THREE MILES FROM DISNEYLAND THERE IS ANOTHER FAMOUS THEME PARK, WHICH PROCLAIMS ITSELF AS “AMERICA’S TELEVISION CHURCH.” THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL, PERHAPS THE FIRST MEGA-CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES, IS ABOUT TO UNDERGO CONVERSION CLASSES SO THAT IT CAN FINALLY GET THE CATHEDRA AND BISHOP IT HAS ALWAYS WANTED. THE DIOCESE OF ORANGE, CALIFORNIA, HAS PURCHASED THE THIRTY-ONE-ACRE PROPERTY AND ITS FOUR BUILDINGS FOR $53 MILLION, A STEAL EVEN IN THIS REAL ESTATE MARKET. REALIZING THAT RECENT CATHEDRALS BUILT FROM SCRATCH HAVE COST UPWARDS OF $200 AND $250 MILLION ON THE WEST COAST, RETROFITTING SOUNDS LIKE A FINANCIALLY SAVVY MOVE. HOWEVER, TURNING THIS PRISMATIC BEACON OF TELEEVANGELISM INTO A HOUSE OF GOD MAY BE EASIER SAID THAN DONE.


SAID TO BE THE FIRST ALL-GLASS STRUCTURE BUILT FOR RELIGIOUS PURPOSES, IT IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FEEL-GOOD THEOLOGY OF THE 1980S. HOW TO CONVERT A BUILDING LIKE THIS AND AT THE SAME TIME DISSOCIATE IT FROM ITS FOUNDER AND HIS THEOLOGY? CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL MINISTRIES WAS A RELIGION ABOUT SELF-PROMOTION, AND, APPROPRIATELY, ITS MAIN BUILDINGS WERE DESIGNED IN DISPARATE MODERNIST STYLES BY THREE WELL-KNOWN ARCHITECTURE FIRMS: RICHARD NEUTRA, PHILIP JOHNSON AND JOHN BURGEE, AND RICHARD MEIER. EACH BUILDING IS A PERSONAL EXPRESSION OF THE ARCHITECT, SO THAT TOGETHER THEY CREATE A CAMPUS WITHOUT MUCH TO UNIFY THEM. Perhaps what may be of more concern to its future owner, the Neutra tower (1968) does not meet earthquake codes and the Crystal Cathedral (1980) and the Welcoming Center (2003) are high maintenance glass and metal buildings. This could be an expensive investment.

Can the Crystal Cathedral be converted to a Catholic Cathedral? We shall see. After all, the much noted cathedrals of Oakland, Los Angeles, and San Francisco are all expressionistic modernist sculptures. The diocese has said that they will not change the exterior of the church and will not compromise the architectural integrity of the 2700-seat interior. Yet, without a radical transformation the building will always come across as a technological mega-church rather than as a sacred place. It needs to be totally gutted and reconceived. And even if the interior can be functionally retrofitted for Catholic liturgy, many believe that its identity will always be that of the Crystal Cathedral.

One of the major criticisms of Catholic architecture during the past fifty years is that it has incorrectly adopted many of the forms of low-church Protestantism: the theater form, a fear of sacred images, asymmetrical layouts, vacuous sanctuaries, minimalist liturgical elements, prominently placed JACUZZIS FOR BAPTISM, AND THE BANISHMENT OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT TO THE BAPTISTRY. THE ALTAR AREA BECOMES A STAGE WITH A FOCUS ON ENTERTAINMENT ALONGSIDE PRAISE BANDS THAT PERFORM UPTempo MUSIC. IN RESPONSE, LITURGISTS HAVE ARGUED THAT ALL OF THESE THINGS ARE SIMPLY THE OUTGROWTH IF NOT THE REQUIREMENT OF VATICAN II. ARE THEY FINALLY ADMITTING THEIR AGENDA BY PURCHASING A READY FOR TV MEGA-CHURCH COMPLETE WITH A JUMBOTRON AND THREE HUGE BALCONIES FOR THE “SPECTATORS”?

THE TIMING OF THIS IS WRONG. A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF PRIESTS, LAY, AND THEOLOGIANS HAS GROWN UP WITH THIS STUFF AND FIND THESE PROTESTANT INNOVATIONS DATED AND LACKING IN SUBSTANCE. THEY DESIRE AN ARCHITECTURE THAT GROWS OUT OF THE CHURCH’S RICH TRADITION AND THAT WILL ENABLE THEM IN WORSHIP. ASKED WHAT CATHEDRALS SHOULD LOOK LIKE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY, THEY POINT TO SAINT PETER’S IN NEW YORK, SAINT PETER’S IN ROME, NOTRE DAME IN PARIS, AND OTHER OBVIOUS SUSpects. THESE ARE BUILDINGS CONSTRUCTED HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, YET CONTINUE TO SPEAK TO BELIEVERS AND UNBELIEVERS ALIKE TODAY. A TIMELESS ARCHITECTURE BUILT FOR THE AGES, A CATHEDRAL SHOULD BE A DURABLE BUILDING CONSTRUCTED OUT OF MASONRY, TRANSCENDENT IN HEIGHT, AND DIRECTIONAL IN LENGTH. UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE NEW GENERATION AND THEIR CHILDREN, THE ORANGE DIOCESE HAS CHosen THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION AND WILL FOIST ON THEM A BUILDING THAT IS OF ITS TIME AND NOT PARTICULARLY SUITED TO CATHOLIC WORSHIP AND DEVOTION. TWENTY YEARS FROM NOW, IT WILL NOT MATTER THAT ORANGE GOT A REALLY GOOD DEAL WHEREAS ANOTHER CALIFORNIA DIOCESE QUADRUPLED ITS BUDGET. PEOPLE WILL SIMPLY ASK IF IT IS A BEAUTIFUL CATHEDRAL, WORTHY OF THE CREATOR.

