The “ars celebrandi” is meant as an invitation, not to some sort of theater or spectacle, but to an interiority that makes itself felt and becomes acceptable and evident to those present. Only if they see that this is not an external, showy “ars” – we are not actors! – but the expression of the journey of our hearts, which also draws their hearts, only then does the liturgy become beautiful, it becomes the communion of all those present with the Lord.

Benedict XVI

Most people would agree that television and film have become the primary cultural medium of expression today. Theater, dance and live music just cannot compete for people’s time in the same way as video, television and movies which are so convenient, economical and numerous. Thus it is not surprising that Christian churches of many stripes have sought to employ this cultural medium in the service of the gospel. In fact, it could be argued that the Church has not done enough to employ medium of film today.

But what of video in the service of liturgy? Is the use of video necessary to make the liturgy relevant and to spice up the mass? I am told that there are dioceses in the west where video screens are built-in to churches like giant side altars. In other places, video cameras and screens help the faithful to watch processions or baptisms, not unlike the behind the scenes cameras on the David Letterman show. I even have the sneaking suspicion that some people believe that it is necessary to see a baptism for the sacrament to be valid. No early Christian baptisteries here please, with the catechumens journeying into a separate building for their receiving of new life – we want to see close ups of the whole event. Mystery is old fashioned – what the people want today is full disclosure.

The phenomena of televising Protestant mega churches and outdoor papal masses has existed for decades, and with their size it was only a matter of time that the Church would embrace the technology of the rock concert with large video screens showing close ups of the preacher or pope. Just as in sporting events, we have to compensate for the fact that people can get a better view at home on tv than they can in person. The use of large video screens at papal masses, though well intentioned, results in unfortunate situations such as the faithful watching the video screen rather than focusing on the actual liturgy taking place around them. Then there is the example of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City where tv monitors were attached to the columns in the side aisles so that the faithful sitting there could see everything. What is more distracting, being in a glorious Catholic church in Manhattan and not being able to see the priest at the pulpit, or being in the same church and seeing ten priests and ten pulpits?

In previous eras, a bishop asked his priests from time to time to read a letter, preach on a special theme, or talk about the diocesan campaign from the pulpit. Today, the bishop can bypass his priest and provide a larger than life delivery directly to all the people through the medium of video. Instead of a sermon on the readings today, we are entertained by a jazzy show with the successor to the apostles as actor. Ultimately, the use of video calls into question the meaning and purpose of the liturgy. Is it something we receive and participate in or is it something we produce and watch? If it is a show that we produce then we can learn from the Protestant seeker churches who do whatever it takes to get the message across. Typically this results in a couple of foci not unlike the Late Show – the person of the preacher balanced by the band who give us jokes and musical interludes, on a stage with a lightshow and video clips. As we follow the lead of “Mega-churches,” Catholic churches more and more resemble in architecture, disposition and tenor a religious entertainment show.

Perhaps the most important criticism of video in church is that it helps to destroy any sense of prayer or sacred character in the mass. It is an interruption of the flow of the liturgy, by religious entertainment, of our worship of the Triune God. Any solemnity that was there in the church previously is out the window once the video starts. At the beginning of the show, ahem presentation, the priest and acolytes non-process out of the sanctuary, the screen comes down, the lights dim, and we focus our attention solely on the screen (not on the altar, the tabernacle, the angels or saints in glory, or the Lord crucified). If the video takes the place of the sermon, we lose any connection to the scriptures. The music and piped in sound can be jarring and, if in the service of fundraising, are normally of a style more appropriate for advertising than for worship.

It would be better to show the video after mass and preferably in the parish hall. Then we would not confuse the people by pretending that the video is part of the heavenly liturgy. Of course you would lose some people, because given the option many would prefer not to watch. “We came to mass to pray, to fulfill our obligation, but not to see a second rate video” they would say. Of course, others of us will be happy to watch it, and some may ask to take the dvd home and watch it there (as long as they return it within five days).

The church in the modern world is a cultural building, but it is also a counter-cultural place. It is a place where we can actually retreat from the bombardment of video and other technological sensations. The church should be a place of prayer, silence and permanent beauty. Everywhere we go there is ubiquitous pop music, powerpoints and television screens vying for our attention. The house of God, sans ipod and cell phone, is one of the few places we can be caught up into something greater than ourselves and our need to be distracted by the hum of information, news and noise. And though it may seem most difficult for the youth around us, they are the ones most in need of a video-free experience. According to Monsignor Stuart Swetland, director of the Newman center at the University of Illinois, the “millennials” are very incarnational when it comes to the faith. The world that they have grown up in is made up of so much virtual reality that they have a hunger for a tactile reality: for crucifixes, icons, candles and incense.

This is where the Church needs to do what she does best, including in her music, preaching, art and architecture. It is ludicrous to argue that video provides a twenty-first century version of the paintings on the Sistine chapel or stained glass windows. The moving picture is by definition transitory, without stability or integration with the architecture. Religious statuary or paintings (even if of varying quality) can become friends and patrons, reminding us of the heavenly hosts who intercede for us and who worship with us. A fleeting image has no lasting presence. No matter how wonderfully it is edited, it can never become an icon for veneration.

Finally, the use of video in church seems to indicate a lack of respect for the house of God, and to fight against the nature of the church as a holy place. There are many good things which are inappropriate to do inside a church, i.e. basketball games, square dancing, superbowl parties, or massage therapy. Yet Christians who build multipurpose spaces for worship promote all of these within them, along with the use of video. The use of audio visuals by the Church is certainly here to stay, and will likely grow in sophistication and influence. Yet if they are to remain places “distinct from the ordinary, and therefore possessing a special and unique dignity” in the words of Josef Pieper, our churches should remain video free.

Duncan Stroik
November 2006
Sacred Architecture

2006 Issue 12

Contents

Editorial

2  ♦ Imago Dei, Imago Video ............................................................... Duncan Stroik

News & Letters

4  ♦ Urban Churches selling "air rights" ♦ Russian Orthodox Church built in Rome ♦ Benedict Praises Art ♦
    ♦ Mosaics Completed in National Shrine Basilica ♦ Kneeling in Mass banned in California ♦
    ♦ Basilicas declared in Texas and Wisconsin ♦ Sullivan designed church burns ♦ Assisi restoration complete ♦

Articles

12  ♦ Chorus Angelorum: Locating Musical Ministers in the Church Interior ....................... Steven Semes
16  ♦ Quinlan Terry: The Survival of Classicism ................................................................. Duncan Stroik
20  ♦ Built Form of Theology: The Natural Sympathies of Catholicism and Classicism .... Denis McNamara
25  ♦ A Transcendent Canopy: The Positive Role of the Church in Our Second Cities ....... W. Bradford Wilcox
26  ♦ Naïskos: The Miniature Domed Temples Inside the Churches of Corfu .................... Richard Economakis
28  ♦ Beyond Basilicas: Centralized Churches of Early Christianity ................................. Sandra Miesel

Documentation

29  ♦ "The Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament" .............................................................. His Holiness Benedict XVI

Books

31  ♦ A Benediction of Place by Clyde F. Crews ................................................................. Reviewed by Anne Husted Burleigh
32  ♦ Gaspard Fossati; Aya Sofia Constantinople CD-ROM by Octavo Editions ............... Reviewed by William Heyer
33  ♦ Architecture for the Shroud by John Beldon Scott ................................................. Reviewed by Thomas Norman Raykovich
35  ♦ St. Peter's in the Vatican by William Tronzo .............................................................. Reviewed by Duncan Stroik

Www.sacredarchitecture.org

Journal of the Institute for Sacred Architecture

The Institute for Sacred Architecture is a non-profit organization made up of architects, clergy, educators and others interested in the discussion of significant issues related to contemporary Catholic architecture. Sacred Architecture is published bi-annually for $9.95.

©2006 The Institute for Sacred Architecture.

Address manuscripts and letters to the Editor:

EDITOR
Duncan Stroik
P.O. Box 556
Notre Dame IN 46556
voice: (574) 232-1783
email: editor@sacredarchitecture.org

ADVISORY BOARD
John Burgee, FAIA
Most Rev. Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M., Cap.
Rev. Cassian Folsom, O.S.B
Dr. Ralph McInerny
Thomas Gordon Smith, AIA

PRODUCTION
Erik Bootsma
Greta Schilling
Jamie LaCourt
Tony Bajuyo
Helena Tomko

WWW.SACREDARCHITECTURE.ORG
St. Patrick’s Church in Kansas City is being reborn by the work of the Institute of Christ the King and a Latin Mass community in the Missouri city.

Old St. Patrick’s Church in Kansas City, after years of neglect is being restored with help a Latin Mass community. The Institute of Christ the King, granted the church by Bishop Robert W. Finn, is restoring the neglected downtown church to house a growing Latin Mass congregation. Because of decreased residential population in the downtown area, the parish was suppressed in 1959 and the church became an oratory for the celebration of Mass under the care of the cathedral. The community was formed in 1994 and has over 200 members. In an ironic twist, the church will be outfitted with a salvaged altar, altar rails, ambo and baptismal font that were taken from a church recently closed in Boston.

Pope Benedict XVI in June of 2006 made a call for traditional sacred music. The Pontiff stated that sacred polyphony “is a legacy that must be carefully conserved, maintained alive and made known.” The Pope also exhorted the audience at a concert held in his honor that “an authentic updating of sacred music cannot occur except in line with the great tradition of the past, of Gregorian Chant, and of sacred polyphony.” Benedict also explained how “the ecclesial community has always promoted and supported those who investigate new expressive ways without rejecting the past, the history of the human spirit, which is also the history of its dialogue with God.”

The first Russian Orthodox church in Rome was blessed this May by Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad. The Russian orthodox church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr was built at the Russian Embassy in Italy on the Gianiculum Hill not far from the St. Peter’s Basilica. The construction was licensed in June 2002 with the Embassy’s assistance, and the works began in summer 2003. The cross and the domes were blessed and installed later in March 2006. The necessity of the construction of the first Orthodox church in the Eternal City where many martyrs had shed their blood is explained by the presence of numerous Russian orthodox believers in Rome. The idea to build an Orthodox church in the capital of Italy first appeared in the 19th century, but the Revolution impeded the project.

Two major U.S. archdioceses have announced plans or recommendations to close dozens of parishes, a response to declining numbers of priests and shifts in demographics. The New York Archdiocese said in March of 2006 that it is bracing for a major reorganization, recommending the closing of 31 parishes and 14 schools. In Michigan, the Detroit Archdiocese also in March announced plans to close or merge 16 parishes, most of them in or near the city, under a five-year reorganization plan. Other small congregations in the city and elsewhere will share pastors under the reorganization plan. The changes will reduce the number of parishes from the current 306 to 290.

Mission San Miguel Arcangel is one of the Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places for 2006 by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Mission, founded in 1797 by Franciscan missionaries to preach to the native Indians, is considered the best preserved Spanish Mission church in California. One of the 21 Spanish Missions in California, San Miguel suffered severe damage from an earthquake in 2003 and is in need of major repairs.

The Christian Science church in Boston will vacate two of its three headquarters buildings on the church’s renowned Back Bay campus and has cut its annual $190 million budget by almost half and reduced its staff by 40 percent. The church will also sell two former homes of founder Mary Baker Eddy. The Eddy homes, in the Chestnut Hill neighborhood of Newton and in Lynn, were used as museums until about two years ago. The church is drastically cutting expenses to adjust to declining revenues and membership. It is also reallocating more of the funds it has toward its spiritual and teaching mission.

Mission San Miguel Arcangel in California is in need of serious repairs due to damage from a recent earthquake.
After two years of restoration work, the United States’ first cathedral reopened with grand public ceremony and cannon fire. The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary reopened November 4th after the completion of a privately funded two-year, $32 million restoration and renovation project.

Three cannon volleys fired from Baltimore’s Fort McHenry as the doors swung open and the historic cathedral’s bells rang to mark the reopening ceremony. Speakers, such as Father George William Rutler of New York and Papal Biographer George Weigel were on hand to speak of the importance of the Basilica in the history of religious freedom and the Catholic faith in America.

The Basilica was the focus of a week of special events, religious services, and other festivities which culminated in a procession of America’s Catholic bishops into the Basilica for a special celebratory Mass on November 12.

The Basilica was the first metropolitan cathedral constructed in America after the adoption of the Constitution. Two Americans guided the Basilica’s original design and architecture: John Carroll, the country’s first bishop, later Archbishop of Baltimore, and cousin of Charles Carroll, who signed the Declaration of Independence; and Benjamin Henry Latrobe, an architect of the U.S. Capitol and a father of American architecture.

Holy Cross Catholic Church in New York recently sold its air rights to a developer to build 50 stories of luxury apartments.

Lourdes still draws crowds at the Grotto where the Blessed Virgin is said to have appeared to St. Bernadette. The town and Basilica built over the grotto, where the miraculous “Lourdes Water” sprang forth, still draws about 6 million visitors a year and the numbers grow yearly.

The new St. Florian’s Church in Munich Germany is an unusual exercise in ecumenism, as it was built on the same lot with the new Lutheran Church of Sophia. While both churches have their own sanctuary, pastoral offices and halls, they share a bell tower and the common entry plaza.

Urban Churches in the U.S. are looking to selling their “air rights” as a means to generate revenue. A crunch on open space in many cities has developers courting churches with multimillion-dollar offers to buy their property and sometimes even the air above their heads. After decades of declining membership, many congregations are using their biggest asset -- their property -- to rethink their ministry and presence in U.S. cities. The mainline Protestant churches, including Episcopal, United Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran congregations are the predominant participants. Unlike Catholic churches, in which bishops and cardinals have the final say, the semi-independent status of mainline congregations lets them play the market more freely.
Restorers have replaced the last fresco fragments in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, more than eight years after an earthquake sent parts of the ceiling crashing to the floor. With the aid of computer technology, experts were able to recompose most of the damaged images -- including an archway with Sts. Francis and Clare, and a rib vault decorated with a depiction of St. Jerome at his desk. St. Matthew did not fare as well: His image today, high above the main altar, is a series of chromatic stains against a white background. When the vault section fell in September 1997, four people below were killed. Cimabue’s fresco of St. Matthew exploded into more than 120,000 pieces, many of them smaller than a fingernail. In the end, only about 20 percent of the original pieces of the St. Matthew fresco could be replaced. From the floor of the basilica, the image looks like a faint shadow on a white background. In previous eras, the Church would have hired a talented painter to repaint the frescoes, but restorers have chosen to leave the destroyed portions blank.

Hurricane Katrina hit hard not only residents of the Gulf, but also its churches. The statistics are staggering for sacred edifices in the South. Between 300 and 400 Southern Baptist churches were damaged by the hurricane. Of those, about 100 were destroyed. The Roman Catholic Diocese of Biloxi had its parishes, schools, deaf center and senior citizens apartments insured for $35 million on one policy, but Katrina did $70 million in damage. Ten churches were destroyed in the Diocese and another 10 were severely damaged. Other losses include St. Marks Episcopal Church, founded in 1846 and frequented by Confederate President Jefferson Davis, all that is left of the historic church is a bare slab of concrete.

According to a study almost 90% of French citizens identify themselves as Catholic, but only 5% actually attend Mass, and 60% say they never attend Mass. Muslims now number 15 million and make up 5% of the population throughout Europe, where many fret about the future of a Christian Europe.

An 80-year-old Romanesque church in St. Louis was demolished this past spring despite preservationists efforts to save the church. The Archdiocese of St. Louis sold St. Aloysius Gonzaga last fall to a local developer, who plan to replace the complex’s six buildings with 25 single-family residences. Built in 1926, the church closed last year, along with 29 other Catholic churches, after parish enrollment decreased to 315 families. The church’s highest enrollment was 800 families in the 1950s.

