspicuous place that fosters the recognition of Christ’s true presence in the Eucharist. Second, the Priest Celebrant’s chair be moved to the current location of the tabernacle so that the Celebrant may be able to face the people as he presides over the gathering of the faithful during the celebration of the Eucharistic liturgy.

We have received a letter from Bishop Burbidge with his approval of our request.

In the peace of Francis of Assisi,

The Pastoral Team

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