

Appendix 6: Liturgical Environment Self-Study

The Instruction on Putting into Effect The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy states, “In building new churches and in repairing or adapting old ones great care must be taken to ensure that they lend themselves to the celebration of divine services as these are meant to be celebrated, and to achieve the active participation of the faithful” (#90). With this in mind, the Diocese of Davenport is making available this Liturgical Environment Self-Study. The self-study provides a resource for pastors, parish pastoral councils and liturgy commissions to reflect on before they begin planning for a new worship space, renovation of existing space, or a critique for present parish worship space when a new building or renovation is not being planned.

The column on the left is divided into topic sections. For the most part, the text in each section is taken from *Built of Living Stones* (BLS), 2000. *Built of Living Stones* provides principles for those involved in preparing liturgical space. Other liturgical documents that correspond to each topic are referenced at the end of each section. These documents include: *The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (CSL), 1963; *The Instruction on Putting into Effect The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (ICSL), 1964; *Instruction on Eucharistic Worship* (IEW), 1967; *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass*, (HCOM), 1973; *Notitiae*, newsletter of the Congregation for Divine Worship, 10:80 (1974), #4; *Code of Canon Law* (CCL) revised 1983; 1982; *Ceremonial of Bishops* (CB), 1984; *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), 1988; *National Statutes for the Catechumenate* (NSC), 1988; and the *Book of Blessings* (BB), 1989; *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar* (RDCA), revised 1989, *General Introduction to the Lectionary at Mass* (GILM), 1998; *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), retranslated 2011; *(Circular Letter Concerning) the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts* (PCEF); *Sing to the Lord* 2007.

The column on the right provides space for individuals to write notes, observations or remarks based on how their worship space is aligned with or deviates from the liturgical documents. An honest assessment of current conditions will be helpful to the parish, the Diocesan Liturgical Commission and the Diocesan Building Commission when renovation and/or building plans are being made.

Liturgical Documents	Parish Remarks / Questions
<p>Narthex (Gathering Space) (The narthex) serves as gathering space and as the entrance and exit to the building. The gathering space helps believers to make the transition from everyday life to the celebration of the liturgy, and after the liturgy, it helps them return to daily life to live out the mystery that has been celebrated. In the gathering space, people come together to move in procession and to prepare for the celebration of the liturgy. It is in the gathering space that many important liturgical moments occur: men and women participate in the Rite of Becoming a Catechumen as they move towards later, full initiation into the Church; parents, godparents, and infants are greeted for the celebration of baptism; and Christians are greeted for the last time as their mortal remains are received into the church building for the celebration of the funeral rites.</p> <p>In addition to its religious functions, the gathering space may provide access to the vesting sacristy, rooms for choir rehearsal, storage areas, restrooms, and rooms for ushers and their equipment. Adequate space for other gatherings will be an important consideration in planning the narthex and other adjoining areas.</p> <p>(BLS 95-96)</p>	

<p>Assembly (Nave) The space within the church building for the faithful other than the priest celebrant and the ministers is sometimes called the <i>nave</i>. This space is critical in the overall plan because it accommodates a variety of ritual actions: processions during the Eucharist, the singing of the prayers, movement during baptismal rites, the sprinkling of the congregation with blessed water, the rites during the wedding and funeral liturgies, and personal devotion. This area is not comparable to the audience’s space in a theater or public arena because in the liturgical assembly, there is no audience. Rather, the entire congregation acts. The ministers of music could also be located in the body of the church since they lead the entire assembly in song as well as by the example of their reverent attention and prayer. Two principles guide architectural decisions about the form and arrangement of the nave: (1) the community worships as a single body united in faith, not simply as individuals who happen to find themselves in one place, and the nature of the liturgy demands that the congregation as well as the priest celebrant and ministers be able to exercise their roles in a full and active way; and (2) the priest celebrant and ministers together with the congregation form the liturgical assembly, which is the Church gathered for worship. (BLS 51-52) [cf. ICSL, 98, IEW 24, GIRM 293-94]</p>	
<p>Chair for the Priest Celebrant The chair for the priest celebrant stands as a symbol of “his function of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer.” (GIRM 310) An appropriate placement of the chair allows the priest celebrant to be visible to all in the congregation. The chair reflects the dignity of the one who leads the community in the person of Christ, but is never intended to be remote or grandiose. The priest celebrant’s chair is distinguished from the seating for other ministers by its design and placement. “The seat for the Deacon should be placed near that of the celebrant.” (GIRM 310) [cf. BLS 63, ICSL 92, GIRM 294]</p>	
<p>Seats for Other Liturgical Ministers The seats for the other ministers should be arranged so that they are clearly distinguished from the seats for clergy and, so that the ministers are easily able to fulfill the office assigned to them. (GIRM 310)</p>	
<p>Music Ministers It is important to recognize that the building must support the music and song of the entire worshipping assembly. In addition, some members of the community have special gifts for leading the assembly in musical praise and thanksgiving (STL 48). The skills and talents of these pastoral musicians, choirs, and instrumentalists are especially valued by the Church. Because the roles of the choirs and cantors are exercised within the liturgical</p>	