Ground was broken outside Naples Florida in February for Ave Maria Town, a 5,000-acre, 11,000-home community to be built around Ave Maria University, expresses founder Tom Monaghan’s desire to create a family-friendly atmosphere, one free of morally problematic elements such as pornography, contraceptives and abortion. According to Monaghan, Ave Maria Town will reflect traditional family values and retailers will be asked to refrain from practices opposed to Catholic teachings. Monaghan, who made his fortune as founder of the Domino’s Pizza chain, founded Ave Maria College near Ann Arbor, Mich., in 1998, but later elected to move the institution to Florida, prompting a mix of praise and criticism even from his own faculty and administration. He currently is seeking board approval to move the Ave Maria School of Law to the Naples area as well.

The World Trade Center Memorial, “Reflecting Absence” will cost nearly $1 billion to complete. The estimated $972 million includes the cost of the memorial, its museum and related infrastructure improvements. The original estimate was for $500 million but increased complexities of the project as well as increased construction costs have nearly doubled the price tag. The money spent on the minimalist abstract design makes it one of the most expensive memorial projects ever built in America. In comparison other monuments have received far less attention than paid to the site, for example, the Vietnam Memorial, $8.5 million; and the World War II memorial for $182 million. Considering what has been spent on the largest Catholic churches in this country is revealing as well; Our Lady Queen of the Angels, was recently completed in Los Angeles for $201 million.
in California. Maria de Ovila will soon be reborn again, for public reception. Meeting hall for the Monks as well as a space original purpose, as a chapter house, a monastic building will again serve its Monks acquired the stones. When completed abandoned gothic structure disassembled and shipped to America to be rebuilt as part of his fantasy castle in Northern California. Hampered by the Depression his vision of his 1000-year-old stones to be raised has never realized and the stones were abandoned in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco until 1994 when the Cistercian Monks acquired the stones. When completed the monastic building will again serve its original purpose, as a chapter house, a meeting cell for the Monks as well as a space for public reception.

The 12th century monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila will soon be reborn again, in California. The Monks of the Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina California have been slowly raising the 1000-year-old stones to reconstruct the Spanish monastery’s chapter house. The chapter house, originally constructed around 1200AD, stood until 1931 when William Randolph Hearst had the abandoned gothic structure disassembled and shipped to America to be rebuilt as part of his fantasy castle in Northern California. Hampered by the Depression his vision was never realized and the stones were abandoned in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco until 1994 when the Cistercian Monks acquired the stones. When completed the monastic building will again serve its original purpose, as a chapter house, a meeting hall for the Monks as well as a space for public reception.

Kneeling “is clearly rebellion, grave disobedience and mortal sin,” Father Martin Tran, pastor at St. Mary’s by the Sea, told his flock in a recent church bulletin. The Diocese of Orange backs Tran’s anti-kneeling edict. At least two altar boys, the parish altar servers coordinator and three members of the parish council have been dismissed from their duties for kneeling at the wrong time, according to parishioners. Angered by the anti-kneeling edict, a group calling itself “Save Saint Mary’s” began distributing leaflets calling for its return outside church each Sunday. Tran responded in the church bulletin with a series of strident weekly statements condemning what he called “despising the authority of the local bishop” by refusing his orders to stand, and calling the disobedience a mortal sin, considered the worst kind of offense (usually reserved for sins such as murder.) Tran sent letters to 55 kneeling parishioners “inviting” them to leave the parish and the diocese for, among other things, “creating misleading confusion, division and chaos in the parish by intentional disobedience and opposition to the current liturgical norms.” Recipients of Tran’s banishment letter said they have declined his “invitation” to depart.

In the Diocese of Saginaw Michigan all parishes will be required to install kneelers by 2009. Bishop Robert Carlson published the directive in a pastoral letter directing the implementation of the General Instruction on the Roman Missal.

Archaeologists repairing a Roman catacomb have discovered an unusual network of underground burial chambers containing the elegantly dressed corpses of more than 1,000 people. The rooms appear to date back to the second century and are thought to be a place of early Christian burial. The corpses, dressed in fine clothes embroidered with gold thread, were carefully wrapped in sheets and covered in lime. The burial chambers were found accidentally in the Catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus, a catacomb that is closed to the public.

Wisconsin has reason to be proud as it is home of one of America’s newest Basilicas. In July Bishop Timothy Dolan announced that the Vatican has declared the National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians a Minor Basilica. In a mass celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Discalced Carmelites presence at the Shrine, locally known as “Holy Hill,” Bishop Dolan surprised the congregation with the news. The designation was made after the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship found the church to be both venerable and the center of “vibrant piety.”

The newly designated Basilica Shrine of Mary, Help to Christians in Wisconsin.

St. Joseph Basilica in Alameda California will be renovated by a San Francisco architect known for his collaboration with liturgical consultant Richard Vosko. The Bay Area basilica has hired John Goldman of Goldman Architects to renovate the Church, which was designated a Minor Basilica in the 70’s. The plans for the renovation include moving the altar to the center of the space “to allow most worshippers to be within 50 feet of the celebrant” and the arrangement of rows of chairs in an arc around the altar.

The 12th century monastery of Santa Maria de Ovila will soon be reborn again, in California. The Monks of the Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina California have been slowly raising the 1000-year-old stones to reconstruct the Spanish monastery’s chapter house. The chapter house, originally constructed around 1200AD, stood until 1931 when William Randolph Hearst had the abandoned gothic structure disassembled and shipped to America to be rebuilt as part of his fantasy castle in Northern California. Hampered by the Depression his vision was never realized and the stones were abandoned in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco until 1994 when the Cistercian Monks acquired the stones. When completed the monastic building will again serve its original purpose, as a chapter house, a meeting hall for the Monks as well as a space for public reception.

Kneeling “is clearly rebellion, grave disobedience and mortal sin,” Father Martin Tran, pastor at St. Mary’s by the Sea, told his flock in a recent church bulletin. The Diocese of Orange backs Tran’s anti-kneeling edict. At least two altar boys, the parish altar servers coordinator and three members of the parish council have been dismissed from their duties for kneeling at the wrong time, according to parishioners. Angered by the anti-kneeling edict, a group calling itself “Save Saint Mary’s” began distributing leaflets calling for its return outside church each Sunday. Tran responded in the church bulletin with a series of strident weekly statements condemning what he called “despising the authority of the local bishop” by refusing his orders to stand, and calling the disobedience a mortal sin, considered the worst kind of offense (usually reserved for sins such as murder.) Tran sent letters to 55 kneeling parishioners “inviting” them to leave the parish and the diocese for, among other things, “creating misleading confusion, division and chaos in the parish by intentional disobedience and opposition to the current liturgical norms.” Recipients of Tran’s banishment letter said they have declined his “invitation” to depart.

In the Diocese of Saginaw Michigan all parishes will be required to install kneelers by 2009. Bishop Robert Carlson published the directive in a pastoral letter directing the implementation of the General Instruction on the Roman Missal.

Archaeologists repairing a Roman catacomb have discovered an unusual network of underground burial chambers containing the elegantly dressed corpses of more than 1,000 people. The rooms appear to date back to the second century and are thought to be a place of early Christian burial. The corpses, dressed in fine clothes embroidered with gold thread, were carefully wrapped in sheets and covered in lime. The burial chambers were found accidentally in the Catacomb of Sts. Peter and Marcellinus, a catacomb that is closed to the public.

Wisconsin has reason to be proud as it is home of one of America’s newest Basilicas. In July Bishop Timothy Dolan announced that the Vatican has declared the National Shrine of Mary, Help of Christians a Minor Basilica. In a mass celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Discalced Carmelites presence at the Shrine, locally known as “Holy Hill,” Bishop Dolan surprised the congregation with the news. The designation was made after the Vatican’s Congregation for Divine Worship found the church to be both venerable and the center of “vibrant piety.”

Sacred Architecture - Issue 12 2006
A colonial era church in Brooklyn New York has been saved from the wrecking ball. The New Utrecht Reformed Church used during the Revolutionary War by British soldiers as a hospital and prison, constructed in 1700 and rebuilt in 1828 using its original materials, was deemed in 2003 structurally unsound and closed indefinitely is being restored by a group of local volunteers. In April work began on an effort to repair the church and reopen it to the public. The Friends of Historic New Utrecht (FHNU) has raised a significant portion of the estimated $2.6 million required to bolster the flagging structure and restore deteriorated stonework and other historic elements. Both the church and cemetery, where veterans from the Revolution through World War II are buried, are city and state landmarks and are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Catholic Church now officially owns Prague’s St. Vitus Cathedral after winning a suit against the Czech government that had claimed ownership.

The Gothic cathedral in the Czech Republic’s capital belongs to the Catholic Church, a municipal court here ruled in June 2006, upholding a lower court verdict delivered the previous October. St. Vitus Cathedral was nationalized under a 1954 communist decree. A 1994 court decision to restore church ownership was overturned on appeal in 1995 after protests from Czech legislators. The dispute between the Church and State for the valuable real estate lasted for more than 13 years. Celebrating the victory Miloslav Cardinal Vlk stated “This is a clear response to those who claimed, using communist vocabulary, that the cathedral belongs to all the people and to the nonsense that the church could purloin the national heritage by taking it away to the Vatican.”

Restorers plan to return angel statues found in the crypt of Baltimore’s Basilica of the Assumption to the altar as part of the basilica’s restoration.

Francis Cardinal Arinze in a letter to the Neocatechetenal Way advised the group of charismatic Catholics that some of its liturgical practices were in need of serious reform. The Way, which was founded by the Spanish Artist Kiko Argüello in the sixties as a “Word of God-Liturgy-Community”, that seeks to lead people to fraternal communion and mature faith has been criticized for its non-traditional liturgy and practices. Cardinal Arinze instructed the Way to “accept and follow the liturgical books approved by the Church, without omitting or adding anything” and also to accept other “clarifications and guidelines.”

Particular guidelines included the limitation of “testimonials” and “dialogues” of congregants during the homily. Also to be phased out over a two year period is the group’s practice of communion received while seated around a table. The practice is according to Arinze’s letter to “to pass from the widespread manner of receiving Holy Communion in its communities to the normal way in which the entire Church receives Holy Communion.”

Altars, confessional, and baptismal fonts are a hot new market in antiques. Rising on the heels of the recent spate of church closings across the country, the market is booming for religious items salvaged from urban churches. Items ranging from full altars to chalices and tabernacles are being bought and sold on the market at a brisk pace. Many of the buyers are private owners looking for “cool” items, like a Las Vegas casino owner who installed an altar on the gambling floor and a woman looking for a tabernacle to store her jewelry. Not all of the items are subjected to such desecration, as many dealers will only sell to other churches. For churches growing in the south and west, this has proven to be a boon, giving rapidly growing parishes to quickly outfit their church with salvaged altars and even vestments.

The crisis that arose in the Church after the Second Vatican Council wasn’t due to the conciliar documents, but rather in their interpretation, says Benedict XVI. According to Benedict XVI, the reception of the Council’s messages took place according to the first interpretation is the one the Pope called “hermeneutics of discontinuity and rupture” “between the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar Church.” According to this view, what is important about the Council is not its texts but the spirit of renewal brought to the Church, the Holy Father said. This view, he observed, “has often been able to make use of the media’s liking, and also of a part of modern theology.” The other interpretation is “the hermeneutics of reform,” which was proposed by the Popes who opened and closed the Council, John XXIII and Paul VI, and which is bearing fruits “in a silent but ever more visible way,” says Benedict XVI. According to this view, the objective of the Council and of every reform in the Church is to “transmit the doctrine purely and fully, without diminutions or distortions,” the Pope said the two interpretations that “confronted each other and have had disputes between them.”

Two long-lost angels, from the National Shrine of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Baltimore, will return to their place of honor in the sanctuary of the historic cathedral when the building is rededicated in November. The angels, forgotten for 60 years after being consigned to the undercroft, are believed to have been crafted in the early 1800s and were removed from the basilica in the 1940s. Originally, there were four angels; two remain missing. Jim Adajian, a Baltimore wood craftsman, has been carefully restoring the angels.

Age, neglect and moisture in the undercroft contributed to the deterioration of the angels causing cracks, chipped paint and gaps in pieces of the wood. One angel is missing both feet. Mark Potter, executive director of the Basilica Historic Trust, said he can’t wait to get the angels “back to the altar where they belong.” “By the way,” he said, “if anyone’s seen the two missing angels, we wouldn’t mind getting those back, too.”

Archaeologists have found an ancient pyramid beneath the Good Friday Hill in Mexico City. The site, where Catholic faithful have reenacted the Passion of Christ for more than 150 years, was thought to be a hill but turns out to be a pyramid built by ancient Aztecs who also built nearby Teotihuacan. The hill has been the site of an annual procession since 1833 when locals attributed the subsidence of a plague to a statue of Christ.
The masterpieces and thousands of artifacts on display at the Vatican Museums “are not simply impressive monuments of a distant past,” but represent the church’s unwavering faith in the beauty of God, Pope Benedict XVI told a group of the museums’ benefactors. He said that for the hundreds of thousands of visitors who flock to the museums and the Sistine Chapel every year, the artistic treasures housed there “stand as a perennial witness to the church’s unchanging faith in the triune God,” who, according to St. Augustine, is “beauty ever ancient, ever new.” The pope made his comments during a June 1 audience with members of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums. The group was visiting Rome to mark the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Vatican Museums. The arts group, which helps fund the museums’ conservation and restoration projects, has regional chapters in Washington and 15 U.S. states, as well as in Canada and Europe.

†

A study shows that Mass attendance rates have remained steady despite recent crises in the Catholic Church. The study by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate showed that in the US Catholics make up 23% of all adults, and of the self-identified Catholics 33% attend Mass weekly.

†

America’s newest Catholic College has started to accept students for its first classes starting in 2007. Wyoming Catholic College in Lander will begin classes at Holy Rosary Church in Lander before moving to its new campus outside the town. The College plans a chapel as the focus of campus, the chapel planned to hold the entire student body, faculty and staff will seat 450. The chapel will also have two devotional chapels dedicated to St. Benedict as well as to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

†

Fire claimed a landmark Adler and Sullivan Church on the south side of Chicago in January of 2006. Pilgrim Baptist Church caught fire from a roofers torch during repairs and was reduced only the exterior stone walls surrounding the charred remains of the church. Originally built in 1890 as a Synagogue to serve the area’s large Jewish population, but with changes in the neighborhood the edifice was bought by a predominantly black Baptist congregation in the 1930’s. The church has been called the birthplace of modern gospel music, as many of its early stars performed there. The church was known for its vaulted ceilings and ornaments, as well as its excellent acoustics.

†

Heaven on Earth: Theology and Design of Catholic Church Buildings, a theological and practical conference on how to envision the church building as a sacrament of heaven, was held October 25-27th at the Liturgical Institute of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundein Seminary. The conference included sessions on thinking of architecture sacramentally, choosing a traditional architect, finding craftspeople, acoustics and music, the nature of the image, fundraising, and a beginning-to-end walkthrough of a church project. Speakers included Dr. David Fagerberg, Ethan Anthony, Jeff Greene, Denis McNamara, and Frs. Thomas Loya and Mark Daniel Kirby, O. Cist.

†

The recently completed Our Lady of Loreto Catholic Church in Foxfield, Colorado has won the AIA Colorado Merit Award. The church features a 1300 person capacity hall, grade school gymnasium, rectory and administration buildings, as well as a convent for 16 nuns. The project was completed in at a cost of $15 million, was designed by David Owen Tryba Architects of Foxfield Colorado.

†

The World Monuments Fund listed over a dozen churches and religious structures on their list of the 100 most endangered monuments of the world. Among those listed are the Venetian church of Saint Blaise in Dubrovnik Croatia, and the eight Pimera Alta Missions of Mexico. Of particular note as also threatened are the Temple of Portunus, also known as Fortuna Virilis, one of the most influential Temples of Rome, as well as the Dutch Reformed Church of Newburgh New York, built by the architect of New York’s Federal hall Alexander Jackson Davis. The Fund publishes the list every two years to call “international attention to cultural heritage sites around the world threatened by neglect, vandalism, armed conflict, or natural disaster.”

