

Moving Forward... Full Parish GATHERING

THURSDAY Evening, February 8, 2024

Introductory remarks: Fr. Ed Hislop

Imagination, for the believer, is essential.

The Paschal Mystery of Christ evokes our imagination!

The life, death and resurrection of Christ is the story by which we are shaped and in which we live. It is the truth—past, present, and future—which focuses our dreams and powers our imagination.

The Paschal Mystery is our beginning and our ending, for, as we know, it is not simply a matter of history but a matter our entrance, in and through the liturgy of the Church, into the life, death and resurrection Christ, which breaks through the barrier of time.

It is entrance into that mystery by a community of faith—not simply isolated individuals: it is an endeavor of the holy communion that has become and is becoming the Body of Christ. That reality, truth, vision, and hope is powerfully evocative. It does NOT allow us to be isolated, separated, exclusive, opinionated, or self-righteous. When we are captured by the mystery, the wonder of Christ, we can no longer accept the cheap, the shoddy, the fake. We are drawn to the authentic, to beauty, to wonder, to holiness, to reverence, and to an ongoing endeavor to both find it and create it through the artful work of human hands.

Good, beautiful Catholic Worship Space reflects the reality of the Paschal Mystery abiding in us and beyond us. That is our beginning and our fulfillment.

When we imagine good Catholic Worship Space we must imagine a place, a house where the mystery of Christ is encountered, entered, and lived. A place where hearts are changed, and lives transformed. A place where this great mystery takes root, a place which evokes the imagination and inspires (perhaps even impels) new vision, mission, and loving service.

The best Catholic Worship Space is the place which reveals and honors the mystery of Christ in those who assemble there. *“Where two or three gather in my name, there I am among them.”* It is a place, therefore, which honors those who bear the great dignity of being the Body of Christ.

It is no ordinary place, not just any place will not do—it must be the best place **we can shape** for it is a place which must bear the mystery of birth and life, of promise and brokenness, of sin and forgiveness, of sickness and healing, of service and ministry, of justice and peace, of death and grief and the glory of eternity.

It a place where the body of Christ is washed and anointed, fed, and nourished, loved, and given, healed, and embraced, forgiven, and transformed, shaped, and brought to holy order, blest and sent forth to love and serve.

It is the gathering place, a sanctuary, the place the Church is made, the place the song of the people fills the heavens, and music fills the heart with the wonders of the universe and the mystery of creation. It is the house in which Christ speaks the Word of God, the place the world is remembered and prayed for, the place sin and evil is named and confronted, the place the mystery of Christ is entered, the place of the holy table around which the world gathers, the Altar at which sacrifice is offered and given, thanksgiving is made, memory evoked, and over which the Spirit flows; the Sacred Table at which we become the one of whom we eat and drink! Indeed, in the words of St. Augustine, *"It is our own mystery that is placed upon the table, it is to who we are that we say "amen."*

It is the place the lost are to find a welcome home, a place the excluded are to be included, a place the weary find rest, a place the poor find justice **and a dwelling place**, *for the poor we are to have always with us*; a place the hungry are fed and the soul is nourished. It is to be a place of hope and compassionate mercy! *A House where God is praised with trumpet sound, lute and harp, strings, pipe and clanging symbols; a sanctuary where everything that breathes sings praise.* (Psalm 150)

In many ways this house for the church, since 1988, (along with Holy Family and Spirit of Christ) has reflected that vision, sung that song, inspired a holy communion of faith and service, and has been the place the church has been made, again and again.

Inspired by who we have all become, and are becoming, we move forward with a spirited imagination as we **HONOR THE PAST, SERVE THE PRESENT AND PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE.**

With those words I welcome and Introduce Ken Griesemer... an "evoker of imagination!"

