VENITE ET VIDEBITIS

The more the Church grew into the Eucharistic mystery, the more she understood that she could not consummate the celebration of Communion within the limited time available in the Mass.

—Benedict XVI

What is it that makes a Catholic church different from other churches? I remember asking myself this question as a graduate student in architecture school. On a cold and dreary day I visited the Dominican church of St. Mary in New Haven. What is it that would draw people in to make a visit, say a prayer, or even stay for a while in this massive Gothic pile? Huge stairs challenged me to come in. “There is something important up here,” they seemed to say. Upon entry, the architecture was generous, grand, and with a sense of the beautiful. The lofty and colorful vaulted nave and side aisles with their bundled colonnettes and stained glass were complex and offered a glimpse into a shadowy mystery.

Musty smelly, lingering incense, flickering candles, and imagery made me aware of the sacredness of the place. Elements such as side altars, statues, paintings, stations of the cross, wood confessional, and pews seemed familiar even though I had never seen them before. I was moved by the beautiful and strange works of art. I felt I was in the Father’s house and I felt safe, cared for, and a bit in awe.

Later, a fellow student told me that what differentiates a Catholic church from all other churches is that God is present there at all times: in the Eucharist, reserved in the tabernacle. This was a novel thought to me, having grown up going to contemporary multi-purpose churches where the reserved Eucharist was hidden away and housed in a brass box. I asked a priest I respected whether what distinguished a Catholic house of God from other churches was that God was truly present in the reserved host. He told me no. But I continued to wonder why some Catholic churches seemed so holy.

At the recent Synod on the Eucharist in Rome, the bishops expressed concern that people do not have correct faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. How much has this lack of belief been caused by the design of modern churches and the treatment of the tabernacle? Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger in his book God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life writes, “During the day our churches should not be allowed to be dead houses, standing empty and seemingly useless.” Our churches are not to be used simply for an hour a day, but they are places of prayer and we should fill them. The devout Simeon, who was waiting to see the salvation of Israel, and the prophetess Anna, who worshipped in the temple night and day, rejoiced at Christ’s presentation in the Temple. They would be jealous of us who have the opportunity to be in his presence every day.

Pope Benedict sees our churches as calling us and inviting us in. Jesus Christ beckons to us through art, architecture, and material goods to enter in and worship. The oval piazza of St. Peter in Rome is one of the finest examples of how the exterior of the church building can be an invitation to the mysteries inside. Gian Lorenzo Bernini, responsible for the design, wrote that “since the church of St. Peter is the mother of nearly all the others it had to have colonnades, which would show it as if stretching out its arms maternally to receive Catholics, so as to confirm them in their faith, heretics, to reunite them to the Church, and infidels, to enlighten them in the true faith.” The house of God should beckon us, draw us in, and offer us an image of the eternal and real presence of the Lord. This should be done by employing the time tested principles of sacred architecture rather than with the profane aesthetic and commercial tricks of shopping centers, country clubs, or multiplexes.

Pope Benedict again: “Jesus Christ’s invitation is always being proffered from [our churches]. This sacred proximity to us is always alive in them. It is always calling us and inviting us in. This is what is lovely about Catholic churches, that within them there is, as it were, always worship, because the Eucharistic presence of the Lord dwells always within them.” This worship continues outside of the liturgy, and we should participate in that worship through prayer, adoration, and by honoring Christ through noble and beautifully designed tabernacles and their surroundings. It was for this reason that St. Charles Borromeo, among others, advocated the enlargement and centrality of the holy tabernacle and its joining with the Eucharistic altar at the Basilica of St. Mary Major in Rome and in the cathedral and churches of the archdiocese of Milan. The eternal flame or sanctuary lamp hanging near the tabernacle is the sign of the fire of love that dwells within this miniature temple. The worship of Christ present is also articulated by other types of iconography: praying angels, images of the saints and martyrs who offered their bodies towards Christ’s one sacrifice. The saints and angels along with the faithful of all lands are part of that worship. The heavenly host and the heavenly banquet have historically been represented in our churches—a thesis recently articulated in Denis McNamara’s brilliant new book, Heavenly City: The Architectural Tradition of Catholic Chicago.

So even when the historic architecture of other Christian traditions is inspiring or even imitates the splendors of two millennia of Catholic tradition, it is the Eucharist reserved that sets apart the Catholic church or chapel as a sacred place. This is why people cross themselves as they pass a church, why they genuflect as they enter their seats, and kneel to pray in Christ’s presence. If the theological truth of God’s real presence in the tabernacle is believed by the faithful and church architecture reflects the fact that we are in the presence of the Almighty then it will cause us to rethink how we comport ourselves in church, how we relate to others and show reverence for Him who offered himself on the cross. The Lord is always there:

When, thus, the eternal light was lit in the Church, and the tabernacle installed beside the altar, then it was as if the bud of the mystery had opened, and the Church had welcomed the fullness of the Eucharistic mystery. The Lord is always there. The church is not just a space in which something sometimes happens early in the morning, while for the rest of the day it stands empty, ‘unused’. There is always the ‘church’ in the church building, because the Lord is always giving himself, because the Eucharistic mystery remains present, and because we, in approaching it, are always included in the worship of the whole believing, praying and loving Church. (Benedict XVI [Joseph Ratzinger], God is Near)

Duncan Stroik
March 2006

On the cover: St. Hyacinth Church; view of dome

Image from Heavenly City: The Architectural Tradition of Catholic Chicago by Denis R. McNamara. Photo by James Morris

—Benedict XVI
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A better understanding and celebration of the Eucharist served as the focus of the Synod of Bishops, which took place in October 2005. An emerging and complex topic at the synod was how the Eucharist is viewed and experienced—as a gift or a right, for example. Italian Cardinal Angelo Scola, the synod’s recording secretary, found himself challenged by several bishops after he said the faithful have no real “right to the Eucharist.” A similar question was whether the Eucharist should be understood more as a sacrifice or as a communal meal. Traditional Catholic theology highlights both aspects, although some people felt the Second Vatican Council tipped the balance toward the shared banquet. The revival of Eucharistic adoration also elicited differing perspectives. Italian Cardinal Camillo Ruini said the rediscovery of Eucharistic adoration has helped young Catholics establish a visible relationship with the divine. The question of how to improve liturgies drew numerous comments. One bishop wanted an end to general Communion distribution at huge Masses. An Indian bishop suggested PowerPoint presentations during homilies.

Propositions sent to Benedict XVI from the Synod of Bishops, October 2005:

Proposition 6: Eucharistic Adoration: “The Synod of Bishops—recognizing the manifold fruits of Eucharistic Adoration in the life of the People of God, in a large part of the world—forcefully encourages that this form of prayer—so often recommended by the venerable Servant of God John Paul II—be maintained and promoted, according to the traditions, both in the Latin Church as well as in the Oriental Churches. It recognizes that this practice springs from Eucharistic action that, in itself, is the greatest act of adoration of the Church, which enables the faithful to participate fully, conscientiously, actively and fruitfully in the sacrifice of Christ, according to the desire of the Second Vatican Council, and refers to the same. Thus conceived, Eucharistic adoration keeps the faithful in their Christian love and service to others, and promotes greater personal sanctity as well as that of the Christian communities. In this connection, the renewal of Eucharistic adoration, also among young people, is manifested today as a promising characteristic of many communities. For this reason, in order to foster visits to the Blessed Sacrament, care must always be taken, insofar as possible, that churches in which the Blessed Sacrament is present stay open.”

In the case of conflict between the artistic and celebratory aspects, priority must be given to the liturgical needs of the celebration, according to the reform approved by the Church.”

Proposition 28: The Tabernacle and Its Location: “In conformity with the Roman Missal’s General Instruction (cf. n. 314), the Synod reminds that the tabernacle for the custody of the Blessed Sacrament must have a noble place in the church, of consideration, very visible, looked after under the artistic aspect and appropriate to prayer. With this objective, consult the Bishop.”

Cardinal Francis Arinze stated that the Mass should not be a form of entertainment in an interview with Inside the Vatican magazine. The prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments gave a comprehensive assessment of the Synod of Bishops in October 2005 on the Eucharist and of developments in liturgical practice forty years after the Second Vatican Council. Regarding “music in the liturgy, we should start by saying that Gregorian music is the Church’s precious heritage,” he said. “It should stay. It should not be banished. If therefore in a particular diocese or country, no one hears Gregorian music anymore, then somebody has made a mistake somewhere.” However, “the Church is not saying that everything should be Gregorian music,” the cardinal clarified. “There is room for music which respects that language, that culture, that people. There is room for that too, and the present books say that is a matter for the bishops’ conference, because it generally goes beyond the boundaries of one diocese.” “But the sacrament does not finish after Mass,” the cardinal observed. “Christ is in the tabernacle to be brought to the sick, to receive our visits of adoration, praise, love, supplication.” In describing the importance of adoration at the Synod, Cardinal Arinze stated, “The synod fathers did not only talk about adoration—they did adoration every day. Christ exposed in the monstrance in the chapel near the Synod Hall, one hour in the afternoon.”

Free-flowing discussions highlighted the Eucharistic Synod of Bishops. Archbishop Jan Pawel Kenga of Karaganda, Kazakhstan, advocated a change in reception of Holy Communion to recover a sense of the sacred. Two innovations from the Western world “cloud” understanding of the Eucharist, he said: the removal of the tabernacle.
Catholic Charities USA to rebuild churches and schools that were destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. Canizaro, chairman of First Bank & Trust of Mississippi & Louisiana and the founder of Donum Dei Foundation, donated $1 million along with a $3-million grant from Catholic Charities to rebuild thirty churches and schools that were damaged.

During the current $32-million renovation of Baltimore’s National Shrine of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, historic paintings of the Four Evangelists were found. The paintings date to 1865 and had been covered during a renovation in the 1870s.

In Coney Island, NY, nine thousand members of parishes in Queens and Brooklyn turned out for the Diocese of Brooklyn’s celebration of the closing of the Special Year of the Eucharist on October 15, 2005. The events of the day included a Eucharistic procession, a talk by Franciscan Friar of the Renewal Father Benedict Groeschel, and Mass celebrated by Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio of Brooklyn.

Our Lady of the Annunciation Monastery of Clear Creek in Hulbert, OK, has laid the foundation for a permanent church and accompanying buildings designed in the Romanesque style by Thomas Gordon Smith, a well-known architect and professor at the University of Notre Dame. The monastery, a foundation of the Benedictine Abbey of Fontgombault, France, Congregation of Solesmes, is in the midst of a fund-raising campaign to raise the remaining cost of $17 million.

Plans continue for St. Brigid’s Church in the San Francisco Archdiocese to be sold to the Academy of Art University. The church located at Van Ness and Broadway will undergo a $7-million restoration in preparation for the 141-year-old-church to be used for community events and the gym in the church basement be used by art students who take classes at another facility several blocks away. In the interim, the building is expected to be designated an official city landmark by the San Francisco board of supervisors and the city’s mayor. This landmark status will enable the Richardsonian architecture and the stained glass windows executed by the Harry Clark Studios in Dublin to be protected from modification or destruction.
“Megachurches” are continuing to draw large crowds in the United States. California’s Saddleback Church, Willow Creek Community Church in South Barrington, IL, and Houston’s Lakewood Church each draw twenty thousand or more on a weekend, while also offering amenities that try to connect individuals on a one-to-one level beyond the crowd. “These churches can do a ton of things that smaller churches can’t,” said Nancy Ammerman, professor of the sociology of religion at the Boston University School of Theology. “If you really love stock car racing, but hate being surrounded by drunken rowdies, you can go with a busload of your church friends.”

A group of Swiss Scholars has petitioned the European Parliament to ensure that the Church of Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey, is restored for Christian worship if Turkey joins the European Union. The sixth-century church became a museum in 1934. It had been used as a mosque after the city’s capture by Ottoman Turks in 1453.

The Vatican Museums hope to encourage more interest in a permanent exhibit of sarcophagi by supplementing it with didactic panels that give a biblical reading of the carved friezes. The explanatory placards together with a beautifully illustrated free guide will allow visitors to understand the biblical sources of inspiration for the carvings.

Luigi Garlaschelli, a chemist at Pavia University, has acquired a reputation as a scientist who explores the science of miracles. “Miracles are just paranormal events in religious clothing,” he says. “I’m a chemist. I look for the substance behind things.” In his work he does not often tangle with Vatican officials, who prefer to take a benign, distanced stance toward the many events traditionally celebrated as miracles in churches, neither questioning nor embracing them. Garlaschelli recently completed a periodic imitation of the miracle of San Gennaro, an event that has been celebrated in Naples since the fourteenth century. The city’s archbishop pulls out a vial containing a maroon-colored solid substance from a case, then rotates and shakes the container until the contents liquefy. The liquid is said to be the blood of San Gennaro, a pious bishop who was beheaded in AD 305 by the Roman emperor Diocletian. Garlaschelli put together a cocktail of material available near Naples—which would have been obtainable in the Middle Ages—to try to replicate the miracle. His mixture of limestone powder, iron, and pigments was solid when left still, but turned fluid when stirred or shaken.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City has timed the first wide-ranging retrospective of Fra Angelico’s works ever shown in the United States to coincide with the five-hundred-and-fiftieth anniversary of the artistic master’s death. The show, which opened October 26 and runs until January 29, is comprised of more than seventy of his paintings, drawings, and illuminations, along with an additional forty or so works by his assistants and imitators. Throughout his works at the exhibit, one sees how the vision and talent reflected in his work were natural extensions of the faith of this preeminent painter who was beatified in 1984 by Pope John Paul II and named the patron of painters.
St. James the Great Freeing the Magician Hermogenes by Fra Angelico

Constantino Brumidi, an Italian-Greek immigrant who painted much of the work in the Capitol building, was honored by American lawmakers who gathered in the Capitol Rotunda on July 26, 2005. Brumidi, known as “the American Michelangelo,” was born in Rome, but left after the 1849 revolution, when Pope Pius IX pardoned him for stealing Church artwork on the condition that he leave for good.

