

THE CHURCH OF ST. THOMAS MORE
Interior Design Team Minutes

August 9, 2011

Present: Father Mike Ratajczak, Pastor; Robert Habiger, Liturgical Consultant; Phil and Pat Goscienski, Interior Design Team Chairpersons; Team Members: Kathy Arciero, Charlene Buhlert, Lorraine Doering, Ann Eriksson, Douglas Lynn, Chris Smith, Kathleen Quinn

Team Members Absent: Mary Castle, Diana Diaz, Mario Diaz, Sondra Parks

The meeting opened at 7:05 PM with the Prayer of Dedication.

Father Mike told us this meeting is to be in preparation for the next joint meeting with the New Construction Committee, Interior Design Team and Parish Staff with Renzo Zecchetto, our Architect, and Robert Habiger, our Liturgical Consultant, on August 23.

At this meeting we discussed the initial plans for the font, the ambo, the altar, art and the shrine for the Blessed Mother.

Robert Habiger had prepared illustrations of proposed designs. He has not seen the new proposed design by Renzo for the choir area. That will happen the next day on Wednesday.

Douglas Lynn remarked that we need to have a lot of space around the altar area. Chris Smith said that she noticed at the dedication of the new St. Gabriel Church that the communion procession did not go well; the traffic flow was not ideal. We looked at sketches that Robert Habiger provided at the last meeting wherein he had taken this into consideration for our church.

We looked at an illustration for a proposed shrine for Mary. This will be an area in our Eucharistic Hall.

Robert Habiger told us of the scriptural references he used in his design: Romans 6:3 and Matthew 27:51. The latter refers to the moment of the crucifixion when the temple veil was rendered. His design influences are: three (trinity); circle (eternity); square root 2 rectangle (earth) and stone (stability, permanence). He plans to use stone, bronze, water and wood, the primary sustainable earth materials.

We looked at an illustration for the proposed baptismal font to be located near the entrance. The design allows for full immersion for adults and a basin for infant baptisms. The Paschal Candle can be placed nearby. The design calls for a pillar on which a basin – made of bronze – will stand. The water will trickle down the side of the pillar into the round large basin. A bronze cover for the lower basin will be made with inscribed symbols. The water can be seen through the cover which will be strong enough to walk on (although this is unlikely) and can hold a heavy object such as a coffin for funerals.

The dimensions of the font are ten feet across for the “circular” basin; the circle standing for “eternity”. The lower area filled with water will be eight feet across with three eight inch steps. We discussed the various types of baptism for adults: fusion (water poured over the head), immersion and submersion. The person being baptized can choose the method. In the past the various methods were determined by cultural influences .

A question was raised about the sound of the trickling water which may be a distraction. Robert Habiger replied that the design is such that the water will not drop from the top of the pillar but rather it will flow down the side of the pillar into the lower basin.

Symbols for the font include the three steps down – the trinity. The reference is being baptized into Christ's death. Materials are symbolic: stone, bronze and running water.

The question was raised about calcium buildup in the water. Filters will take care of that and the water will be cleaned at least every three months. What if people walk on the screen and debris from their shoes falls into the water? Robert Habiger assured us that people rarely if ever walk on the screens and if they do, the filter will take care of the debris.

In a presentation on the altar design we were told the goal was for dignity and noble simplicity. There will be space around the altar for ritual activities and the needs of people with disabilities will be taken into consideration. There will be immediate visibility to all who enter the Eucharistic Hall. Height of the altar will be 39 inches.

The illustration we saw was not the final design. Robert Habiger said he is still working on it. He told us the reference (Matthew 27:51) was to the "torn veil" in the temple and the "split rocks". We should think of mystery. There will be five crosses symbolic of the five wounds inscribed on the mensa – the top of the altar.

We asked if people will understand the references. Somehow the verse from the bible will be shared either verbally or perhaps inscribed on a stair step or other place that is visible. The dedication booklet will describe all the features of the sanctuary and the biblical references.

Candles for the altar will be designed as pillars on the floor. The entire pillar could be carried for the entrance ceremony or only the top – such as a "torchiere" – can be used.

The proposed ambo matches the design of the altar. The shelf on top will be three feet, six inches across to accommodate three cantors. Since three cantors are used only once a year, we wondered if this is necessary or can an "add on" be made for the special readings. This will be taken into consideration.

The question was raised as to whether we want a place of repose for the Book of Gospels. This will continue to be discussed. Father Mike would like to have a shelf built into the ambo so that the lectionary can be placed there before the Book of the Gospels makes its way to the ambo.

The top of the ambo will be movable up and down to accommodate readers who may be in a wheelchair. To make this work, rods are placed between the bottom support and the top. The rods could be made of Lucite so as to not be so visible.

Chris Smith was of the opinion that the ambo was a copy of the altar giving the impression of two altars. Perhaps the design could be changed so that the "veil" in the center is not included.

We talked about the microphone on the ambo and whether it would be possible to have a wireless microphone. Chris Smith said that there is often “feedback” with such devices and perhaps the type of microphone (over the ear) used by the presider would be better. This matter calls for more investigation.

We agreed that we prefer a smaller top surface for the ambo than that which is called for in the design. If a bigger top is needed for three cantors, perhaps it could be kept in storage and placed on the ambo when needed.

After a brief break, Robert Habiger asked if we are on the right track. Chris Smith said she likes the design of the font – the symbolism of the circle is good.

We discussed the Stations of the Cross and we were asked if we prefer traditional or the scriptural based 15 stations of John Paul II. We prefer the 15 stations. The design for the stations calls for two of them to be in the sanctuary, made of sculpted glass. The remaining ones will be in the garden outdoors in bas relief, material to be determined. (Kathleen Quinn knows a glass artist who can create the artwork. His name, Patrick Blythe, was given to Robert Habiger.)

We looked at various representations of Mary to see what we have in mind. Father Mike told us whatever depiction we choose should represent all races, all people. Of the various representations the bronze statue seemed to be what we would prefer (without the depiction of Mary’s Sacred Heart). We wondered if we have room for a statue in the small shrine area or could it be a two dimensional image against the wall? Is there room for kneelers and/or chairs? We would like to have both. Could Mary’s image appear to be pointing toward the chapel? Perhaps votive candles could be placed on the wall, similar to the illustration we saw from St. Gregory the Great. Robert Habiger will send us a list of artists we can interview.

We discussed the depiction of the large permanent crucifix. Should we include the two crosses on either side of the cross of Jesus that would be symbolic of the saved and the unsaved? We would have one main crucifix and two smaller crosses on the wall, perhaps in niches? No final decision was made.

We discussed the depiction of our patron, St. Thomas More. We want the theme of the “Man for All Seasons”. A depiction of Thomas More can be made of three-dimensional carved wood along with illustrations of the four seasons and some mottoes by him. Our present statue of St Thomas More is a mold from which one more casting can be made. Father Mike prefers that it be placed in the new offices.

We talked about Renzo’s ideas of how light from the tower will be incorporated into the design of the chapel, the shrine and the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. We will learn more at the August 23 meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM. Our next meeting will be on August 23 at 6:00 PM. The meeting after that will be held on October 11.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Quinn