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Newsletter of Holy Family Parish & St. Joseph Church

December 2022

St. Joseph Church Altar: A Labor of Love & Service to Community

*“Love cannot remain by itself - it has no meaning.
Love has to be put into action and that action is service.”*

—Saint Teresa of Calcutta



St. Joseph Church in Dolgeville, NY, originally had three beautiful marble altars: a large altar in the center of the sanctuary, and two smaller altars on each side. Regrettably, they were torn down after a misinterpretation of Vatican II in the 1970s.

An Altar Committee was formed in 2016 to examine creating a new Altar of Repose for the Blessed Sacrament. Our Committee felt a strong need to have a new Altar of Repose for our Lord to be honored and praised. The Eucharist is the Source and Summit of our Catholic Faith. Our Lord Jesus, is truly, really, and substantially present, Soul, and Divinity in the Eucharist under the appearance of bread and wine.

The Altar Committee was comprised of Chairman Joe Jablonski, Ronald Lasowski, Kathy Winkler, Margaret Johnson, Mary Lou Huddleston, and Tom and Susan Farish. The Committee found the cost for a new altar was very expensive and there were no parish funds for the project. The committee then began a search for a used altar.

St. Joseph Church was offered a beautiful altar from St. Patrick's in Hagensburg in the North Country. The cost to dismantle and transport it was prohibitive and the weight of the altar could not be supported by the

sanctuary floor. We also had some talks with a parish in Sidney, NY, to get more ideas for an altar that their parishioners built themselves. This also, would be too expensive.

Our next step was to invite Fr. Richard Vosco and Fr. Patterson from the Albany Diocese Architectural Building Committee to assist us. Their first idea focused on painting the Sanctuary to match patterns already there. They also mentioned there were some altar pieces at St. Joseph's in Grafton, NY. A group of us traveled to pick them up. We all felt, with a great deal of work, the altar could be saved.

Thankfully, St. Joseph parishioners voted to have the new Altar of Repose to be placed in the center of the Sanctuary. The vote was passed by a very large majority.

Our first volunteer to build the altar had to step down because of other commitments. He did help us to get started and gave us valuable ideas. The main task of rebuilding the Altar of Repose was performed by Michael



Michael Volo

Volo, who was a master craftsman. His work was outstanding. Michael went to great lengths to ensure that the altar matched the original design, working from a picture of the altar from St. Joseph's in Grafton. Any alterations were reviewed by Fr. Brian Slezak. Sadly, Michael passed away before the task was completed. May God give rest to his soul as our new altar will “live on” in his memory. His wife, Dodie, also gave great assistance with this project.

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Ralph Miller and Ian Guidilli immediately took charge and tirelessly labored to finish the altar. A good friend, “Melvin” did the sanding, staining, and varnishing..

An altar relief with two angels holding a “Host” was refinished and restored by Philomena Cerone from Holy Family Parish in Little Falls. This relief was a very old artistic medallion, which rests in the center of the new



altar. Philomena picked away layers of paint with an artist’s pallet knife. She uncovered the original plaster painting. When she realized how beautiful the painted image was, she chose to keep as much of the original as possible. Some areas had to be newly painted to blend with the

original work because of damage caused by cracking and scarring. God guided her expert and creative hands!

A lovely tabernacle was donated by Fr. Steve Scarmozzino, a friend of Fr. Slezak. It was recovered from the old St. Agnes Church in Manhattan after a fire destroyed it. The Venerable Bishop Fulton Sheen would often celebrate Mass there.

Donors, who wish to remain anonymous, have been a wonderful blessing to our beautiful project. A donor had the tabernacle refinished. A crucifix from the original altar in Grafton was found for the center of our Altar of Repose. A parishioner paid to have it cleaned and refinished in Chicago. Two charming golden angels were found with the altar from Grafton and were once part of a Communion railing. The stately steeple and golden cross were from the original altar. Both were restored by St. Joseph donors. Another parish donor graciously purchased six beautiful new candle holders for our altar, and parishioners donated new altar linens and matching vestments.

The carpet in the Sanctuary was ripped out to make a more natural overall look. Fred Zerbst, Bob Peters, and Mike George spent hours sanding the oak floor. May Fred rest in the peace of the Lord. The carpet removal team consisted of Nick Miller, Adam and Henry Swartz, Matt Pollard, Tom Farrish, Ronald Lasowski, Steve Jablonski, Joe Jablonski, and Ann Zennaier.

Some fine oak boards for the altar and platform were donated by Jeff Slifka and North Hudson Woodcraft Co. Chris Holliday donated time to help with the altar platform steps. Volunteers cleaned up the mess so we could continue to have Mass every Sunday. Tom Farrish created two beautiful benches for our sanctuary from old parish pews.

The team that helped deliver and set up the altar

included Nick Miller, Blake Decker, Mark Miller, Travis Jennison, Fr. Slezak, Bob Peters, Mike George, and Fred Zerbst.

On November 7th, 2021, St. Joseph’s new Altar of Repose was consecrated by Bishop Edward Scharfenberger. He also officially installed Fr. Slezak as our pastor. The Holy Celebration of the Mass was inspiring and lovely. The Knights of Columbus served as honor guards in the ceremony. Our dedicated choir offered beautiful music.

Overall, it has been a long journey to the completion of our new Altar of Repose. Many people have contributed to the project. We appreciate their assistance and hope we did not leave anyone out. We also truly thank Fr. Slezak for his guidance and leadership in the project. Ronald Lasowski ultimately created a photo album of the Altar of Repose, and the history of the altar paper.

On April 21, 2022 volunteers who worked on the Altar of Repose came together to break bread and give thanks to all of wonderful people who gave their time and talent. It truly was a labor of love for many of us.

Above all else, we thank the Holy Spirit for guiding us on the journey to honor and praise our Lord Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament with our beautiful new Altar of



Repose. May God continue to bless Fr. Slezak, our parish, and parishioners here at St. Joseph Church in Dolgeville and surrounding areas.

Future projects for St. Joseph Church will include: repairing the front steps, new pulpit, celebrant’s

chair, choir stalls, Communion rail, and stenciling on the back wall. —written by Ronald Lasowski