An expansion of the church and school at Our Lady of the Atonement Parish in San Antonio, TX, the flagship church of the Pastoral Provision, was recently completed at a cost of $7.5 million. The architect was John G. Martin Architects of Riverton, NJ, and the contractor was Green Mountain Construction, also headquartered in New Jersey. For the project, eleven thousand square feet were added to the five-thousand-square-foot church by lengthening the nave and adding two towers. An addition of forty-nine thousand square feet was also added to the school.

The Vatican raised an issue of canon law in Boston when it questioned the disposition of assets of seven of the fifteen closed parishes that filed appeals to the Congregation for Clergy. The vast majority of parish closings have been implemented through a process known in canon law as “suppression.” In suppression, which is governed by Canon 123, a parish is legally dissolved and the assets and the liabilities of the parish revert to the archdiocese. Included in most decrees of suppression was a paragraph assigning the closing parish’s territory to a neighboring parish. By doing so, the Vatican said, the archdiocese inadvertently invoked Canon 122, which deals with the division of parishes. According to Canon 122, a closed parish’s property and bank accounts, along with its liabilities, must be transferred to the parish or parishes asked to receive the parishioners from the closed parish.

Fr. Bartholomew Endslow, eighty-four, from Our Mother of Mercy parish in Pass Christian, MS, received some very welcome assistance after Hurricane Katrina when Fr. Bill Stang, a chaplain and lieutenant colonel with the Indiana National Guard, helped him obtain permission to visit his little parish in the heavily guarded and quarantined area. The priests were able to find the two tabernacles located in the main church and the adjacent chapel, which had both been destroyed, as well the storm will stir change in the form of “a simple way of life, … less consumer-driven.”

Sixty thousand people celebrated the reopening of Dresden’s restored baroque cathedral on October 30, 2005. The church and its famous bell-shaped dome was destroyed by Allied bombing sixty years ago. Bishop Jochen Bohl said the restoration of the Lutheran church was a “great work in the spirit of reconciliation.” The restoration cost $215 million, including $120 million in donations.

The Archdiocese of New Orleans predicts a negative cash flow of $40 million by the end of the year. Although the archdiocese’s insurance coverage for wind-related damage provides for full replacement value, it has only about $13 million in flood insurance. A preliminary assessment of about fifty archdiocesan buildings indicated there was at least $84 million in flood damage, leaving a shortfall of more than $70 million. “The people of New Orleans are a people of faith, and we can begin to explore the possibilities,” Archbishop Hughes said, hoping that...
as a chalice that Fr. Endslow had received from his family when he was ordained in 1949.

In November, Peter Berger, author and professor emeritus of the sociology of religion at the University of Georgia and the University of North Carolina, was in the Netherlands to speak before the Dutch chapter of the Society for International Development. He was interviewed by Eildert Mulder of the newspaper Trouw. “With their secularism, Europeans stand alone in the world,” he stated in the interview. “It’s a European misunderstanding that regards America as the odd man out in terms of religiosity.” The interview took place in The Hague, in the city hall designed by Richard Meier. “In a building like this,” exclaimed Berger, “you lose your last vestige of religious feeling.” “Apparently I don’t understand much about architecture,” Berger chuckled. “But I notice that the whole world is beginning to look more and more like an airport, and this building is a prime example.”

Di Segni, who said “they seem much earlier than anything I have seen so far from the Byzantine period. It could be from the third or the beginning of the fourth century.” Christian rituals were prohibited in the Roman Empire prior to the year 313 AD, and Christians had to pray in secret in catacombs or private homes. The earliest churches, dating from around 330 AD, are the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, the Nativity in Bethlehem, and Alonei Mamre near Hebron, which were built by Emperor Constantine I.

The Diocese of Buffalo, NY, is experiencing radical church clustering, consolidation, and closings, due to large demographic changes, reported the Buffalo News. Shifting populations from urban to suburban areas, financial difficulties, and a shortage of priests are forcing the change. Buffalo is among several dioceses that are downsizing. Rochester, NY, has closed twenty-seven parishes since 1997. Green Bay and Milwaukee, WI, and Pittsburgh, PA, are also experiencing similar trends.

The sixty-four-story residential tower overlooking Fourth Presbyterian Church on Chicago’s Michigan Avenue is nearing approval. Fourth Presbyterian has sold air rights to condominium developer Edward R. James for $25 million, pending city approval of the building project. The tower, which will overshadow the Ralph Kram–designed church and Howard Van Doren Shaw–designed parish buildings, is being built despite protests from preservationists and neighbors. The church will be expanded and preserved upon the construction of the overlooking tower.

In Margahayu, Indonesia, a group of two hundred Islamic fundamentalists forcibly shut down a Catholic chapel, which is linked to the Buah Batu’s parish church in West Java. Right after Mass, the Islamists approached the celebrating priest, Father Iwan Pr, and told him immediately to close the chapel and stop all liturgical service. In the last year, militants linked to the Islamic Defender Front, a local extremist group, forcibly closed twenty-three Christian churches. Muslim leaders like former President Abdurrahman Wahid have called on the government to “intervene quickly and decidedly” to defend Christians.

In Israel’s Galilee region, a mosaic and the remains of a building uncovered recently on the Megiddo prison grounds may belong to the earliest Christian church in the world. Photographs of three Greek inscriptions in the mosaic were sent to Hebrew University expert professor Leah Meier. “In a building like this,” exclaimed Berger, “you lose your last vestige of religious feeling.” “Apparently I don’t understand much about architecture,” Berger chuckled. “But I notice that the whole world is beginning to look more and more like an airport, and this building is a prime example.”
However, the measure was passed by the narrowest of margins with 50.6 percent in favor of the measure and 49.4 percent opposed to it. Wolfgang Bürgstein, general secretary of the Catholic Church’s advisory commission, Justitia et Pax, said that Sunday workers were the big losers in the equation. “Those who have to work more will be missed by their families and by church, religious and social communities,” he said at a news conference. The ecumenical committee’s president, Peter Oberholzer, said, “First they introduced working on Sundays in shops located in rail stations; now there are plans in the pipeline for making the whole of Switzerland a train station.”

Victims of an earthquake in Chile were sheltered in chapels. Some of the six thousand persons dispossessed by a June 13 earthquake in northern Chile have found shelter in three chapels in the town of Iquique. The chapels, built by a German-based Catholic charity, proved strong enough to resist the earthquake, which measured 7.9 on the Richter scale.

An eccentric monk of the schismatic United Catholic Church has officially changed his name to Santa Claus. The Tahoe-based cleric keeps a naughty list with Osama Bin Ladin on it and plans on publishing a book entitled The Santa Diet.

Archbishop José Horacio Gómez of San Antonio, TX, says Hispanics will return American culture to its Christian roots. In an interview with Zenit, the archbishop noted, “Much has been lost in U.S. culture because of secularism. The values of the immigrants are very basic, reflecting a profound Catholicism where faith, family, and expressions of piety, etc., are part of our daily life.” The archbishop hopes his own ethnically rich San Antonio will in time become a model for the whole nation.

After a lapse of sixteen hundred years, a Sanhedrin has been called at Tiberias in Israel. Organizers have reported their plans to convene seventy-one rabbis, ordained according to instructions laid down by the medieval Spanish sage Maimonides. While membership is not permanent, the body will purportedly meet monthly in Jerusalem and consists of rabbis from across the whole spectrum of Judaism. Several centuries earlier, another Sanhedrin was unsuccessfully convened at Tzfat, while Napoleon purportedly once established a lay assembly of French Jewish notables known as the Grand Sanhedrin.

On September 14, 2005, Pope Benedict XVI blessed a statue of Saint Josemaría on the external wall of Saint Peter’s Basilica. The statue was unveiled at about 11.15 a.m. He then greeted some of the church and civil authorities and others present at the ceremony, mainly family groups. Before the Holy Father arrived, participants heard short addresses by Cardinal Francesco Marchisano, archpriest of the Vatican Basilica; Bishop Javier Echevarria, the prelate of Opus Dei; and the sculptor of the statue, Romano Cosci. A choir of eighty people, led by the conductor Pablo Colino, sang several classical pieces.

The Castel Sant’Angelo in Rome is at risk of collapse. The Italian government has said it will offer more than $1.2 million in funding after a newspaper published an exposé of its decay, including holes in the walls, faulty wiring, and crumbling brickwork. The imposing fortress overlooks the Tiber River and backs onto the Vatican City. It was originally a mausoleum for Emperor Hadrian in 139 AD and later became part of the city walls, medieval citadel, jail, refuge for besieged popes and more recently a museum that draws hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

The Pontifical Lateran University of Rome hired King Roselli Architects of Rome to renovate an existing lecture hall and design a new library with reading rooms to a block with buildings dating from the late 1930s. The new building features reading rooms arranged on sloping ramps in three sections. Each section has two floors of book stacks linked by ramps. Construction is scheduled for October 2006.

Art professor Bill Sandusky of St. Mary’s College, Notre Dame, IN, unveiled his modern take on Masolino, Masaccio, and Lippo Lippi’s Brancacci Chapel fresco cycle in October 2005 at the University of Notre Dame.
Dame’s Snite Museum. Sandusky’s canvases re-create scenes such as the Tribute Money and the Raising of Tabitha using figures in modern dress against modern backgrounds. A second phase to replicate the frescoes of the lower register is planned, pending funding.

DePaul University is in negotiations to sell its Barat campus in Lake Forest, IL, to the Hyatt Corporation to be re-used as a Hyatt Classic Residence retirement community. Barat’s awe-inspiring Old Main designed by Charles Prindiville is scheduled to be preserved as part of the conversion, while the fate of the chapel within the Old Main is uncertain. The Barat Chapel, described as the “jewel of the Sacred Heart Sisters” is currently used for a weekly communion service ministered by the Divine Word Missionaries. Barat College is scheduled to close at the end of the Spring Semester 2005.

St. Stephen the First Martyr Church in Sacramento, CA, recently completed a renovation of a Lutheran Church for about $500,000. The existing Lutheran Church was gutted to the bare walls and redesigned for the new Catholic traditional Latin Mass congregation. The recycled altar, pews, and other interiors were obtained from various church supply sources and originally came from churches in Wisconsin and Massachusetts that had been closed. The parish is run by the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter (www.fssp.com) within the Sacramento Diocese and with the endorsement of Bishop William Weigand.

Ruling asserts Portland Archdiocese owns parishes: Despite a court ruling that could significantly boost the amount the Portland Archdiocese must pay for sex-abuse settlements, archdiocesan leaders said the local Church and its work will endure. “The archdiocese is committed to continuing its religious and charitable mission as it has for its 157-year history in Oregon, no matter what obstacles confront it,” said an archdiocesan statement issued after the December 30 decision by a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge. The ruling stated that the archdiocese is the owner of parish and school properties. That means parish and school real estate worth hundreds of millions of dollars can be tallied when the court decides how much the claimants will be paid.

The City of Evanston, IL, is moving to sell the former Marywood Academy without preservation covenants, despite having one of the strictest preservation ordinances in the United States. Since 1977, the city of Evanston has utilized the Marywood Academy as a civic center, housing many city offices. The city has obtained a single quote of $20 million to rehabilitate the building. Marywood Academy, designed by architect Henry J. Schlacks, the founder of the Notre Dame architecture program, was used for seventy years as a Catholic girls’ school. Public hearings are scheduled.

In Italy, Romano Prodi has vowed to restore the Via Francigena (the Way of the Franks) if he wins the general election this spring. The Via Francigena, founded by Sigeric, the Archbishop of Canterbury in the tenth century, is a pilgrimage route that runs from Canterbury through Calais, Rheims, Besançon, and Lausanne, crossing into Italy at the St. Bernard Pass. It then reaches Rome via Aosta, Piacenza, Fidenza, Parmi, Lucca, Siena, and Viterbo. The twelve hundred miles between Canterbury and Rome recently took one modern-day pilgrim seventy days to walk.
Sacred Architecture Letters

A Correction

You will be happy to know that, contrary to the report published in the last issue of Sacred Architecture (2005, Issue 10), Blessed Sacrament Church in Houston, Texas is still standing. The building that was torn down was the former church, used as a school and assembly hall since 1924. Built in 1910, that structure was designed by Birdsall P. Briscoe, a local architect and well-known eclectic. Briscoe’s career spanned many decades in Houston and included “county house” design as well as a number of institutional buildings, many of which are still extant.

The present church of Blessed Sacrament (of which you included a beautiful photo) was designed by the San Antonio architect Frederick B. Gaenslen in 1924. The interior was recently repainted and restored, despite the infelicities of a thankfully limited and regrettably uninspired post-conciliar renovation. Gaenslen designed two other Houston parishes in the 1920’s, both of which have been well maintained.

The neighborhoods around these churches have become largely impoverished. They have had a difficult time in maintaining their ageing infrastructure. Blessed Sacrament School was a victim of this situation. For many years, the parish neglected to maintain the property, and it fell into disuse after the school was closed. The building had been condemned for a number of years, and the pastor was not able to raise the seven-figure sum needed for restoration. As a result, the building was torn-down.

More could and should have been done to return the historic structure to viability. Sadly, by the time those efforts were made, they proved inadequate.

