

High Altar Mishap ...

This Week at Ascension – January 23, 2019

I'm sorry to have to report a mishap that will no doubt trouble all of you as it has me. In the process of covering the high altar with a large sheet of plastic on Monday evening in anticipation of the tuck pointing project, the tip of the altar spire, about 2 feet in total, tumbled to the ground and shattered.

I'm grateful to share that no one was injured. Also, as I'm writing this, a marble sculptor with extensive church altar experience, is on way to Ascension to help us assess the situation.

The four pictures below may help you comprehend what happened. The picture on the left shows the altar whole (i.e. for the 120 years before last night). The pencil tip photo is included because the toppled tip of the altar can be envisioned, relative to the whole, as the lead portion of the sharpened tip of a pencil. The third and fourth photos show the altar crown as well as can be viewed with the plastic on it.



Some additional information:

- ★ George Panice, our Sexton, was doing the work with a hired laborer. George is, of course, feeling devastated. I feel confident that he was doing the work with utmost care. He had previously explained to me a system he'd devised that prevented plastic from being dragged over the top of the altar. Clearly the system failed.
- ★ Although the altar-top fell on the altar surface proper, there initially appears to be no damage to it.
- ★ It may be possible to restore the damage! Marble craftsman John Rigali, from Daprato Rigali Studios, Chicago, has already examined the damage and is preparing proposals that include restoration, a replacement piece and cleaning of the entire spire.
- ★ It was a clean break. It appears as if the altar was put together like a wedding cake AND it appears there was no apparatus to hold the topmost pieces together.
- ★ If necessary, I'm quite sure that we will be able in the coming month to manufacture something that will adequately approximate what we've lost - not marble, of course, some kind of tromp d'oeil – as we await a permanent restoration. The 'clean break' I mention above will make this more plausible -- it would be much harder to deal with a diagonal or ragged break.
- ★ Ascension Treasurer Schlough has made an initial determination that our insurance policy will likely not cover this damage. Stay tuned as we make further inquiry. And, finally ...

Sorry to have to be the bearer of this news.