†

Among the ongoing celebrations for the 500th Anniversary of the Vatican Museums is the presentation of the newly restored pictorial cycle of the Room of the Mysteries in the Borgia Apartment, which was painted by Bernardino di Betto, called il Pintoricchio. The Room of the Mysteries is situated near the large Room of the Pontiffs and has a double cross-vault ceiling. In the vault are painted medallions with half-figures of the Kings David and Solomon and of the Prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Malachias, Sophonias, Micheas and Joel. The restoration of this Room started in 2002 and represents only the first stage of a more complex project involving all the pictorial cycles painted by Pintoricchio and his workshop in the Rooms of the Borgia Apartment. The restoration project was made possible thanks to the generosity of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums, in particular of the Chapters of Florida, California and Minnesota.
baptisms however remained steady. Infant baptisms fell by 34,000, though adult First Communions dropped by 40,000 and number of confirmations declined by 15,000, recognized marriages in the US last year. The but yet there were 11,000 fewer Church-
population grew by 1.3 million to 69,135,254, US diocese’s annual reports, Catholic the Kenedy Directory, a directory of every sacraments has decreased.

**NEWS**

In the US, Catholics increased in number from 2005 to 2006, but the number receiving sacraments has decreased. According to the Kenedy Directory, a directory of every US diocese’s annual reports, Catholic population grew by 1.3 million to 69,135,254, but yet there were 11,000 fewer Church-recognized marriages in the US last year. The number of confirmations declined by 15,000, First Communions dropped by 40,000 and infant baptisms fell by 34,000, though adult baptisms however remained steady.

It is not just in America that churches face the wrecking ball. In England and throughout Great Britain churches face dwindling attendance, one study had shown that only 7% of Brits are regular church-goers and that little money is spent on church maintenance. It is estimated that the cost of repairing all 14,500 of England’s listed places of worship - of which 80% are Church of England - will be £925m over the next five years.

Attending religious services at least once a week can add two to three years to your life according to a new study. That’s not as significant an extension as regular physical exercise (three to five years), but is telling enough to suggest a link between faith and longevity. “While this study was not intended for use in clinical decision making,” said study leader Daniel Hall, a resident in general surgery at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, “these findings tell us that there is something to examine further.” The next question is whether attending daily mass will add 14 to 20 years to one’s life?

The downtown Houston skyline has a new look after construction crews lifted an 80,000-pound dome to the top of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. The move marks a milestone in the construction of the new cathedral in that it signifies the completion of the highest point of the structure. The cruciform co-cathedral will be a masterpiece of art and faith. On April 18, 1506 the cornerstone of the current basilica was laid by Pope Julius II and through the next 130 years until its completion a plethora of the world’s greatest architects worked on the project. The basilica, was built above the tomb of the Apostle Peter, who by tradition was crucified in Rome, was built to replace the previous basilica built by the Roman Emperor Constantine. The architects who have worked on the basilica include Donato Bramante, Antonio da Sangallao, Raphael, Carlo Maderno, Michelangelo and Gian Lorenzo Bernini.

Pope Benedict XVI has granted basilica status to St. Anthony Cathedral in Beaumont Texas this August. The honorary title makes St. Anthony, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary next year, the fourth basilica in Texas and one of about 60 in the United States. Other Texas churches that have been named basilicas are St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica in Galveston, Basilica of the National Shrine of the Little Flower in San Antonio and Basilica of Our Lady of San Juan Del Valle-National Shrine in San Juan. The Catholic Diocese of Beaumont requested in September 2005 that the Vatican consider the designation.

The rebuilding of a Catholic church in northern Vietnam after 40 years of decrepitude was seen as a sign of recovery of faith life and religious activities. Bishop Joseph Nguyen Van Yen of Phat Diem consecrated the new Ninh Binh parish church at a Mass April 20. The mass drew more than 5000 faithful including 70 priests. The day before the bishop ordained five priests at Phat Diem cathedral. Catholics make up about 6% of the population of the diocese. “It marks the recovery of the parish after 40 years in ruins” said the bishop.

In April Pope Benedict marked the 500th anniversary St. Peter’s Basilica calling the basilica a “masterpiece of art and faith.”

Mosaic from the Redemption dome of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

---

The new Redemption Dome mosaic in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington will be unveiled in September. The ceiling dome, the first part of a three-part project, is gold with 12-foot figures and four scenes of redemption. Part of the original intent for the shrine when it was constructed in the 1950s, the mosaic project began to be planned in 1999. When the project is completed, three ceiling domes will be filled with mosaic artwork. The theme of the first dome is redemption, featuring Christ’s temptation in the desert, crucifixion, descent into hell and resurrection. The other two domes, to be completed at a later date, will depict the Incarnation and the Trinity. The mosaic for the Redemption dome was designed by Leandro Miguel Velasco of the Rambusch Decorating Company in Italy based on the original 1958 design of John de Rosen. In all, the mosaic contains 2.4 million tiles and is 3,780 square feet.

The Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Houston

---

---

---

---
Patrick Keely

Dear Editor,

The name Keely in print always elicits peaked interest for the Keely Society. In Rory O’Donnell’s piece, Pugin in America, Sacred Architecture, Issue 11, 2006, the Pugin Society expert and writer, who is not unknown to us, mentions St. John the Evangelist Church (1854) in Providence, RI as by a John Keeley. Patrick C. Keely, America’s most prolific Catholic church architect was completing St. Joseph’s Church (1851-1855) in Providence, RI. St. Joseph’s incorporates a Pugin style similar to that of Pugin’s influence seen in Fordham University Chapel by William Rodrique. Patrick Keely did have a son John by 1854, but John was a wee lad of three! The spelling as Keeley only rings true when referring to Patrick’s 1st cousin, William Keely. William designed the noble edifice of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Louisville, Kentucky. William also designed ecclesiastical edifices in the Ohio area. William had a feud with the Bishop, who later contacted Patrick in Brooklyn to plan a more grand spire for the Louisville Cathedral. Our letters indicate Patrick corresponded with the Bishop, but a local architect tackled the task.

Perhaps the difference in names is a recording error as is found on Pg. 8 of that same issue when the acclaimed gothicist Ralph Adams Cram is referred to as Ralph Kram. Ralph Adams Cram designed the beautiful Fourth Presbyterian Church in Chicago, IL. The news item on Pg. 7 regarding Constantine Brumidi is also of great interest to the Keely Society. Brumidi did mural work for Patrick Keely, most notable in Holy Innocents Church, and St. Stephen/Our Lady of the Scapular, both in Manhattan. The latter was originally designed by James Renwick Jr. and faced 29th St. Patrick Keely was called upon to reverse the structure so the facade would be on 28th St., and redesign the interior with Brumidi’s work highlighted. A contemporary muralist working with Brumidi at the U. S. Capitol was Daniel Mueller. Mueller’s work for Keely stretches from St. Francis Xavier in Parkersburg, WV, all along the East coast to the Jesuit Church of the Gesu in Montreal, Canada. Daniel Mueller and his brother were neighbors of the Keely Family in Brooklyn.

Edward H. “Ted” Furey
President Keely Society
Verger, Holy Cross Cathedral, Boston, MA
Director, Holy Cross Cathedral Liturgical Treasury

Brides and Churches

Dear Editor,

Fr. Giles Dimock makes a good point in noting that brides have a sense of what a church should look like, at least one in which they wish to be married. Like many Catholics, they have a “sense” for wanting a long aisle, the external symbols of the church and a beautiful ceremony in a beautiful church on that special day.

With risk of having more than the bouquet thrown in my direction, I would not, however, carry this one step further in calling it a “sensus fidei.” As a pastor and witness to many marriages, I attest that often I must do everything in my power to bring some semblance of faith to wedding ceremonies. I am regularly confronted with the suggestion for symbols that have nothing to do with a sense of faith, music that is far from Christian and grooms that take no part in the planning. Like the article was titled, it seems to be about “brides and churches” and not “weddings in churches.” My sense of sacred can be offended by those who want to use the sacred building but resent being called to understand Catholic traditions and how they are celebrated there. I attempt to welcome these brides to experience the sacredness and beauty of our church buildings. This is a monumental task as they already have secular preconceptions of what should happen at a wedding there.

Rev. William J. Turner, KHS, PhD
Michigan
A s one trained and professionally experienced in both church music and architecture, I am especially interested in issues related to the role and placement of musicians within the physical setting of the liturgy. Here we are faced with a wide variety of possibilities, from the traditional unseen organist in a high loft above the west end of the nave to a seemingly random group of instrumentalists and vocalists—supported by a clutter of microphones and music stands—arrayed within or adjacent to the sanctuary. Any attempt to define general guidelines for the placement of liturgical musicians will depend on the types of musical expressions the particular community wishes to include. The other key factor is the architectural setting itself, and this admits of as much variety as the musical program, from traditional basilican naves to characterless “multipurpose” rooms to auditorium-style arrangements, all presenting numerous different interpretations of the domus ecclesiae, not to mention diverse formal conceptions and architectural styles.

P a r i s h e s  a n d  o t h e r communities either building new churches or remodeling existing ones should consider the placement of musicians and organs along with the location of the altar, tabernacle, and font and their relationship to the seating of the assembly. Just as the configuration of altar and pews will powerfully form our understanding of the character of the liturgical space and the respective roles of clergy and people, so the location of a choir and organ will either facilitate or inhibit a lively liturgical music program. But often the placement of music ministers does not receive the attention it deserves.

In this article, I will focus on the musical ministry of churches with a “traditional” understanding of both architecture and music. By this I mean an architectural setting characterized by historical European types and styles—such as the classical, the Gothic, and their variants—and musical expressions derived from European liturgical music traditions, from Gregorian chant through polyphony, to the classical repertory, to modern composers like Olivier Messiaen and Arvo Pärt. Within these contexts we can generalize about the role of the choir and organ and suggest one or more preferred locations for them within the worship space. First let us look at some historical patterns relevant to our inquiry.

Catholic liturgical music has, for the most part, been a matter of music provided by specialist musicians, choirs, organists, and instrumentalists. With a few exceptions and until recently, the lay congregation in Catholic churches has not been an active participant in the music of the liturgy, although in some parishes prior to the Second Vatican Council the assembly would typically join the choir in chanting the ordinaries of the Mass and perhaps in a familiar processional and recessional hymn. Where choirs and organs have been used, they have tended historically to follow one of two models: the monastic choir and the court chapel choir.

The chanting monks (or nuns) of a religious community—especially in their singing of the Daily Office—provide a special paradigm, being in effect both choir and assembly in one. This body of singers, though occasionally expanded by visitors, may be thought of as a “choir of the whole assembly.” The English collegiate choir of men and boys (usually connected with a choir school) largely continues this model, still in use throughout the Anglican Communion and in numerous Roman Catholic communities under English cultural influence. In practice, outside actual religious communities, the collegiate-style choir is more often a specialized ministry that is both visually and musically distinct from the congregation, which, though it may be of considerable size, has a reduced musical role.

“Professional” musicians employed in cathedrals or court chapels—whether accompanying the liturgy with Renaissance polyphony or French “symphonic” organ music—were seen as ministers in their own right, albeit for hire, rather than as members of the assembly. Typically, these musicians were placed in an upper gallery or loft, out of sight of the congregation. While their location within the church might have been less prominent than the monks’ choir, these musicians remained both physically and musically distinct from the congregation as a whole.

Today, the placement of musicians in Catholic parish churches, cathedrals, and other worship spaces may be seen as some variation on one or other of these two models. For example, the placement of a choir in the part of a church historically termed the “choir” (i.e., between the crossing and the sanctuary in a Latin-cross basilican plan) reprises the monastic-collegiate pattern, while the choir in a side chapel near the sanctuary or in a loft at the west end of the nave follows the court chapel model. In either case, the musicians most often appear as vested ministers rather than as members...
One of the primary motifs of modern liturgical reform has been to encourage the assembly’s “active participation,” both in terms of the spoken word and through song. Perhaps an unstated ideal in much recent reflection about the worshipping community is that monastic “choir of the whole,” whose members participate fully in the liturgical celebration. If the only legitimate form of “active participation” is explicit external action, such as singing (and this premise has been questioned by many), we naturally want to encourage a greater musical role for the assembly. But where in preconciliar Catholic churches can one find examples of true “singing congregations”?

In truth, one has to look to the Protestant traditions, which historically placed greater emphasis on congregational hymnody. Consequently, since the Second Vatican Council, Catholic music ministers have borrowed heavily from their Protestant colleagues, both for models of the role of musicians in the liturgy and in the actual musical repertory used. (For example, a large proportion of the tunes—often with revised lyrics—in such mainstream Catholic hymnals as Worship are in fact drawn from the Anglican and Lutheran traditions.) Today, there is general agreement between Catholic church musicians and the clergy with whom they work to promote a “sung” liturgy that includes the contributions of trained musicians but also promotes that of the assembly as a whole. This goal is also supported by official Church documents, including the Sacred Constitution on the Liturgy and the General Instructions of the Roman Missal.

Among the factors influencing the placement and role of musicians in the Catholic liturgy is a widely expressed discomfort, especially among the clergy, with any suggestion or perception that musical offerings during the liturgy take on the character of a concert performance, a condition that would render the assembly a passive audience rather than a body engaged in “active participation.” Catholic church musicians rightly counter that the assembly derives benefits from music offered on its behalf, just as it does from words spoken in its name by a lector reading a lesson or a lay minister leading the prayers of intercession. In my experience, however, this particular conversation has proved inconclusive, and the role of musical ministers remains ambiguous. Their ministry requires them to lead the singing of the congregation and, at times, offer musical prayer on their behalf; but, in doing so, they are not to usurp the congregation’s role or allow their musical activity to become confused with or compete with the liturgical acts of the ministers in the sanctuary.

This ambiguity is reflected in official Church thinking on the placement of music ministers in the worship space. For example, in the document Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship (hereafter BLS), published by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2000, the authors point out that the general seating space within the church—the “nave”—is “not comparable to the audience’s space in a theater or public arena because in the liturgical assembly, there is no audience. Rather the entire congregation acts.” This seems straightforward enough, and the text continues: “The ministers of music could also be located in the body of the church since they lead the entire assembly in song as well as by the example of their reverent attention and prayer” (BLS 51). The bishops go on to say that “The ministers of music are most appropriately located in a place where they can be part of the assembly and have the ability to be heard. Occasions or physical situations may necessitate that the choir be placed in or near the sanctuary. In such circumstances, the placement of the choir should never crowd or overshadow the other ministers in the sanctuary nor should it distract from the liturgical action. (BLS 90)

The bishops recognize that musical ministers, except in monastic communities, are not clergy—they properly belong to the body of the faithful assembled in the nave rather than among the ministers in the sanctuary—and yet are specially delegated within the assembly by virtue not only of their musical contributions but by their “reverent attention and prayer” (not always a conspicuous attribute of lay choirs). The bishops do not suggest an ideal configuration or placement; rather, they recognize that while the musicians may sometimes find themselves in or near the sanctuary, their role is to support the song of the congregation.
without drawing attention away from the primary liturgical focus on the altar. While the bishops do not call for choirs to be literally embedded in the assembly, we can infer from their statement that they prefer a location for the choir that is either outside the sanctuary or does not intrude into the line of sight from the assembly to the altar.

Using the bishops’ statement as a guide, supplemented by some practical musical and acoustical considerations, let’s evaluate some of the historical choir locations seen in Catholic churches here in the United States and elsewhere. Do any examples drawn from historic practice satisfy both the bishops’ desiderata and make practical and musical sense at the same time?

In the English “collegiate” choir configuration mentioned earlier, the choristers occupy stalls facing each other across the main axis in a space between the chancel arch and crossing to the west and the sanctuary proper to the east. In both Catholic and Anglican settings following the Second Vatican Council’s reforms, the main altar has most often been relocated to the crossing or within the nave, while the choir remains in its former place. The old high altar may have become the tabernacle. The organ in such settings is typically placed in chambers flanking and above the choir on the triforium level.