Three years ago, the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston implemented a policy whereby parishes are required to set aside a percentage of the appraised value of their buildings for maintenance and capital improvements. One-half percent of appraised value is reserved for maintenance and repair while one percent should be budgeted for capital expenditures. At the end of the fiscal year, any unused funds are deposited in a special account to accrue for future needs. While this policy decision came too late to save Blessed Sacrament School, it may help to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

You will also happily note that the announced demolition of Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral is subject to change. While the church (designed by Olle J. Lorehn in 1912) was destined for the wrecking ball, it will likely be preserved as a chapel for daily Mass, weddings, and other liturgical celebrations.

Brides and Churches

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states that the laity are given the sense of the faith sensus fidei (n.904) by which “The People of God, under the guidance of the Church’s living magisterium unfailingly adhere to this faith” (cf L.G. 12 quoted in n.889). The faith of the Church, received from the apostles is expressed in the Liturgy of the Church which is a “constitutive element of this holy and living tradition” (n.1124).

Perhaps this is stretching this teaching too far, but could one not argue that a sensus fidei is shown by what kind of churches brides wish to be married in and which ones they eschew? They want “churches that look like a church” not one that doesn’t. They may not be able to define what this means, but they’ll speak of an aisle, arches, stained glass windows, a high altar, a Marian Shrine at which to leave a bouquet. It is my contention that the Holy Spirit is speaking to us through the desires of brides who are married in our churches. Any reactions?

Fr. Giles Dimock, op, STD

Conversion Through Building

There have been reports that people associated with building or renovating a Catholic church have converted to the Catholic Faith. For example, it was reported at a three-day symposium at the University of Notre Dame in October, 2001, “Cathedrals for a New Century,” that seven workers renovating the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Fort Wayne, Indiana, converted. Moreover, the renowned Japanese sculptor, Etsuro Sotoo, became a Catholic after studying Antoni Gaudi’s Church of the Holy Family, Barcelona, Spain. Mr. Sotoo described his conversion at an August, 2005, conference entitled “The Window Men: Freedom in Art,” organized by Communion-and-Liberation in Rimini, Italy. He visited Barcelona and the church in 1978, asked to remain to work in Spain, and converted in 1989.

And, of course, there is the example of the esteemed Augustus Welby Pugin (1812-1852) who converted after visiting and studying medieval churches and cathedrals – and the “ancient rites” for which they were designed.

May I ask readers to submit any historical or contemporary examples of this phenomenon [to you at the address below], especially with citations?

We maintain, with Churchill, that we shape our buildings and then they shape us. We maintain that Catholic churches enhance the faith of believers. This phenomenon appears to take matters one step further: The intimacy between a nonbeliever and a Catholic church induces belief.

Do readers know of any empirical studies of this phenomenon? Do we know from interviews of such converts the mechanics, the psychology, of how the Spirit works in this context? One would not expect stadium construction workers and architects to become sports fans; how is it that a man or woman is drawn to the Faith from building or renovating a church? Do bishops/pastors routinely invite such people into RCIA? Do Catholic builders/architects invite their staff and workers to examine the Faith? Do these “building” conversions perdure?

James M. Thunder
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Write to Letters to the Editor, Sacred Architecture Journal, PO Box 556, Notre Dame, IN 46556 or editor@sacredarchitecture.org
On the Solemnity of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Pope Benedict XVI presented a Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church to the Universal Church. The “mini catechism,” among the first publications of this pontificate, contains some fourteen works of sacred art that will be included in subsequent language editions of the text. In introducing the new Compendium, the Pope drew attention to the catechetical significance of works of sacred art. “Sacred images,” he noted, “proclaim the same Gospel message that the Sacred Scriptures transmit through words and they help reawaken and nourish the faith of believers.”

In recent decades, as Catholics in this country witness a diminishing, a stripping of sacred images from cathedrals, churches, and chapels, attempts to speak of the catechetical value of sacred art and architecture are sometimes deemed wasteful, extravagant, or irrelevant. Against that backdrop, the inclusion of sacred images in the new Compendium is all the more significant, as it invites architects, artists, catechists, pastors, bishops, parents, and teachers to reflect anew on the relationship of art and catechesis. Leaving aside the vital issue of what constitutes genuine sacred art, the placing of sacred images within a catechism raises specific questions that this article seeks to reflect on: What is the catechetical value of sacred art? Why is sacred art and architecture indispensable to full instruction in the faith? Might sacred images serve as powerful means of evangelization and catechesis in our own day and age?

The Catechism of the Catholic Church notes that sacred art is true and beautiful when “its form corresponds to its particular vocation: evoking and glorifying, in faith and adoration, the transcendent mystery of God—the surpassing invisible beauty of truth and love visible in Christ, who ‘reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature,’ in whom ‘the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.’... Genuine sacred art draws man to adoration, to prayer, and to the love of God, Creator and Savior, the Holy One and Sanctifier” (CCC 2502).

The catechetical function of sacred art and architecture, affirmed in this passage, is to lead the faithful from seeing to contemplation to adoration of God. From a pedagogical standpoint, a sacred image of Christ, the Blessed Mother of God, or a Christian saint provides an earthly glimpse into eternal realities, a “head start to heaven,” so to speak.

The Catechism elsewhere describes the goal of “liturgical catechesis (mystagogy) ... [as] aims to initiate people into the mystery of Christ by proceeding from the visible to the invisible, from the sign to the thing signified, from the ‘sacraments’ to the ‘mysteries’ (CCC 1075). Instituted by Christ, the sacraments are the privileged means by which the faithful participate in His saving mystery through the ministry of the Church. Within this sacramental economy, sacred architecture and images, which predispose one to the sacramental presence of God, serve as a “pre-sacrament,” a phrase used by Pope John Paul II to describe the sacred art and architecture of the Sistine Chapel.

To limit the function of sacred images then to mere decorative or aesthetic representations of socio-cultural ideals is to miss a high note in the liturgical symphony that is in fact composed of sacred images, architecture, music, and rites. For sure, sacred images express human, social, and cultural realities and add aesthetic value to the interior and exterior spaces of cathedrals, chapels, and churches, but they are also an indispensable means to instruct the faithful in the content of divine revelation and to reawaken and nourish their faith. With the aid of sacred images, catechists, preachers, and teachers of faith echo the divine pedagogy of salvation history in which the witness of divine “words” and “signs” or “word” and “image” are inextricably linked.

Pope John Paul II drew attention to the...
pedagogical value of sacred images in his 1999 Letter to Artists when he wrote that “in a sense, art is a kind of visual Gospel, a concrete mode of catechesis.” That is to say that each Sunday as the faithful hear the truth of the Gospel proclaimed and respond by professing their faith in the words of the Creed, those very truths of faith take the form of the beautiful in the sacred images that surround them. Church teachings and doctrines condensed onto a page of a catechism find complementary forms of expression in sacred art and architecture. In this way, sacred images—paintings, mosaics, stained glass, sculpture, sacred music—become a “visual Gospel” by which the faithful see, hear, and touch the mysteries of faith so as to incarnate its truths in holiness of life and Christian witness.

One of the first to affirm this role of sacred images was Pope Saint Gregory the Great. In a letter to Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles in A.D. 599, he wrote, “Painting is employed in churches so that those who cannot read or write may at least read on the walls what they cannot decipher on the page” (Epistulæ IX, 209). The movement from seeing to contemplation to adoration of God is realized through written or spoken words and through sacred images.

It is rightly suggested that appreciating the meaning of sacred images depends on one’s ability, however minimal, to “read” the signs and symbols expressed. Consequently, some have justified a diminishing of sacred art and architecture with the assertion that the faithful lack familiarity with Christian symbols. The person in the pew, they would argue, cannot be expected to understand, let alone be instructed, through sacred images. In other words, since sacred images are meaningful only to those who are intellectually equipped to “read” them, the artistically uninitiated cannot gain much by way of formation in the faith from sacred images.

For centuries sacred images were aimed precisely at illiterate faithful. For sure, the appropriation of signs and symbols in sacred images relied on effective preaching and teaching in communion with the “seeing faith of the Church,” but the whole pedagogical point of a sacred image is not to engage viewers in an intellectual or didactic exercise alone. Rather, it is to lead them to awe and wonder, perhaps even to a ravishing of the soul by a glimpse, a hint of divine beauty, in the hope that they entrust their lives to the beauty of faith. The whole point is to lead the faithful to perceive the Invisible in the visible, to learn a new way of seeing and hearing that leads to contemplation, worship, and adoration of God.

Whether or not the person in the pew fully understands the symbolic elements in a work of sacred art and architecture depends on a convergence of multiple factors. But the very presence of genuine sacred images that convey through the senses the content of Christian revelation draws the faithful into a distinct catechetical mode. And blank walls have an equally potent pedagogical message plain even to the most uninitiated!

Pope Gregory’s assertion would take distinct visible form in the outpouring of Christian art and architecture of the Middle Ages. A Gothic cathedral like Chartres served, in effect, as a catechism in stone, a homily in stained glass, expressing for the faithful in art and architecture the faith they professed in the Creed and heard proclaimed in the Scriptures. As medieval craftsmen set stone upon carved stone, visible from miles away and luminous through colored glass, they were, in fact, sculpting and painting the saving message of Biblical history—explicit and beautiful as their faith. A pilgrim entering Chartres Cathedral was not only drawn into a “reading” of Biblical history made visible in sacred art and architecture, but was, through his seeing and hearing, at the same time inserted into a sacramental present fully realized in the liturgy.

While visiting Chartres in the 1950s Soetsu Yanagi, the father of the Japanese crafts movement of the early twentieth century, stood long and silent before its great stone façade. Then turning to a Christian friend he simply said: “That is what you have lost today.” He went on to observe that perhaps the West stood in need of a new teaching of the Gospel such as was expressed in the eloquent craftsmanship and beauty of Chartres.

Can works of sacred art and architecture serve as fresh catechisms and means of evangelization today just as they did for past generations? Or to return to our starting point, what catechetical purpose is served by inserting sacred images in a Catechism? To provide a framework for such a recovery I offer some reasons for the indispensability of sacred art and architecture as “concrete modes of catechesis” today.

A first defense for the catechetical role of sacred images is, of necessity, theological.
When God acted in human history in the person of his Son, Christ entered our sensible world rendering it transparent to Him. Images of beauty, through which the invisible mystery of God becomes visible, are now an essential part of Christian worship. As Pope Benedict XVI notes in The Spirit of the Liturgy, “The complete absence of images is incompatible with faith in the Incarnation of God.”

Secondly, there is the witness of history, cumulative and undeniable. From the art of the early Christian catacombs to Romanesque basilicas and Byzantine iconography, from the soaring Gothic to the creative torrent of the Renaissance, from the age of the Baroque and beyond, the history of Christianity is inextricably linked to its artistic heritage built up over centuries. For sure, this historical wealth of previous centuries reflects past artistic styles, social and cultural worlds. Yet educators, artists, pastors, and even nations (as evidenced in recent debates over the Preamble to the European Constitution) who overlook or altogether ignore this accumulated treasury of Christian artistic and architectural history fail to resound with the most basic of human experiences—that of imagination rooted in memory.

Thirdly, there is a human or anthropological basis for the use of sacred images in faith formation. The Catechism speaks of faith as a response of the whole human person, engaging intellect, heart, senses, emotion, memory, and will. A systematic formation in faith may lead one to notional assent (in Cardinal Newman’s terms) to the mystery of the Incarnation but it does not and should not stop there. Effective catechesis and evangelization is directed to real assent that encompasses intellect, heart, will, senses, and emotions. Sacred architecture and art engage the senses so that catechetical formation involves and moves the whole human person toward lifelong conversion and discipleship.

Saint Thomas Aquinas outlines this rationale when he writes in the Sentences: “There were three reasons for the introduction of the use of visual arts in the Church: first, for the instruction of the uneducated, who are taught by them as by books; second, that the mystery of the Incarnation and the examples of the saints be more firmly impressed on our memory by being daily represented before our eyes; and third, to enkindle devotion, which is more efficaciously evoked by what is seen than by what is heard.”

A fourth and final reason for genuine sacred images placed at the service of catechesis and evangelization is a cultural one. Few will argue that we live in the midst of a global culture in which multiple images dominate, shape, and define people’s values and identity. Television commercials, billboard advertising, the Internet, blogs, video games, all of these visual media express, reflect, and communicate in sensory forms the content and values of culture, for good or ill. This sensory culture daily presents fragmented images that subtly and not so subtly trivialize and denigrate the dignity of the human person, create superficial and consumerist needs, and estrange us from spiritual realities. To effectively engage the faithful who are shaped by this sensory culture can the Church afford to dispense with sacred architecture and images as tools of catechesis and evangelization?

In an interview given decades ago, then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger cut to the heart of the matter when he observed: “The only really effective apologia for Christianity comes down to two arguments, namely the saints the Church has produced and the art which has grown in her womb. Better witness is borne to the Lord by the splendor of holiness and art which have arisen in communities of believers … if the Church is to continue to transform and humanize the world, how can she dispense with beauty in her liturgies, that beauty which is so closely linked with love and with the radiance of the Resurrection?”

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Fordham’s “Jewel in the Crown”

Joan L. Roccasalvo, C.S.J.

Beauty and the arts go hand in hand. If beauty is meant to please, then Fordham’s “jewel in the crown,” pleases beyond measure. William Rodrigue designed the Fordham chapel in 1838 as part of St. John’s college seminary founded in 1839 by Bishop John Hughes. The art and architecture of the chapel create a visual atmosphere that engages the human for the sake of divine worship, its details being directed to the life of faith fashioned in the Jesuit spirit. Here the senses are awakened to marvel at its beauty and to feel God’s presence deep within. Here the senses form part of the act of faith, and faith becomes sensory. Bold assertions these, but what is the evidence?

