



# **RENKUS-HEINZ**



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## **60's CHURCH AUDIO DESIGN BROUGHT TO LIFE WITH ICONYX**

**APRIL 2008 – USA – Two single Renkus-Heinz ICONYX digitally steerable array loudspeakers have brought a 1960s audio design stunningly to life for an 800-seat church in Bethesda, MD.**

The Catholic Church of the Little Flower has recently witnessed the successful commissioning of the third sound system in its 45-year life. When consultants Kirkegaard Associates of Chicago, IL were brought in by the church's business manager, Gerry Mehlbaum, they found the wide, angular, almost hexagonal worship space faced by two tall niches in the limestone wall either side of the altar – homes of the church's original multi-driver column loudspeaker system.

"When we saw those niches," says Jonathan Darling, Senior Consultant at Kirkegaard, "we realized they would form the perfect location for the loudspeakers that we knew would work best in such a tall, highly reflective, reverberant space."

A pair of **ICONYX IC16** 16-driver fully active column arrays was already in town, in the hands of integrators RCI Sound Systems of Beltway, MD, who at Kirkegaard's request provided the church with a live demonstration.

Winning the church's approval on the spot, an RCI team led by project manager Gene Ingham duly installed the arrays in a 21st century recreation of the original designer's aspirations. Each **ICONYX** is supplemented by a **PN212** subwoofer, providing full frequency response for music reinforcement.

"They had exactly the right idea in the 1960s," says Darling, "but only now does the technology exist to deliver the combination of directivity and intelligibility they were hoping to achieve. They

tried to get even distribution from the two niches, but the technology lacked adequate pattern control.”

With a traditional, predominantly speech based worship, vocal intelligibility was key, along with an unobtrusive appearance. Musicality is required for piano, other musical instruments and the children’s choir.

Happily, adds Darling, the renovation not only greatly increased intelligibility but also improved the look of the church, since the most recent system had employed standard black horn-loaded two-way loudspeakers mounted higher on the limestone walls. To conceal the new loudspeakers the church chose white grille cloths.

“The coverage is very even and the overall tone is very natural,” he says, “and like the original concept the new system has minimal architectural impact.

“We also discovered two very interesting things about the **ICONYX**. One, it was amazing how counter-intuitive it is to people that the column can distribute sound so evenly from the front to back of the room even though the loudspeakers are located quite low down: people assume it will be much louder in front yet it isn’t.

“Two, there’s an education process both for priests and lay speakers. Because of the **ICONYX**’s directivity there’s very little reflected sound from the walls and balcony back to the sanctuary, so celebrants and lay readers think they’re not being heard, even though they are, very clearly. Put simply, they had to learn to trust the system.”

The loudspeakers are driven by a BSS London processor which both replicates a previous unit’s auto-mixing function and provides loudspeaker routing and processing, as well as interfacing with the church’s requested touch panel control units for simple system setup.

A pair of small infill loudspeakers provide foldback for the choir loft, which is no longer covered by the general sound wash from the old main system – and even less so by the tightly focused pattern control of the Iconyx.

Sound sources are primarily fixed microphones for speech. There are installed microphones at the ambo, altar and in front of the celebrant’s chair. Wireless microphones are used by some celebrants and a line feed is also provided by a sub-mixer in the musicians area.

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*Headquartered in Foothill Ranch, California, Renkus-Heinz, Inc. is the worldwide leader in the design and manufacture of audio operations networks, digitally steerable arrays, powered and non-powered loudspeakers, system specific electronics and fully integrated Reference Point Array systems. For additional information contact:*

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