Duncan Stroik
Notre Dame, Spring 2012

On the cover: North Portal of Chartres Cathedral, Chartres, France - Photo by Alain Michot
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In a general audience in August 2011, Pope Benedict XVI said that artistic beauty can lead the human heart to God. Art evokes in its viewers a sensation of something beyond mere matter which can touch the heart and elevate the soul, leading ultimately to God, Benedict said. He invited his listeners to open themselves to that beauty and be moved to prayer and praise of the Lord. The pope related a personal experience of attending a performance of the works of J. S. Bach, where he felt the music conveyed the truth of the composer’s faith, and moved him to praise the Lord. He concluded by urging those gathered to visit churches and art museums, which are not only an occasion for cultural enrichment but can be “a moment of grace, an encouragement to strengthen our relationship and our dialogue with the Lord.”

The earthquake that shook the northeastern United States last August damaged churches in the archdioceses of Washington and Baltimore. Saint Patrick Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Baltimore was deemed unsafe and is closed indefinitely for repairs. The steeple was badly damaged, but Archbishop Edwin O’Brien of Baltimore expressed thankfulness that no one was injured when pieces of concrete fell to the sidewalk. Several churches in Washington were damaged by the magnitude 5.8 quake as well, including significant damage to the central tower of the Episcopal Church’s Washington National Cathedral.

A new church established as a National Hispanic Parish in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia was dedicated on August 16, 2011, the feast of the church’s patron Saint Rocco. His Eminence Justin Cardinal Rigali, the then-Archbishop, now Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese, was present for the ceremony and unlocked the front doors of the church. The 10,000-square-foot building is located in Avondale in South Chester County and was designed by architect Michael P. O’Rourke in the style of churches in Mexico and missions in the West. The new church, made possible by a $5 million donation from a benefactor, will serve the 12,000 members of the San Rocco congregation and serve the needs of Spanish-speaking Catholics in Philadelphia.

Bradford Wilcox of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville suggests that unemployment among young adults may be a key factor. Some demographers believe the one child household will become the norm in the U.S. as in Europe, but others say it is a mistake to believe the decline will be permanent.

The Vatican’s Congregation of Divine Worship will soon establish a new commission to regulate church architecture and liturgical music. The “Liturgical Art and Sacred Music Commission” will evaluate construction projects for new churches to ensure their designs are appropriate for the celebration of the liturgy. Music and singing that accompany the Mass will also be evaluated by the commission.

The proposed new Minnesota Vikings stadium will not be built three hundred feet from the Basilica of St. Mary in Minneapolis. Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton removed this location from the list of potential sites for the new stadium after Church representatives voiced their concerns about the threat it would pose to parish life.
A Vatican exhibition exploring the art, science, and spirituality of Barcelona’s La Sagrada Familia Basilica was on display in the colonnade of Saint Peter’s Square from November 24 through January 15. Lluís Cardinal Martinez of Barcelona, in Rome for the inauguration of the exhibit, explained that it presents “another of the contributions of Christian faith which the Church has made over the centuries to the world of culture, art, and beauty.” The display was divided into three sections, which focused respectively on the art, science, and spirituality of Gaudí’s design. Drawings for the façade and designs for the stained glass windows were also displayed. The exhibition was accompanied by a colloquium on December 12 entitled “Architecture: symbolism and sacredness a century after Gaudí.” Architect Maria Antonieta Crippa moderated the event, and addresses were given by Gianfranco Cardinal Ravasi, president of the Pontifical Council for Culture, and architect Mario Botta.

Chicago philanthropist Richard H. Driehaus is supporting the rebuilding of neglected churches in underfunded areas. After being asked by Father Jack Wall, a priest at Old Saint Patrick’s church in Chicago where Driehaus is a parishioner, the Richard H. Driehaus Charitable Lead Trust matches 500 gifts per year of $1,000 to Wall’s nonprofit organization, Catholic Extension. With a strong donor base in Chicago, Catholic Extension has built over 12,000 churches across the country. Driehaus, who has previously donated to Saint Ignatius College Prep, DePaul University, and Old Saint Patrick’s, says he considers his donations an investment in the future.

Holy Apostles College and Seminary in Cromwell, CT, recently completed a new chapel dedicated to Mary, Queen of the Apostles. The 10,000-square-foot, $4 million chapel was designed by architect Don Hammerberg Associates and built by Sullivan Brothers, LLC. It replaces a temporary chapel that could hold only 80 of the Seminary’s nearly 400 students. The new chapel has an octagonal design with a cathedral ceiling that replicates a fifth-century Byzantine design. Bishop Michael R. Cote of Norwich presided at the dedication of the chapel, which has since been used for the celebration of both the ordinary and extraordinary forms of the liturgy.
Radius Track, a cold-formed steel framing fabricator, received a 2011 Product Innovation Award for realizing the design of the Interfaith Peace Chapel in Dallas. Designed by the late architect Philip Johnson just before his death in 2005, the curving walls of the interdenominational chapel have no parallel lines or right angles. Radius Track used BIM and 3-D modeling to create its framing details for the 8,000 square-foot, 175 seat chapel which cost $3.7 million.

The diocese of Saskatoon recently completed a new 1,250-seat cathedral to serve its growing Catholic community. The 65,000-square-foot, $28 million (Canadian currency) Holy Family Cathedral is the first cathedral constructed in western Canada in over fifty years. Saint Paul’s in downtown Saskatoon will be retained as a co-cathedral. The eco-friendly design for the new cathedral by Saskatoon firm Friggstad Downing Henry Architects includes a unique feature: solar cells embedded in the stained glass windows designed by artist Sarah Hall. The formal dedication and Mass of Blessing for the new cathedral will be held on May 13.

Saint Thomas More Chapel at the Thomas More College of Liberal Arts recently received a renovation that included the installation of a new altar and three new icons, relocating the tabernacle to a central position, and repainting the sanctuary. The new mahogany altar is positioned to ensure that the priest celebrates the Mass facing Ad Orientem. The three new icons, painted by the College’s artist-in-residence David Clayton, feature Our Lady, Saint John the Evangelist, and Saint Thomas More.