The Outer Structure

The church’s materials come from near and far, as do its influences. Designed in cruciform, the outer structure is built of local fieldstone and Yonkers granite, in blends of amber and grey. Rising ninety-five feet, the octagonal lantern, with pointed roof, spires, buttresses, and gargoyles, resembles Britain’s Gothic Cathedral at Ely. Its companion piece, a square bell tower of seventy-five feet with its own spires and pointed arches, bears the stamp of English Gothic. Together, their upward thrust of arbor bears the stamp of English Gothic. Its own spires and pointed arches, bell tower of seventy-five feet with imposing stone structure. The tympanum focuses on the figure of the Mother of God. Its Latin inscription, illi autem sunt in pace (“but they are in peace”), recalls those Fordham students who gave their lives in World War II. Carved into the oaken walls of the narthex are the two figures of Saint Ignatius, the soldier-saint and founder of the Society of Jesus, and Saint Michael, defender of those in battle. The walls of the narthex list the names of Fordham’s war heroes.

The Interior Structure

If the church’s exterior reflects strength and repose, its interior opens up a vista, “charged with the grandeur of God.” The eye, indeed all the senses, are caught up in soaring pointed arches, ribbed vaulting, and stained glass windows, all characteristic of Gothic architecture.

The church’s finest ensemble is revealed in a unique set of stained glass windows lining the walls of the nave. When in 1840, Bishop Hughes traveled to Europe seeking donations for his fledgling diocese, the French King Louis-Phillipe (1830–1848) gave him the six windows for Old Saint Patrick’s Cathedral in lower New York. Apparently, they were the wrong size, and in 1846 they were installed in the Fordham chapel. The Four Evangelists and Saints Peter and Paul, all with their traditional symbols, are depicted in these beautiful windows, styled in French Gothic revival. What symbolism do stained glass windows convey if not God’s light revealed here in red and blue, green, gold, and the royal of purple? Their rays bounce off one another in a play of luminosity, a metaphor for faith-in-action, the Christian’s response to God’s light. The same can be said of the spectacular traceries and borders of abstract design. To walk down the nave is to be bathed in the light of this powerful art form. We see, but only from the inside.

Suspended from the church’s ceiling hang brass lanterns glazed with mica and stained glass of ivory and amber. Here the play of light is created by the placement and intensity of the bulbs inside the fixtures. Again we have a suggestion of living faith. As if to put the finishing touches on these exquisite lanterns, small crosses of red and blue with gold leaf encircle their base. The Church’s ceiling is paneled in beams of polychrome wood, another feature that recalls Ely Cathedral. Here and throughout the church, we are enveloped by the warmth of wood and the mystery of light.

In the Apse

The apse holds two altars, both made of inlay marble originally taken from the altars at the Old Saint Patrick’s. The elaborate pre-Vatican II altar stands against the east wall while the freestanding altar is used for the Eucharistic celebration. In its center, the image of a lamb rests on a scroll with seven seals holding a victorious banner. A delicate motif of florets in rose and deep blue surrounds this symbol of Jesus Christ. Around the sanctuary, symbols of wheat and grapes are carved three-dimensionally into its marble. This familiar motif is also carved into the oaken walls in the apse. High above the altar of the Eucharist, on the inside of the octagonal lantern, cut glass of yellow, gold, and blue, so typical of British churches, shines down to focus on the altar. The Eucharist is reserved in an unadorned tabernacle at the south side, where the oils of anointing are also kept.

The Jesuit Presence

There are five locations in the church where the Jesuit spirit is prominently featured. Directly above the high altar, a Gothic figure of Christ the King robed in glory is carved in wood, as are the figures of the Four Evangelists. In the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius Loyola, meditation on the Kingdom of Christ introduces what is the central question of Ignatian spirituality: “How much more will I do for Christ?” A huge three-paneled mural is posi-
tioned below this figure of Christ. It was painted in the 1920s by Hildreth Meiere, one of the most famous American artist of murals and mosaics. In addition to
the Mother of God, Saints Joseph, John the Baptist, Basil, and John Chrysostom, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas More, and others, luminaries of the Society of Jesus are presented as inspirations to Fordham’s students: Ignatius Loyola, Isaac Jogues (saint and martyr of New York State), Robert Bellarmine (Doctor of the Church), Peter Canisius (apostle of German universities), and Edmund Campion (scholar-saint-martyr and the Light of Oxford).

The mural reminds students, first, that the Universal Church boasts saints from every walk of life; second, that wisdom and learning (sapientia et doctrina), Fordham’s motto, have characterized the Church in every age, and finally, that the Christian East is revered as a vital part of the Universal Church.

A triptych of oaken wood depicting three Jesuit saints who died in their youth hangs on the north transept wall. Saints Aloysius Gonzaga, John Berchmans, and Stanislaus Kostka are pictured in their garb as college students. Three “Jesuit” windows, made in Munich, are located on the wall of the south transept. In the first window, Saint Ignatius responds to a vision of the Holy Trinity at La Storta, Italy; in the second, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga receives the Eucharist from Saint Charles Borromeo; and finally, in the third, the great missionary Saint Francis Xavier preaches to his flock in the Indies. Here we see the Ignatian ideal of finding God in all things—in prayer, in the Eucharist, and in action.

Finally, at the side altar near these windows stands a reliquary containing first-class relics of Saints Charles Garnier, Gabriel Lalemant, and John de Brébeuf, three of the eight Jesuit North American martyrs who died between 1642 and 1649 at Auriesville, New York, while ministering to the Iroquois and Mohawk Indians.

The reliquary of Russian malachite lapis lazuli features a statue of an Indian holding the relics in his hands. The remains of the other five Sts. René Goupil, Isaac Jogues, Jean de Lalande, Antoine Daniel and Noël Chabanel were unfortunately destroyed. The presence of these relics, encased so beautifully, expresses the dual pride that Fordham takes in its Jesuit and New York history.

Other sacred art in the church includes two sets of stained glass windows in the sanctuary, Stations of the Cross carved in wood by Pietro Montana, and a triptych of the Holy Family.

Conclusion
The church’s early builders and conservationists have cared enough to give God their very best. In their hands, the visual arts have become incarnational: the senses participate in and are raised to the spiritual, and the spirit unites itself to the senses. Let us recall what we already know that we live out our Christian vocations in our bodies in this material world. It is here, and nowhere else, that God’s great work of the Incarnation is accomplished. We live as co-creators with the Divine Artist. After all, we are called to become “God’s works of art” (Eph 2:10), to make things beautiful, to make beautiful things, and to help others do so as well. More than a work of art, the church at Fordham is a labor of love, and on entering it, we repeat the words of the apostles on Mount Tabor, “Master, it is wonderful for us to be here” (Mt. 17:4!!)

Notes:
1 The phrase “jewel in the crown” was first used by Benjamin Disraeli (1801–1881) to describe India, Britain’s most prized possession.
2 Rodrigue, Hughes’ brother-in-law, taught mathematics and civil engineering at St. John’s.
4 Moundas, “The Heart of the University” (unpublished manuscript), p. 12.
5 Icher, Building the Great Cathedrals, p. 117.
6 Saint Isaac Jogues was martyred between 1642 and 1649.
7 Saint Edmund Campion was executed in 1581 during the reign of Elizabeth I of England.
8 Moundas, “The Heart of the University,” p. 19. The full roster of saints depicted in the mural are: Saints Joseph, patron of the Universal Church, Francis of Assisi, patron of Francis Cardinal Spellman (FCO ’71), Ignatius of Loyola, John the Baptist, patron of Fordham University, Genevieve, patroness of Mrs. Nicholas Brady, a benefactor to the Jesuits, Isaac Jogues, Patrick, patron of the New York Archdiocese. Associated with university studies are: Saints Robert Bellarmine (political philosophy), Basil of Caesarea (literature), Thomas More (law), Bernard of Clairvaux (mystical theology), Peter Canisius, Augustine (dugmatic theology), Bede the Venerable (history), Edmund Campion, John Chrysostom (rhetoric), Gregory the Great (canon law), Columba (Irish scholarship), Thomas Aquinas (philosophy and theology).
9 The other martyrs were Jesuit Fathers Isaac Jogues, Antoine Daniel, and the donnés, René Goupil, and Jean de la Lalande. Today Auriesville stands among the most famous pilgrim sites in North America.
A Pilgrim’s View

The Roman basilica, exemplified by Constantine’s fourth-century Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem and by the many other monumental churches he had erected throughout the Roman world, remained the standard of church architecture in the West for more than a thousand years. Even as church elevations transformed themselves from Roman to Romanesque, to Gothic, to Renaissance, to Baroque, the floor plans remained essentially the same: a rectangular nave—divided into aisles, if large, by ordered rows of columns or piers—having its principal entry at one end of the space and its altar in an apse at the other. The arrangement is axial and focused; one is almost compelled—visually, at least—to progress down the length of the nave to the ultimate goal in the apse. Transepts, where they exist, do not detract from the initial impression. The structure is an image of the worshipper’s ongoing pilgrimage toward his final bliss in heaven.

By contrast, since the construction of the Emperor Justinian’s great Church of Holy Wisdom at Constantinople in the sixth century, Byzantine churches have generally exhibited a more centralized floor plan. A round, square, octagonal, or compact cruciform nave is surmounted by an all-encompassing broad ceiling, often in the form of a dome. There is little sense of movement in the structure. The eye is drawn not forward, but upward toward the ceiling, which traditionally boasts a large painting of Christ the Ruler of All. The impression is not one of an ongoing journey, but of having arrived.

Our own monastic Church of St. John the Theologian attempts to be faithful to the Byzantine design exhibited by many wooden country churches of western Ukraine. Given the constraints of our building site and budget, however, some accommodations had to be made.

Constantine’s Church of the Resurrection faced west, as did the other monumental churches he erected. Its main entry was on the east end of the structure, its apse at its western extremity. This arrangement may have been borrowed from Roman temples, where it had been the custom to open the main doors at dawn to allow worshippers gathered outside a glimpse of the god illumined by the first rays of the sun. Christians, however, had no such cult images, and they faced east to worship, into the rising sun, a symbol of the salvation breaking over the world in Christ Jesus (cf. Lk 1:76–79). The Constantinian model was soon reversed; since the sixth or seventh century it has been the custom in both East and West to build churches with their altar and apse to the east.

Such is the case with our church. Thus, since the highway lies on the east side of the site, the exterior of the apse first greets the pilgrim as he approaches the church from the road. Coming up the ramp, he passes in front of the Byzantine/Slav cross on the east wall of the apse, and, traversing the length of the porch on the south side of the building, enters the narthex.

In Byzantine tradition this area is seen as a place of preparation for entering the actual worship space, the nave; as such it is often decorated with images drawn from the Old Testament, the preparation of the Gospel. The narthex of our new church does not yet have this decoration.

By the many lancet windows on the west wall above the porch on the south side of the building, sunlight pouring in through three great lancet windows on the west wall above and behind him and from three others high...
on the south wall of the central tower. The vaulted ceiling above our pilgrim opens eastward into the tower, and its own ceiling vaults open further into a light-filled octagonal dome, where one day a large image of Christ Pantocrator will gaze down upon worshippers. The altar area projects east from the tower, the height and configuration of its ceiling mirror that over the congregational area, and its east wall opens into the apse the pilgrim passed on his way into the church.

Thus, although the church is rectangular in plan, it is centralized in organization. The tower and dome occupying its center and covering half its area provide a strong vertical axis around which the whole structure seems to revolve. The tripartite arrangement of its ceiling is reflected in the strong patterns of its tile floor and in the arrangement of its fixtures and furnishings, which in turn is dictated by liturgical function.

The monastic choir occupies the central space under the tower. A broad border of patterned tile demarks it from the congregational area to the west and follows along its north and south walls. Arranged in a U-shaped configuration atop the border, the monks’ choir stalls face east and toward center, where a medallion marks the space under the dome. From here, in the “midst of the temple,” the Scriptures—other than the Gospel—are proclaimed, and here the monks come together to chant certain hymns during services. Facing across the medallion to the ambon and the royal doors of the iconostasis, the hegumen’s chair occupies the west center of the arrangement; an opening on either side separates it from the wings of stalls to north and south, and allows the congregation access to the front for Holy Communion, veneration of the Cross, anointings, etc. To accommodate processions, prostrations, and other liturgical actions the choir remains otherwise empty of furnishings.

Before or after services, a pilgrim may also enter the choir to pray before the icons arranged along its walls, to venerate the “Kissing Icons” on either side of the ambon, or to place votive tapers in their candelabra. In no case may he step up onto the soleas and ambon that mark the outer edge of the altar platform or pass through the doors of the iconostasis. Such is permitted only to priests and deacons and to those who are serving some particular liturgical function.

Thus the deacon enters and leaves the altar by the side doors to intone the liturgical actions the choir reverses; the deacon enters and leaves the throne on high, as well as seating for the clergy and other liturgical appurtenances. He is not moved by idle curiosity, and he does not need to see them to appreciate their beauty and significance. He walks by faith.

May our almighty and loving Lord Jesus continue to shed an abundance of His grace and mercy upon the holy temple and upon all who enter it with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

The altar seen through the open Royal Doors

Photo: Holy Transfiguration Skete

Photo: Holy Transfiguration Skete

An elevated view into the Choir, looking east toward the Ambon, Iconostasis, etc.

Holy Transfiguration Skete is a Catholic monastery of the Byzantine Rite under the jurisdiction of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of St. Nicholas in Chicago. In their community at Jacob’s Falls on the shore of Lake Superior in Michigan’s Keweenaw Peninsula, the monks devote themselves to a common life of prayer and work for the praise, love, and service of God and for the upbuilding of His Kingdom through the arts.

