

Dear Parishioners,

I hope you all had a very happy, healthy Thanksgiving celebration this year; we certainly have much for which to be grateful.

While this letter is an expression of gratitude it is also a request for your help in making an important decision. We have a beautiful church. Our worship space is unique. There are challenges to its uniqueness and there are many advantages as well. Several years ago Fr. Nilges purchased a statue depicting the resurrected Christ which is displayed prominently above the baptismal font. This statue was donated by the O'Rourke family. At the time Fr. Nilges purchased this statue, images of the risen Christ were quite popular, especially in newer churches. Over the subsequent years, however, a tremendous amount of debate on this issue has culminated in this instruction which comes from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal which gives us the official norms for the Mass:

“There is also to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, either on the altar or near it, where it is clearly visible to the assembled congregation. It is appropriate that such a cross, which calls to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord, remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations.”

While it is true we do have a processional cross, one of my concerns is that it is not clearly visible to everyone in the congregation. Here is another question we should ask ourselves: Does our processional cross call to mind for us the “saving Passion of the Lord?” Every crucifix calls to mind the “saving Passion of the Lord” for us. My favorite rosary, made by my seven year old niece has a white plastic image of the crucified Lord on it, and it does remind me of the price Christ paid for our salvation.

However, when it comes to the liturgy, it is important to have a crucifix that is large enough for everyone to see clearly. This is important because in our celebration of the Mass we are so intimately

connected to the Passion of Christ which includes the cross. Christ had to endure the cross before he rose from the Dead. He is the Bread of Life whose body was broken open for the salvation of the world. The Eucharist, which is *THE* central sacrament of the Catholic Church, is always carried out, "In remembrance of me." In our communion with the body of Christ in the Eucharist we share not only in his resurrection, but in his passion as well. This is why we are strongly encouraged to have a crucifix in the sanctuary.

The processional cross we have does meet this need. However, there is another factor in contemplating the decision to put a crucifix in the sanctuary. Jeff Seyller, whose son Jake was killed in a car accident in the summer of the 2005, would like to pay to have a cross put into the church. We currently have a special committee, including Jeff Seyller, to help in the decision making process. Under the advice of this committee, a poll of the parishioners who attend Mass is going to be taken next week. The sole purpose of this poll is simply to discover what you think about this idea. You will have the opportunity to say either, "yes, I would like to see a crucifix in the church," or "no, I would not like to see a crucifix in the church."

It is also important for me to state that the statue of the Risen Christ will remain prominently displayed somewhere in, or near the sanctuary.

Please understand that I am going to listen carefully and weigh the impact of the decision to be made. The final decision will hopefully be made after we have carefully discerned what is best for this parish.

Please pray that we can make the right decision which will respect the needs of the Liturgy as well as the needs of the community.

In joyful hope,  
Fr. Tim Seigel