The Diocese of Orange purchased the Crystal Cathedral in California for $57.5 million. The building has been on the market since well-known TV evangelist Robert H. Schuller filed for bankruptcy in October 2010. The diocese originally bid $50 million in July, but increased the amount to compete with other groups, such as Chapman University, who were also bidding for the property. Under the terms of the agreement, Crystal Cathedral Ministries can continue to use the church and other campus structures for up to three years, when it will be converted to a Catholic cathedral. The $57 million spent by the Church is much less than the estimated $100 million proposal for a new 2,500-seat cathedral that the diocese has been planning for over ten years to serve the 1.2 million Catholics of Orange County.

A fire at Saint Malo’s retreat center in Allenspark, CO, caused significant damage to the structure. Believed to have been caused by a gas build-up in the chimney, the fire destroyed the lounge, dining room, kitchen, library, common areas, and small chapel, but did not cause any injuries or deaths. The room that Pope John Paul II stayed in during his 1993 visit to Denver was preserved, as well as the historic Saint Catherine of Siena stone chapel located on the property. The Archdiocese of Denver will determine the future of the center once damage is completely assessed. In the meantime, members of the Christian Life Movement who run the center are staying elsewhere, but remain “in high spirits.”

The floorplan and interior of the new Holy Family Cathedral and Diocesan Chancery in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
New three-dimensional mapping technology is being used by the Pontifical Institute for Christian Archaeology to study Rome’s Christian architectural history. The project, a joint initiative between the Vatican and the Swedish Heritage Board, involves taking thousands of digital scans of a structure and using them to build a three-dimensional virtual recreation. The high-resolution model can then be used by archaeologists for detailed analysis and interpretation of a building. The team is currently working on a study of the Lateran baptistery, located next to the Cathedral of Saint John Lateran. The baptistery has been in continual use since the fourth century, when, it is claimed, the Emperor Constantine was baptized in its octagonal font.

Enrollment is up in seminaries across the U.S. The Theological College in Washington, D.C., is at maximum capacity with ninety students for the 2011-2012 school year. The Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, OH, currently has 186 seminarians, the highest level since the 1970s. Saint Paul Seminary School of Divinity at the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota, has its largest new class since 1980. In all, the United States has over 3,600 post-baccalaureate seminarians, a net increase of four percent since the previous year. Father Phillip J. Brown, rector of the Theological College in Washington, says he is impressed by not only the numbers, but by the “quality and spirit of the men who are coming ... we’re seeing a real renewal of the priesthood.”

A Marionite chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Lebanon is the newest side chapel in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. 300 people were present for the dedication of the chapel, which coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Seminary in Washington, D.C, and the fiftieth anniversary of priesthood for the seminary’s rector, Chorbishop Seely Beggiani. The stone interior of the chapel, designed by Louis R. DiCocco III of St Jude Liturgical Arts Studio, reflects the design of Lebanon’s stone churches. The floor contains a Cedar of Lebanon design. A Syriac cross adorns the altar, and images of the crucifixion and the four evangelists are found behind the altar, as well as images of Saint Maron and Our Lady of Lebanon.

Construction continues at Our Lady of the Annunciation Abbey at Clear Creek in Oklahoma, designed by Thomas Gordon Smith Architects. In December 2011, the Benedictine monks completed a sizeable portion of their new abbatial church, including a Great Portal. Andrew Wilson Smith is currently carving the twelve Apostles on the lintel. The abbey was founded in the Diocese of Tulsa in 1999 by Notre-Dame de Fontgombault, a French abbey of Solesmes. The monks hope to resume construction in 2013 to serve monastic needs.

Efforts to restore a shrine devastated by wildfires in Arizona last June are underway, with the hope that the work will be finished by Easter. The Our Lady of the Sierras Shrine, located in the Huachuca Mountains, was completely gutted by the fire, but the damaged ciboria and tabernacle were able to be salvaged. A 75-foot Celtic cross, a 31-foot statue of Our Lady of the Sierras, and two marble statues of angels on the site also survived the fire.

The Our Lady of the Sierras Shrine was destroyed in the 2011 fire.
News

A new cathedral commemorates victims of Soviet-era gulag labor camps in Magadan, Russia. Constructed on the site of one of the notorious Kolyma camps, where it is estimated that 500,000 to 3 million people lost their lives, including countless bishops, priests, nuns, and other Christians, Holy Trinity Cathedral was consecrated by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill on September 2, 2011. Patriarch Kirill described the significance of this consecration, calling the cathedral “a great sign showing that God’s truth is alive and not even the most powerful human forces can destroy this truth … [it is] a symbol of victory over evil.”

The four great pillars at the crossing are reasonably undamaged, although given the extent of the settlement disparity between the interior and exterior of the building, repair of the pillars and arches they support is not considered feasible. Several heritage items have been recovered from the cathedral under the supervision of OPUS Heritage consultant Carole-Lynne Kerrigan, including: a Pat Mulchay crucifix, bronze tabernacle doors and a small cross sculpted by Ria Bancroft, icons of Christ and Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, and several chalices, including those gifted by Pope Leo XIII (1891), and Bl. Pope John Paul II (1986).

Eleven years after Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church was destroyed in the terrorist attacks of September 11th, and following litigation delays between the Church and the Port Authority of New York, the church will finally be rebuilt on a new site at the corner of Liberty and Greenwich streets near Ground Zero. The new design will sit on a platform above a helical underground ramp that allows access to the service and parking areas of the new World Trade Center. The Port Authority will provide $25 million to construct this platform, and the Greek Orthodox Church will pay $10 million for the church itself. Construction on the new church is expected to begin in 2013.

Parishioners of Saint Paul the Apostle Church and other community members of Sandwich, IL, watch as their pre-Civil War church is relocated across town.

The design for the new Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church at Liberty and Greenwich streets at Ground Zero in New York.

The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch, New Zealand, continues to undergo deconstruction and assessment following serious damage by two earthquakes last year.

The Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at Mount Saint Mary’s University in Emmitsburg, MD, was recently rededicated after a $2.7 million renovation by Design Story Architects. Monsignor Steven P. Rohlfs, vice-president and rector, began the project during the University’s bicentennial celebration in 2008.

Damage assessment continues at the Cathedral of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch, New Zealand.

Photo: 3saints.com

Photo: 3saints.com

Photo: indyposted.com

Photo: bdpowers.blogspot.com

Photo: archpaper.com
Visioneering Studios won the Worship Facilities Expo 2011 Solomon Award for adaptive transformation of a historic concrete hanger in Stapleton, CO, into a new church building for the Stapleton Fellowship Church. The planned town of Stapleton did not set aside a site or parcel for a church, so the nearby Stapleton Fellowship Church looked for an opportunity to relocate to the area and transformed the hangar into a worship space. Visioneering Studios won the 2011 Solomon Award for “Best Church Architect” for the fourth year in a row.

A church built entirely of ice and snow opened in Bavaria to commemorate a similar snow church built there one hundred years earlier. Villagers constructed the first church because they did not have a permanent church nearby. The new snow church contains 49,000 cubic-feet of snow and will likely be a tourist attraction until the beginning of spring.

The newly consecrated Church of Saint Peter in Karachi is the largest Catholic church in Pakistan. The Apostolic Nuncio to Pakistan, Monsignor Edgar Pena Parra, concelebrated the inaugural Mass with thirty-seven priests from across the country. The new 5,000-seat church totals 20,000 square feet and is 78 feet tall. It was constructed in just eleven months and cost five million Rupees ($55,000). It includes a Perpetual Adoration Chapel, a devotional initiative that will soon be implemented in churches across Pakistan.

The Basilica of Saint Paul’s Outside the Walls in Rome is currently hosting an exhibition of original documents of the Second Vatican Council. The exhibition began on January 25, the liturgical feast of the conversion of Saint Paul, and includes such documents as the handwritten texts of Pope John XXIII’s address to announce the council and his opening speech on October 11, 1962. October 11, 2012, marks the 50th anniversary of the opening of the council.

The Knights of Columbus now have a street to call their own in Rome after the Largo Cavalieri di Colombo was inaugurated on December 6th in the presence of Supreme Knight Carl A. Anderson and Roman dignitaries of both Church and State. Located near the historic Baths of Caracalla, the street honors with its new name the over ninety years of charitable involvement in the Eternal City by the Knights of Columbus. While in Rome the Knights also attended a special Mass in the Basilica of Saint Peter on the Solemnity of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, and were present for the unveiling of the newly restored tomb of Pope Innocent VIII, a project funded by the Knights of Columbus.

Franz Mayer of Munich
Stained Glass, Architectural Art Glass and Mosaic
Established 1847
Appointed 1882
“Royal Bavarian Art Est.”

St. Cecilia Congregation, Nashville, TN
13 Nave windows, 16 Clerestory windows.
Detail: “Angel gives Crown to Cecilia and Valerian”
Benedictine Hall of Saint Gregory’s University in Shawnee, OK, was damaged in an earthquake that hit the state on November 5th. One of the four turrets on the central tower of the building fell to the sidewalk below, causing two breaks in the water main. Another turret was removed immediately to avoid its collapse, and the remaining two are being disassembled piece by piece, with an effort to preserve the brick and masonry for future reconstruction. Built in 1915 and subsequently renovated, Benedictine Hall is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

Two 700-year-old frescoes will be returned to the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus after being on display in Houston since 1997. The frescoes were carved out of a thirteenth-century Orthodox chapel in Lysi, northern Cyprus, following the Turkish occupation of Cyprus in 1974. An experienced art collector, Mrs. Dominique de Menil, noticed fragments of the frescoes on the black market and immediately notified the Orthodox archbishop of Cyprus. Mrs. de Menil purchased the fragments on behalf of the Orthodox Church in exchange for a long-term display of the frescoes in Houston. The loan period ends in mid-February, when they will return to Cyprus and be displayed in the Byzantine Museum of Nicosia, the capital city.

Solar panels installed on Faith Lutheran Church in Inglewood, CA, are saving the church $500-$600 per month in energy costs, or an estimated $83,000 over a ten year period. Rev. Dietrich Schleef, head pastor of Faith Lutheran, said the pitched roof and southern exposure of the church made the solar panels a natural fit. The 144 panels were installed by California Green Designs of Tarzana, CA.

The construction of the ribbed ceiling vault at the Abbey of New Clairvaux.

Construction continues on the Sacred Stones project of the Cistercian Abbey of New Clairvaux in Vina, CA. An 800-year-old Chapter House from a monastery in Ovila, Spain, is being reconstructed stone by stone at the Abbey in California. Master Stonemason Frank Helmholz aims to complete the ribbed ceiling vaulting and arch work by the end of 2012. He says he finds stone carving “a bit of a refuge” in the modern age: “To create something that takes patience, dedication, and is lasting is very rewarding. And serving the monks in their spiritual lives gives a greater sense of meaning that is rare nowadays.” Helmholz also sees it as a humbling experience, to realize that the project is “much bigger than one person and will survive us all by many centuries.”

Cogun, Inc. of Ohio won a Worship Facilities Expo 2011 Solomon Award for a $4 million project to convert a former Walmart into a 1,200 seat worship center and administrative space for Athens Church in Athens, GA. Cogun, Inc. and LS3P-Neal Prince Architects of South Carolina worked with the church to complete the 45,188 square-foot renovation in six months.

The board of directors of Wyoming Catholic College has approved a newly designed masterplan by Thomas Gordon Smith Architects for their future campus at Broken Anvil Ranch. The 600 acre property lies near the Wind River Mountains in Lander Valley, WY. The college, which began its first academic year in 2007-2008, will continue to host its program at Holy Rosary Church in Lander, WY, until the initial buildings are completed on the ranch property. The original masterplan proposal in 2006 by Anderson, Mason and Dale Architects of Denver has been superseded by the new design.
CUSTOM CHURCH ART

Church Interiors
Adoration and celebration altars, mensas, ambo, pulpits, baptisteries, entire presbyteral areas, stations of the cross.

