

What is a liturgical consultant and do we need one?

Summary: From the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, "Whether designing a new space for the liturgical action or renovating an old one, teamwork and preparation by the congregation (particularly the Liturgical Committee), clergy, architect and consultant (liturgy and art) are essential. A competent architect should have the assistance of a consultant in liturgy and art both in the discussion stages of the project (dialogue with the congregation and clergy as well as among themselves) and throughout the stages of the design and building."

Also, according to the U.S. Catholic Bishops' document, *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*, a liturgical design consultant assists "the pastor, the staff, and the entire parish with continuing education about the importance, role, and value of worship, and the impact of the church building upon worship."

In addition, the liturgical design consultant "selected by the parish, works with the architect and other members of the design team from the earliest stages of the process to help them apply the principles and norms of liturgical design to the practical and liturgical needs of the parish being served. This includes examining the acoustics, the flow and movement for processions, appropriate styles for liturgical celebrations, the interrelationships within the Eucharist as well as the relationship of the Eucharist with the other sacraments, and all the elements required by the Church's liturgy. In addition, the consultant may have expertise in design and can help to coordinate the design and fabrication of appropriate furniture and other objects to be used during liturgical services, as well as the liturgical art to be placed within the church."

The building committee is in the process of interviewing candidates to work with our parish, and we hope to involve this consultant as soon as possible.

If you have further questions, don't hesitate to contact the building committee at: BC@stjuandiego.org.

We are a well-educated and involved parish, can't we figure out this stuff on our own? Rev. Bob Duggan, a nationally-known liturgist and board member for the Georgetown Center for Liturgy, has provided us some thoughts on this topic:

- As an outsider, the liturgical consultant (LC) can do things none of your own people can do, no matter how good they are. As Pastor, for example, I knew my role needed to be other than LC, although I obviously collaborated closely with our LC. An outsider brings an objectivity and detachment that no one on site has, not to mention the wisdom that is gained through experience.
- An experienced LC has a network of contacts for artists and artisans that is extensive, and that knowledge is more than just looking at their portfolios. Usually the LC knows the behind-the-scenes stories, like who is reliable on delivery dates, etc.

What, specifically, does a liturgical consultant offer us?

- Knowledge of how liturgy is actually celebrated, not just what the documents say.
- A vision of the renewed liturgy that is compatible with your local community's vision.
- An artistic vision and developed aesthetic.
- An ability to work with architects as a peer in evolving the vision, rather than a gadfly who intrudes on the architects' creative process.
- A network of professional contacts that can serve as resources to you as you need them.
- High level skills communicating with parishioners and doing formation of communities so that the building process is shaping the community as well as the building.
- An ability to get along with the various segments involved in the process – rather than act as a "prima donna" stirring the pot and causing trouble.

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Is this cost-effective?

Time is money. An effective LC will help facilitate our decision-making, bringing a wealth of experience and expertise to the table. S/he will serve as an excellent and innovative educational resource for the whole community, educating not only the architects about liturgy, but our community as a whole. With a better understanding of liturgy and how a building design will best serve the St. Juan Diego worship community, we will be creating a space to stand the test of time, that won't need reorganization in a few years.

How much does this cost?

As with anything, it depends on what we ask the consultant to do. S/he could come and work with us on a weekly basis coordinating all the details, or (more likely) come in a few times during the design process to help educate the parish, and provide expert review to the building committee and the architects. Per diem fees can range from \$850 a day to \$1500 a day.

Have we hired the liturgical consultant?

Not yet. In our professional and liturgical networks, we identified three candidates and checked their references. Fr. John had phone conversations with two of them, and one of them will be coming to visit St. Juan Diego July 20-22.

Who is visiting and why are we paying for him to come out?

John Buscemi comes highly recommended from our friends and professional affiliates. He has a Master of Arts in Liturgy from Catholic University of America, a Bachelor of Science in Art and a Bachelor of Arts in Theology. He has experience teaching at universities and conferences and is involved in national professional associations such as The Georgetown center for Liturgy and The National Conference of Environment and Art for Catholic Worship. He is based in Wisconsin but has worked with parishes from coast to coast.

In John Buscemi's words, "the service offered by a liturgical design consultant is to help express the story of a particular Christian community. The story is told in its tradition, in its present struggles and in its future dream. When the community has articulated its story, then the task of the consultant is to help create a home both for the story and the storytellers."

It's useful to meet such a consultant face-to-face, to see if that person *gets* the unique and vibrant worship culture that takes place in our churchnasium and in our homes.

What is John Buscemi doing during his visit?

He will meet with the building committee, a variety of parishioners and, most importantly, the greater parish community. He will attend both the Saturday and Sunday Masses and will be participating during both. We encourage you to mark your calendars for July 21 or 22 to not miss this opportunity! We will be interviewing him, and he will be interviewing us – to make sure our relationship would be a "good fit."

We are excited about the educational and spiritual growth that will be afforded by a liturgical consultant! We look forward to the collaboration between the consultant, the architects, and the collective "storytellers" of our parish.