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A. W. N. Pugin's name is probably best known in the U.S.A. through popular editions of A. C. Pugin's *Examples of Gothic Architecture* re-issued with his *Specimens of Gothic* by J. H. Hansen (Cleveland, 1914). These books were produced by A. W. N. Pugin's father, but he had his first architectural training in their preparation. As an editor of the plates, though not of the text, from these vital source books for the Gothic revival, the generation of Cram and Goodhue found just what it wanted. But there was much more to Pugin than the publication of Gothic sources. A. W. N. Pugin (1812–52) established himself from 1838 as the architectural impresario of the Catholic revival in the British Isles, and, even more than his buildings, his journalism and publications spread this message. Pugin began his assault of the neo-classical style and the habits of the Georgian building world with his *Contrasts* (1836). He then introduced to the English-speaking world principles of French structural logic and rationality drawn from the Gothic tradition with his handbook *True Principals of Pointed or Christian Architecture* (1841). Pugin's introduction of extraneous moral or religious arguments into the question of architectural style and choice, insisting as he did on a structural, material reality or functionalism in reaction to the formalism of the classical style, is rightly seen by some as a herald of the modern movement in architecture. His *Apology for the Revival of Christian Architecture* (1843) and his *Present State of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England* (1841–42) published over fifty-eight church, cathedral, and convent schemes with which he had been involved from 1836. It would be interesting to know which mid-nineteenth-century American Catholics had Pugin's works in their libraries or which seminaries used his books. I would imagine very few.

Pugin's message was enthusiastically parroted by the Anglican (Protestant Episcopalian) Church restoration group, the Cambridge Camden Society (1839–68), which summed up his teachings under the slogan "let every material be real." It was to be through American Episcopalian imitators, such as the architect Richard Upjohn (who owned Pugin's *True Principles* [1841]), that the Pugin message was first given physical form in the United States (see P. Stanton, *The Gothic Revival and American Church Architecture: An Episode in Taste*, 1840–1856 [Baltimore, 1968]).

Catholics in the U.S.A., however, find their architectural founding myth in Benjamin Latrobe's Baltimore Cathedral (1805–1821/23). This extraordinarily confident building was the finest neo-classical church to be built anywhere for Anglophone Catholics, well ahead of anything even comparable in Dublin (Pro-Cathedral, 1815–40) or London (St. Mary Moorfields, 1817–1823, demolished 1900). Although Latrobe did design a Gothic church, Archbishop Carroll preferred the classical style. The building (as the current handout has it) claims descent from the crossing of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, the Catholic chapel at Lulworth Castle, "sloane's" [sic] for Soane's Bank of England, and (piously) St. Peter's in Rome. But like the dense stained-glass inappropriately installed in the cathedral since the Second World War and its affect on the clarity of the cathedral's design, Americans might find that the teachings of the controversialist and architect A. W. N. Pugin obscure this picture. They might be happier with the architecture of the Mediterranean or of the Spanish Southwest or California to that of the Gothic that Pugin championed. Despite our postmodern interest in a classical revival, the romantic nineteenth century largely repudiated classicism so that from 1840 the Catholic revival and the Gothic revival were largely one and the same thing. This was particularly true of the influential German Catholic immigration to the north-east coast, as shown, for example, in the German congregation's major Baltimore church, the Gothic style St. Alphonsus Ligouri (1842) by the local architect Robert Cary Long, Jr. (who was certainly aware of Pugin). As the Church in Europe rebuilt itself after the disasters of the French Revolution and, in the British Isles, from over two and half centuries of persecution, it was possible for Pugin to equate the classical style with the eclipse of the Church by the Reformation and its exploitation by the corrupt monarchic regimes so recently overthrown in the American and French Revolutions. The high Gothic of the Catholic Middle Ages, the Age of Faith, was to be stylistically prescriptive for the new churches required by Catholics on both sides of the North Atlantic, not the classical style which was associated with the nightmarish end of the Age of Reason.

Pugin was ever in search of an ideal church or style, which would be (in his phrase) "the real thing." Having toyed with the Romanesque and the perpendicular Gothic styles, he came down in favor of the English fourteenth-century decorated Gothic style, especially as seen in the recreation of the ideal English country parish church of which his masterpiece is St. Giles, Cheadle, Staffordshire (1840–46). At its opening this building was known to at least one American, the Rev. Pierce Connolly, a former Episcopalian clergyman from Nantucket, who was at that time the Catholic chaplain to Lord Shrewsbury, the donor of the church. (While Connolly
later abandoned Catholicism, his ex-wife founded the Holy Child Order.) Cheadle is an example of the Gesamtkunstwerk, a complete-work-of-art, and as a model it was widely imitated.

Pugin’s favoured rural church model, suitable for the relatively small scale required by Episcopalian congregations, was completely inappropriate for the teeming downtown masses of the immigrant Catholics on the East Coast and in seaport towns. They are characteristically housed in Romanesque and Gothic basilican plan churches, not in the English fourteenth-century decorated styles, and they are much more vigorous and eclectic, close not to English “Puginism” but to High Victorianism. Some buildings such as St. John the Baptist, Providence, RI (1854), by the Irish-born John Keeley, is somewhat Puginesque. His mature work is much closer to the “modern Gothic” in the phrase of E. W. Pugin (1834-1875) who visited the U.S.A. in 1874 and left designs, part-executed by his brother, for a church at Cambridge, MA. But by the end of the century, architects such as Cram and Goodhue certainly knew Pugin through his publications and subscribed to the English “back-to-Pugin” movement begun by the Anglican architect G. F. Bodley in the 1860s. Cram’s Dominican church in San Francisco and Goodhue’s St. Vincent Ferrer in New York City are highly Puginesque in detail but very much filtered through later nineteenth-century Anglican refinement.

Apart from his dogmatic stylistic message, his exiling of the classical, and his canonizing of a particular Gothic style, what might Pugin say to today’s architect designing a Catholic church? While his integrist approach to the Gothic and insistence on traditional building material would be impossible to imitate, his teaching that a church was a complete-work-of-art (Gesamtkunstwerk) and that the architect must understand the liturgy and its furnishing is instructive. Pugin’s church plans and attention to furnishings were highly “liturgical” (before that word was in vogue) and based upon his great erudition in the medieval liturgy and a depth of scholarship shared with very few priests. His “liturgical” altars as illustrated in Present State shun massive fixed tabernacles and six candlestick sets, preferring a pair of candlesticks and crucifix. He designed separate Blessed Sacrament chapels (but highly decorated and easy to locate). He provided lecterns, as well as pulpits, in his larger churches, hoping for the revival of the public recitation from the Divine Office, but the clergy soon displaced them and placed tabernacles on the high altars. He disliked extra liturgical devotions such as Benediction and “modern devotions” such as that to the Sacred Heart (for which he proposed a more tasteful iconography based on the figure of the Risen Christ). He insisted on providing everything for the service of the altar and the church, all through a number of firms he collaborated with or redirected to produce his own designs—stained-glass, base and precious metal-work, woodwork, encaustic tiles and pottery work, book-binding, vestment-making, textiles, wallpaper, etc. In all these fields, Pugin was a brilliant and original designer, especially in the small scale. For Catholic America, much of this material came from Catholic Belgium, France, and Germany, not England.

Like many obsessive-creative geniuses, Pugin was also a great teacher. Of his own role, he said: “I who bear the whole weight Revival on my shoulders.” He thus saw himself in a professorial, ministerial, perhaps priestly role. As a liturgical revolutionary he had few friends amongst the clergy, many of whom were apathetic and some of whom actively opposed his strict neo-medievalism. His book A Treatise on Chancel Screens and Rood Lofts, Their Antiquity, Use, and Symbolic Signification (1851) was his response, but he was to die at the age of forty within eighteen months of its publication. Because of the different phasing of the Catholic expansion on the American north-east seaboard, Pugin’s death meant that his influence in America was deflected, re-emerging only later in the nineteenth century. The high points of the Puginian Gothic are found instead in England, Ireland, and Australia. But it was to be the post–Second World War American architectural historians, H. R. Hitchcock and Phoebe Stanton, who, seeking to make Pugin the putative father of the modern movement, began the current revival of Pugin studies, which has seen (inter alia) the exhibition at the Bard Graduate Center in 1995.
Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica

One Hundred Years

Father Brian D. Boosel, O.S.B.

Nestled among the emerald green foothills of the Laurel Ridge Mountains of Southwestern Pennsylvania, at a place called Saint Vincent, there is to be found a jewel of human achievement and architectural wonder, in praise of God: the Saint Vincent Archabbey Basilica. The story of this grand church is situated within the stories of the many immigrant peoples who first came to Pennsylvania beginning in the mid-eighteenth century. It was the determination, zeal, and dedication of these peoples that formed the spiritual foundation of this sacred space. Thus, to understand the significance of this noble structure, it is necessary to understand the significance of the events around which this place called Saint Vincent came to be.

The tale of Saint Vincent begins in 1766—three years following the turbulent end of the French and Indian War. King George III of England granted a gentleman by the name of John Fraser some three hundred acres of land for development. Subsequently, Mr. Fraser sold the tract of land to a man named James Hunter, who, after having built a small log cabin on the land, named it Sportsman’s Hall. In January 1790, a Franciscan friar from Holland, Father Theodore Brouwers, O.F.M, sailed to America to become a missionary. At the behest of Bishop John Carroll, Father Brouwers came to Southwestern Pennsylvania and purchased the property from Hunter. It was here that he established—a Roman Catholic parish. The parish was first called “Sportsman’s Hall Parish,” then later Saint Vincent. In 1835 the growing congregation built a brick church. It stood behind the present-day basilica. When it came time to bless the church, the people of this parish wrote to the Bishop of Philadelphia, Bishop Kendrick. The Bishop’s custom was to name the church for whatever saint’s day it happened to be when he arrived at a church. He arrived at this parish on the feast of Saint Vincent de Paul. Today, 215 years later, this vibrant parish seeks to serve God and neighbor as the oldest Catholic parish west of the Allegheny Mountains.

On October 21, 1846, a Benedictine monk named Boniface Wimmer arrived at Saint Vincent with eighteen young companions. They came from Bavaria to be missionar-...
Each brick used in the church was made at Saint Vincent campus by monks. At the height of the brick-making operation, the monks were making fifteen thousand bricks each day.6 Those arriving at the basilica through the main portal discover the ornate carvings that welcome people as they enter. Since ancient times, Christian churches were seen as microcosms of the Kingdom of God. The doorway is gigantic, as it reminds the visitor that God calls all people to himself. Eight door jambs and eight jamb columns—four on each side—serve to gradually draw one’s view into the building. Above the columns are the “rainbow-like” arches called archivolts. The archivolts serve to represent the heavens. In the center above the door is the tympanum, which depicts the “Confession of Peter.” Saint Peter kneels before Jesus, who asks of him: “Who do you say that I am?” Peter responds: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus says, “No mortal has told you this … you are Rock, and upon this Rock I will build my church … I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven.”7

Eighteen Columns made of rose-colored Peterhead granite support the enormous roofing structure and arched ceiling. The columns were quarried in 1893 in Aberdeen, Scotland—then known as the “Granite City.” The columns were finished and sent by steam ship to New York City and then by railroad to Latrobe. They are unique in that they are solid from base to capital. The length of the basilica is 230 feet from the front doors in the east to the apse wall in the west. At the crossing, or transept, the church is 122 feet long. The nave and the choir are 75 feet wide and 62 feet tall. The sanctuary and transept ceilings are 68 feet high. The back towers are 150 feet high and the front towers are 195 feet high. The flooring is composed of white Carrara marble pieces.8 Each piece is three quarters of an inch by three quarters of an inch. Each piece was sized, cut, and hand placed by Italian craftsmen in 1901. The furniture in the basilica, namely, the pews, choir stalls, main ambo (lectern), and benches were carved on site by monks out of native oak and pre-blight American chestnut.9 After the plasterwork and interior were finished, the stained-glass windows were installed in 1900. They are the work of the Stoltzenberg Company of Munich, Bavaria. There are twenty-seven stained glass windows in the basilica. The Nativity, the Epiphany, the Child Jesus Teaching in the Temple, the Holy Family, the Baptism of Christ, the Transfiguration, Christ Blessing the Children, the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Spirit, Saint Boniface, the Pharisee and the Publican, the Sacred Heart, the Good Samaritan, Saint John the Baptist, the Good Shepherd, the Prodigal Son, and Saint Martin of Tours. There are also twenty-two tinted glass windows in the clerestory near the ceiling.

Four large gray columns and a canopy demarcate the sanctuary. The columns symbolize the earth and the canopy symbolizes heaven. There are angels present here also—guiding and protecting the holy place. Within the canopy are the Four Evangelists. They are depicted with their classical symbols. These oils on canvas, by the artist Joseph Reiter,10 depict Saint Matthew with an angel, Saint Mark with a lion, Saint Luke with an ox, and Saint John with an eagle. They are pictured in Heaven looking down on the Crucifix and the present sacrifice of the Mass.