Statues
Saints, blessed, copies of antique statues, relief figures, carved portraits.

Restorations
Cleaning, renewal of interiors, renovation of statues, integrative and conservative restoration.

WOOD - BRONZE - MARBLE
In the last century we have seen a steady devolution of Catholic sacred architecture from grand and formal edifices to decidedly more residential scale and casual buildings. This was not accidental, but rather a deliberate effort to return to what mid-century liturgical scholars considered was the true character of Christian worship as understood in the early Church.

A desire of the ressourcement movement was to recover the true meaning of the Christian liturgical assembly and the true meaning of Christian assembly space. Therefore, it was commonly held that the Church should emulate the early Christian Church in their liturgical practices and its surroundings. The architecture should be simplified to heighten the symbolic expression of the gathered community. Architectural accretions should be removed as non-essential, distracting, and counterproductive to the goal of “active participation.”

Active Participation

It is historically curious that the desire to promote active participation of the faithful came to imply a radical reductionism in the majesty, beauty, iconography, and symbolism of church buildings. The notion of “active participation” as the genesis of the twentieth-century liturgical reforms was first articulated by Saint Pope Pius X (d. 1914) in a small exhortation on sacred music, *Tra le Sollecitudini*. Pius X reminds the faithful of the importance of the church building as a sacramental sign of the heavenly realities:

> The architecture should be simplified to heighten the symbolic expression of the gathered community. Architectural accretions should be removed as non-essential, distracting, and counterproductive to the goal of “active participation.”

The Mid-Century Liturgical Arguments

The typical rhetoric of the mid-century liturgical authors was that we ought to build churches for the “modern man” or “constructed to serve men of our age.” Styles and forms from previous ages were declared “defunct” or “no longer vital.” One even finds the condemnation of wanting a “church that looks like a church” as being “nostalgic” or an unhealthy yearning for a past Golden Age that really never was.²

For instance, Edward Mills wrote in *The Modern Church:*

> “If we do not build churches in keeping with the spirit of the age we shall be admitting that religion no longer possesses the same vitality as our secular buildings.”³ His book concerns topics such as efficient planning, technology, cost abatement, and environmental considerations. It is worth mentioning that only a few years before this book, Mills had written *The Modern Factory*, with the same rationalistic concerns for efficient planning, technology, cost abatement, and environmental considerations.

But we see something else going on in the mid-century writers. One cannot simply discard two millennia of sacred architectural forms and styles without having a new paradigm to replace it, and one cannot have a valid new paradigm without having grounds for discarding the old paradigm. The paradigm itself needed to change: and all the better if the new paradigm was promoted as the “authentic” paradigm, the recovery of what was lost.

Within this rhetoric of building churches for our age and in the willingness to discard the past is an embedded *mythos*. By this accounting, the Church began to formalize its liturgy and her architecture only after the Edict of Milan, when Constantine first legalized Christianity. The imperially sponsored building programs brought formality and the hierarchical trappings of ele-
ments take from the Imperial court. Prior to this Pax Constantini, the Church was a domestic enterprise, and the model of domestic architecture—domus ecclesiae (literally, “house of the church”)—was the simple, humble, and hospitable residential form in which early Christians gathered to meet the Lord and meet one another in the Lord for fellowship, meals, and teaching. This became valued as a model for contemporary worship and self-understanding. The early house church—seen as pure, simple, unsullied by later liturgical and architectural accretions without the trappings of hierarchy and formality—was to be the model for modern liturgical reform.

As Father Richard Vosko surmised, “The earliest understanding of a Christian church building implies that it is a meeting house—a place of camaraderie, education and worship. In fact, the earliest Christian tradition clearly held that the Church does not build temples to honor God. That is what the civic religions did.” This notion was put most forcefully by E.A. Sovik, writing: “It is conventionally supposed that the reasons that Christians of the first three centuries built almost no houses of worship were that they were too few, or too poor, or too much persecuted. None of these is true. The real reason that they didn’t build was that they didn’t believe in ecclesiastical building.”

The ascendency of the residential model as the authentic liturgical form raised another question of architectural history: what to do with the intervening 1700 years of church building? For the mid-century and later architectural writers, the simple answer was that the domestic model was the ideal, and all later grand and hierarchical buildings are the deviations. Therefore, all the intervening eras, liturgical and artistic expressions, and architectural forms and styles came in for censure.

The changes in the age of Constantine were implicated for the advent of clericalism, turning the congregation into passive viewers at a formalistic ritual, the loss of liturgical and spiritual intimacy, and the subjugation of the Church’s evangelical mission to the politics of the Emperor. The Christian basilica was thereby rejected as an expression of power-mongering and imperialistic tendencies. The Byzantine churches were rejected for their courtly imperial formality, where the ministers are hidden behind the iconostasis, only to venture out in courtly processions. The Romanesque was rejected for its immensely long naves that separated the people from God, and the proliferation of side altars required for the monks to fulfill their daily obligations to say private Masses. The Gothic style was criticized for its alienating monumentalism and for its reliquaries of dubious merit. Baroque architecture comes in for special censure: for triumphalism, for Tridentine rubricism, for pagan artistic themes and sensuality, for hyper-valorization of the Eucharist in reaction to Protestantism, and for dishonesty in the use of materials. Father Louis Bouyer’s judgment of the Counterreformation liturgy was that it was “embalmed” – devoid of life and vitality.

The decided trend of mid-twentieth century liturgical and architectural thinking was to reject historical styles. Clearing the table to start anew, with a sweep of the hand, Father Reinhold dismissed all previous architectural eras, styles and forms:

Conclusion: We see that all these styles were children of their own day. None of their forms are ours. We have concrete, steel, wood compositions, brick, stone, glass of all kinds, plastic materials, reverse cycle heat and radiant heat. We can no longer identify the minority, called Christendom, and split in schisms, with the kingdom of God on earth. Our society is a pluralistic one and lives in a secularist atmosphere…[O]ur architects must find as good an expression in our language of forms, as our fathers did in theirs.