An example of this pattern may be found in the beautiful church of St. Vincent Ferrer in New York, completed in 1918 and designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. The advantages of this arrangement include nearly optimal visual and acoustical conditions for the musicians themselves—including the organist. Choral blend and balance between choir and organ are easily achieved. With the altar now moved into the crossing, the choir is no longer interposed between the congregation and the altar. A disadvantage of the arrangement is the separation—not to say isolation—of the choir from the congregation. It is difficult to reconcile this with the bishops’ statement that the musicians “should clearly express that they are part of the assembly” (BLS 89). Many church musicians and congregation members also find it difficult to support and encourage congregational singing from a position in front of the assembly—a position still associated in many people’s minds with staged performance.

Another position for choir and organ follows a pattern often observed in non-
SACRED ARCHITECTURE - ISSUE 12 2006

its excellent music program specializing in Renaissance and baroque repertory. The choir is arranged in a circle next to the organ console, while the organ chamber is above, speaking into the sanctuary and nave as well as the chapel. (A similar chapel on the opposite side of the sanctuary serves as a Blessed Sacrament chapel.) This arrangement succeeds admirably with respect to musical support for the liturgy itself, but at the sacrifice of a strong connection between choir and congregation. The choir is partly concealed from the view of the assembly, and from this position it cannot lend optimal support to congregational singing, although the intimate scale and felicitous acoustics of the interior at Corpus Christi mitigate this somewhat. At least the choir does not “crowd or overshadow” the ministers in the sanctuary.

If the choir is not in the east end of a basilica-plan church, it might find itself in one of the transepts. Such an arrangement is used at Rome’s Basilica of San Giovanni in Laterano, as well as in St. Matthew’s Cathedral in Washington, D.C. In all of these cases, the great organ occupies the south transept. Supporters of this position for the choir point to its placement within the body of the assembly, removing it from the sanctuary and underscoring the choir’s role in leading congregational song. Critics point out its numerous acoustical difficulties, the most serious of which may be the inevitable directionality of the sound coming across rather than from in front of or behind the congregation. It is also difficult in these configurations for the choir singers to hear one another properly in order to achieve a good ensemble or for the organ and choir to achieve proper balance.

There may be good reason why the most common position for organ and choir in Germany and France—the countries besides England with the most highly developed liturgical music traditions—is in a loft above the west end of the nave. This position best addresses the visual and acoustical concerns raised by the other configurations considered so far. First, by being above and behind the congregation, the choir and organ are not normally visible, precluding any sense of “distraction” or “concert performance.” This position is also the strongest acoustically for supporting congregational singing. The sound, enveloping the assembly from above and behind can be the perfect engine driving congregational song, as it has done in the Lutheran tradition for centuries. In Catholic churches, too, there is nothing like starting the final verse of a great hymn—“Lift High the Cross” or “To Jesus Christ Our Sovereign King,” for example—with a full organ and choral descant giving foundation and soaring flourish, respectively, to a large singing congregation. (Such full-voiced Catholic congregations do exist, particularly in large urban parishes and in regions like the Midwest with strong musical traditions.)

The matter of having the choir out of direct sight is not insignificant. The bishops’ reference to the choir’s “reverent attention and prayer” notwithstanding, in my experience choirs are not always composed of perfectly behaved members, and so a degree of visual separation is not necessarily undesirable. Furthermore, a choir in a loft may decide either to be vested or to wear “civilian” dress; either way, the decision need not hinge on the choir’s being in the constant gaze of the congregation. At the same time, the usual choir loft (not too highly elevated, and sometimes continuous with an upper gallery that can be made available for overflow congregational seating) allows sufficient visual contact between choristers and assembly that the music does not take on an unwelcome hidden or “mysterious” character.

The choir loft is an element appropriate to churches large and small. For very large churches, especially cathedrals, and those with large and varied musical ministries, a generously sized loft area will accommodate choral ensembles of different sizes, a pipe organ, and supplementary soloists or instrumentalists. This is certainly the preferred arrangement in Germany and Austria. Sundays at the Michaelerkirche in Vienna, the choir sings Mass settings by Haydn, Mozart, or Schubert, accompanied by organ and full orchestra in its capacious loft. Similar arrangements are found in numerous American parishes, including St. Ignatius Loyola in New York—with that city’s largest tracker organ, one of its best choirs, and a superb musical program including both liturgical and concert events.

From its position in the loft, not only does the choir and organ support the worship of the assembly as it can from no other position, but the sonic splendor is often matched by the visual splendor of the organ façade, which edifies from its commanding position without competing with the twin foci of altar and pulpit at the opposite end of the nave. While other configurations can be workable under certain circumstances, the traditional western choir loft is, in my view, the one most likely to satisfy both musical and liturgical considerations, including the criteria of the bishops in their document on worship and church design. As both a longtime church musician and practicing architect myself, I have found this arrangement supports both the best in architectural design and the best in music—whether that music comes from the music ministers or from the faithful assembled below.

Steven W. Semes is the Francis and Kathleen Rooney Professor of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, IN. Educated at the University of Virginia and Columbia University, he is also a practicing architect and the author of The Architecture of the Classical Interior (New York: Norton, 2004). Mr. Semes has been an active church musician since childhood and has held positions including organist/choirmaster at Christ Church, Riverdale, NY, and assistant organist/choirmaster at St. Ignatius Church, San Francisco, CA.

e-mail: semes.1@nd.edu
QUINLAN TERRY
THE SURVIVAL OF CLASSICISM
INTERVIEW BY DUNCAN STROIK

Quinlan Terry is one of the most well known & longest practicing classical architects in the world today. The 2005 recipient of the Richard Driehaus Prize in architecture, Mr. Terry practices architecture in England. In 2003 Mr. Terry won the Best Modern Classical House 2003, awarded by the British Georgian Group. He has designed numerous private homes including in the US, several campus buildings at Cambridge University and the Catholic Cathedral of Brentwood in Essex England. Sacred Architecture Editor, Duncan Stroik, sat down with Mr. Terry to chat about the state of classical architecture and sacred architecture.

SAJ: How are things in Great Britain in terms of church architecture? Do you see any good signs?

QT: One must first deal with the real meaning of the word “Church”. The Greek word “ecclesia” means “called out”, those who have been called out of the world. The New Testament use of “ecclesia” never described it as a building; it was always a group of people who have become Christians. However, I acknowledge it was used allegorically by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians.

“You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are citizens like all the Saints, and a part of God’s household. You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundation, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone. As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives by the spirit.” The ‘ecclesia’ is parallel to the Greek word ‘synagoge’ which means a “gathering” of people; from which we get our word synagogue. So, both the ecclesia and the synagogue were first and foremost a gathering of people who were different from those around them. In the fullness of time these people erected buildings in which to meet and these buildings had the same name as the people who used them.

It may sound strange for an architect to say this, but to me it matters far more that the people in the building are interested in the Gospel of Christ rather than the architectural quality of the building itself.

Historically the whole process became more complicated with Constantine the Great. Before Constantine, Christians were harshly persecuted and in some cases martyred. But with the Edict of Milan in 313 Constantine granted toleration for all Christians in the Roman Empire. Christianity became the State Religion in place of Paganism. So suddenly, these same people who had been despised became respectable, which was too rapid a change for the Church to accommodate easily. As they moved rapidly from adversity to prosperity they started erecting buildings specifically for Christian use and some of the finest examples of Early Christian architecture can still be seen in Rome today.

SAJ: How are things in Great Britain in terms of church architecture? Do you see any good signs?

QT: All my life I have found that the process of measurement and sketching is both enjoyable and therapeutic; I am learning all the time. This has the added advantage that these sketch books are kept in my office and become a quarry for details and ideas when working up new designs.

Only last year I was drawing the two churches in the Piazza del Popolo, which I had always thought were both by Carlo Rainaldi. On closer examination I realised that although they were notionally a pair there was not room on the sites to have two circular churches and therefore the second one, designed by Bernini is elliptical. One can only appreciate these subtleties if you spend time looking at buildings and recording them in a sketchbook. A camera may make a useful record but you learn more if you leave your cameras behind and think as you look at the building.

SAJ: What about the idea of the Church as a building set apart with a higher use?

SAJ: Even though you are a successful architect with many buildings under your belt, you continue to take trips to Rome and Italy and do drawing tours and you find it beneficial for yourself. Why is drawing so important?

QT: All my life I have found that the process of measurement and sketching is both enjoyable and therapeutic; I am learning all the time. This has the added advantage that these sketch books are kept in my office and become a quarry for details and ideas when working up new designs.
SACRED ARCHITECTURE - ISSUE 12 2006

SAJ: Would you do a Baroque Church? What are your favourite Baroque Churches?

QT: I suppose Borromini, Michelangelo and Bernini are the great Baroque architects of the Renaissance but there are many beautiful Rococo buildings in Bavaria, and indeed the whole Baroque Movement has spread throughout Europe.

The more I think about Baroque, the more I realise that it is a constantly repeating theme within the classical repertoire. I find as I get older – and I think most architects as they get older – tend to move towards the Baroque. The Romans were masters of what we call the Baroque – Trajans Market in Rome used broken and segmental pediments; the Temple of Clitumnus near Assisi, the Roman gate in Verona and many other Roman buildings, (illustrated in Palladio’s Quattro Libri) have spirally fluted columns. It seems that when an architect has mastered the more basic rules of architecture he wants to move on to more difficult territory where the cornices are curved and there is more movement in the composition.

Palladio is misunderstood by the English and the Americans who emphasise his more orthodox works, but a study of the Capitaniato in Vicenza with its giant triglyphs supporting balconies is one of many examples of Palladio’s interest in Baroque form. Indeed, the fact that he measured and recorded the Minerva Medica in his Quattro Libri as well as his use of the profile of the column bases of the Baptistry of Constantine at St Giorgio in Venice shows that he was always looking for a more Baroque expression to his later buildings. The Churches of San Giorgio and the Redentore in Venice are both simple classical buildings at first sight, but once you begin to analyse his use of space and modelling of different classical orders (he used no less than 10 different classical orders in San Giorgio), one realises how highly developed his skills were intellectually.

SAJ: It’s interesting that in the Veneto for 200, 300 years, they kept learning from Palladio and his churches. Palladio became their mentor.

QT: Yes, Masari did really basically Palladian churches. It’s very interesting how they carried on. And the other thing about the church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice is you think, “Well, here’s a really simple church.” I mean I brought a preacher with me, a great preacher, and he said, “This is a really lovely building, just nice. It’s very simple,” but actually it’s not really simple. I mean it’s got about ten different classical Corinthian columns, different sizes, one below the impost, one adjunct, one superimposed. I mean in intellectual terms it’s highly developed.

SAJ: Speaking of Palladio, why today look at the past and learn from Palladio or Lord Burlington? Why do that today?

QT: The simple answer is that the traditional and classical way of building works. It is beautiful, it is sustainable, it uses natural materials in the right way and it will last hundreds of years. It is a tradition that goes back before the time of the Apostles and continues to the present day.

To reject the classical tradition is to reject the whole process of building well. The high consumption temporary aesthetic which is so prevalent around us today is the result of turning away from that tradition, and it is totally dependent on the consumption of fossil fuels.

And by the time I’ve been sketching and practising architecture for 40 years, there’s an awful lot of stuff in my mind. And what comes out is not a bit a bit of Palladio, a bit of Bramante, it’s just what you’ve learned over the years. But it’s a mind that’s been applied to the wisdom of our forefathers, and obviously one will have to apply it in our own day with different stimuli. Therefore, whatever comes out is going to be different, but I don’t say, “Now I’m going to express the 21st Century.” I mean, that’s a conceit. I’m just going to do it properly, and then probably 50 to 100 years later, people may say, “You know, that architect was the one who really expressed” – or in my case, they might say, and I think most will say about us Classicists, “These people were defying the age.”

That’s what they were doing. They were actually statements of defiance. You know, everything’s going wrong, and they said, “Look, forget about this age.” It’s gone completely out the spout, but this is where our minds come to rest and we like his sort of architecture. Whether we’re praised or vilified is rather secondary. You know, we just do it because we like it and we believe that it is the thing to do.

SAJ: Do you think future generations will appreciate this?

QT: We admire the great classical buildings today more than any others. I acknowledge that many intellectuals are opposed to carrying on in that tradition and it is therefore difficult for architects like me to get commissions for public buildings. But the fact that it is not popular is irrelevant. Many men in different spheres have had to swim against the tide all their lives to achieve what they did.

SAJ: Could you tell us about St Helen’s, Bishopsgate, the Church you worked on and re-modelled in London.

QT: St Helen’s, Bishopsgate is one of only two churches in the City of London which survived the fire of London in 1666 and the Blitz. It was started by the Blackfriars in the 12th century and was added to in the Middle Ages. After the Reformation it was simplified internally and some high quality joinery was added, particularly the pulpit, gallery and organ case. In the Victorian period it was heavily restored as the result of the Tractarian Movement by a famous architect called Edward Loughborough Pearson. He reduced the floor level by 3ft so that once the worshipper had come into the building and got down to this lower level he would then slowly approach the sacramental area which was cut off from the congregation by Victorian screens inspired by Mediaeval examples. In 1992 and 1993 two IRA bombs exploded nearby which destroyed some...
adjacent modern buildings, but St Helen’s remained intact because of its traditional construction, although all the windows and the Victorian stained glass was destroyed.

The congregation had been established as a result of the preaching ministry of Rev. R.C. Lucas who led successful lunchtime services for several hundred City businessmen. This destruction by the IRA enabled the Church to consider a more radical restoration, and I was invited to suggest how this might be achieved. In practice, it was very simple because I could see that the original layout and floor level should be reinstated. However, this restoration required removing all the Victorian work, raising the floor to its original level, restoring a gallery at the west end and replacing the organ in the gallery. This layout increased the seating from 500 to 1000 which was a fundamental requirement of the Church committee as the congregations were very large.

You would have thought that something which was so soundly based in history would have been welcomed by the authorities, but no. It was strongly opposed by the City Corporation of London, English Heritage, The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Victorian Society, the Ancient Monument Society and other interested amenity groups. It was only supported by the Council for the Care of Churches and the Georgian Group. This opposition meant that a Public Enquiry had to be held in the Church which lasted ten days while Proofs of Evidence were read and subjected to cross examination from both sides before the Chancellor. Six months later judgement was given in our favour and the work was carried out.

SAJ: Tell us about the Catholic Church you designed. What were you thinking about in the design of the Catholic Cathedral in Brentwood? Some people have said that the exterior of Brentwood reminds them of a country house, whereas the interiors are like an Italian courtyard.

QT: The need at Brentwood was different from St Helen’s. The original Gothic style Victorian Church had been considerably enlarged when it became a Cathedral in 1973. The enlarged building was in the modern style with huge concrete girders and flat roofs which were causing structural problems when I was approached in 1990. The Bishop of Brentwood was not happy with the style of the building nor with its low ceiling height. Our design removed all the modern work in its entirety but kept the original Victorian Church as a side aisle. The row of Victorian columns which were removed in the modern scheme were replaced, the only difference being that the columns were classical in detail rather than Gothic. The main influence architecturally was Brunelleschi’s Foundling Hospital in Florence with his use of a Tuscan arcade on four sides and Christopher Wren’s treatment of windows with clear glass leaded lights. The unifying element was a giant Doric Order complete with triglyphs and metopes in the frieze which unites both the inside and the outside.

SAJ: What does one do with all the redundant churches in England? What do you do with all these great churches, beautiful grand cathedrals, parish churches, county churches? Should they just be turned into museums? I know a number of them are essentially becoming museums, charging you to go in, having cappuccino in the back and that kind of thing.

QT: I feel that this is too great a problem for one person to solve. All we can do is pray for revival and try to serve our generation faithfully.

SAJ: Europe in general is in decline. Benedict XVI said that before he was elected, and he also talked about the faithful becoming smaller, but being more vibrant. He said a smaller and stronger Church was better than big and weak Church.

