

# Return and Renewal Project

## Update for March 11

### Impact on the 8:00 am and 9:00 am Congregations:

In prior articles we have shared information about the advantages of the new audio-visual equipment, and the liturgical and musical benefits of moving the organ console and choir to the chancel. But some of you may be wondering, how will these changes impact the 8:00 am and 9:00 am services?

#### **Eight O'clock Congregation**

Since this service is a Low Mass (a "said" Mass)—hence, no music or choir—there will not be much of an impact. But with the addition of pews in the chancel for the choir, there will be a new opportunity (post-Covid when things return to normal) for the 8:00 am congregants to sit in these pews for an intimate liturgical experience. This can be said for the weekday morning masses as well. This is just one suggestion. Mother Erika and the project team welcome all for conversation to share thoughts and ideas about how returning to 8:00 mass on Sundays and morning weekday masses might look, be or feel. It may not change at all, but we are open to suggestions and comments.

#### **Nine O'clock Congregation**

While there is no choir at the 9:00 am service, there is congregational singing accompanied by the organist. Now that the organ is located in the chancel, the organist will feel more like an integral part of the service and not just someone playing an instrument from afar. In addition, should we someday have a children's or youth choir at this service, having them in the chancel acknowledges their position as liturgical leaders and allows the congregation to better support them in their singing.

Prior to the pandemic, the 9:00 am service was experiencing steady growth in attendance, averaging 50-75 people. Since the days of Father Johnson, this congregation has traditionally gathered around the altar for communion. However, the growing number of attendees has made this more challenging. Further, through a series of feedback sessions conducted soon after Mother Erika's arrival, the congregation concluded that gathering around the altar during the Eucharist could send a message of exclusion to those in the congregation who are physically unable to walk up the steps to the chancel or to newcomers who are not part of that visible "inner circle around the altar." Pre-Covid, the congregation had been attempting a different way at gathering around the altar, by extending in a "V" configuration out into the church rather than creating a closed circle. While this was an improvement, it often created confusion and safety issues, as some people were forced to stand on the steps to the chancel.

The changes occurring as a result of the Return and Renewal Project create another opportunity for the 9:00 am congregation to try new things. How can this service maintain its traditional close, family-like feeling and still be welcoming to all? Mother Erika and the project team are eager to obtain feedback and ideas from members of this congregation on how we can take advantage of the new church configuration to continue to grow this congregation.

You do not have to wait until these two services return to normal to share your ideas. Please send your thoughts or questions via email, [\*\*HERE.\*\*](#)