

DRAFT
ST. MARY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
Proposal: Renovation of the Baptistry

Pastor Rick Rodoni, in consultation with Fr. Justin Le, Director of Liturgy, and a committee of parishioners selected by the St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Liturgy Committee, recommend that the Baptistry at St. Mary's Church be renovated to allow for the baptism of both infants and adults by either infusion or immersion and to make possible more active and meaningful participation by the liturgical assembly in the Sacrament of Baptism.

Rationale for the Construction of a New Baptistry

The current Baptistry at St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception is inadequate to accommodate the Baptism of adults through immersion. In addition, the design and materials are not in harmony with the altar and the other architectural elements of the church. Finally, the location of the font in the sanctuary area does not appropriately emphasize the "Christian journey *through* the waters of baptism *to* the altar," as suggested by the Church's documents on Art, Architecture and Worship.

The font presently in use is in fact a birdbath designed for garden use. It contains no iconography or symbolism emphasizing the significance of water as the key symbol of baptism, nor does it harmonize in any way with the altar in either design or materials. In addition, the font is not large enough to accommodate the baptism of both infants and adults. Thus, "the dignified celebration for all who are baptized at the one font," (paragraph 69, "Built of Living Stones) is not possible.

Location of the New Baptistry

It is our goal to relocate the Baptistry in a manner that will emphasize "the essential relationship of baptism to the celebration of other sacraments and rituals," (paragraph 69, Built of Living Stones.) While the Church documents indicate that, "Some churches choose to place the baptistery and font near the entrance to the church," (paragraph 69, Built of Living Stones) this will not be feasible at St. Mary's because of the architectural design of the church.

St. Mary's Church was constructed in 1962 in the rectangular Spanish Colonial style with a very long central aisle leading to an elevated marble sanctuary area. We have been informed by Fr. Christopher Bennett of the Diocese of San Jose Worship Environment Committee that our current font should not share the same space with the altar in the elevated marble area.

We need to relocate the font, but placing it near the entrance would hamper the ability of the assembly to participate in the baptisms in a meaningful way. Seating in our worship area is in pews which are fixed to the floor. We do not have moveable chairs, and members of the assembly would literally be unable to see a baptism taking place if the font were located near the entrance. Asking the assembly to turn in their pews and look down a ----- foot aisle to observe a baptism would be awkward and certainly not liturgically enriching.

Our recommendation is to relocate the font to the front of the worship area on the east side of the church facing the statue of St. Mary, the patron saint of our parish, and near a side door which is accessible to the disabled. Our intention is to elevate the new baptistery area so it will be clearly visible and accessible to all who enter the church building. We believe that the area before the statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a "prominent place for celebration," (paragraph 66, Built of Living Stones) and that it will also be clearly visible from the altar. We believe that this location will emphasize the journey from baptism to eucharist.

We believe that no other space in our worship area can be appropriate for the baptistery because the adults who will be baptized will need an adjacent area to change after being baptized by immersion. The space in front of St. Mary's statue is near the sacristy and would allow easy access for the newly baptized to exit the east doorway directly into the sacristy.

Design and Materials of the New Baptistery

Our intention is to highlight the connection between baptism and the other sacraments by using the same type of marble and a design style that will harmonize with the altar and the tabernacle table.

Architectural Integrity of the Entire Worship Space

St. Mary's Church is a beautiful example of neo-Spanish Colonial architecture, and the worship area is blessed with many exquisite architectural elements and sacred symbols. The stained glass windows, marble sanctuary, areas for private devotion with candles and the statues of St. Mary and St. Joseph on either side of the sanctuary create a harmonious and symmetrical effect. We believe that the ambo and the presider's chair are in harmony in their design and location on either side of the altar. We desire to maintain this architectural integrity by designing a Baptistry that will be compatible with the existing architecture and will allow full, active and conscious participation of the assembly in all our liturgical celebrations.