QT: I agree. I can think of many examples. My son-in-law is an Anglican Clergyman. He does not worry about the fabric of the Mediaeval building where he takes services beyond keeping it in good repair. His calling is to preach the Gospel of Christ, bring people to Christian Faith, administer the sacraments and build up the congregation. If the building is helpful for that purpose, that is fine, but the building must serve that end, and in his case it does, although the congregation is now outgrowing it.

SAJ: How can the Church building be helpful?

QT: I can think of many ways that buildings can be unhelpful. Too often the architecture is restless and the detail is meaningless. If only the architecture can be simple and harmonious with good lighting, good acoustics, comfortable seating, in fact the less distractions, the better.

SAJ: But can the beautiful Church be a means of grace? Can it also uplift?
Palladio and a great love of the early Middle
abhorrence of classical detail particularly
Christian which is absurd. Ruskin had an
that Classic was pagan and Gothic is
thinking. Pugin, as you know, maintained
and Pugin in the 19C has affected people’s
The arrival on the scene of Ruskin
digressions within the classical tradition.
many ways it is one of the many interesting
is now regarded as a separate style but in
Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular
Ages into the outstanding examples of
Romanesque, by its very name, was trying
long before the Middle Ages, and even
Historically, the Classical was there
long before the Middle Ages, and even
Romanesque, by its very name, was trying
to be Roman at the end of the Dark Ages.
The development of Gothic in the Middle
ages into the outstanding examples of
Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular
is now regarded as a separate style but in
many ways it is one of the many interesting
digressions within the classical tradition.

The arrival on the scene of Ruskin
and Pugin in the 19C has affected people’s
thinking. Pugin, as you know, maintained
that Classic was pagan and Gothic is
Christian which is absurd. Ruskin had an
abhorrence of classical detail particularly
Palladio and a great love of the early Middle
Ages. Both Ruskin and Pugin wrote well
and influenced a whole generation, but they
were, in my view, totally misguided and they
both ended their lives in a lunatic asylum.
Perhaps this should teach us to be careful
when we identify our preferred style in
architecture with our theological opinions.

SAJ: Speaking about classical architecture,
what do you think is the significance of the
origin of the Orders, like the Doric or Ionic
to a practitioner of classical architecture
today.

QT: There have been many suggestions
about the origin of the classical orders. You
must be familiar with Vitruvius’s account of
Callimachus drawing an acanthus leaf under
a basket covered with a large tile, where the
leaves curl up under the tile forming volutes.
Clearly Vitruvius thought the orders were
Greek in origin. Fischer von Erlach went
further back in time and John Wood the Elder
maintained that the orders originated
in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. I wrote
an essay in the 80’s on the Origin of the
Orders taking that position. My late partner
Raymond Erith maintained that they were
so beautiful that they could not have been
invented by man, and therefore must have
had a divine origin.

I think the principle is still there that
God gave us the classical orders, in some
form, for man to use and ornament His
buildings whether it’s a sacred building or
a public building.

SAJ: But you don’t think that God giving
the directions for the design of the Tabernacle and
the Temple and then these different columns,
W

t the early Christians were finally able to build their churches in public, they chose the high-

style architectural classicism of the Roman Empire. Almost every Christian culture, from

the Constantinian era forward to the mid-twentieth century, has used some version of classicism
to build its churches. After many decades in the shadows, classicism is appearing once

again in civic and ecclesiastical architecture. Architects who specialize in traditional design are

getting significant commissions in cities across the nation as more congregations are asking for

churches that “look like” churches. Architects Thomas Gordon Smith, Duncan Stroik, David Meleca,

Michael Imber, and the firm of Frank, Lohsen, McCrery and others are using the classical and

traditional language for Catholic church design. But what is one to make of this resurgence? Is

classicism simply a thing of the past used today in a moment of comfortable nostalgia, or can we

still find relevance in the 1,800 years of Christian architecture which made use of the classical

language?

Classicism and Catholicism

As the Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us, liturgy “is woven from signs and symbols” that make up the rites
we know (CCC, 1145), and because liturgical architecture is part of the rite, it also bears sign and symbol value. Although
every “style” of architecture signifies something, certain kinds of architecture, like certain homilies, relay their messages more
clearly. Classicism is a way of making buildings that signify clearly, that is, use the medium of architecture to convey
otherwise invisible ideas. Proper churches are built to signify theological realities like the presence of the Christian community, the
importance of the Church in civic life, and the presence of the full liturgical assembly: the Trinity, the angels, saints, souls in
purgatory, etc. Liturgical art and architecture is therefore properly called sacramental in the broad sense of the term, since it makes
invisible theological realities knowable to our senses.

Another way to say this is that architecture is the built form of ideas, and church architecture is the built form of theology. Classical architecture, with its rich vocabulary of forms is an articulate bearer of meaning. It serves the church particularly well because from its very origins, classicism was an architecture meant to embody and reveal Truth, not merely to solve a functional or structural problem. Like the liturgy itself, classicism is concerned with continuity. It speaks of truths that transcend the mundane facts of names and dates, giving new expression in a familiar language that can be readily understood because of our culture’s inherent familiarity with its forms. Catholic liturgy recalls past deeds as does classical architecture.

Discussion of architectural classicism is not a discussion about “style,” even though classicism certainly does include the buildings of many stylistic periods. (I include Gothic and other medieval styles under the broad heading of classical architecture because of their explicit use of the classical tradition in, for instance, the use of Roman-derived columns, the basilican form, etc.) Instead of framing the discussion in terms of style, it is better to compare classicism to language, which has structure, syntax, and rules that are necessary to best convey meaning.

Language can be flexible but requires stability, can be poetic yet precise, mundane and yet convey soaringly transcendent ideas. Words can be everyday slang or reserved for sacred occasions. Language by its very nature conserves, relying on stability to make it understandable. New words are invented as the need arises, but always within the stable context of a common grammar and lexicon. It has differing accents, regional turns of phrase, and local conventions. Language reserved for ritual behavior retains archaic forms that distinguish it from everyday speech (“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name ...”). Language expresses and conveys ideas, and the kind of language used is closely tied to what is being said. In a similar way, ritual architecture depends upon inherited form and should not be subject to arbitrary wholesale innovation; rather it corresponds to a proper understanding of its role in the liturgy.

Church as Icon of Heaven

In the Book of Revelation, an angel gives Saint John a literal-sounding tour of the heavenly city with a measuring rod, giving
dimensions, numbers of gates, and descriptions of materials (Rev 21:15-17). But the heavenly city is not a tangible, material place. It is an icon of the glorified church in which God is seated and the faithful are the “living stones.” This has led some to theorize that since the people are the living stones, then the actual physical building is therefore irrelevant. Strictly speaking, if “we are church,” then the church building,
by definition, is not. What is it then? The answer of course, is that the church building is an icon of the full living church of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

The metaphorical association of the members of the Church (including the angels, saints, etc.) with the church building takes its cue from scriptural language itself. Christ, of course, is the stone the builders rejected who has become the cornerstone (Mt 21:42, Mk 12:10, Lk 20:17). James, Cephas, and John are called “pillars” (Gal 2:9) and Paul speaks of building up the church “like a skilled master builder” who builds the foundation that is Jesus Christ (1 Cor 3:10–11). In Ephesians Paul explicitly compares the people of the church to an edifice, calling Christians “citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone” (Eph 2:19–22). Similarly, Peter calls Christians “living stones” built into a “spiritual edifice” (1 Pet 2:4), a phrase used by the American bishops in naming their own document on church architecture, Built of Living Stones. So the church building, then, is an icon of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which itself is made up of the Trinity and celestial beings surrounded by living stones of the saints. Making this invisible spiritual reality appear to us in material form is the very essence of the sacramentality of a church building.

Sacraments are never exact images of the realities they signify, so churches we build will never literally “look like” heaven. But, by definition, sacraments use conventional forms that humans understand. So, what do we make our sacramental heavenly city “look like”? The Book of Revelation tells us its length, width, and height are equal, making it roughly cubic in shape. The city has twelve foundations, each with a name of one of the apostles upon it. Its twelve gates are like pearls, and the walls are made of precious gems including jasper, sapphire, onyx, and topaz. Additionally, the city is described as “pure gold, clear as glass” and filled with radiant light of the glory of God (Rev 21:15–27).

One need think of any well-ornamented church from the early Christian period through the twentieth century to see an understanding of church building as icon of the heavenly Jerusalem. Glimmering gem-like mosaics combine with rich materials and images of Christ and the saints to fill these churches with iconic representations of the heavenly realm. Similarly, the Gothic cathedral, with its great expanses of glowing stained glass and colorfully painted and gilded interiors evoked the heavenly city, as did the buildings of the Renaissance and high baroque, with angels and saints swirling around interiors made of precious marbles and gold. Eastern-rite Catholics and Orthodox have maintained this sense of the sacramental nature of church architecture, even in contemporary churches, often basing their buildings on the proportions given by the angel and covering the interiors with icons over gold leaf.

Natural Sympathy between Classicism and Catholic Liturgical Architecture

Moving from the theoretical to the specific, the broad language of classicism (which includes Gothic, Romanesque, Byzantine, and other “styles”) has at least five essential qualities that make it uniquely suitable for Catholic liturgical usage: 1) its continued place in the Western cultural vocabulary; 2) its inherent respect for received tradition; 3) the integrated nature of its proportional systems is an imitation of nature; 4) its anthropomorphism; and 5) its origins in festive architecture.

First, its forms remain potent in the dominant culture as markers of important buildings. Years of teaching both children and adults have convinced me that the language of classicism, even among those without great understanding of its origins...
or terminology, marks a building of high status in our culture. The significant public buildings in American history are classical, and this understanding has not been erased by the glass and concrete monuments of recent years. Whether or not people can speak of volutes or triglyphs, Corinthian or Ionic, they know that important buildings are made a certain way, and in the West and Near East, that way has been derived from the classical tradition. Classicism therefore gives a church building a head start in being recognizable as important.

Second, classicism by definition maintains close ties to received tradition. Just as the liturgy grows and changes slowly and organically, so does classical architecture. When we celebrate the liturgy of Vatican II, we use a rite combined of many encapsulated pieces from the past bought together for current use. Phrases like “Kyrie eleison” have their origin in liturgical use from the fourth century, but they grow out of a cultural use even in pre-Christian times. The First Eucharistic Prayer dates to the fourth century, and the Second Eucharistic Prayer is even older. In both cases, the prayers themselves reuse the words of Jesus Christ himself at the Last Supper, bringing the past forward and making it present to us today.

Similarly, classical architecture captures motifs from the past and uses them today. For example, the triumphal arch form was used in ancient Rome to mark the victorious entry of a significant person into the city. The triple-arched Arch of Constantine, named for the first Christian emperor, retained a particular symbolic importance. From the early days of Christianity, the triumphal arch form was added to the west entry of the church building to speak of the new triumphal entry, the victory of Christ over sin and death that allows our entry into the heavenly city. This form remained part of the Christian vocabulary through the middle ages and into modern period, and it continues today in such new works as architect Allan Greenberg’s Church of the Immaculate Conception in New Jersey and Thomas Gordon Smith’s Church of Saint Joseph in Georgia. Importantly, a triumphal arch entry is more than three doors in a row; it is a motif known through many years of tradition with recognizable pieces arranged in a particular way. The use of the same pieces, elements and motifs that were used in fifth or fifteenth century, makes that form legible as part of the continuity of Christian architecture.

Despite the common perception, dependence on precedent always allows for great freedom of expression. The architect of Chartres did something very different than Michelangelo did at Saint Peter’s, which is very different again from a Chi-
cago parish in the nineteenth century. Dependence on precedent assures a building’s cultural legibility and prevents an artist or architect from imposing a highly idiosyncratic, intensely personal design that baffles all who use it. The common language of classicism, based on consistent principles, makes the building serve all comers who can then compare the building with those they have seen before and evaluate it based on established norms rather than merely their own emotional reaction.

Third, classicism places the harmonic proportional systems found in nature at its very heart. From the discussions of Plato and Pythagoras through Aristotle to the writings of Saint Augustine and the medieval and Renaissance scholars, the notion of harmonic relationship of parts has dominated the discussion of beauty in art, architecture, music, and poetry. Harmony in music is directly related to the proportional relation between different notes. Certain notes played together are pleasing while others are discordant. Similarly, the eye knows pleasing proportions in buildings. The patterns of harmony and proportion are found in nature, mathematics, geometry, and Scripture, all of which reveal the mind of God imprinted in created things.

Every part of a classical building is designed with harmonic proportional systems in mind. Columns have height-to-width ratios in particular whole numbers, column bases are composed of parts with particular numerical relationships, and the scroll of the Ionic capital grows out of a mathematical formula based on the repeating mathematical patterns found in nature, mathematics, and geometry. Since Classicism affirms the goodness of creation and its ability to make invisible realities present to us in material form, an architecture in which every part, large or small, roots itself in the goodness of creation forms a good starting point. Furthermore, certain proportions were given by God in Scripture itself, from the Tabernacle of Moses (Ex 25—28), Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6–7), to the very heavenly city itself (Rev 9). Scriptural revelation combines with evidence in the natural world to establish the importance of proportional systems that precede and overwhelm the individual emotional expressions of any particular artist, producing instead a beauty, though expressed by a human mind, that remains rooted in the mind of God.

Fourth, classicism is anthropomorphic, that is, based on the proportions of the human body. Leonardo Da Vinci’s famous Vitruvian Man, which shows the proportional and geometric patterns of the human form, aptly reveals the geometric underpinning of the body created in the image of God. The circle and the square formed by the human body are therefore foundational in classical architecture, although other geometric forms enter in gracefully to classical design as well.
A church is decorated for the importance of its celebrations, just as a bride and groom dress appropriate to the importance and solemnity of the occasion.

resents that reality when it expresses the anthropomorphic attributes of the Church it symbolizes. For instance, the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, the first church dedicated to the Virgin after she was deified as the egg-and-dart, wave, and leaf patterns, swags of fruit, urns, lamps, and the like. Even the very columns themselves came to be ornamented in the ways we ornament our bodies: beads are placed around the neck of columns and flowers emerge from the capitals like an adornment to the human head. One is reminded of Psalm 144, when God is asked to make the daughters of Israel “graceful as columns adorned as though for a palace.”

The Catholic liturgical act is also festive. It is the sacramental presentation of the Wedding Feast of the Lamb, the time of the consummation of the world, when the Church as bride meets Christ the Bridegroom (Rev 19:7, 21:9). We distinguish a festive meal from other ordinary meals by ritual actions and decoration, and what we do at the liturgy is also festive, though of a higher order. We dress in our fine clothes and ornament ourselves properly. Brides carry flowers and grooms wear boutonnieres. Bishops, priests, deacons, and servers wear attire specific to the festive community act of sacrificial worship. This sacramental expression is of the very essence of our ritual action, and if the church building is to signify the “living stones” of the Church, it will do what we do.

In sum, classical architecture, in stark contrast to much recent architecture, is about highly specific and articulate signs and symbols, the “symbols of heavenly realities” that Sacrosanctum Concilium asks of us (SC, 122). While many modern buildings will often claim some vague symbolism or association through shape or general motif, classical architecture can be read like a book. Every piece is designed as part of the whole in an organized manner that represents theological and heavenly realities rather than merely the latest trend or most economical method. It does what Catholics want their liturgy and witness to do: it remains a potent visual marker in Western culture for buildings of great significance, and therefore important liturgical activity within. It stays close to precedent, as does Catholic liturgy, thereby preserving the inherited tradition. It makes use of the revelation of the mind of God in its imitation of nature in mathematics, proportion, and the human form. As a festive architecture, it both displays and reinforces the notion of the sacrificial feast in the Eucharist. It does what walls of glass and exposed beams and bolts cannot do: it makes the very nature of the liturgical celebration visible in sacramental form. As such, it is an architecture that allows worshippers to enter something formative and sacramental. The worshipper is drawn in by its beauty, inspired therefore to participate in the liturgy, and once formed by the liturgy, to go out in mission of service to the world. Architecture thereby becomes a participant in the liturgical life in the Church and plays an important role in full, active, and conscious participation in the sacred liturgy.