The Problem of the Domus Ecclesiae

Thus were 1700 years of Christian architectural history discarded as liturgically erroneous and inapplicable for contemporary buildings in favor of simpler domestic-scaled places for assembly. This however, was not manufactured out of thin air. It was clear from Scripture that the early Church worshipped in the residences of the wealthier members of the community. The Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions mention a wealthy and powerful man who gave over his great house to the Church to establish what ought to be considered the first ‘cathedral’ as the chair of Peter. Given the lack of excavated basilicas from the pre-Constantinian era, it was assumed that there was some sort of organic development between the domestic house and the basilica that only found full expression in the fourth century. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many historians grappled with the question of transition between these two forms, looking at the Roman house with the triclinium, various sorts of intermediate structures such as the aula ecclesiae, adaptations of the Roman civic basilica, and the architecture of the imperial palace, among others.

These speculations all went by the wayside in the mid-century, and the model of the house church came to the fore, with the discovery of the church at Dura Europos in the 1930s. This discovery was of profound importance given that it was the only known identifiable and dateable pre-Constantinian church. It was obviously a residence converted to the needs of a small Christian community. Significantly, it was also a rather late dated church about 232 AD, and quite in keeping with the expectations from all the various scriptural references to a domestic liturgical setting. Henceforth, especially in the late 1950s and the 1960s, the dominant...
The Problem of Place

Despite the textual evidence that argues for significant church buildings before the age of Constantine, the dearth of archeological evidence for formal church buildings has seemed persuasive. With the recent discovery of a pre-Constantinian basilica at Aqaba it seems timely for liturgists and architects to reconsider the validity of the residential domus ecclesiae as a meaningful model for contemporary church architecture. The Aqaba church dates comfortably to 300, and perhaps as early as 280 A.D. We have no knowledge of what other pre-Constantinian churches looked like, but we can have certainty that Christians had special, purpose-built, urban-scale churches before the Emancipation in 313 A.D. We should therefore reevaluate the claims about the “authenticity” of the simple house church as a meaningful architectural model for the Christian assembly both in the early Church and for today.

However, we should also consider the emotional impetus for the house church. The romantic notion of the primitive house church has a strong sense of attraction: the desire for more communitarian and domestic church buildings is enticing in the alienating condition of post-agrarian and post-industrial modern life. Both the massive scale of the modern city and the anonymity and placelessness of suburban sprawl contribute to the desire for a sense of domestic rootedness. In-
creased mobility in the modern work force and the consequent breakdown of traditional community and family life also create a tension and a desire for familiarity, welcome, and belonging in the parish community. These perhaps contribute to the nostalgic longing for a more domestic parish facility. But the church building must function on a variety of levels. Church architecture is necessarily symbolic, and the various metaphors by which we understand church buildings are derived from the metaphors by which we understand the Church. These metaphors find their poignancy and potency in the human condition: matters of embodiment, relationship, dwelling, and community life form a matrix of symbols for the Church, the parish community, the liturgy, and church architecture. Among the most significant Scriptural images for the Ecclesia (and therefore the liturgy and the church building) are the Body of Christ, the nuptial relationship, the Tent of Dwelling/ Temple of Solomon, and the Heavenly City. These speak of the fundamental human experiences of embodiment, of marriage and domestic family life, of dwelling and habitation, and of social life.

This residential model of domus ecclesiae has been placed into a false opposition to the domus Dei as a model for sacred architecture. Both are models that find their validity in the human experience of dwelling and family life, but the former has come to imply an immanent expression of the home for the local community whereas the latter has a transcendental and eschatological horizon that is more apt for sacramental buildings that are called to be “truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities.”

The desire for a domestically-scaled liturgical environment is not wrong per se, but it cannot stand in isolation without reference to the broader framework of ecclesiastical, liturgical, and architectural symbolism. All are needed for the person and the community to understand how the liturgy and the liturgical environment express and participate in a greater sacramental reality beyond the confines of the local assembly.

If the domestic model has no sure foundation, then the arguments erected for rejecting the hierarchical and formal models of liturgy; for discarding the sacramental language of Christian architecture in favor of a functionalist and programmatic approach to building; and for dismissing any appeals to the rich treasure trove of Catholic architectural history and various historical styles are susceptible to falling like a house of cards.

**Articles**

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1 Pius X, Tra le Sollecitudine, November 22, 1903.
12 Reinhold, Speaking of Liturgical Architecture 32.
13 Ps.-Clement. Recognitions. 10.71.
19 Lampridius, Life of Severus Alexander, 2.49.
20 The Greek in Macarius is “they build very large buildings”. Porphyry distinguishes between these large buildings and residential houses, “their own houses”, in which they lived. In Ezra 4:1, the same construction is used specifically for the building the Temple. There is no reason therefore to assume “eikes” meant a residential dwelling house, since it could be used for a house, any building, or a temple. Cf. Macarii Magneti Quae Quaequeerunt, ed. C. Blondel (Paris: Klincksieck, 1877), 201.
21 Porphyry, Adversus Christianos, known to us from the fragment addressed by the later Macarius in Apotheosis, 4. 21. Cf. T.W. Crafer, The Apotheoses of Macarius Magnes (London: SPCK, 1919), 146. Crafer notes that some took this passage as proof that Porphyry lived and wrote after the Emancipation, though he considers this argument weak. The conventional dates for Porphyry are c. 214 – c. 305.
24 Another formal basilican church, Saint George at Rihab Jordan, is quite controversially and, in my view, improbably dated to 230. The earliest accepted church currently is the Christian prayer hall in Meggido, Israel, which is not a basilica and found in the structure of a larger early third-century Roman villa. NM.
25 General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 288.
Elegance Personified: The Black Madonna of Montserrat

Joan L. Roccasalvo, CSJ

Few places in the world resemble Montserrat in the Catalanian region of Spain. There, nature, culture, and faith are united as one. Spectacular saw-shaped mountains rise like a geological cathedral about 3,500 feet above sea level to embrace the Benedictine Abbey at Montserrat. Within the Abbey is found the shrine of the regional patroness, the statuette of Our Lady of Montserrat and Child, a flawless gem of Romanesque art.

