

**HOLY CHILDHOOD OF JESUS CHURCH
150 WEST MAIN ST.
HARBOR SPRINGS, MI 49740**

August 28, 2006

Dear Parishioners,

Enclosed is a summary on the importance of the narthex (gathering space) to Holy Childhood of Jesus Church based on study, discussion and prayer by our Pastor, the Worship Commission and the Building Oversight Committee.

In ten short years Holy Childhood of Jesus Church has seen an increase in registered households from 350 to 762, and we continue to grow. The Building Oversight Committee was asked to review the entire campus and give recommendations to our parish Architects for not only present needs but future needs as well.

It has been well documented the parish misses its social center the hall. It seemed prudent to further address any worship needs we may have along with the construction of a new parish hall. We need to remember that our social needs are always secondary to our worship needs. It is at liturgy that we are gathered in Christ, nourished by Christ and sent forth to do Christ's work. With this in mind, we asked the Architects to design a narthex (gathering space) that would meet our present worship needs and take us into the future.

We are a "welcoming people". The narthex will enable us to pass through a common space in a climate of hospitality, plus address a myriad of worship needs. Great care will be taken to maintain the current beauty of our church and continue that flow into the narthex.

Please see the enclosed sheet for further information on the narthex.

**Respectfully submitted in Christ,
The Building Oversight Committee**

NARTHEX (GATHERING SPACE)

HOLY CHILDHOOD OF JESUS CHURCH BUILDING OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

What is a gathering space? Why do we need one?

“The gathering space or narthex helps believers to make the transition from everyday life to the celebration of the liturgy, and after the liturgy, it helps them to return to daily life to live out the mystery that has been celebrated.”

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops has this to say, “Such gathering space can encourage introductions, conversations, the sharing of refreshments after liturgy, the building of the kind of community sense and feeling recognized now to be a prerequisite of good celebration.”

Some of the rites of the Church are actually celebrated there: men and women participate in the Rite of becoming a catechumen, parents, godparents and infants are welcomed for baptism, welcoming for weddings, assembling for processions into other liturgies and devotions and Christians are greeted for the last time as their bodies are brought for funeral rites.

With this in mind, we submit the following recommendations regarding the gathering space and related subjects:

- 1. A gathering space is needed, attached to the church, where the entrances would open into a common space, before entering into the church body or worship area. The church currently seats 500 people. The choir loft holds 81 additional people. Due to requirements of existing codes, the use of the choir loft for overflow seating will eventually have to be eliminated, causing a seating shortage. An overflow area could be located in the gathering space. This would accommodate additional seating for our growing parish. Portable chairs could be set up for Masses when there is a large influx of worshipers, such as Christmas, Easter, and the summer months. If Holy Childhood of Jesus Church wishes to continue to be a “warm, welcoming haven” for worshipers, Christian hospitality dictates we address our seating needs.**
- 2. Glass doors should separate the gathering space from the worship area, giving parishioners a place to gather and converse before and after liturgy, thereby leaving the worship space for private prayer.**
- 3. The gathering space should include a Vestry so that the priest can enter the worship area through the same door as all other worshipers. Also, space would be provided for ministry sign up, coat room, parish information center, material distribution area, ticket sales, memorial plaque, church history display and an area for children to hang their religious sacramental artwork.**
- 4. The gathering space would provide an area for deceased parishioners to be shown before the Mass of Christian Burial. It would also provide a place to take worshipers who become ill with easy access for paramedics.**

5. **A music room, easily accessible to the church, with its own thermostat for storage of musical equipment, bell choir tables and choir practice. Design room so it could be used for multiple purposes such as meeting room, children's Liturgy of the Word, etc. Also, the choir area in the church should be expanded to accommodate vocal and bell choirs.**

This sub-committee felt it was extremely important to keep the current Main St. view of the church in the consideration of any expansion or addition. The original plans of the renovated church called for addition or expansion through the bay windows behind the baptismal font. These windows should then be reused and placed in a prominent area. The committee recommends any addition or expansion of the church (gathering space) should keep the same architectural lines and feeling inside as well as outside.

**Respectively submitted,
Sub-committee on narthex**