Denis R. McNamara, an architectural historian who specializes in American church architecture, holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He is currently assistant director and faculty member at the Liturgical Institute of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake / Mundelein Seminary, and serves as a liturgical design consultant. His recent book, Heavenly City, was published by Liturgy Training Publications, Chicago. email: denismcnamara@yahoo.com

---

Timeless Interiors and Fine Works of Art Since 1889

Conrad Schmitt Studios Inc.

Excellence in Artistry Since 1889

Historic Finishes Analysis  •  Specification Writing  •  Fundraising Tools
Creation & Conservation of:  •  Decorative Painting  •  Stained & Art Glass
Murals & Mosaics  •  Sculpture & Statuary

Nationwide Services  •  Phone: 800-969-3033  •  www.conradschmitt.com
A TRANSCENDENT CANOPY

THE POSITIVE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN OUR SECOND CITIES

W. BRADFORD WILCOX

Typical American cities—Boston, New York, and Chicago come to mind—often contain within them two very different cities. The first city, usually found in or near the downtown, is prosperous and progressive, racially diverse, childless, and well-maintained. The second city, often found in neighborhoods some distance from the downtown, is poor, black, and Latino, filled with children, and all too often run-down. America’s first cities are “bobo” havens; America’s second cities are distinctly unheavenly.

One other, if little remarked upon, way in which they differ from one another is faith. First cities are remarkably secular. Sunday is a day best spent sleeping in, sipping lattes, reading the New York Times, and catching up with friends. Second cities, by contrast, have large minorities of residents who can be found walking, driving, or taking public transportation to the nearest church on Sunday morning.

The conventional wisdom holds that second cities are in crisis. The conventional wisdom is largely right—crime, drug use, and illegitimacy, for instance, are much higher in second cities than the nation at large. But the faith found in these second cities plays an important role in keeping them from heading into the abyss. In fact, in second cities, churches are virtually the only civic institutions still standing strong.

Churches play a positive role in at least three areas: crime, drug use, and family life. Take crime. Work by Byron Johnson of Baylor University indicates that urban adolescents who are religious are significantly less likely to sell drugs. In one study of poor urban neighborhoods, he found that 33 percent of teenage boys who did not attend church were involved in the drug trade compared to 17 percent of teenage boys who did attend church on a weekly basis. In another study of men who had been to prison and been released, Byron found that 44 percent of these men who did not attend bible study on a regular basis in prison were rearrested within two years, compared to 27 percent of men who had attended bible study on a regular basis while in prison. In both studies, then, religious attendance was linked to a marked reduction in criminal activity.

Or take substance abuse. Another study by Johnson shows that highly religious youth living in poor urban neighborhoods are 17 percent less likely to smoke marijuana than their peers.

Lisa Miller, a psychologist at Columbia University, has found that teenagers whose parents were drug addicts but regularly attend church are 83 percent less likely to abuse alcohol than children with similar family histories who do not attend church.

Or take family life. My own research indicates that urban mothers are 100 percent more likely to have their child in wedlock if they attend church several times a month or more, compared to mothers who attend infrequently or not at all. Churchgoing couples in urban America also report significantly higher levels of happiness in their marriages, compared to couples who are not regular churchgoers. Indeed, in poor urban communities, churches are virtually the only bulwarks of marriage.

Why do churches play a constructive role in urban America—especially our nation’s second cities? Churches offer family-oriented, decent social networks that provide a clear alternative to the lifestyle of the street. Churches also promote moral norms—what Rev. Calvin Butts, pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, calls “righteousness.” Finally, churches cast a transcendent canopy over the lives of their members; this canopy provides hope and meaning to people who often struggle with poverty, discrimination, and other difficulties.

Let me be clear. Religion is by no means a silver bullet in urban America. Urban churchgoers, just like their suburban peers, often fail to live righteous lives—as evidenced by the minority of regular churchgoers who end up dealing drugs in Johnson’s studies. But things would be a lot worse in America’s second cities were it not for the presence of churches, offering a message of hope and an oasis of care and concern in neighborhoods that often seem devoid of hope and mutual concern.

W. Bradford Wilcox is a fellow at the Witherspoon Institute in Princeton, New Jersey and assistant professor of sociology at the University of Virginia. He lived with his family in Harlem last year.

email: wbwilcox@virginia.edu
like other ancient peoples—the Celts, Latins, and Franks, for instance—the Greeks experienced a dilution of their sense of ethnic identity after the collapse of the Roman Empire, which was replaced by a general attachment to Christianity. After the Edict of Milan in 313 AD, this identity was gradually replaced with a strong attachment to their faith. With the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, however, and their incorporation as a minority into a Muslim empire, they came increasingly to think of themselves as a nation again, principally on the basis of their ancient tongue with its direct links to the language of Homer and Plato—a language that the Orthodox Church had an important role in preserving.

Though central to their self-awareness, the Christian identity of the Greeks is a paradoxical one, for while the Church retained its seat in the old Greek Byzantine capital of Constantinople and used New Testament Greek as its language, it had originally made a point of distinguishing itself from ancient Greek or Hellenic civilization, which it denigrated as pagan. The ancient cultural legacy, however, was hoisted as a national standard alongside the Cross when, after some three-and-a-half centuries of Turkish occupation, the Greek people rose in 1821 to proclaim their independence. This shift in attitude toward its pre-Christian cultural heritage, which by now was increasingly supported by members of the Greek clergy, was prompted by a number of factors, the varying effects of which we shall examine briefly in connection with the evolution of an unusual basilical church type on the Ionian island of Corfu.

While there were periods of respite and even favor in the years of Ottoman occupation, in general Greeks and other Christians suffered much discrimination by the Muslim authorities. By the mid-eighteenth century, conditions for the Orthodox Church within the Ottoman Empire had deteriorated to such a degree as to prompt Empress Catherine the Great of Russia in 1770 to challenge the Turkish fleet in the Aegean in order to secure better treatment for Christians. While Catherine succeeded in part and there was a subsequent softening of Ottoman attitudes toward the Church, by now many clergymen and Orthodox faithful had been stirred to seek independence from Turkish authority. They found that their rallying cries reached much farther when they appealed to their flock—and an increasingly concerned international community—on the basis of its ethnic “Greekness.” The Greek national identity had meanwhile been fired by a European Romantic revival of interest in Hellenic antiquity.

The Romantic Movement’s interest in the sublime found fertile ground in the ruins of ancient Greece, which were rediscovered in the eighteenth century, and above all in the Acropolis in Athens, which was carefully documented for the first time by the British architects James Stuart and Nicholas Revett. With the revival of European interest in ancient Greek literature and science, the largely affluent and educated members of the Greek Diaspora thriving outside the Ottoman Empire began to see their kin as the direct cultural heirs of classical Greece. In the Turkish-occupied homeland, meanwhile, the Orthodox Church was not long in realizing that the promise of independence from Ottoman control was greatest when faith and ethnicity were fused into what in previous centuries had been considered an unholy alliance. By the early nineteenth century the Greek countryside was crawling with “Philhellenes,” European “lovers of Greece” like the poet Lord Byron, the architect Charles Robert Cockerell, the painter Edward Lear, the French connoisseur Louis Francois Fauvel, and the German Haller von Hallerstein, stoking their Romantic vision of antiquity and stirring the Greek peasant population into revolt against their Turkish overlords. The dream of independence became a reality in February of 1833, when the young Otto of Bavaria was installed on the throne of the newly created Kingdom of Greece at its first capital, the town of Nauplion in the Peloponnese. Only a year later the capital would move to Athens, where Otto was able to indulge his passion for dignifying the urban environment with neoclassical buildings, avenues, boulevards, and parks. Artists, architects, and poets poured into the country from around Europe, eager to exercise their Romantic ideals in the making of the new nation.

The island of Corfu—or Kerkira as it was known in antiquity and is today officially called—is unique in the Greek world in having withstood the Ottoman invasion and forged deep cultural ties with Venice, under the influence of which it fell in the early thirteenth century. Absorbed into a Venetian island province in 1386 (the Greek remnants of which today constitute the province of the Ionian Islands), Corfu was especially valued by “La Serenissima,” or Republic.

In Corfu the Venetians built the Catholic Church of St. Iakovos that stands over the “Plateia Dimarcheiou” or Town Hall Square.

Though forbidden by the Turks on mainland Greece, the tall bell towers such as Orthodox St. Spyridon’s dot the skyline of the island of Corfu.
of Venice, as an important forward bastion against Turkish advances into the Adriatic Sea. Though it was besieged a number of times by Turkish forces—most notably in 1538 and 1716—it survived to retain its reputation as a political haven for Greeks from around the world. In its earlier phase of development, the historic town, which spread into the open terrain between two fortified hillocks, or korfès (whence it modern name is derived), acquired an essentially Venetian urban and architectural character, which was reflexively adapted for its needs by the Greek population. This is evident in the numerous commercial arcades and winding streets, or kantoùnia, civic buildings overlooking campi, or squares, as they are known in the local Venetian-influenced Greek dialect, elaborately carved well-heads, tall stuccoed townhouses with prominent balconies, and a plethora of Renaissance architectural details and trim, particularly door surrounds and cornices. The Italian High Renaissance is best represented on Corfu by the surviving structures of the old Fortezza Vecchia on the eastern side of the town by the Veronese military engineer Michele Sanmicheli and the Venetian Ferrante Vitelli, who designed the later fortress on the west, the Fortezza Nuova.

In this first Venetian period the town began to grow on a low hillock situated between the two forts. In many respects Corfu typifies the small Venetian town, or borgo, of which there are numerous other surviving examples in the former Venetian territories of the Adriatic Sea, such as Ragusa, or Dubrovnik as it is known today, and Spalato, or Split, on the Croatian coast. As in Venice itself, the campi developed haphazardly in the urban fabric where it was natural for residents to congregate, especially around churches, civic buildings, fountains, and cisterns. The best example of such a space is Plateia Dimarcheioú, or Town Hall Square, overlooked on its north side by the seventeenth-century Loggia dei Nobili (which today serves as the seat of local government) and on the east side by the late sixteenth-century Catholic Church of St. Iakovos, or St. James.

Venetian influence in Corfu was strengthened by the bestowal of titles to local families, which were subsequently inscribed in the notorious Venetian Libro d’Oro. Though this document was burned in public by Napoleonic forces when Corfu and the Ionian islands were seized by the French in the nineteenth century, Venetian culture and fashions had been thoroughly absorbed by the Corfiot population by this time, and in many ways survive to this day. Some customs were accepted after initially being urged upon them by the Venetian authorities: for instance, new churches that were built for the predominantly Greek Orthodox population no longer reflected the Byzantine centralized plan, as typified in the Church of Sts. Jason and Sosipater of the twelfth century to the south of the town of Corfu, but were modeled on an western basilical type. Thus, Corfiot churches are linear, single-nave buildings adapted from an Italian plan type to accommodate the Orthodox rites.

Though tall, assertive domes are absent on Corfu, elegant bell towers from before the eighteenth century abound, as in the towers of the late sixteenth-century Orthodox Church of St. Spyridon and the Greek Cathedral of St. Theodora. In occupied mainland Greece bell towers had been forbidden by the Turks, and to this day they strike Greek visitors to Corfu as strange. The same can be said of the basilical church type, which despite the freedom from Ottoman oppression that the Venetians were able to guarantee, Corfiot Greeks began to associate with their subjugation to another foreign power (after all, their island had been annexed from the Greek Byzantine Empire in the thirteenth century after the perfidious conquest of Constantinople by its own western allies during the Fourth Crusade). In the late seventeenth century, the characteristically Greek centralized church type was cleverly worked into the basilical churches by incorporating a small marble cupola above the altar, so that the iconostasis appears as the façade of a miniaturized, domed Byzantine church—what Greeks would call a naïskos, or small temple. Meanwhile, the iconostasis itself projected an Italianate aspect through the use of the classical Orders. Rather than representing a concession to Venetian culture, this treatment reflects instead the Greek Diaspora’s own interest in the revival of the architecture and art of antiquity, and the belief that their church needed to embrace the cultural objectives of the Renaissance, as had their Catholic cousins. The best examples of the domed iconostasis, which we might more properly term a naïskos keryraíkos, or “Corfiot templietto,” are to be found in the late sixteenth-century churches of St. Spyridon and St. Antonios, at the eastern and western extremities of the old town. The overall effect of these naïskoi is, of course, that of a Greek church engulfed (and one might subtly add, protected) by a Venetian basilica.

Sts. Jason and Sociapater typifies the Greek Byzantine domed centralized church form that had fallen out of favor during Venetian dominance over Corfu.

The Orthodox church of St. Anthony features an iconostasis in the form of a miniature domed Byzantine church called a “naïskos.”

Richard Economakis is associate professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame. The author of several books, he is also a practicing architect.

email: reconoma@nd.edu
B E Y O N D  B A S I L I C A S

C E N T R A L I Z E D  C H U R C H E S  O F  E A R L Y  C H R I S T I A N I T Y

S A N D R A  M I E S E L

In patristic times, when basilicas ruled the earth, a few alternative church plans dotted the landscape. We may regard these designs as Stephen Jay Gould did the Burgess Shale fossils: novel forms that left no progeny. Nevertheless, both the churches and the fossils are beautiful and worthy of contemplation.

The longitudinal basilican church borrowed the shape of Roman law courts, markets, athletic facilities, and other public buildings. Centrally planned churches, by contrast, derive from Roman mausolea, imperial audience chambers, banqueting halls, and even garden pavilions. Central plans could be cruciform, round, polygonal, or polyconched and further enriched with ambulatories, galleries, and niches of varied shape. Constantine, that energetic patron of Christian architecture, built both types of churches and even mixed forms, such as in the basilican Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem with its octagonal headpiece covering the birthplace of Christ. Regardless of design, the main altar normally stood in the east of the building, not the center.

The old rule that basilicas were for community worship but other shapes were for honoring martyrs (martyria) is not universally true. Old St. Peter’s in Rome, built by Constantine, was one of the earliest basilican churches yet was sited over the Apostle’s grave and designed for the convenience of pilgrims. Meanwhile, Constantine’s Golden Octagon at Antioch was the city’s cathedral, not a martyr’s shrine.

The much imitated church that Constantine built to be his own burial place, Holy Apostles at Constantinople, was cruciform, with a central drum over the crossing where the emperor’s tomb lay within a circle of twelve piers representing the Apostles. St. Babylas near Antioch (380), the first martyrrium built to enshrine translated relics, copied the cruciform shape and central burial spot of Holy Apostles. A contemporary martyrrium designed by St. Gregory of Nyssa added hemispherical lobes (conches) between the arms of the cross and enclosed the structure within a square peristyle of forty columns. A century later, S. Stefano Rotundo in Rome has a circle-in cross-in circle plan: tall, cylindrical nave with an ambulatory attached to four rectangular chapels joined by covered porticoes.

A round design was even simpler. Around 350, Constantine built his daughter a domed and arcaded circular mausoleum, now called S. Costanza, against the wall of S. Agnese’s covered cemetery. The round footprint of St. John the Baptist in Gerasa (531) extrudes four small exedrae like pseudopods. (contrary to Dan Brown’s allegations in The Da Vinci Code) circular churches existed before the Roman Pantheon, once a temple to all the gods, was rededicated to S. Maria ad Martyres in 610. There is nothing peculiarly pagan about roundness.

Only a single “working” church of tetraconch form still survives. San Lorenzo in Milan (378), a double-shelled quatrefoil with four square towers at the corners and three octagonal chapels budded off the curved exterior walls. Its original dome has been replaced by an octagonal baroque one. Tetraconch churches of the Middle East no longer exist.

But four lobes were not enough for St. Gereon in Cologne. This late fourth-century church was built with eight horseshoe-shaped exedrae, a round apse, double-apsed narthex, and a huge atrium. Its mutant design left no progeny.