<p>community, the space chosen for the musicians should clearly express that they are part of the assembly of worshipers. In addition, cantors and song leaders need visual contact with the music director while they themselves are visible to the rest of the congregation. Apart from the singing of the Responsorial Psalm, which normally occurs at the ambo, the stand for the cantor or song leader is distinct from the ambo, which is reserved for the proclamation of the word of God. (BLS 89) [cf. ICSL 97, GIRM 294]</p>	
<p>Musical Instruments Musical instruments, especially the pipe organ, have long added to the beauty and prayerfulness of Catholic worship. Planning sufficient space for the organ and other instruments that may be used to accompany the assembly's prayer is an important part of the building process. This includes the design of the organ casework, if such is used, or the placement of the pipes of large instruments. An acoustical specialist and musicians working together can arrive at a placement that allows the pipes to be seen and heard well without becoming a distraction or competing with the other artwork and iconography. The placement of the organ also must ensure that the instrumentalists have a clear visual connection with the director of music and, if necessary, with the cantor or song leader. Some instruments are used only occasionally for more solemn and festive occasions. For this reason there is a need for flexibility in the arrangement of the space allotted for music so that there will be adequate room to accommodate them when they are included in the worship services (BLS 226-227; STL 95-100) [cf. ICSL 97]</p>	
<p>Visibility Visibility speaks more to the quality of view than merely the mechanics of seeing. A space must create a sense that what is seen is proximate, important and personal. The arrangement of the space should consider levels of priority in what is seen, allowing visual flow from one center of liturgical action to another. Furthermore, the sense and variety of light, artificial or natural, contribute greatly to what is seen. (EA 50) [cf. BLS 212; 228-233]</p>	
<p>Audibility Audibility of all (congregation and ministers) is another primary requirement. A space that does not require amplification is ideal. Where an amplifying system is necessary, provision for multiple microphone jacks should be made (e.g., at the altar, ambo, chair, font space immediately in front of the congregation, and a few spots through the congregation*). Since the liturgical space must accommodate both speech and song, there must be a serious acoustical consideration of the conflicting demands of the two...A room designed to deaden all sounds is doomed to kill liturgical participation. (EA 51; STL 101-</p>	