The altar is the second altar that has been in this basilica. The first altar was made of white Carrara marble. It was replaced in 1954 with the present day grand high altar, constructed of two types of marble and resting in the heart of the sanctuary. The pedestals are two slabs of white Carrara marble, each weighing about two tons. The top, or mensa, is a dark green variegated marble, weighing about ten tons. The bottom pedestals are decorated with four carvings of the four great sacrifices of the Old Testament: the A k e d a h — t h e sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac; the Passover sacrifice of Moses; the sacrifice of Cain and Abel; and the Bread and Wine offered by Melchisedech the Priest. The pedestals therefore represent the Old Testament and the mensa represents the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross. The carved wooden Crucifix above the altar was carved at Saint Vincent in the 1860s by a monk named
Brother Cosmas Wolf, O.S.B., who was a leader in liturgical sculpture in the American Mid-west throughout the 1860s and 1870s.11

The chapel of the Blessed Sacrament is a place for silent prayer and meditation before our Eucharistic Lord. The sacrament tower, located in the south arm of the transept, is hand-carved oak and is based on a medieval concept that was employed in the great cathedrals of Europe. The idea of a sacrament tower was utilized to draw attention to the place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in these vast ancient churches. The tabernacle is also composed of hand-carved wood. It has been gilded and inlaid with semi-precious stones. The sides of the tabernacle depict four Eucharistic scenes from Holy Scripture. The frontispiece of the tabernacle depicts the Emmaus account in the Gospel of Luke (24:13–25): “We recognized him in the breaking of bread.”

The choir of the basilica is where the monks of Saint Vincent gather four times a day to pray the Liturgy of the Hours. They recite or chant the psalms antiphonally, which means that one side recites or chants a stanza while the other side listens. The choir is composed of seventy-six individual stalls. Four statues are visible behind the choir stalls representing four important figures in the history of monasticism. The statues, carved by Dutch sculptor Ferdinand Seeboeck, depict Saint Benedict, father of Western monasticism and patron of Western Civilization; Saint Placid, an early disciple of Saint Benedict; Saint Maurus, another early disciple of Saint Benedict; and Saint Scholastica, Saint Benedict’s twin sister. The stained-glass windows behind the monastic choir stalls (both on the north and south walls) have two large triptych windows created by the Stoltzenberg Company of Munich, Bavaria.12 They depict the following: 1) The Last Meeting of Saints Benedict and Scholastica. They met once per year at a small house between their two monasteries. On this occasion, the two have spent the entire day praying, studying Sacred Scripture, and sharing a meal together. Benedict stands and is preparing to leave. Scholastica asks him to stay a little longer. Benedict refuses, arguing that it is not good for monks and nuns to be outside of their monasteries at night. Scholastica pleads for him to stay. He adamantly refuses. Scholastica begins to pray. Suddenly, the winds pick up. Heavy rains begin to fall. The weather has turned foul and unwelcoming. Benedict exclaims, “Woman! What have you done?” Scholastica states that since her brother would not listen, she asked someone who would listen to her, namely, God.

The weather was so inclement that Benedict had to stay the night. He and his sister prayed, studied more scripture and had a meal in the morning. Benedict left later that morning. As he was nearly back to his monastery, he received news that his sister had died. 2) The Holy Guardian Angels. Blessed Pope Pius IX proclaimed the Holy Guardian Angels as the patrons of the American-Cassinese Congregation in August of 1855. This side window panel portrays scenes from the Book of Tobit, in which the Archangel Raphael is sent by God to protect Tobiah on a journey. The central panel depicts a scene from the ninety-first psalm. 3) The Transitus of Saint Benedict. Saint Benedict is pictured in the presence of, and being supported by, his monks as he takes his last breath and commends his soul to God. Saint Benedict died on March 21, 547. His transitus, or passing into heaven, is still celebrated on this day, some fifteen centuries later. 4) Saint Vincent de Paul. Pictured here is Saint Vincent de Paul. Vincent was a priest in seventeenth-century Paris who gave up a life of ease in order to care for widows and orphans. When Boniface Wimmer arrived at Saint Vincent, he kept the patronage of Saint Vincent de Paul, instead of re-dedicating the church after a Benedictine saint, as he saw his mission as being similar to that of Vincent’s. The side windows depict two Sisters of Charity—the order of women founded by Saint Vincent de Paul.

The apse is the last architectural piece of the basilica. It is a half-moon shape with a half-dome. In ancient Roman times, the apse would have been where the emperor was seated. It serves as a natural “public address” system—vaulting sound up and out across the expanse of the church. This assists in the transfer of sound in a clear manner. The basilica itself was designed to be acoustically perfect. The building has a natural six-second delay from the time sound leaves the apse until it reaches the front doors and comes back.

The paintings that flank the sidewalls at the entrance to the apse depict the four Latin Doctors of the Church. The paintings are also the work of Joseph Reiter. They de-
tail: 1) Saint Augustine of Hippo (Northwestern Africa), the most notable theologian of the early Church. 2) Saint Gregory the Great, the first of fifty Benedictines to be elected pope, who wrote the biography of Saint Benedict and is credited with writing down the musical notations that bear his name, Gregorian chant. 3) Saint Jerome, the early theologian and scripture scholar who is credited with translating the Bible from Hebrew and Greek into Latin. Latin was the “Vulgare,” or language of the people, at the time. Thus the translation has become known as the Vulgate Bible. Finally, 4) Saint Ambrose of Milan, who was only a catechumen when he was elected bishop of Milan by popular acclaim, and was responsible for the conversion and baptism of Saint Augustine and for composing the Easter Vigil Liturgy. The apse arch contains paintings depicting—in ascending order—the nine Choirs of Angels. These too are the work of Joseph Reiter. The round paintings alternate back and forth up the interior arc of the arch: Angels, Principalities, Archangels, Powers, Virtues, Dominions, Thrones, Cherubim, and Seraphim. The five apse windows depict the founders of religious orders in the Church. They are as follows: 1) Saint Romuald, founder of the Order of Camaldolese Hermits, who in around 1200 founded his order at a place called Campus Madoli (hence Camaldolese) as a reformation of the Benedictine way of life. The Camaldolese live as hermits in their own separate huts and meet daily for prayer. 2) Saint Bernard of Clairvaux, Benedictine monk, abbot, teacher, and Doctor of the Church, who helped to found the Cistercian Reform in the Middle Ages. 3) Saint Benedict, father of Western monasticism and patron saint of Western culture, who founded his first monastery at Monte Casino in the year 500. Benedict’s Rule survives to the present day and is used not only by Benedictines but also by many other religious societies and institutes. Saint Benedict’s monks are credited with preserving the ancient cultures of Europe. 4) Saint Dominic, born Dominic Guzman in Moorish Spain in the 1200s, founded a group of preachers, known as the Order of Preachers (or, more popularly, as the Dominicans), who helped to reconvert Europe to the Faith. Dominic is pictured with a small dog at his feet. When Dominic’s mother was pregnant with him, she had a dream of a dog with a torch in its mouth. The dog was running all over the earth lighting it on fire. Dominic’s preaching was to light Europe on fire for the Faith. Finally, 5) Saint Francis of Assisi, who was born into a wealthy family and led a life of ease and excess. He had a dramatic conversion and founded a group called the Order of Friars Minor, more popularly known as the Franciscans, who lived out the poverty of Christ.

In the dome of the apse is to be found a starburst depiction of a mystical scene from the Book of Revelation. We see a lamb who represents Jesus Christ. The lamb is holding the Banner of the Resurrection. At the lamb’s feet is a chalice representing Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. The lamb stands upon a book with seven seals. This represents Christ’s dominion over all things. The vision takes place within a trefoil and a triangle, both symbolic of the Blessed Trinity. Reiter painted the image in a way that suggests that the vision has “burst” through the church roof.

Bishop John Francis Regis Canevin of the Diocese of Pittsburgh solemnly consecrated the archabbey church on August 24, 1905. On August 24, 1955, His Holiness, Pope Pius XII elevated the Archabbey Church to the ecclesiastical rank of minor basilica. For one hundred years, this crown jewel of Catholicism in southwestern Pennsylvania and captivated the minds, and hearts of thousands of people who have come and still come to pray.

Father Brian Boosel, OSB, a Benedictine monk of Saint Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pennsylvania, teaches Church History at Saint Vincent Seminary, and serves as Chaplain of Saint Vincent College.

Notes
1 Louis Haas, Saint Vincent’s: Souvenir of the Consecration of the New Archabbey Church, August 24, 1905 (Latrobe: Saint Vincent Archabbey Press, 1905), p. 3.
2 Album Capitularium (Latrobe: Saint Vincent Archabbey, 1855), p. vi.
5 Ibid., p. 70.
6 Haas, St. Vincent’s, p. 14.
7 Mt 16:15–19.
9 Ibid., p. 16.
10 Ibid., p. 18.
11 Ibid., p. 16.
12 Ibid., p. 13.
Dresden is a beautiful Baroque city located in the heart of former East Germany. It has been the capital of Saxony since the rule of King Augustus the Strong, when the city was at its pinnacle. Architecturally, Dresden is a city of the Baroque style produced by builders under the great aspiration of King Augustus I, the famous king of Poland. This style, known today as the Dresdener Baroque, is named after the city and its unique balance of sculpture, art and architecture. Dresden was an elegant city in its architecture and planning before the Second World War. Though small in scale compared to other cities developed at the same time, Dresden is a good blend of density with ambience and quality. Today, the local government driven by the love of its citizens for their city, has led to the redevelopment of the city and an effort to recreate Dresden and its magnificent beauty.

Architects often debate the reconstruction (or restoration) of historical monuments due to the high cost. There are many diverse opinions on this topic. Furthermore, there is a discussion about whether to reconstruct an exact replication of the original monument or to build a classical building relating more to the functional demands of today’s time.

The Frauenkirche or The Church of Our Lady was constructed between 1726 and 1743. In 1722 George Baehr, municipal building contractor and architect of the city, started on plans for a new building to replace the small Gothic church, the oldest parish church in the city. The new Protestant church kept the original name “Frauenkirche”.

In 1726, the actual planning of the Frauenkirche began. The church was planned to provide a clear and dominating centerpiece for the extensively planned historical city. Baehr envisioned the church with a cubic base rising high above the houses surrounding it. The massive base was largely kept without ornamentation, forming an elegant and elaborate dome heightened by a slim obelisk, creating a slender but grand view of the church. The obelisk was replaced by a pavilion-like lantern after George Baehr’s death.

The unusual shape of the dome has always aroused fascination and admiration; it has neither predecessors nor successors.

It is a genuine invention of the architect George Baehr. It was his intention to place the sandstone structure into the city like a giant sculpture. The homogeneity of the masonry work – grayish – yellow Elbe river sandstone that soon acquired a dark patina – lent the body of the building an impression of massivity and weight, adding all the more emphasis to the dynamic, soaring cupola.

Along with the domes of the Florence cathedral and St. Peter’s in Rome, this is one of the rare domes built completely in stone. Most of the best known dome constructions are either done in stone or iron. Since dome construction was a new engineering feat at this time, designers from the surrounding areas went to Rome to study St. Peter’s construction. Architecturally, the design of the dome gave the architects and builders new scope for designing internal spaces of great height with skylights to help give a new dimension to the interior of the building.

There were many doubts regarding the stability of this 12,200 ton heavy stone dome. However, even when the Prussian King bombarded Dresden in 1760, the structure survived and remained stable.

The understanding of structures was limited at that time, and hence the dome was designed based on pyramidal transfer of forces. Today, this has been recalculated with the help of computers to rebuild a much more stable dome for the Frauenkirche.

Both shells of the dome had been penetrated by eight openings for windows. These openings, necessary for natural light to enter the church, detrimentally influence the otherwise perfect load transfer of the dome. George Baehr had intuitively recognized the load transfer problem and had planned to mount ring beams inside the stone base of the dome.

The church has a very simple but beautiful plan on the inside. This Protestant church was designed for preaching sermons with a central seating area oriented towards the altar. The inner cupola was lit by large windows which brought filtered light into the interior. The seating area was surrounded by tall arcades supported by slender piers on all sides. The inner cupola rested on these wide arcades. Corner staircases lead to seating areas in wooden balconies above.

The restrained décor of the interior culminates in the truly Baroque splendor of the altar and organ. A special atmosphere was created by the music from the organ, designed with great care by Gottfried Silbermann. In December 1736, Johann Sebastian Bach played for the first time on the church’s organ and filled the listeners with joy and admiration. Documentation in the form of audio tapes can still be found with original pieces of music from this organ. This helped a lot in the reconstruction process of the organ and the church bells executed by a special team of experts.

On February 13th 1945, 200 hundred years after the church was constructed, Dresden was bombed and completely destroyed, and along with it the magnificent Frauenkirche. The whole city became a grave of rubble and dirt. Although the church was not bombed, it succumbed to the city-wide fires that soon spread to the church causing the iron ring built to hold the dome to melt, which led to the dome to collapsing and the church subsequently collapsing under its own weight.

Soon after the war, the city of Dresden along with the whole of East Germany came under communist rule. Serious attempts

Dome, The Frauenkirche, Dresden, Germany

Photo courtesy Prof. Wolfram Jaeger
were made in the following year to clear the rubble of the church, but were then stopped due to a lack of funding and resources. The preservation committee in Dresden placed the site under historic protection in 1966. The reconstruction of monuments all over Dresden began, but the Frauenkirche remained in its rubble state for 48 more years.

Finally, after the Berlin wall came down in 1989, the citizens of Dresden started intense discussions on the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. Around 1990, the first plans for redeveloping the church started to appear under the name “Call for Dresden”. In 1993, work to clear the rubble began. The citizens of Dresden took the initiative and with the support of private funds started a 13 year long reconstruction and restoration process.