The most successful of the central plans was the polygon. And perhaps the oddest looking polygonal church was the early fifth century shrine of St. Philip at Hieropolis, which had a floor plan easily mistaken for an asterisk. Each side of its octagonal nave thrust out a barrel-vaulted rectangular niche, with tiny chapels of irregular shape hollowed out of the piers between each niche. The building was enclosed within a square of cells to house pilgrims.

Double-shelled octagons proved more popular. Although sloppily executed and noticeably askew, Justinian’s Church of H. Sergios and Bakchos (536) still stands under its pumpkin dome in Istanbul. But it has long been a mosque. The gem of the style is S. Vitale at Ravenna (547), where the octagonal core rises to a domed octagonal drum. The core is surrounded by seven semicircular niches (the eighth spot opens to the chancel), then enveloped by ambulatories and galleries to create an interior of harmonious complexity, glittering with mosaics and rich colored marbles.

The surviving beauties of S. Costanza, of S. Lorenzo, and of S. Vitale are living fossils, reminders of what might have been in church architecture.

†

Sandra Miesel has written hundreds of articles for the Catholic press, principally on history, art, and hagiography. She holds an M.A. in medieval history and is co-author with Carl Olsen of The Da Vinci Hoax (Ignatius 2004). email: SMKopec5@yahoo.com
The Reservation of the Blessed Sacrament
His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI PP
(Written as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger)

The Church of the first millennium knew nothing of tabernacles. Instead, first the shrine of the Word, and then even more so the altar, served as sacred “tent”. Approached by steps, it was sheltered, and its sacredness underscored, by a “ciborium”, or marble baldacchino, with burning lamps hanging from it. A curtain was hung between the columns of the ciborium (Bouyer, pp.46-48). The tabernacle as sacred tent, as place of the Shekinah, the presence of the living Lord, developed only in the second millennium. It was the fruit of passionate theological struggles and their resulting clarifications, in which the permanent presence of Christ in the consecrated Host emerged with greater clarity. Now here we run up against the decadence theory, the canonization of the early days and romanticism about the first century. Transubstantiation (the substantial change of the bread and wine), the adoration of the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, eucharistic devotions with monstrance and processions – all these things, it is alleged, are medieval errors, errors from which we must once and for all take our leave. “The Eucharistic Gifts are for eating, not for looking at” – these and similar slogans are all too familiar. The glib way such statements are made is quite astonishing when we consider the intense debates in the history of dogma, theology, and ecumenism undertaken by the great theologians in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. All that seems now to be forgotten.

It is not the intention of this little book to enter into these theological discussions in detail. It is plain for all to see that already for St. Paul bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Christ, that it is the risen Lord himself who is present and gives himself to us to eat. The vigor with which the Real Presence is emphasized in John chapter 6 could hardly be surpassed. For the Church Fathers, too, from the earliest witnesses onward – just think of St. Justin Martyr or St. Ignatius of Antioch – there is no doubt about the great mystery of the Presence bestowed upon us, about the change of the gifts during the Eucharistic Prayer. Even a theologian of such a spiritualizing tendency as St. Augustine never had a doubt about it. Indeed, he shows just how far confession of faith in the Incarnation and Resurrection, which is so closely bound up with eucharistic faith in the bodily presence of the risen Lord, has transformed Platonism. “Flesh and blood” have received a new dignity and entered into the Christian’s hope for eternal life. An important finding of Henri de Lubac has often been misunderstood. It has always been clear that the goal of the Eucharist is our own transformation, so that we become “one body and spirit” with Christ (cf. 1 Cor 6:17). This correlation of ideas – the insight that the Eucharist is meant to transform us, to change humanity itself into the living temple of God, into the Body of Christ – was expressed, up to the early Middle Ages, by the twin concepts of corpus mysticum and corpus verum. In the vocabulary of the Fathers, mysticum did not mean “mystical” in the modern sense, but rather “pertaining to the mystery, the sphere of the sacrament”. Thus the phrase corpus mysticum was used to express the sacramental Body, the corporeal presence of Christ in the Sacrament. According to the Fathers, that Body is given to us, so that we may become the corpus verum, the real idea of the Real Presence.

It is true that this linguistic change also represented a spiritual development, but we should not describe it in the slanted way just mentioned. We can agree that something of the eschatological dynamism and corporate

 intensified vision about the place of the Church of the first millennium in the second. It is therefore the fruit of the struggle and its result. The Church of the first millennium was a church in which the eternal light is burning before the tabernacle is always alive, is always something more than a building made of stones.”

“In fact, the tabernacle is the complete fulfillment of what the Ark of the Covenant represented. It is the place of the ‘Holy of Holies.’”
character (the sense of “we”) of eucharistic faith was lost or at least diminished. As we saw above, the Blessed Sacrament contains a dynamism, which has the goal of transforming mankind and the world into the New Heaven and New Earth, into the unity of the risen Body. This truth was not seen so vividly as before. Again, the Eucharist is not aimed primarily at the individual. Eucharistic personalism is a drive toward union, the overcoming of the barriers between God and man, between “I” and “thou” in the new “we” of the communion of saints. People did not exactly forget this truth, but they were not so clearly aware of it as before. There were, therefore, losses in Christian awareness, and in our time we must try to make up for them, but still there were gains overall. True, the Eucharistic Body of the Lord is meant to bring us together, so that we become his “true Body”. But the gift of the Eucharist can do this only because in it the Lord gives us his true Body. Only the true Body in the Sacrament can build up the true Body of the new City of God. This insight connects the two periods and provides our starting point.

The early Church was already well aware that the bread once changed remains changed. That is why they reserved it for the sick, and that is why they showed it such reverence, as is still the case today in the tabernacle is the complete fulfillment of the place previously occupied by the now broken Body. Moreover, always in a spontaneous way, it takes place for this Presence.” And so little by little the tabernacle takes shape, and more and more, always in a spontaneous way, it takes the place previously occupied by the now disappeared “Ark of the Covenant”. In fact, the tabernacle is the complete fulfillment of what the Ark of the Covenant represented. It is the place of the “Holy of Holies.” It is the tent of God, his throne. Here he is among us. His presence (Shekinah) really does now dwell among us – in the humblest parish church no less than in the grandest cathedral. Even though the definitive Temple will only enter into me, and invites me to surrender myself to him, so that the Apostle’s words come true: “[I]t is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Only thus is the reception of Holy Communion an act that elevates and transforms a man. It is the place of the “Holy of Holies.” It is the “true Body” of the whole Christ. Receiving the Eucharist is the reception of Holy Communion an act that elevates and transforms a man. “He is here, he himself, the whole of himself, and he remains here.” This realization came upon the Middle Ages with a wholly new intensity. It was caused in part by the deepening of theological reflection, but still more important was the new experience of the saints, especially in the Franciscan movement and in the new evangelization undertaken by the Order of Preachers. What happens in the Middle Ages is not a misunderstanding due to losing sight of what is central, but a new dimension of the reality of Christianity opening up through the experience of the saints, supported and illuminated by the reflection of the theologians. At the same time, this new development is in complete continuity with what had always been believed hitherto. Let me say it again: This deepened awareness of faith is impelled by the knowledge that in the consecrated species he is there and remains there. When a man experiences this with every fiber of his heart and mind and senses, the consequence is inescapable: “We must make a proper place for this Presence.” And so little by little the tabernacle takes shape, and more and more, always in a spontaneous way, it takes the place previously occupied by the now disappeared “Ark of the Covenant”. In fact, the tabernacle is the complete fulfillment of what the Ark of the Covenant represented. It is the place of the “Holy of Holies.” It is the tent of God, his throne. Here he is among us. His presence (Shekinah) really does now dwell among us – in the humblest parish church no less than in the grandest cathedral. Even though the definitive Temple will only come to be when the world has become the New Jerusalem, still what the Temple in Jerusalem pointed to is here present in a supreme way. The New Jerusalem is anticipated in the humble species of bread. So let no one say, “The Eucharist is for eating, not looking at.” It is not “ordinary bread”, as the most ancient traditions constantly emphasize. Eating it – as we have just said – is a spiritual process, involving the whole man. “Eating” it means worshipping it. Eating it means letting it come into me, so that my “I” is transformed and opens up into the great “we,” so that we become “one” in him (cf. Gal 3:16). Thus adoration is not opposed to Communion, nor is it merely added to it. No, Communion only reaches its true depth when it is supported and surrounded by adoration. The Eucharistic Presence in the tabernacle does not set another view of the Eucharist alongside or against the Eucharistic celebration, but simply signifies its complete fulfillment. For this Presence has the effect, of course, of keeping the Eucharist forever in church. The church never becomes a lifeless space but is always filled with the presence of the Lord, which comes out of the celebration, leads us into it, and always makes us participants in the cosmic Eucharist. What man of faith has not experienced this?

A church without the Eucharistic Presence is somehow dead, even when it invites people to pray. But a church in which the eternal light is burning before the tabernacle is always alive, is always something more than a building made of stones. In this place the Lord is always waiting for me, calling me, wanting to make me “eucharistic”. In this way, he prepares me for the Eucharist, sets me in motion toward his return.

The changes in the Middle Ages brought losses, but they also provided a wonderful spiritual deepening. They unfolded the magnitude of the mystery instituted at the Last Supper and enabled it to be experienced with a new fullness. How many saints – yes, including saints of the love of neighbor – were nourished and led to the Lord by this experience! We must not lose this richness. If the presence of the Lord is to touch us in a concrete way, the tabernacle must also find its proper place in the architecture of our church buildings.

This article can be found as Part II, Chapter 4 of Pope Benedict XVI’s book The Spirit of the Liturgy, available from Ignatius Press.
THE KENTUCKY HOLY LAND
SACRED SITES OF KENTUCKY AND SOUTHERN INDIANA


Reviewed by Anne Husted Burleigh

If you love old churches, and if you want a flavor of the history of the Catholic Church in America after it crossed the eastern mountains and expanded into the American frontier, you will want to add to your library Clyde F. Crews’s lovely book, A Benediction of Place: Historic Catholic Sacred Sites of Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

With its predominance of photographs, it is a beautiful coffee-table book; yet its text, maps, and foreword by the late centenarian historian Dr. Thomas D. Clark make it much more substantial in content than a merely decorative volume. Rather, it is a book to pore over, to meditate upon, to reminisce with, and definitely to carry in the car as the guidebook for outings to track down priceless old churches.

Fr. Crews, a theology professor at Bellarmine University in Louisville and priest of the Archdiocese of Louisville, does not intend to present a work of scholarship. He instead offers a book of “experiences, images and impressions” that capture the deeply Catholic essence of the Midwest and Upper South, represented by Kentucky and Southern Indiana. Perusing this book, one grasps in the fullest possible way the benediction, the blessing that permeates a place when God himself dwells there. Thus these handsome old churches, the work of so many hands, strike a comforting chord in the modern heart that so craves permanence, continuity, and a home with foundations both here and in heaven.

The magnificent altar in St. John Church, Louisville

When the church is a Catholic church, then the benediction of place is inextricably united to the presence in that place of Christ in the Eucharist. Thus the Catholic churches, monasteries, and shrines of Kentucky and Southern Indiana that are the places of this book depict in the fullest possible way the benediction, the blessing that permeates a place when God himself dwells there. Thus these handsome old churches, the work of so many hands, strike a comforting chord in the modern heart that so craves permanence, continuity, and a home with foundations both here and in heaven.

St. Rose Church was built in rural Kentucky in 1855.

As a Hoosier born and reared in Indianapolis, a former resident of Southern Indiana and a current resident of Kentucky, I find old familiar faces among the cathedrals and churches of such cities as Bardstown, Louisville, Covington, Vincennes, Evansville, and Indianapolis, and among the rural churches, abbeys, and motherhouses such as those at St. Meinrad, Mariah Hill, Ferdinand, and Napoleon in Indiana, and at Springfield, Gethsemani, St. Catharine, and Melbourne in Kentucky.

Of the approximately 20,000 Catholic parishes in the United States, nearly 300 of those are in Kentucky. Another 100 or so are in Southern Indiana, south of Indianapolis. Fr. Crews showcases a selection of the historic or landmark churches of the region, many of which were built before World War I. He spares us, therefore, a view of the pedestrian auditorium-style churches of the last forty years, reminding us simply by their absence how much our historic old churches, whether grand or simple, provide us a satisfying sense of the transcendent that is lost in too many of our present parish churches.

Among the treasure trove of sacred sites in Fr. Crews’ book, the section that ranks among the most fascinating is the chapter on the Kentucky Holy Land, the seat of the first inland diocese of the Catholic Church. Other than Vincennes and a sprinkling of spots evangelized by the French Jesuit explorer missionaries, there is no Catholic area west of the Baltimore Diocese that is older than the Kentucky Holy Land. Comprised of the three historic counties of Marion, Nelson, and Washington in central Kentucky, not far from Louisville, and dotted with the earliest sacred sites in the region, the Kentucky Holy Land was settled by Catholics from Maryland, beginning in the 1780s. It was once part of the Diocese of Bardstown, established, along with the Dioceses of Boston, New York, and Philadelphia, by Pope Pius VII on the same day in 1808. This original diocese of the West was enormous, running from the Alleghenies to the Mississippi and from Michigan to Tennessee. From the Diocese of Bardstown, centered around the St. Joseph Protocathedral, eventually sprang more than thirty dioceses, including Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Chicago, and Nashville.

For an insight into what Fr. Crews calls the “spiritual geography” of the earliest scene of the Catholic Church in Kentucky and Southern Indiana, a good beginning is a leisurely, contemplative reading of A Benediction of Place, coupled with a promise to oneself to tour some of these sacred sites.

Anne Husted Burleigh is a free lance writer, the author of two books and numerous articles for a variety of journals. She lives on a farm in Rabbit Hash, Kentucky, overlooking the Ohio River, near Cincinnati. She is married to Bill Burleigh, a long-time journalist, and they have three children and seven grandchildren.

email: burleigh@fuse.net
HAGIA SOPHIA IN THE 19TH CENTURY
CD-ROM COMPILATION OF THE SURVEYS OF GASPARD FOSSATI


Reviewed by William Heyer

Octavo Editions (www.octavo.com) has recently published via CD-ROM a series of historic and rare books on architecture, botany, literature, and science. Some of the titles now available on architecture include Fontana’s Obelisco, Amico’s Trattato, Palladio’s Quattro Libri, and this publication, Gaspard Fossati’s Aya Sofiu. The books are high resolution scans of the original publications from cover to cover viewable in PDF format. It is recommended that you have a high-speed computer and a good monitor for viewing the plates (CRT monitors far surpass LCD monitors for viewing true colors).

Octavo Editions has gone to great lengths to make the advent of books on CD a user-friendly experience. Simply install the CD, open the PDF file in Adobe® Acrobat Reader™, and enjoy books that few people previously had access to. For research and other intellectual purposes, this new format is a welcome technological advance. Every page is scanned as if one were looking down on the actual book. And zooming in reveals the fine details of the plates. Be warned, though. Each page takes some time to open depending on your computer processor speed, so prepare to wait for some pages to load. Don’t worry; it’s worth the wait.

Aya Sofia Constantinople was first published in 1852 by Gaspard Fossati, an Italian architect who was hired by the sultan Abdülmecid to restore the third most significant building in the world. After his service to the sultan with the restoration accomplished in 1847, Fossati documented his work for the public. At the time, the Byzantine world was becoming popular for study and emulation. As Fossati mentions in his introduction, “[I aim to] rectify certain errors that I have run across in the history of this famous monument of Christianity as well as to come to the aid of those artists who are working to revive Byzantine art.” David Sullivan, classics librarian at the University of California at Berkeley, notes in his introduction to the CD that this publication was probably the closest thing to actually being there for most Europeans, who could enter Turkey only under the strictest terms. Sullivan gives an historian’s account of the church and restoration work accomplished by Fossati and also gives an account of his life and career, how he came to be in the service of the sultan, and other interesting aspects of the restoration.