<p>104) [cf. BLS 212; 221-225] * Current technology makes it possible for a number of these microphone jacks to be eliminated (it is preferable that a microphone not rest on the altar if possible). However, parishes should keep in mind the celebration of the various rites, especially the RCIA, where microphones may need to set up in different locations for full participation to take place.</p>	
<p>Altar At the Eucharist, the liturgical assembly celebrates the ritual sacrificial meal that recalls and makes present Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, proclaiming “the death of the Lord until he comes” (1Cor 11:26; cf. Rev 19:9). The altar is “the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist” (GIRM, 296) and the point around which the other rites are in some manner arrayed. (<i>Mediator Dei</i>, 21) Since the Church teaches that “the altar is Christ” (RDCA, ch. 4, no.4), its composition should reflect the nobility, beauty, strength, and simplicity of the One it represents. In new churches there is to be only one altar so that it signifies to the assembly of the faithful “the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church” (GIRM 303). The altar is the natural focal point of the sanctuary and is to be “built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible” (GIRM 299). “In keeping with the Church’s traditional practice and with what the altar signifies, the table of a fixed altar should be of stone and indeed of natural stone. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, wood which is dignified, solid and well-crafted may be used, provided that the altar is structurally immobile. As to the supports or base for supporting the table, these may be made of any material, provided it is dignified and solid” (GIRM, 301; see RDCA, ch. 4, no. 9). Parishes building new churches must follow the directives of the diocesan bishop regarding the kind of altar chosen and suitable materials for new altars (BLS 56-57). [cf. BLS 56-60, ICSL 91, IEW 24, GIRM 296-308, RDCA ch. 4, nos. 1-5]</p>	
<p>Cross The cross with the image of Christ crucified is a reminder of Christ's paschal mystery. It draws us into the mystery of suffering and makes tangible our belief that our suffering when united with the passion and death of Christ leads to redemption (BB 1233). There should be a crucifix positioned “either on the altar or near it... clearly visible to the assembled people” (GIRM 308). Since a crucifix placed <i>on</i> the altar and large enough to be seen by the congregation might well obstruct the view of the action</p>	

<p>taking place on the altar, other alternatives may be more appropriate. The crucifix may be suspended over the altar or affixed to the sanctuary wall. A processional cross of sufficient size, placed in a stand visible to the people following the entrance procession, is another option. If the processional cross is to be used for this purpose, the size and weight of the cross should not preclude its being carried in procession. If there is already a cross in the sanctuary, the processional cross is placed out of view of the congregation following the procession. (BLS 91) [cf. ICSL 94, GIRM 117]</p>	
<p>Candles Candles, which are signs of reverence and festivity, are required at every liturgical service (GIRM 307). The living flame of the candle, symbolic of the risen Christ, reminds people that in baptism they are brought out of darkness into God’s marvelous light (1 Pt 2:9). For the celebration of the Eucharist it is appropriate to carry candles in the entrance procession and during the procession with the Book of the Gospels (GIRM 120, 133). At least two candles are placed near the altar in the sanctuary area. If there is a lack of space, they may be placed on the altar. Four or six candles may be used for the celebration of Mass and for exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. If the bishop of the diocese celebrates, seven candles should be used. Candles placed in Floor-standing bases or on the altar should be arranged so they do not obscure the view of the ritual action in the sanctuary, especially the action at the altar. Candles for liturgical use should be made of a material that provides “a living flame without being smoky or noxious.” To safeguard “authenticity and the full symbolism of light,” electric lights as a substitute for candles are not permitted (<i>Notitiae</i>). [cf. BLS 92-3, ICSL 94]</p>	
<p>Paschal (Easter) Candle The paschal candle is the symbol of “the light of Christ, rising in glory,” scattering “the darkness of our hearts and minds (<i>Roman Missal</i>, the Easter Vigil, no. 14). Above all, the paschal candle should be a genuine candle, the pre-eminent symbol of the light of Christ. Choices of size, design and color should be made in relationship to the sanctuary in which it will be placed. During the Easter Vigil and throughout the Easter season, the paschal candle belongs near the ambo or in the middle of the sanctuary. After the Easter season it is to be moved to a place of honor in the baptistry for use in the celebration of baptisms. During funerals, the paschal candle is placed near the coffin as a sign of the Christian’s passover from death to life (PCEF 99; BLS 94).</p>	
<p>Ambo The central focus of the area in which the word of God is proclaimed during the liturgy is the <i>ambo</i>. The design of</p>	