The rubble clearing process was done by the University of Dresden, Department of Structural Design, under the guidance of Prof. Wolfram Jaeger. The team worked extensively recording each and every detail of stone or material found on site. The preliminary research included analyzing the existing data. Plans recovered from archives documenting the building before it collapsed were of great benefit. The measured plans done by Kiesling from 1949 – 1959 were particularly useful in forming a good base of documentation for the reconstruction phases. The initial work also included site studies and surveys where the rubble site was photographically documented meter by meter. A 3D graphic model was made to analyze the movement of the collapse of the stones and their present place in the rubble. This helped in identifying the tentative locations of various stones. The archaeological stocktaking method was elaborate and the latest technology was also used for assistance. The rubble clearance study and documentation was carried out precisely with a digital photogrammetric evaluation system called Phidias MS.³

Once the rubble was cleared, active interest came in from all sides. Artists, Architects, Engineers, Historians, Scientific Researchers, Socialists, and Conservationists all started taking an active part in the discussion and decision making process for the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche. Efforts and proposals were brought in by professionals world wide.

In February 2001, the Foundation Board for the Frauenkirche decided to install a new organ which would reflect the original technical and sound structure of the Silbermann organ of the Frauenkirche and em-

One of the main features of the reconstruction was the re-designing of the dome. Based on detailed calculations, there was a need to reinforce the stone dome with post-tension anchors for the dome to support itself and survive any kind of sudden change in forces. The post-tensioning technique had to be done in such a manner as to ensure that the two anchor ends be clamped into position, post-tensioned and kept from slipping out of place. The tension applied by each of these members can be monitored with computer software and administered time and again. This is a very new method and a step forward for technology in the process of reconstruction.

In the process of the reconstruction of the Frauenkirche, many architects, engineers and artists gathered a lifetime of experience. The scale of the project was so vast that it was initially thought to be an impossible task. With the help of the citizens of Dresden, donors throughout the world and technical experts, the dream of a reconstructed Frauenkirche was realized on October 31st 2005 with the reopening of the Frauenkirche to the public.

Dresden is a city which tries to absorb the variety of flavors from the world influencing it. Still maintaining its Baroque style but respecting change, the Frauenkirche, though a reconstruction, combines the best technology of today with the beauty of the past, thus giving us the pleasure of enjoying a historical structure and the advantages of both eras.

Prof. Krupali Uplekar, has recently joined the faculty at The University of Notre Dame School of Architecture. Previously she has worked as a scientific researcher at the Technical University Dresden in the department of Structural Design and worked on the rubble clearance and the dome reconstruction of Frauen Kirche.

Notes:

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Sacred Places

The Altar and the Direction of Liturgical Prayer

His Holiness Benedict XVI PP (written as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger)

The reshaping so far described, of the Jewish synagogue for the purpose of Christian worship, clearly shows—as we have already said—how, even in architecture, there is both continuity and newness in the relationship of the Old Testament to the New. As a consequence, expression in space had to be given to the properly Christian act of worship, the celebration of the Eucharist, together with the ministry of the Word, which is ordered toward that celebration. Plainly, further developments became not only possible but necessary. A place set aside for Baptism had to be found. The Sacrament of Penance went through a long process of development, which resulted in changes to the form of the church building. Popular piety in its many different forms inevitably found expression in the place dedicated to divine worship. The question of sacred images had to be resolved. Church music had to be fitted into the spatial structure. We saw that the architectural canon for the liturgy of Word and sacrament is not a rigid one, though with every new development and reordering the question has to be posed: What is in harmony with the essence of the liturgy, and what detracts from it? In the very form of its places of divine worship, which we have just been considering, Christianity, speaking and thinking in a Semitic way, has laid down principles by which this question can be answered. Despite all the variations in practice that have taken place far into the second millennium, one thing has remained clear for the whole of Christendom: praying toward the east is a tradition that goes back to the beginning. Moreover, it is a fundamental expression of the Christian synthesis of cosmos and history, of being rooted in the once-for-all events of salvation history while going out to meet the Lord who is to come again. Here both the fidelity to the gift already bestowed and the dynamism of going forward are given equal expression.

Modern man has little understanding of this “orientation”. Judaism and Islam, now as in the past, take it for granted that we should pray toward the central place of revelation, to the God who has revealed himself to us, in the manner and in the place in which he revealed himself. By contrast, in the Western world, an abstract way of thinking, which in a certain way is the fruit of Christian influence, has become dominant. God is spiritual, and God is everywhere: Does that not mean that prayer is not tied to a particular place or direction? Now, we can indeed pray everywhere, and God is accessible to us everywhere. This idea of the universality of God is a consequence of Christian universality, of the Christian’s looking up to God above all gods, the God who embraces the cosmos and is more intimate to us than of God above all particular places and yet maintains the concreteness of divine revelation. Our praying is thus inserted into the procession of the nations to God.

But what about the altar? In what direction should we pray during the Eucharistic liturgy? In Byzantine church buildings the structure just described was by and large retained, but in Rome a somewhat different arrangement developed. The bishop’s chair was shifted to the center of the apse, and so the altar was moved into the nave. This seems to have been the case in the Lateran basilica and in St. Mary Major’s well into the ninth century. However, in St. Peter’s during the pontificate of St. Gregory the Great (590–604), the altar was moved nearer to the bishop’s chair, probably for the simple reason that he was supposed to stand as much as possible above the tomb of St. Peter. This was an outward and visible expression of the truth that we celebrate the Sacrifice of the Lord...
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in the communion of saints, a communion spanning all times and ages. The custom of erecting an altar above the tombs of the martyrs probably goes back a long way and is an outcome of the same motivation. Throughout history the martyrs continue Christ’s self-oblation; they are like the Church’s living altar, made not of stones but of men, who have become members of the Body of Christ and thus express a new kind of cultus: sacrifice is humanity becoming love with Christ.

The ordering of St. Peter’s was then copied, so it would seem, in many other stational churches in Rome. For the purposes of this discussion, we do not need to go into the disputed details of this process. The controversy in our own century was triggered by another innovation. Because of topographical circumstances, it turned out that St. Peter’s faced west. Thus, if the celebrating priest wanted—as the Christian tradition of prayer demands—to face east, he had to stand behind the people and look—this is the logical conclusion—towards the people. For whatever reason it was done, one can also see this arrangement in a whole series of church buildings within St. Peter’s direct sphere of influence. The liturgical renewal in our own century took up this alleged model and developed it into a new idea for the form of the liturgy. The Eucharist—so it was said—had to be celebrated versus populum (toward the people). The altar—as can be seen in the normative model of St. Peter’s—had to be positioned in such a way that priest and people looked at each other and formed together the circle of the celebrating community. This alone—so it was said—was compatible with the meaning of the Christian liturgy, with the requirement of active participation. This alone conformed to the primordial model of the Last Supper. These arguments seemed in the end so persuasive that after the Council (which says nothing about “turning toward the people”) new altars were set up everywhere, and today celebration versus populum really does look like the characteristic fruit of Vatican II’s liturgical renewal. In fact, it is the most conspicuous consequence of a reordering that not only signifies a new external arrangement of the places dedicated to the liturgy, but also brings with it a new idea of the essence of the liturgy—the liturgy as a communal meal.

This is, of course, a misunderstanding of the significance of the Roman basilica and of the positioning of its altar, and the representation of the Last Supper is also, to say the least, inaccurate. Consider, for example, what Louis Bouyer has to say on the subject: “The idea that a celebration facing the people must have been the primitive one, and that especially of the last supper, has no other foundation than a mistaken view of what a meal could be in antiquity, Christian or not. In no meal of the early Christian era, did the president of the banqueting assembly ever face the other participants. They were all sitting, or reclining, on the convex side of a C-shaped table, or of a table having approximately the shape of a horseshoe. The other side was always left empty for the service. Nowhere in Christian antiquity, could have arisen the idea of having to ‘face the people’ to preside at a meal. The communal character of a meal was emphasized just by the opposite disposition: the fact that all the participants were on the same side of the table” (pp. 53–54).

In any case, there is a further point that we must add to this discussion of the “shape” of the meals: the Eucharist that Christians celebrate really cannot adequately be described by the term “meal”. True, the Lord established the new reality of Christian worship within the framework of a Jewish (Passover) meal, but it was precisely this new reality, not the meal as such, that he commanded us to repeat. Very soon the new reality was separated from its ancient context and found its proper and suitable form, a form already predetermined by the fact that the Eucharist refers back to the Cross and thus to the transformation of Temple sacrificed into worship of God that...
is in harmony with logos. Thus it came to pass that the synagogue liturgy of the Word, renewed and deepened in a Christian way, merged with the remembrance of Christ’s death and Resurrection to become the “Eucharist”, and precisely thus was fidelity to the command “Do this” fulfilled. This new and all-embracing form of worship could not be derived simply from the meal but had to be defined through the interconnection of Temple and synagogue, Word and sacrament, cosmos and history. It expresses itself in the very form that we discovered in the liturgical structure of the early Churches in the world of Semitic Christianity. It also, of course, remained fundamental for Rome. Once again let me quote Bouyer: “Never, and nowhere, before that [that is, before the sixteenth century] have we any indication that any importance, or even attention, was given to whether the priest celebrated with the people before him or behind him. As Professor Cyrille Vogel has recently demonstrated, it, the only thing ever insisted upon, or even mentioned, was that he should say the Eucharistic prayer, as all the other prayers, facing East. … Even when the orientation of the church enabled the celebrant to pray turned toward the people, when at the altar, we must not forget that it was not the priest alone who, then, turned East: it was the whole congregation, together with him” (pp. 55-56).

Admittedly, these connections were obscured or fell into total oblivion in the church buildings and liturgical practice of the modern age. This is the only explanation for the fact that the common direction of prayer of priest and people were labeled as “celebrating toward the wall” or “turning your back on the people” and came to seem absurd and totally unacceptable. And this alone explains why the meal—even in modern pictures—became the normative idea of liturgical celebration for Christians. In reality what happened was that an unprecedented clericalization came on the scene. Now the priest—the “presider”, as they now prefer to call him—becomes the real point of reference for the whole liturgy. Everything depends on him. We have to see him, to respond to him, to be involved in what he is doing. His creativity sustains the whole thing. Not surprisingly, people try to reduce this newly created role by assigning all kinds of liturgical functions to different individuals and entrusting the “creative” planning of the liturgy to groups of people who like to, and are supposed to, “make their own contribution”. Less and less is God in the picture. More and more important is what is done by the human beings who meet here and do not like to subject themselves to a “pre-determined pattern”. The turning of the priest toward the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself. The common turning toward the east was not a “celebration toward the wall”; it did not mean that the priest “had his back to the people”: the priest himself was not regarded as so important. For just as the congregation in the synagogue looked together toward Jerusalem, so in the Christian liturgy the congregation looked together “toward the Lord”. As one of the fathers of Vatican II’s Constitution on the Liturgy, J. A. Jungmann, put it, it was much more a question of priest and people facing in the same direction, knowing that together they were in a procession toward the Lord. They did not close themselves into a circle; they did not gaze at one another; but as the pilgrim People of God they set off for the Orients, for the Christ who comes to meet us.

But is this not all romanticism and nostalgia for the past? Can the original form of Christian prayer still say something to us today, or should we try to find our own form, a form for our own times? Of course, we cannot simply replicate the past. Every age must discover and express the essence of the liturgy anew. The point is to discover this essence amid all the changing appearances. It would surely be a mistake to reject all the reforms of our century wholesale. When the altar was very remote from the faithful, it was right to move it back to the people. In cathedrals this made it possible to recover the tradition of having the altar at the crossing, the meeting point of the nave and the presbyterium. It was also important clearly to distinguish the place for the Liturgy of the Word from the place of
for the properly Eucharistic liturgy. For the Liturgy of the Word is about speaking and responding, and so a face-to-face exchange between proclaimer and hearer does make sense. In the psalm the hearer internalizes what he has heard, takes it into himself, and transforms it into prayer, so that it becomes a response. On the other hand, a common turning to the east during the Eucharistic Prayer remains essential. This is not a case of something accidental, but of what is essential. Looking at the priest has no importance. What matters is looking together at the Lord. It is not now a question of dialogue but of common worship, of setting off toward the One who is to come. What corresponds with the reality of what is happening is not the closed circle but the common movement forward, expressed in a common direction for prayer.

Häussling has leveled several objections at these ideas of mine, which I have presented before. The first I have just touched on. These ideas are alleged to be a romanticism for the old ways, a misguided longing for the past. It is said to be odd that I should speak only of Christian antiquity and pass over the succeeding centuries. Coming as it does from a liturgical scholar, this objection is quite remarkable. As I see it, the problem with a large part of modern liturgiology is that it tends to recognize only antiquity as a source, and therefore normative, and to regard everything developed later, in the Middle Ages and through the Council of Trent, as decadent. And so one ends up with dubious reconstructions of the most ancient practice, fluctuating criteria, and never-ending suggestions for reform, which lead ultimately to the disintegration of the liturgy that has evolved in a living way. On the other hand, it is important and necessary to see that we cannot take as our norm the ancient in itself and as such, nor must we automatically write off later developments as alien to the original form of the liturgy. There can be a thoroughly living kind of development in which a seed at the origin of something ripens and bears fruit. We shall have to come back to this idea in a moment. But in our case, as we have said, what is at issue is not a romantic escape into antiquity, but a rediscovery of something essential, in which Christian liturgy expresses its permanent orientation. Of course, Häussling thinks that turning to the east, toward the rising sun, is something that nowadays we just cannot bring into the liturgy. Is that really the case? Are we not interested in the cosmos anymore? Are we today really hopelessly huddled in our own little circle? Is it not important, precisely today, to pray with the whole of creation? Is it not important, precisely today, to find room for the dimension of the future, again, indeed to live, the dynamism of the new creation as an essential form of the liturgy?

Another objection is that we do not need to look toward the east, toward the crucifix—that, when priest and faithful look at one another, they are looking at the image of God in man, and so facing one another is the right direction for prayer. I find it hard to believe that the famous critic thought this was a serious argument. For we do not see the image of God in man in such a simplistic way. The “Image of God” in man is not, of course, something that we can photograph or see with a merely photographic kind of perception. We can see it, just as we can see the goodness in man, his honesty, interior truth, humility, love—everything, in fact, that gives him a certain likeness to God. But if we are to do this, we must learn a new kind of seeing, and that is what the Eucharist is for.