The mountains themselves are an open-air museum in the middle of a rugged landscape containing about 1,050 species of plants. There are various routes up the mountains to the Abbey, but going by cable car only intensifies the gradual and exhilarating ascent into thin air.

The Benedictine Abbey of Montserrat

The Abbey’s history began in the ninth century with four hermitages, and the Benedictine sanctuary itself was founded in the eleventh century: a sheer feat of architectural genius! By the end of the sixteenth century, the present Gothic and Renaissance-style basilica was consecrated. After Napoleon set fire to parts of the Abbey, restoration was accomplished by the mid-nineteenth century. Poets, artists, and musicians have sung the Basilica’s praises as man’s praise of the transcendent. The Abbey is a symbol of Catalonian culture and faith combined.

In the Spanish style, the façade is ornately decorated as is the interior, which is a cavernous place for a plethora of liturgical services as well as for personal prayer. Of note are the main altar, an enormous solid block cut out of a mountain, and a huge stained glass window at the rear of the Basilica.

A Paradigm of Western Religious Art

The famous statuary of the Madonna of Montserrat was sculpted in the twelfth century by an exceedingly gifted anonymous artist. The Madonna of Montserrat is also known as La Moreneta, “the little dark-skinned one.” There is no definitive proof as to why this and other depictions of the Madonna-type are black. A simple reason may be due to the wood having been darkened over time. The verse from the Song of Songs (1:5), “I am black but beautiful,” has been linked to this Madonna-type because it was a favorite phrase at the time. Though a regional shrine, devotion to it has spread throughout Europe.

Statuary and sculpture are decidedly western art forms. Virtually every culture in the world that venerates the Mother of God and Divine Child has depicted them according to its own regional view of them. The statuette of the goddess Isis and her son Horus, “Our Lady of Vladimir,” this statuette ranks as one of the loveliest depictions of the Mother of God with Child. It conveys a greater accessibility to the viewer than does the icon. The statue, however, imitates the international Byzantine conventional and stylized form. Its anonymous sculptor offers the West a paradigm of sacred art that has charm, warmth, and beauty. Located in this remote Benedictine Abbey, the statuette measures about thirty-eight inches and is painted in polychrome. One can see a striking resemblance to the statuette of the Egyptian goddess Isis and her son Horus.

The Majesty of Sainte Foy (983-1013) in Conques, France, is another model for the statuette of the Black Madonna of Montserrat. Ancient Isis-Mothers, also called Thrones of Wisdom, were brought back from the Crusades and were kept in the shelter of Christian crypts. They attracted people and pointed them toward Chartres, Rocabodour, and Marseilles. These models were known in the region of Montserrat.

The sculptor shows Our Lady in a pose assuming a majestic reserve and a certain detachment as she sits on a throne, hieratic and exalted. The pattern of the statuette derives from three type-origins: (1) the Egyptian statuette of the goddess Isis and her son Horus; (2) the type of Black Madonna; (3) “Seat of Wisdom” (sedes sapientae), a phrase first used by St. Augustine. The art-historical name is “Throne of Wisdom.”

Mary is the seat of wisdom because, in her, the Father found a dwelling place where the Son and Spirit could dwell among humankind. She is daughter of God the Father, mother of God the Son and the cathedra or seat of the Logos incarnate, and spouse of the Holy Spirit. As sanctuary of the Trinity, she presents the triune God to the world acting as intermediary between transcendent Divine Wisdom and human wisdom. Mary is the embodiment of communion between the divine and the human.

The Statuary Proper

A cushion serves as the footstool for this figure which exudes a mysterious presence. This is no ordinary
regal figure. Mother and Child are depicted in their idealistic attributes and not as figures of sentimentality. As a sign of asceticism, the Mother’s body is slender, even thin. Her elongated face expresses delicate features: eyes alert and wide-open, petite nose, slightly-curved, depressed in the middle, and an upturned tip. Mary’s fulsome cheeks symbolize plenitude and joy as she reveals her delight in being herself and in being the Child’s mother. Her smile suggests deep satisfaction, redolent of her Magnificat where she recognizes her privileged stature in being singled out among women. Her quiet, jubilant face contrasts sharply from that of the Mater Dolorosa, the sorrowful Mother, a role she will later assume. But for the present, she enjoys her exalted position as do we, together with the Christ-Child. Like Our Lady of Vladimir, the light, radiating over Mary’s black face, makes her entire visage sparkle with radiance. In keeping with the period, her headdress is draped, and beneath the crown, a veil adorned with stars, squares, and stripes in subtle polychrome. The gold-edged border falls symmetrically, encircling her face like a halo that high-lights her delicate features. Tunic and cloak gracefully envelop her slender shoulders. Our queen of heaven and seat of wisdom holds an orb of the earth in her right hand, while the other hand, gracefully cupped and extended, monitors the Child’s left side. It is impossible to grasp her inner composure, a stunning beauty in one glance. Here is elegance personified.

Not surprisingly, the Child is depicted as the God-Man. His hand is raised giving the formalized and traditional Eastern blessing, three fingers raised (symbolizing the Trinity) and two folded inward to the palm (symbolizing the two natures of the God-man). Like his mother, the Child expresses contentment. He does not grasp his mother but is shown frontally and is firmly seated between his mother’s legs. Though barefooted, he wears a crown and regal garments. Curiously enough, the thin draped covering of their legs accents the knees of both figures with feet firmly on the ground. The sculptor has portrayed a classic Mother and Child accessible to us even as their aesthetic distance remains in place. The verticality, mass, density, balance and symmetry render the statu-ary a peerless beauty and one capable of bringing its beholders to their knees.

