

Saint Patrick Church and Gothic Architecture: Part 3 of 3

Greetings Parishioners! If you have not read parts 1 and 2 of this series, I encourage you to read those on the parish website (www.CatholicBellefontaine.org).

As we have discussed in the previous articles, the architecture of Catholic Churches is meant to reflect the beauty of Heaven here on earth. Since humans are body and spirit, it is important for us to reflect our faith both in our hearts and in the physical world. Vatican II called on the Church to “carefully preserve” the artistic and architectural beauty of our churches. Authentic interpretations of Vatican II view the Church today in continuity with the Church in the past. This leads to a respect of our amazing Catholic history. Misinterpretations of Vatican II portray the past as bad; this leads people to reject the work of the Holy Spirit in past ages and confuses them about how the Spirit is at work today.

I have listed to many parishioners sharing their fond memories of the original interior of our church. In response to requests from parishioners, we have taken steps to restore the beauty of our church interior. Most importantly, we moved the tabernacle to the center of the sanctuary. We are in the final stages of acquiring a new set of Stations of the Cross, we restored the statues to color, purchased a new crucifix and chairs for the priest/deacon, and restored the original processional cross. This was all financed through restricted donations for the renovation without any money from the operating funds. The parish has been overwhelming supportive of these projects.

Many parishioners have also expressed a desire to restore the high altar, side altars and communion rail from the original church. Parishioners have been searching (without success) for a high altar set that resembled our original set for around two years. On April 16, I was informed a beautiful set (pictured on the back of this sheet) would be auctioned off within a week. On April 17, our Parish Council passed a unanimous resolution to put in a bid on the set. The Finance Council and Building and Grounds committees were also supportive. We placed a bid and won the auction. No money from our operating account was used; we purchased the set with money in a restricted account for use only in renovating the interior of the church. In preparation for installing the high altar set, we will be repainting the sanctuary and restoring the sanctuary floor. The altars will also require some minor repairs. This restoration is a work in progress and will happen in coming months with consultation from parish council.

I am excited about the upcoming changes, and I truly believe that this restoration will help to deepen and inspire the faith of our people! I hope these articles help our understanding of why these changes are important in moving our parish forward. As Catholics, we must always stay faithful to our past, recognizing how the Holy Spirit has been at work throughout the centuries of our Church's history. We must also respond to the Holy Spirit today, in opening our hearts and our lives to embrace the beauty and majesty of God. In restoring our church to its original design, we honor our predecessors who founded and nurtured St. Patrick Church through the

generations, and we help to lead our people today and in the future to an encounter with our God of beauty and majesty.

In Christ,

Father Shawn Landenwitch

“Art is able to manifest and make visible the human need to surpass the visible, it expresses the thirst and the quest for the infinite. Some artistic expressions are real highways to God, the supreme Beauty; indeed, they help us to grow in our relationship with him, in prayer. These are works that were born from faith and express faith. We can see an example of this when we visit a Gothic cathedral: we are enraptured by the vertical lines that soar skywards and uplift our gaze and our spirit, while at the same time we feel small yet long for fullness...” Pope Benedict XVI