A more important objection is of the practical order. Ought we really to be rearranging everything all over again? Nothing is more harmful to the liturgy than a constant activism, even if it seems to be for the sake of genuine renewal. I see a solution in a suggestion that comes from the insights of Erik Peterson. Facing east, as we heard, was linked with the “sign of the Son of Man”, with the Cross, which announces the Lord’s Second Coming. That is why very early on the east was linked with the sign of the Cross. Where a direct common turning toward the east is not possible, the cross can serve as the interior “east” of faith. It should stand in the middle of the altar and be the common point of focus for both priest and praying community. In this way we obey the ancient call to prayer: “Conversi ad Dominum”, Turn toward the Lord! In this way we look together at the One whose death tore the veil of The Temple—the One who stands before the Father for us and encluses us in his arms in order to make us the new and living Temple. Moving the altar cross to the side to give an uninterrupted view of the priest is something I regard as one of the truly absurd phenomena of recent decades. Is the cross disruptive during Mass? Is the priest more important than the Lord? This mistake should be corrected as quickly as possible; it can be done without further rebuilding. The Lord is the point of reference. He is the rising sun of history. That is why there could be a cross of the Passion, which represents the suffering Lord who for us let his side be pierced, from which flowed blood and water (Eucharist and Baptism), as well as a cross of triumph, which expresses the idea of the Second Coming and guides our eyes toward it. For it is always the one Lord: Christ yesterday, today, and forever (Heb 13:8).
A Windy Legacy


Reviewed by Thomas M. Dietz

This is a book suited for anybody seeking a greater appreciation of the Church’s rich artistic heritage in Chicago, which is stronger and better preserved than that of most American cities. While many other major American cities—particularly in the Midwest—have seen the majority of their once-glorious churches stripped bare, the churches of Chicago continue to display the past splendor of original polychromatic interiors, fantastic paintings, and rich stained-glass windows. These churches also bear the unmistakable mark of varied cultural influences and ethnic identities, giving testimony to a political, theological, and architectural past deserving of a skilled historian.

This book collects sixty-eight of the finest churches in Chicago, citing each with a street address, architect’s name, and date of dedication, usually—but not always—followed by an article on the church in question, generally around two pages in length. The buildings included span from the inception of the first Catholic communities in Chicago to one of the last great exemplars of the Gothic revival in the mid-twentieth century. This book can be regarded as a tribute to the beauty of the Catholic architectural tradition that reached its American golden age in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The desire to emphasize buildings that draw from the historic patrimony of the Church is obvious, and only a couple of modernist works are included (and that is only if one conceives that an art deco building or the peculiar style of Francis Barry Byrne should be regarded as modernist). During this period a host of talented architects and craftsmen drew inspiration from the rich legacy of the preceding centuries, leaving a legacy of their own that has generally outmatched the following generations.

Denis McNamara’s contribution brings to life a host of figures and events in the history of the city in relation to the buildings in question. The towering figure of Cardinal Mundelein, the political drama of Catholic immigrant communities in a largely Protestant America, and the schism that separated nationalist Poles from the archdiocese; these are merely a few examples of the dramatic events that provide the context for essays on subjects ranging from the first use of steel-frame construction at Saint Josaphat’s to the idiosyncratic electrical lighting showcased in Holy Cross Church. Unlike many books of this nature (in which photographs often take precedence), it can honestly be said that the accompanying text deserves a careful reading.

Yet the beautiful images make this book invaluable, as nothing of this nature has been published in years. (George Lane’s Chicago Churches and Synagogues [1982], which comes closest, is visually lacking.) James Morris is a skilled photographer with a unique awareness of what really matters in the visual recording of buildings. In almost every instance an exterior frontal photograph (usually angled for a glimpse of the exterior along the nave) and a direct shot of the interior toward the altar have been included. Photographs of this manner provide a glimpse of the artistic impression intended by the architect, as well as the experience garnered. Yet, Morris also provides enlarged images of important details, including close-ups of altars, paintings, statuary, and stained-glasswork. This book also serves to fill a disappointing void in architectural history. While the production of monographic studies on turn-of-the-previous-century architects has become a minor industry since the mid-1980s, several of the works included in this volume are by architects of considerable merit who continue to be widely understudied. This is particularly true of Joseph McCarthy, who worked in the first four decades of the twentieth century. In McCarthy’s buildings, one sees a wonderful subtlety guiding a distinctly American interpretation of classicism, particularly as demonstrated in the magisterial Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the University of St. Mary of the Lake / Mundelein Seminary. To a lesser degree, Henry Schlacks, the first director of the curriculum in architecture at the University of Notre Dame, is a figure that might likewise warrant greater discussion, as also with New York architect Patrick Keely and the prolific firm of Worthman and Steinbach. With an architectural historian as dedicated as Dr. Denis McNamara now present in Chicago, one can reasonably assume much of this neglect will be rectified.

Finally, this book also marks a rather important new course for the publisher. Venturing into the realm of architectural publishing appears to be a rather scary proposition, as a handful of established imprints dominate the field. In recent years other Catholic book publishers have tried their hand at architectural publishing with only limited success. Fortunately, this book allows for few significant criticisms. It may be argued that there is an over-density that places text and the accompanying images in competition (one might compare this book with many of the distinguished monographs by Rizzoli Press), and there is a distinct absence of drawings; further, several of the churches lack their own article, which is a bit disappointing considering the detailed accounts provided for Chicago’s most famous churches. Yet, the Liturgy Training Press has entered the architectural publishing fray on an even footing, and future books released under this imprint are promising.

Thomas M. Dietz is a practicing architect in Chicago and a graduate of both Notre Dame and MIT.
SEGREGATED SACRED SPACE:

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CHURCH OF SANTA MARIA DONNA REGINA


Reviewed by Renée Köhler-Ryan

This magnificent book comprises a multi-disciplinary discussion of the import of a church in Naples, Italy. The architectural, artistic, historical, political, and, of course, religious, implications of the church of Santa Maria Donna Regina become increasingly apparent as one reads each contribution.

The spatial design of the church begs many questions that its co-authors proceed to address. The Franciscan sisters for whom the church was built needed to be separated from both priest and congregation during the celebration of Mass. Their segregated space took the form of a loft that extends quite deeply into the nave. While unable to see the altar, the nuns benefited from more window-emitted light than anywhere else within the space of the church, and they were surrounded by a complex series of frescoes depicting scenes including Christ’s Passion and events in the lives of the saints, primarily of Agnes, Catherine of Alexandria, and Elizabeth of Thuringia-Hungary.

After an introduction by co-editors Janis Elliott and Cordelia Warr, Rosa Anna Genovese outlines the history of the construction and restoration of the thirteenth-century church. Samantha Kelly and Matthew J. Clear follow with fascinating contributions about the significance and personality of the patroness of the convent, Maria of Hungary. Tanja Michalsky complements these chapters with a description of Maria’s tomb within the church, which further illustrates the character of the queen. Caroline Bruzelius places the church within its architectural context, arguing that it cannot be seen simply as an early example of French-style Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. Hisashi Yakou demonstrates the influence of Franciscan spiritual writings upon the church’s architecture and frescoes. Cathleen A. Fleck and Adrian S. Hoch describe and analyze, also in light of Franciscan writings being read at the time, the frescoes that became for the nuns the visual accompaniment to the celebration of Mass. Cordelia Warr studies extant stories of Saint Elizabeth of Thuringia-Hungary to find sources of the series of frescoes depicting events in that saint’s life. Janis Elliott concludes the study of the frescoes with an analysis of the significance of the depiction of the Last Judgment for the times in which the series was executed. Julian Gardner concludes the volume by discussing the significance of the church within Europe.

Accompanying all of this are over one hundred illustrations, in black-and-white and in color, many of which were commissioned specifically for the book. All in all, the reader finds here the means to make a sacred space come alive at many levels of significance.

Renée Köhler-Ryan is a doctoral candidate at the Institute of Philosophy at the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium. Her dissertation is on the topic of “Sacred Space”.

Tomb of Mary of Hungary located within the church
CASTLES OF GOD

Reviewed by William Heyer

One of the most exhilarating aspects of architectural history is that there is always something new to discover. Castles of God: Fortified Religious Buildings of the World sheds light on Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist fortified sacred architecture; a typology unsung by historians and covered in great detail in this publication. Yet another seemingly esoteric subject actually reveals aspects of building that were a major part of religious architecture for over a thousand years.

The author, Peter Harrison, examines this building type chronologically and by religion, so one has a grasp of how each example fits into the larger history. In fact, the most interesting aspect of this book is not the architecture per se, but the colorful and informative descriptions Mr. Harrison gives of the religious and cultural events of each period. The building of fortified churches in Syria by the Crusaders, for example, is described in its full context; the Knights Templar vs. the fanatical Assassins; raiders; protection for pilgrims from Europe coming to the Holy Land, etc. Obviously these buildings were erected in dangerous times, hence the fortifications. One is drawn into the exciting history as much as the architecture. Luring stories are numerous of treacherous territories, brutal attacks, inspired counter-attacks, intrigue, romance, devotion, and action. It becomes clear through studying these buildings that the interaction of religious belief with opposing forces can have brutal consequences.

Much of the book covers European fortified churches, but it also gives ample space to the early fortified churches of the Middle East, the Missions of America and the Philippines, Ethiopia, Georgia, and Armenia as well as the Islamic ribats and Buddhist dzongs. All fall under this typology, and the similarities are described in a satisfying concluding chapter. Architects as much as laymen will find new architectural terms that enrich the language like “dzong,” “enceinte,” “donjon tower,” and others. A helpful glossary at the end is added for reference. Pen illustrations by the author are welcome as are his maps of regions probably unfamiliar to most readers, and photos are included in a center section of the book. It would have been helpful if the book had more photos especially of details to bring some of the text to life. But, as stated above, the richness is found more in the “who” and “why” than in the “what.”

Another interesting addition might have been a comparison with earlier fortified religious precincts, such as the Acropolis. It also came to mind that a link to military architecture (to which this typology clearly relates) would have been interesting. How did Mnesikles or Vitruvius influence early fortified sacred buildings? Did military architectural writings play a part? How about the notion of fortified city from, for example, ancient Rome, or the biblical Jericho or Jerusalem? These and other questions will be answered in future studies, we can hope. The author himself in the conclusion humbly acknowledges that much research has yet to be done on the subject of fortified sacred architecture. This brief encounter, nevertheless, is an important beginning and an enjoyable read.

William Heyer is a practicing architect and educator in Columbus, Ohio.

Reviewed by Sandra Miesel

The saints faded out of Catholic culture in the wake of Vatican II. Ruthless pruning stripped their feasts from the sanctoral cycle and suppressed the unhistorical ones entirely. Churches banished saints’ images; Church institutions shed saints’ names. The fabric of popular religion frayed. And so the younger generation wanders through art museums and unrenovated churches vaguely wondering why that painted maiden is carrying two eyeballs on a plate.

Enter Fernando and Gioia Lanzi, founders and directors of the Centro Studi per la Cultura Popolare in Bologna. Since 1976, these two Italian scholars have been working to revitalize Catholic culture especially through its arts. Saints and Their Symbols is their invitation to renew acquaintance with a selection of popular saints and to contemplate the significance of sainthood for contemporary life.

The Lanzis assume minimal prior knowledge. Their concise yet comprehensive introductory essay discusses sanctity, the Church’s tradition of honoring it, the saints as patrons, the use and criticism of holy images, iconographic conventions, the value of popular imagery, and photography’s challenge to sacred art. Their scholarship is well grounded in Holy Scripture and the Catechism of the Catholic Church as well as hagiography and art history. Saints and Their Symbols is arranged as a historical atlas, giving short biographies of saints grouped by categories in rough chronological order. The biographies are the traditional ones, innocent of historical criticism, because these are the stories that inspired artists. (For a complementary view based on firmer facts, see the latest edition of Butler’s Lives of the Saints, also published by Liturgical Press.) Versions of each saint’s name are given in the principal European languages. The lists of iconography, attributes, and patronages include gems of quaint data. Who would picture St. Ambrose holding a tricord whip, or has heard that St. Willibrod is invoked against herpes, or knew that St. Francis de Sales protects makers of starch?

In keeping with its coffee-table format, Saints and Their Symbols is filled with crisply reproduced color illustrations, one or more per saint. These cover all possible media, from a wide variety of countries and eras, with a distinct bias toward the unfamiliar. Besides the artwork under each entry, the book includes alphabetically arranged cartoons of each saint in typical pose and an index of attributes.

A work of this sort is necessarily selective, but one can quibble with a few choices. How often will the reader need to identify St. Emidius of Ascoli or St. Leopold Mandic? Where is St. Edward the Confessor or St. Gertrude of Nivelles and her mice? Perhaps they are too little known in Italy for the Italian authors to notice. Beyond its charm and usefulness, Saints and Their Symbols glows with the recognition that all saints’ haloes share one origin: “God alone is holy, and from him alone can holiness come as a gift whereby we share in his life.”

Medievalist and Catholic journalist Sandra Miesel is co-author with Carl Olson of The Da Vinci Hoax (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004).
This visually stunning and carefully researched book encompasses some of the most significant Catholic churches of Chicago, addressing both their architectural and theological significance. Color photographs beautifully illustrate the insightful text. It is a book suitable for those interested in architectural achievement, theological awareness, local history, or those who simply desire to glory in the visual beauty of Chicago’s historic churches.
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