

The Pulpit at St. Louis



At the majestic St. Louis Church, Christmas and Easter are special events for everyone, especially for lectors; not only are they major Catholic Holy Days, but it is on these occasions that we lectors have the opportunity descend from the altar, and then, ascend the 11 steps (yes, I counted) up into the ornately carved pulpit.

Standing up there, in the six-sided pulpit and looking out at the congregation is an interesting and unique experience, as you cannot help but feel like some kind of dignitary or VIP addressing all the people. Being slightly shorter than Mike Zobel, the additional 10 feet gives the speaker a feeling of...loftiness ...and power...and importance!

Who doesn't like feeling important for a couple of minutes?

Along with so many other beauties of antiquity at St. Louis, the pulpit is a wonder to behold. And, when it was installed, way back when, it wasn't merely ornamental, but functional too. Fr. Robert Mack told me that years ago, long before electricity, microphones, and amplification, the pulpit offered the best way for the Priests to project their voices throughout the church during their homilies. He also said, that the beautiful canopy--that crowns the pulpit--helped project their voices acoustically as well.

The pulpit offers an added bonus in giving the Priests and lectors a clear line of sight with the organist and cantor in the balcony; they can be difficult to see all the way from the altar. I must confess that I have often relied on Jim Mrozak to cue me when it's time to read from the Good Book! Truth-be- told, when you're sitting on the altar, it is easy to get caught up in the amazing stained glass. And on more than one occasion, I was remiss in delivering timely readings (long delay) because I was in a reverie. Yes, I was caught daydreaming. And yes, I was embarrassed!

According to Michael Riester-our esteemed St. Louis historian, "the pulpit was installed around 1910, and was designed by the Edward M. Hager Company of Buffalo, and was donated in memory of his family. The Evangelists, carved by Leopold Schnegenburger from Buffalo, are depicted in the large reliefs. The smaller statues depict the Doctors of the Church."

As we all know, they don't build churches and cathedrals like they did 100 to 200 years ago; replicating the quality of the materials and the singular craftsmanship would simply be too expensive!

So, next time you are at St. Louis, take some time to scrutinize the superb craftsmanship of our pulpit-an enduring testament to the talents Hager and Schnegenburger! After 103 years, we all bow low and thank you!