<p>the ambo and its prominent placement reflects the dignity and nobility of that saving word and draws attention of those present to the proclamation of the word (GILM, 32). Here the Christian community encounters the living Lord in the word of God and prepares itself for the “breaking of the bread” and the mission to live the word that will be proclaimed. An ample area around the ambo is needed to allow a gospel procession with a full complement of ministers bearing candles and incense. The <i>General Instruction to the Lectionary</i> recommends that the design of altar and ambo bear a “harmonious and close relationship” to one another (GILM 32) in order to emphasize the close relationship between word and Eucharist. Since many people share in the ministry of the word, the ambo should be accessible to everyone, including those with physical disabilities. (BLS 61) [cf. BLS 62, 211-212; ICSL 96, GIRM 309]</p>	
<p>Baptistry The rites of baptism, the first of the sacraments of initiation, require a prominent place for celebration (RCIA 25). Initiation into the Church is entrance into a eucharistic community united in Jesus Christ. Because the rites of initiation of the Church begin with baptism and are completed by the reception of the Eucharist, the baptismal font and its location reflect the Christian’s journey <i>through</i> the waters of baptism <i>to</i> the altar. This integral relationship between the baptismal font and the altar can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, such as placing the font and altar on the same architectural axis, using natural or artificial lighting, using the same floor patterns, and using common or similar materials and elements of design. The location of the baptismal font, its design, and the materials used for its construction are important considerations in the planning and design of the building. It is customary to locate the baptismal font either in a special area within the main body of the church or in a separate baptistry. Through the waters of baptism the faithful enter the life of Christ (RCIA 213). For this reason the font should be visible and accessible to all who enter the church building. While the baptistry is proportioned to the building itself and should be able to hold a good number of people, its actual size will be determined by the needs of the local community. Water is the key symbol of baptism and the focal point of the font. In this water believers die to sin and are reborn to new life in Christ. In designing the font and the iconography in the baptismal area, the parish will want to consider the traditional symbolism that has been the inspiration for the font’s design throughout history. The font is a symbol of both tomb and womb; its power is the power of the triumphant cross; and baptism sets the Christian on the path to the life that will never end, the “eighth day” of eternity where</p>	

<p>Christ's reign of peace and justice is celebrated. (BLS 66-68) [cf. BLS 69, ICSL 99, RCIA 22, 25, NSC 17]</p>	
<p>Ambry The consecrated oil of chrism for initiation, ordination, and the dedication of churches, as well as the blessed oils of the sick and of catechumens, are traditionally housed in a special place called an ambry or repository (BB1125). These oils consecrated or blessed by the bishop at the Mass of Chrism deserve the special care of the community to which they have been entrusted (CCL c. 847 #2). The style of the ambry may take different forms. A parish church might choose a simple, dignified and secure niche in the baptistry or in a wall of sanctuary or a small case for the oils. Cathedrals responsible for the care of a larger supply of the oils need a larger ambry. Since bright light or high temperatures can hasten spoilage, parishes will want to choose a location that helps to preserve the freshness of the oil. (BLS 117) [cf. BB 1125-26]</p>	
<p>Reservation of the Eucharist It is more in keeping with its meaning as a sign, that the tabernacle in which the Most Blessed Sacrament is reserved not to be on the altar on which Mass is celebrated. Moreover, the tabernacle should be placed, according to the judgment of the diocesan Bishop: either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in the most suitable form and place, not excluding an old altar which is no longer used for celebration; or even in another chapel suitable for adoration and the private prayer of the faithful, and which is integrally connected with the church and is conspicuous to the faithful. (GIRM 315) [cf. BLS 70-80, ICSL 95, IEW 53, HCOM chap.3, #9]</p>	
<p>Tabernacle The Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church which is noble, worthy conspicuous, well decorated and suitable for prayer. As a rule there should be only one tabernacle, immovable made of solid and unbreakable material and not transparent, and locked so that the danger of desecration is avoided as much as possible. (GIRM 314) According to received custom, a designated lamp should burn continuously near the tabernacle, fed either by oil or wax, through which the presence of Christ is both indicated and honored. (GIRM 316) [cf. BLS 72, IEW 57]</p>	
<p>Reconciliation Chapel In planning the reconciliation area, parishes will want to provide for a sound-proof place with a chair for the priest and a kneeler and chair for the penitent. Since the rite includes the reading of Scripture, the space should also include a bible. Appropriate artwork, a crucifix symbolic of Christ's victory over sin and death, icons or images</p>	

