

Dear Friends,

Last week you may have noticed a flyer in the bulletin announcing that daily Mass is going to be moved back into the church sanctuary. The decision to do this has not been taken lightly. I have consulted with the people who attend daily Mass on a regular basis and they listened well to my reasoning and did not express any real opposition to it. I do know there are some who will miss the intimacy of our daily Eucharistic celebration in the chapel; I will as well.

The spark that generated the thought of moving came when a parishioner informed me that some of the kneelers on the backs of each chair are wearing thin and nails are protruding through the cloth. While our religion has penitential components to it, we do not need to make people kneel down on nails. The chairs can be fixed relatively cheaply, so that is not the main reason we're making this move. Again, this information simply gave me the inspiration to ponder deeply what Daily Mass is all about: it is truly sacred, and I am responsible for making sure that its sanctity is preserved and upheld.

Here are a few of the reasons I raised the issue of moving daily Mass back to the church.

- When daily Mass was held in the church sanctuary we usually had between 25 and 30 people attending daily Mass, now we have between 10 and 18 people coming to daily Mass. This made me wonder if more people would appreciate celebrating Mass in the sanctuary because it is a more beautiful space that was designed with the purpose of celebrating the sacraments of the Church. The room we're currently using was the original rectory dining room.
- I know some young parents would like to bring their young children to daily Mass, but there is a lack of space. These parents feel that the crowded space is not appropriate for babies and little children. In the church sanctuary, we can better serve younger parents who want their children to be exposed to daily Mass. I can remember going to daily Mass with my parents as a young child and I always loved it – even though I was often a difficult child to control.
- It is a personal desire of mine to serve this community as well as I possibly can, and I believe that with the work that has been done in the sanctuary it is truly a more sacred space suited for worship than the space we are currently using.
- With the reforms of the Mass beginning in just a few days, I have come to appreciate the Church's desire that the ritual of the Mass be celebrated in a more dignified manner. I am personally committed to respecting, as well I possibly can, that call to celebrate the Mass with greater dignity, reverence and respect.

These are the main motivating factors for this change. It all boils down to stewardship of our worship, though. We have been given the gift of the Eucharist, a celebration that is central to our lives as Roman Catholics. The Mass is a gift we are to cherish in a responsible manner, and we are to give it the best we have to offer. We receive important graces from the Mass, but how we participate in it is also of great importance. I thought that utilizing the smaller space might have some practical advantages. I also thought it would add that sense of unity that the Mass emphasizes. I do not regret moving daily Mass to the chapel. However, I strongly feel that to emphasize the dignity the church so strongly desires for the Mass is more important than the practical reasons for being in the chapel.

It is my hope that more people will begin coming to daily Mass on a regular basis when this move is made. Daily Mass has always been an essential quality of my personal call to Catholic spirituality. I went to daily Mass before I entered school. I went to daily Mass at St. Joseph Grade School in Marion, and at Regis High School in Cedar Rapids. I went to daily Mass at Loras College in Dubuque, and of course at St. Meinrad School of Theology as a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Dubuque. When I left the seminary, daily Mass remained an integral part of my call to live as a Catholic Christian and a lay man in the Church. It was an essential component to the renewal of my decision to become a priest for the Rockford diocese. As a priest who has been in seven parishes throughout the diocese, I have always seen the daily Mass crowd as the pillars of the Church, not because they are holier than everyone else, but because they seem to have a profound love for the Eucharist, and a personal desire to be fed with the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ whose presence enables us to live as the Mystical Body of Christ in the world.

With this in mind, I humbly invite you to consider making the celebration of daily Mass a part of your own call to Christian discipleship. It's a very simple celebration. There isn't a lot of fancy music; we don't spend nearly as much time as we do on the weekends. I usually preach for a couple of minutes (3 to 5 minutes at the most). But there is a profound dignity to what we do when we gather to worship God each day. The grace of the Eucharist feeds our souls and draws us closer to God.

In joyful hope,

Fr. Tim Seigel