Fossati intended the reader to accompany him on a walking tour of Hagia Sophia. Each plate is in sequence for a journey through the interior of the church and the exterior around the structure. There are also views of the surrounding area from the top of a minaret and a panorama of the city with the great monument in the center. A plan of the tour is presented at the beginning with notes as to whence each plate’s view is taken. It truly is like being there, which only makes the reader, especially if Christian, desire to see similar renderings but before the Islamic occupation. A reconstruction of Hagia Sophia with its original Christian adornments would be an important addition to this study. With these new books on CD by Octavo Editions and their wide availability, such an experiment is probably already underway.

William Heyer is a practicing architect in Columbus, Ohio. His firm is currently restoring the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus and St. Gelasius Church in Chicago among other projects. He lives in Columbus with his wife and four children.

Fossati’s illustration of the north entrance of the Hagia Sophia

The great dome dominates the 19th century view of the Church of Hagia Sophia.
ARCHITECTURE OF THE SHROUD

HISTORY OF THE SHROUD OF TURIN


Reviewed by
Thomas Norman Raykovich

His Royal Highness took himself with all the court to San Giovanni ... and, having taken the Most Holy Shroud, carried it into the upper chapel, passing by way of the stairs next to the sacristy that lead to the same ... The Most Holy Shroud was spread out on a table placed between the chapel altar and the balustrade facing San Giovanni, from that same balustrade it was shown to the people who were in the church, and from that same table it was held up also to display it to those who were in the chapel, then it was put back in its chest and placed in the assigned location.”

So wrote the papal nuncio recounting the ostension, or public ritual display, in 1694 of the Holy Shroud—the burial cloth of the body of Jesus Christ—during which it was finally installed in its own permanent chapel. In Architecture for the Shroud: Relic and Ritual in Turin, art historian John Beldon Scott provides a meticulously researched and detailed history of the Holy Shroud, the physical settings in which it was housed and displayed, and the role it played in the dynastic ambitions of the Savoyard dukes.

The Holy Shroud, a linen carrying what is believed to be the preserved image of the body of Jesus Christ “painted in his own blood” is, as Scott observes, more than a relic. It is venerated as a “True Portrait” of the Son of God. “Since the man there plainly bore the wounds of Christ’s suffering, the relic constituted a direct witness to the Passion and the mystery of the Incarnation.” Crucial to our understanding of this history, both architectural and dynastic, the Shroud was declared by theologians of the time to be “worthy not only of dulia (the veneration owed to the relics of saints) but of latria, the adoration due to God Himself.”

Scott places the first known appearance of the Shroud at the village of Lirey in the early fourteenth century, when a knight in Philippe VI of Valois’s entourage, gave the canons at Lirey the holy cloth. By the middle of the fifteenth century, Duke Louis of Savoy had acquired the relic, bringing it into its long possession by the Savoy, and transported it to the royal chateau at Chambéry. There, it was placed in a new Gothic chapel, Sainte. “Projecting assertively from the chateau walls and towering over the city, the Sainte-Chapelle of the Savoy ... created a mighty precinct of dynastic sacrality.” Beyond the apse of the chapel, an exterior ambulatory space allowed for the public display of the Shroud to crowds in the adjoining square.

A series of public and private ostensions occurred at Sainte-Chapelle over the following century. During this period “the court etiquette, diplomatic protocol, and architectural requirements surrounding [the Shroud’s] protection and display had been experimentally tested by means of a process of trial and error and were now ready for more efficient deployment on a grander scale.”

Emanuele Filiberto seized the opportunity to transfer the Shroud to Turin when “Cardinal [Carlo] Borromeo, archbishop of Milan and widely recognized as a saintly person, vowed during the plague that struck his city in 1576 to make a pilgrimage to the Sainte-Chapelle in Chambéry to venerate the famous Passion relic preserved there.” The Shroud was brought to the new Savoyard capital in 1578. Shortly thereafter, the first of the cardinal’s four ostension pilgrimages took place. The prestige accorded the Shroud by the cardinal’s reverence for it and his involvement in its public display were seen by the House of Savoy as essential to their own future.

Numerous architects were subsequently involved in efforts to create a permanent repository for the Shroud after its arrival in Turin. From early designs by Pellegrino Tibaladi (Cardinal Borromeo’s architect) for a reliquary ciborium within the cathedral beginning in 1582 to Carlo di Castellamonte’s oval chapel designs dating to the beginning of the seventeenth century, Scott traces the evolution of the Shroud’s setting as Carlo Emanuele I sought to protect ducal control of the relic and project ducal authority. The new reliquary chapel, moreover, was to be of a magnificence as equal as possible to the grace which God had bestowed on the Savoy by favoring them with such a sacred treasure.”

Prince Maurizio of Savoy and his nephew Duke Carlo Emanuele II of Savoy again revisited the project with the intention of realizing the new chapel to house the relic. By 1655 construction was proceeding on a circular chapel according to designs by the sculptor Bernardino Quadri. The structure was built up to the level of the interior cornice at the base of the drum when Guarino Guarini was given the responsibility of completing the project beginning in 1667.

Guarino Guarini, a Theatine

Photo: Pino Dell’Aquila; Architecture for the Shroud: Relic and Ritual in Turin

The Ostention of the Holy Shroud is shown here in a 1634 painting by the artist Pieter Bolckmann.
priest, mathematician, astronomer, and architect, had studied in Rome and knew well the work of Rome’s three greatest baroque architects: Francesco Borromini, Pietro da Cortona, and Gianlorenzo Bernini. In his designs for the chapel for the Holy Shroud, Guarini masterfully addressed the ongoing challenge of unifying the ducal palace complex with the adjoining Cathedral of San Giovanni scenographically and ritually. His black marble and gilt bronze structure was a brilliant solution to this complex program. Guarini’s design formed a nuanced connection between church, chapel, and ducal palace.

Scott describes how, throughout Guarini’s design, the instruments of the Passion were deployed iconographically, transforming conventionalized architectural elements into resonant symbols. The Corinthian capitals of the chapel are a brilliant iconographic variation on the canonical order. Olive branches replace the more common acanthus leaves. A crown of thorns envelops the capital (understood as the “head” of a column), at the center of the abacus nails emerge from the fleuron (here carved in the form of a passionflower), replacing the more botanically logical styles and stigmas. This is all, as Scott notes, in keeping with classical decorum, which requires “the application of imagery appropriate to the nature and status of the context into which it was to be placed.”

The pendential zone vaulting, whose geometry immediately recalls Borromini’s coffering at San Carlo in Rome, is also described by Scott as a carefully developed reference to the reliquary chest believed to have been used to transport the Shroud from Chambéry to Turin. With his coffering design, Guarini alludes to the exotic geometric patterning of the chest, thereby allowing the entire chapel to be read as a magnificent black marble reliquary.

The drum and dome are articulated by Guarini with an architectural structure that is both real (by necessity) and fictive (lending the illusion of lightness). His skillful use of geometry in the dome, which reiterates the triangulated organization of the plan generates a vertiginous upward perspectival play. In an engagingly insightful set of observations, Scott demonstrates the relationship between this layered concentricity of arches and the development of illusionistic ceiling paintings.

Scott also examines role of the quadratura of Andrea Pozzo (a Jesuit priest, painter, and architect), wherein painted architecture is used illusionistically to extend the boundaries of real space. “The apparition of heaven that the viewer experiences in the Baroque dome paintings of Rome recreates for the spiritually modest viewer the widely reported ecstatic but palpable visions of celestial paradise apprehended by the mystical saints of the sixteenth century: Teresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola, John of the Cross and Filippo Neri.” Guarini employs the actual physical articulation of architectural structure itself to establish “the fictive extension of vertical space” in the Shroud Chapel. At the summit, in the dome’s lantern, a star pattern in marble tracery encircles a representation of the Holy Spirit surrounded by an aura of gilt bronze sunrays and “mystically” illuminated by the concealed windows of the lantern. In so doing, Guarini has created an “optical machine, his dome for the Shroud Chapel rivals in its own trompe l’oeil operation and in its seriousness of purpose the most renowned achievements of visual rhetoric that the century produced both in Rome and in Paris.”

Professor Scott follows with an examination of how seventeenth- and eighteenth-century architects participated in the development of the adjacent urban spaces of the City—Piazza Castello, the Piazzetta Reale adjacent to the royal palace, the Ostension Terrace and the façade of the Palazzo Madama (Reale)—as the setting for highly structured civic ritual beyond the walls of the Cathedral. The city of Turin was thereby engaged as a great humanist stage where permanent and temporal architecture together amplified the communal ritual of the Shroud ostensions. The many projects deployed Christian and dynastic iconography within an ordered framework of classical architecture and theater-like urbanism.

The ensemble provided the ideal setting for what Scott terms “cultic urbanism” in which the civic life of Turin was invested with meaning beyond the quotidian. The Napoleonic period and the Restoration each separated the relic from its public stage, and the tradition of ritual urban ceremony eventually ended. In the twentieth century, the installations of the Shroud for public display weakened further: “Whereas the splendor of dynasty and church once paraded across the field of vision as the excited crowds responded with cries of ‘misericordia,’ now the people filed past the immobile Shroud in silence. The once ambulatory relic now became static and hermetic, not even traveling as far as the cathedral front steps.” Scott emphasizes the sense of decline by pointing out that the Shroud was displayed in a stark modernist black frame, utterly disconnected from its splendid architectural context.

John Beldon Scott’s history of the architecture of the Shroud offers us today a potent, albeit challenging, inspiration. Today we are failing to rival, much less exceed, the architecture and urbanism of Guarini’s time. Guarini and his peers embraced their talents as gifts from God and, by means of their work itself, offered Him their profound gratitude. This fine book demonstrates the transcendent possibilities of the classical. We should aspire, with our every drawn and built effort, to return to those dizzying heights.
**FROM FISHERMAN’S TOMB TO TEMPLE OF GOD**

**A HISTORY OF ST. PETER’S IN THE VATICAN**


Reviewed by Duncan Stroik

Take twelve famous modern architects and ask them to build a new building over 50 years and what do you have? Eclectic chaos. Hire twelve famous architects to work with emperors and Popes over 1600 years and what do you have—perhaps the greatest Temple ever constructed. How does one write a history of a building as complex as St. Peter’s in a mere 300 pages? The basilica has been built, rebuilt, unbuilt, and renovated almost since 160 AD when the priest Gaius erected an aedicule on the grave of the Fisherman’s tomb. This text is a fascinating recap of historical knowledge along with up to date research on the basilica that almost reads like a single author wrote it.

It is common knowledge that St. Peter’s was constructed by Emperor Constantine after his legalization of Christianity in 313 AD. Yet according to Glen Bowersock ancient textual and archaeological remains show no evidence of Constantine’s veneration of Peter nor that he built the martyrion in his honor. Rather the basilica was probably patronized by Constantine’s son, Constans, after the death of the first Christian emperor in 337. Texts indicating that Constantine constructed the basilica come long after his death whereas earlier texts merely mention the Pope.

One of the fascinating subplots of St. Peter’s is the use of spolia or spoils in its construction. Another way of saying this is that St. Peter’s deserves the first platinum LEED rating for “green architecture,” since so much of the building was built from recycled materials. The interior of Old St. Peter’s was made up of four rows of 22 columns with columns of different sizes, diameters and colors presumably taken from other Roman buildings. The columns of the central nave averaged 30’ in height while the shorter aisle colonnades were close to 20’. The early Christian architect arranged the different colored shafts in pairs across the nave and used a variety of Ionic, Corinthian and Composite capitals and different sized bases to make the heights equivalent (as can still be seen in Early Christian basilicas such as Santa Maria in Trastevere). This willingness to use unmatched columns in a colonnade seems foreign to the Roman sensibility. It is not found in high-style Roman architecture of earlier periods nor in its revivals in the Romanesque and Renaissance periods.

During the renovation of St. Peter’s in the sixteenth century, started by Pope Julius II, these colorful columns were taken to other churches, moved to major doorways and side altars of the Basilica, or destroyed. Six columns were re-used at the Fountain of Pope Paul V on the Janiculum and others were employed at the Palazzo Borghese and at Santa Maria Maggiore. It is worthwhile to compare this renovation to the later renovation of San Giovanni in Laterano by Borromini in the 1640’s when the columns were encased in the nave walls. Other spolia include the giant bronze pinecone moved from the atrium of Old St. Peter’s and now in the Vatican Museum courtyard. An even larger engineering feat was the moving of the granite obelisk by Sixtus V in 1586. A spoil of Egypt, it was moved 800’ from the spine of the Circus of Nero (where St. Peter was presumably martyred) to the piazza in front of the Basilica. There are also the twisted or solomonic columns, purportedly donated by Constantine, which were possibly spolia from Greece and were moved from their original position surrounding St. Peter’s tomb to create shrines for the great relics of St. Peter’s on the upper level of the four piers of the dome. They were the model of course for Bernini’s monumental bronze baldacchino over the high altar.

A number of excellent essays on the history of the medieval basilica to its rebuilding in the Renaissance and Baroque periods, with a procession of brilliant architects, leads up to a chapter on Gianlorenzo Bernini by Irving Lavin which could stand as a book in its own right. This monograph within the monograph offers the engrossing story about one of the greatest artists who has ever lived and his work under multiple Popes to design some of the most important parts of St. Peter’s. From the angels of the passion on Ponte Sant’Angelo, to the oval piazza, to the crossing under the dome, to the baldacchino, to the altar of the Cathedra, to the Blessed Sacrament chapel to the Papal tombs—Bernini had such a great impact on the Basilica in its final form that one gets the sense that Bernini was the main protagonist of St. Peter’s. This demonstrates Bernini’s greatness. As T.S. Eliot has written “The existing order is complete before the new work [Bernini] arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order [the basilica] must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new.”

One of the most interesting findings is Bernini’s collaboration with Pope Alexander VII Aldobrandini to construct the great doric colonnades shaped like a keyhole. In contradistinction to other great piazzas of the world St. Peter’s has colonnades with no buildings above or behind them. Alexander VII wanted them to be without function because they were to be for Eucharistic adoration. They were meant to be a covering for Corpus Christi processions when the Pope would be carried around the square holding a monstrance. What makes this travertine Eucharistic canopy or tester particularly interesting is that Alexander VII innovated a new tradition of kneeling in adoration during the procession, creating a synthesis of Eucharistic adoration and procession. This is a breathtaking essay which quarrries the artistic and theological background for Bernini’s inventions. Its one drawback is the quality of many of the black and white photographs.

An essay exploring the temporary architecture built inside of St. Peter’s for the canonization of saints is interesting to compare to the canonizations which have occurred on the exterior of St. Peter’s in the last decades. The concluding chapter explores the influence of the basilica on other buildings in the modern era, particularly churches and cathedrals but also on the glass dome of the Milan Galleria and the cast iron dome by Thomas U. Walter at the United States Capitol.

Duncan Stroik is Editor of Sacred Architecture, Professor of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame and a practicing architect in South Bend Indiana. 
email: editor@sacredarchitecture.org
Is the future of church architecture a revival of the 1950’s and 60’s? Or is it a necessary response to the complexity of modern culture?

Where do you go for expert criticism and analysis of modern trends, historical studies and book reviews? For the latest in contemporary church architecture whether timeless or of its time...

Sacred Architecture

Upcoming articles on: Don’t Blame Vatican II, Adaptive Reuse of Historic Churches, da Vinci’s Last Supper, reviews of new churches, news...

Subscribe for $9.95* for one year / two issues or $18.95* for two years / four issues.

Donate to Sacred Architecture: Contributions of $50 or more Receive a copy of Michael S. Rose’s In Tiers of Glory.

Order online at www.sacredarchitecture.org or fill out the enclosed card. For more information, telephone (574) 232-1783, fax (574) 232-1792 or e-mail editor@sacredarchitecture.org

* U.S. domestic prices only. U.S. domestic prices only. In Canada and Mexico, add $4 per year; elsewhere add $9 per year. Individual issues can be purchased for $6 including U.S. postage. Payment in U.S. funds only.