<p>reflective of baptism and the Eucharist, or Scriptural images of God's reconciling love help, to enhance the atmosphere of prayer. Warm, inviting lighting welcomes penitents who seek God's help, and some form of amplification as well as Braille signs can aid those with hearing or visual disabilities. Additional rooms or spaces will be needed as confessional areas for communal celebrations of penance, especially in Advent and Lent. (BLS 105)</p>	
<p>Sacristy A sacristy or vesting space should be located to favor the procession of cross, candles, book and ministers through the midst of the congregation to the altar area. [cf. BLS 234]</p>	
<p>Images for the Veneration of the Faithful In the early liturgy, the Church participates in a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy, which is celebrated in the holy city Jerusalem, towards which she tends as a pilgrim and where Christ sits at the right hand of God. By so venerating the memory of the saints, the Church hopes for some small part and company with them (CSL 8). And so, in keeping with the Church's very ancient tradition, images of the Lord, the Virgin Mary (RDCA ch.4, no 10), and the saints may be displayed in sacred buildings for the veneration of the faithful, and may be so arranged that they guide the faithful to the mysteries of the faith which are celebrated there. For this reason, care should be taken that their number not be increased indiscriminately, and that they are situated in such a way that they do not distract the faithful's attention from the celebration (CSL 125). There is to be only one image of any given saint as a rule. In general, the devotion of the entire community as well as the beauty and dignity of the images are to be the criteria for their adornment and arrangement in a church. (GIRM 318) [cf. BLS 135-138]</p>	
<p>Stations of the Cross Whether celebrated by a community or by individuals, the Stations of the Cross offer a way for the faithful to enter more fully into the passion and death of the Lord and to serve as another manifestation of the pilgrim Church on its homeward journey. Traditionally the stations have been arranged around walls of the nave of the church, or, in some instances, around the gathering space or even the exterior of the church, marking the devotion as a true journey. Often churches have images as well as the crosses that mark the fourteen stations. While the depictions of the passion are desirable, only the crosses are needed. The images that accompany the crosses are optional. (BLS 133, incl. n.153) [cf. BLS 132-134]</p>	
<p>Decorations Plans for seasonal decorations should include other areas besides the sanctuary. Decorations are intended to draw</p>	

<p>people to the true nature of the mystery being celebrated rather than being ends in themselves. Natural flowers, plants, wreaths and fabric hangings, and other seasonal objects can be arranged to enhance the primary liturgical points of focus. The altar should remain clear and free-standing, not walled in by massive floral displays of the Christmas crib, and pathways in the narthex, nave, and sanctuary should remain clear. (BLS 124)</p> <p>The use of living flowers and plants, rather than artificial greens, serves as a reminder of the gift of life God has given to the human community. Planning for plants and flowers should include not only the procurement and placement but also the continuing care needed to sustain living things. (BLS 129)</p> <p>[cf. CSL 122-128, BLS 122-129]</p>	
<p>Vestments & Vessels</p> <p>There is no particular style for sacred furnishing for the liturgy (GIRM 325). Sacred Vessels may be in a shape that is in keeping with the culture of each region, “provided the individual vessels are suitable for their intended liturgical use and are clearly distinguishable from vessels intended for everyday use” (GIRM 332). Materials used for sacred vessels such as the chalice and paten should be worthy, solid, and durable, and should not break easily. Chalices and cups used for the distribution of the Precious Blood should have bowls made of nonabsorbent material. Vessels made from metal are gilded on the inside if the metal ordinarily rusts. The vestments worn by ministers symbolize the ministers’ functions and add beauty to the celebration of the rites. “For making sacred vestments, in addition to traditional materials, natural fabrics proper to each region may be used ... the beauty and nobility of each vestment [derives] not in an abundance of overlaid ornamentation, but rather in the material used and in the design” (GIRM 343-344).</p> <p>[cf. GIRM 327-347; BLS 164-65]</p>	
<p>Books</p> <p>Any book which is used by an officiating minister in a liturgical celebration should be of a large (public, noble) size, good paper, strong design, handsome typography and binding...Each should be visually attractive and impressive.</p> <p>[cf. GIRM 349]</p>	