

NEC Digital Projectors Engage Congregation at St. Joseph Catholic Church

Facility:

- St. Joseph Catholic Church

Vertical:

- House of Worship

Location:

- Conway, Arkansas

Challenges:

- Difficulties seeing and reading text on screens during services

Solution:

- Two NEC PX750U projectors with NEC NP21ZL lenses and one NEC 55" V552 display

Result:

- Greater engagement with members by enhancing their worship experience

St. Joseph Catholic Church in Conway, Arkansas, welcomes more than 2,000 members to mass each week. Built in 1871, it's one of the oldest churches in town. Because of the congregation's large size and relative youth (the average age of parishioners is 34), church leadership decided to seek a new way to connect with its membership.

The church, where St. Joseph's priest previously worked, had installed digital projectors just prior to his departure, and he was eager to introduce a similar set up in his new parish. And the other church leadership agreed any technology that helps worshipers engage more deeply and personally with mass is a good addition.

"It was his vision when he came to St. Joseph to bring in technology that would engage the congregation," said Marilyn Moix, church sacristan. "When we sing, they can look at the screen for the words rather than have their noses in a book."

The Challenge

Until recently, St. Joseph hadn't integrated any digital technology during mass. The church had used low-fi overhead projectors along with pull-down screens for years, but it was difficult for parishioners to see images on the screen. The pictures appeared washed out because the projectors weren't bright enough to stand up against the lights in the sanctuary.

Moix and other church leadership had heard of Protestant churches using digital projectors to make it easier for congregations to see preachers during services, especially in large churches. Digital projectors would allow St. Joseph not only to project a live video feed of its priest during mass, it would also let it play videos and other materials that would enhance the congregation's experience.

Of greatest interest was the fact that the church could project the words of hymns onto the screens so the congregation could face forward during the entire service. They wouldn't have to disengage for even a moment to read the words from a book.

Additionally, every time pages are torn in a hymnal, those books need to be replaced. The church hoped to switch completely to a digital method for presenting the lyrics to ensure parishioners had a consistent experience.

St. Joseph's leadership also saw technology as a way to get younger people excited about going to church.

"If you don't stay in their world, they're going to go elsewhere," Moix said. "We want young people to feel like they're in a progressive church when they come to St. Joseph."



The Solution

St. Joseph parishioner James Piraino happens to be in the business of systems integration. He has used NEC technology many times and recommended it as the solution for St. Joseph.



"I've put in a lot of projectors over the past 15 years, and I've had a lot of success with NEC," Piraino said. "I have a long-standing relationship with them because they produce a quality product."

St. Joseph selected two 7500-lumen NEC PX750U projectors, complemented with NP21ZL zoom lenses, as well as one 55-inch NEC V552 display, which is placed in a room that accommodates overflow during especially busy mass celebrations.

The PX750U is powerful enough to project a clear, vivid image, even in the brightly lit sanctuary. The high-resolution image makes it easy for members of the congregation of all ages to see the projection. Piraino connected the projectors to high-definition video cameras so they capture every bit of the action during mass.



The vibrant, crystal-clear image on the commercial-grade V552 display helps parishioners in the overflow room stay connected with the mass. The slim depth allows it to meld into the space so it complements the rest of the room. It's also designed for extended use, so the church doesn't have to worry about leaving it on for several hours at a time.



A technician in a sound booth controls the new technology with software that links the projectors, as well as the display in the annex. Because NEC designed both the projectors and the display, Piraino said they work together seamlessly. Eventually, the church hopes to add more digital signage to make technology an even bigger part of mass.

"It's pretty exciting," Piraino said. "We're going from nothing to quite a bit of AV."

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