



Dear friends:

I think that by now most parishioners are aware that we are considering renovating our church building. Some of you are wondering what lies behind this consideration, and asking why now.

Perhaps some background might help.

Over the last several years conditions and problems have become evident and needed to be addressed. Some are obvious. Everyone is aware of the crowding of the church during the height of the winter season, and the need for new flooring is quite evident. There are other problem areas that might not be obvious to the casual observer. The list is large and includes such things as antiquated lighting and sound systems, a cooling system that is not sufficient when weather is warm, altar furnishings that are showing their age and disrepair, lack of space in front of the altar area for funerals, weddings and the distribution of communion, inadequate area for the proper celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation lack of space for choir and instruments and lack of storage capacity. This list could go on and on.

It became clear to me that a piecemeal approach to these problems was not the answer. I had to look at the overall picture. In order to do this I needed to ask the following questions. "What is needed to foster full active and conscious participation of the faithful and what can we do to make our worship space better fitted for the celebration of the Church's liturgies? How do we do this and also make it a place of beauty, conducive to private prayer and devotion?"

Although I pride myself in knowledge and appreciation of the sacred liturgy I felt uneasy of approaching this task alone. Following the advice of our Bishops I sought the expertise of a "liturgical consultant". After reviewing many resumes and proposals, three candidates for the position were interviewed. We engaged the services of Dr. Michael DeSanctis. His love for and knowledge of the liturgy, his vast experience and his familiarity with the Church legislation and guidelines regarding renovations of churches were selling points.

The Bishops of our country have stated in their recent document "Built on Living Stones" that education must precede any concrete planning and is part of any proper discernment process. Dr. DeSanctis has already begun the education phase of our process by holding sessions on the "History of Liturgical Architecture". By means of these presentations we are learning how the structure of church buildings have evolved through the centuries and what effect the worshiping community has had on the building of churches and what effect the church building has had on the worshiping community.

The Bishops in this same document tell us that any process of renovation must be collaborative. In light of this I have named a committee that will work closely with Dr. DeSanctis . I believe it represents a broad sector of our parish community. Dr DeSanctis will be consulting with those involved in the various liturgical ministries of our parish. We will also be soliciting input from the entire congregation.

I need to let you know that, contrary to what some have been saying, no decisions have been made, regarding either the extent or the design of any possible changes.

I believe that with prayer and the asked guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will be able to discern our needs and make whatever decisions that come from that discernment a reality.

I personally ask for your prayers. I know change can be hard and often contentious and moving forward difficult. I want to be a good pastor. I want to both listen well and be a person of vision that has the courage to lead St William into the future.

In the peace of Christ,

Fr Joe