

## Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2022

My dear brothers and sisters, good morning and I pray that this week message will open our minds to grasp the rich message of the gospel. Recently, some parishioners argued that there is no need to install screens in our church, because it would violate the sacred space. So, there is currently an impassioned debate within the parish regarding the possibility of putting screens in the church with these individuals suggesting that this would be a violation of sacred space. Let us address these issues seriously, let us consider the following:

### **The use of Technology within our sacred spaces!!**

We believe churches to be special places referring to them as God's house and the importance of the tabernacle as the place in which Blessed Sacrament is kept is obviously central to our beliefs which is different from other denominations that have discarded the belief in transubstantiation when it is clearly a gospel given truth. But we also believe that all spaces are sacred because we know that God is everywhere and not limited to the buildings in which we gather for worship. Let us consider those places where we gather to worship and think about how they have changed over the centuries.

Jesus, himself, sometimes taught in synagogues but he also preached in houses where he broke bread with his friends and with those who were eager to discover more about what he had to say about God and the kingdom of God and way we must live our lives to enter the kingdom. He preached most of all outside, with people sitting on the ground during the day. At night he preached in houses where everyone relied on oil lamps to see anything. It is likely that everyone retired at dusk because that was the safest, most practical thing to do and because people rose at dawn to begin their day's work.

### **How different are our lives today!**

There are not many places in the northern hemisphere where we can gather to worship outside for very many days of the year. It is too often too cold and too often too dark. We little consider the constraints of daylight hours, unthinkingly relying on electric light to enable us to work, watch television, do almost anything we want because we can see, run our computers, play our music and do, as I say, almost anything. Until the invention of electric lighting our lives were so much more constrained, as was our worship. Services happened mostly in the daytime, with only Christmas and Easter significantly different. And when services were held at night they were conducted in torchlight and those who have attended the great vigil masses of our faith will know how powerful are the feelings which moving from dark to candlelight, before the electric lights are switched on. And yet do we honestly feel less holy when we come to mass today in churches lit by hundreds of electric light bulbs? I hope not because electric light helps us to read our missals and hymn books and to see the church properly, as probably our ancestors saw only infrequently, and, most of all, it allows us to see our fellow human beings and enables us to be fully conscious of the community of Christ in which we meet to praise and glorify God. And of course, we do so in warmth generated by gas or electricity.

### **More technology!**

Let us now consider all the other aspects of technology which we take for granted in church. Before the installation of microphones and public address systems in churches we had to rely on celebrants and readers having strong voices that could be heard without amplification. And often this just didn't happen and sometimes readings, homilies, and even the mass itself, were lost in the vast spaces of a church building so that many people were excluded from being able to follow and understand, which was a serious setback given that one principle concerns of The Second Vatican Council was to make the mass a celebration for the whole community; a worship which was properly shared by clergy and laity together communally rather than each person praying separately as had often happened in the past.

In particular it enables children and young people to hear and understand (as well as those who might be hard of hearing) so that they can participate in mass, which is very important because Jesus told his disciples that they must bring the children to the front because these were the people they were teaching because, of course, the children are our future. We take it for granted that churches will have organs to accompany hymns and to play appropriate music for prayer and meditation and we don't even think about these being powered by electricity. Yet, until the late nineteenth century, only the greatest of cathedrals had organs and where there was instrumental accompaniment it was from a variety of manually played instruments.

Today, many churches around the world employ electric instruments in their worship and it inspires many in their worship. In other words, in so many different ways, we take it for granted that we use whatever technology is available to enhance our worship and to enable everyone to participate more fully in our worship.

And so, it is with screens in our churches which provide improved and increased access to communication within churches. All over the world, churches take it for granted that they use screens - to put up the words for hymns so that everyone can see them, not having to squint at small type in a hymn book (removing the necessity for hymn books altogether and thus saving thousands of trees!); to project images which might enhance meditation or prayer or to screen video of devotional nature which might enhance our devotion (perhaps live-streaming mass or other devotions from a cathedral or even from the Vatican which enables us to share this communally rather than as individuals who can only watch at home).

Once again, this is technology which particularly reaches out to our children and young people who take it for granted in their school settings that they will see hymns, pictures and videos that enhance prayer, as well as so much of their everyday learning, on screens in classrooms and the school hall. And reaching out to the children and young people should be at the core of our practice of our faith if we are to live the Gospel as Christ calls us to do.

Have a peace filled week and May God bless and enrich you and your families with his favours and protection. And may the intercession of our Blessed Mother Mary accompany you always, Amen.

Yours Affectionately,  
Father Nicholas Nwanzi