Saint Ignatius of Loyola at Montserrat

Devotion to this image of Our Lady has wrought many miracles, as with the founder of the Society of Jesus, the Jesuit Order. Shortly after his remarkable re-conversion to Christianity, the soldier Ignatius of Loyola was determined to join the army of Christ and went to Montserrat to make his consecration. Before the beautiful Black Madonna, Ignatius transformed the ancient ceremony for the making of a knight into the “new soldier of Christ.” In pilgrim’s garb and in keeping with the chivalric code, he kept an all-night vigil there. In March 1522, he placed his sword before the statue of the Mother of God, stood, knelt, sang hymns and prayed with the other pilgrims. Ignatius began his new life in God under the inspiration of the beautiful statuary which thousands today revere.

Monastic Apostolic Works

The Abbey’s eighty monks dedicate their works to the service of the Church and country. Not surprisingly, the monks make Spanish liqueurs and other delicacies. Their library and scriptorium contain 300,000 volumes with about 400 incunabula. The Abbey’s museum contains five collections: ar-chaeological, iconographical, gold and silver articles, antique paintings of the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and modern painting and sculptures of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The monks are committed to pay special attention to pilgrims and provide accommodation adapted to everyone’s needs and budgets. As one of the oldest Abbey music schools in Europe, Montserrat boasts of about fifty choir boys who receive excellent music training added and integrated with their general education. At noon each day, they sing the Hymn to Virgin, the virelai, “Rosa d’abri” that begins with the phrase, “The Virgin, the skin-glistened, Black Madonna, soaring up over the peaks . . . .”

A pilgrimage to Montserrat can never be forgotten; it is etched into the memory for immediate recall and savored time and again. It is a feast for the eyes, revealing beauty that leads to prayer.

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(Endnotes)

2. The reliquary statue of Sainte-Foy is made of wood covered with metal and gemstones, glorified bodies being the precious stones of the heavenly Jerusalem wood, gold leaf; precious stones, pearls, enamel; she sits on a throne with her feet on a footstool and her hands outstretched. See Maurice Dilasser, The Symbols of the Church, translated by Mary Cabrini Durkin, OSU, Madeleine Beaumont, and Caroline Morson (Collegeville, MN: A Liturgical Press Book, 1999), 78.
4. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 721.
A DECADE OF NEW CLASSICISM:
THE FLOWERING OF TRADITIONAL CHURCH ARCHITECTURE
Denis R. McNamara

In 2001, the newly-founded Liturgical Institute at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, hosted a conference entitled “Building the Church for 2010: Continuity and Renewal in Catholic Liturgical Architecture.” Invited speakers addressed the topics of renewal and tradition in church design, and the firm of Franck, Lohsen, McCrery presented the “Church for 2010,” a hypothetical church design using New Classical architecture. Because of the liturgical-architectural climate of the time and the requirements of the edition of General Instruction on the Roman Missal then in effect, the proposed church appears today as something of a hybrid compromise. Though it showed a skillful application of the language of traditional architecture, a blending of liturgical and devotional areas, monumental Christian iconography, and a classically-inspired atrium based on those of early Christian basilicas, it nonetheless displayed a compressed, centralized plan, seating in the round and a separate chapel for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament.

As a classical design for a new Catholic church, the “Church for 2010” was no doubt a revelation to many of the conference attendees. Though the New Classical movement in architecture had found a certain maturity by this time and the School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame had established its classically-oriented program some twelve years earlier, one could point to very few newly-built Catholic churches that embraced traditional architecture. Although in 1989 British architect Quinlan Terry had completed England’s new Brentwood Cathedral, a low church, congregation-dominant plan using sophisticated credible classical architecture, it made little impact on the architectural establishment in the United States. Allan Greenberg’s Church of the Immaculate Conception in Union, New Jersey, existed in the architecture world primarily as a beautiful rendering, since the pastor of the parish had passed away during its construction and the design passed on to other architects. Thomas Gordon Smith’s Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary in Denton, Nebraska, had been started, as had his Benedictine monastery in Clear Creek, Oklahoma, and promising plans were being made by Duncan Stroik for All Saints Church in Walton, Kentucky.

But two contemporary books on the renewal of Catholic church architecture showed that most of the revival of traditional Catholic church architecture lay in the arena of hope and even perceived wishful thinking. Most projects displayed in the books were either hypothetical designs or some odd compromises with modernism, or the prevailing ironic moves of postmodernism, or the dominant view of the nature of church architecture as domestic buildings. Essays and roundtable discussions about the revival of church architecture had appeared in a number of journals, but in academic publications and popular articles lamenting the state of Catholic church architecture, no one could point to a completed major commission in the United States for a Catholic church designed by a competent architect using credible classical architecture which could prove to the architectural and liturgical establishment that it could and should be done. Prominent Catholic projects that did appear in liturgical and architectural journals, such as the designs for the new cathedrals in Los Angeles and Oakland, embraced mainstream—if somewhat tired—modernist design methods while consciously avoiding the unofficial New Classical alternatives, often by students or graduates of the University of Notre Dame. Prominent renovations, such as those at the Cathedrals of Saint James in Seattle (1994) and Saint John the Evangelist in Milwaukee (2002), still promoted the even then largely discredited notion of church as a meeting house.

So the dream for the renewal of the classical tradition in liturgical architecture presented as hoped for by participants at the “Building the Church for 2010” conference appeared largely unlikely to many, or at best, perhaps, a sub-sub specialty within the architectural profession for those communities dedicated to the exclusive use of the Missal of 1962. Though in hindsight one sees that the seeds of the classical renewal in church architecture had
already been planted, they had not yet sprouted; and the hopeful church client faced great difficulty in finding an architect with expertise in classical architecture, extreme hostility from the architectural profession, disdain from many liturgical professionals, and skepticism or outright antagonism from some bishops and diocesan officials. Though the year 2010 did not seem far off chronologically, it seemed wishful thinking indeed that the short span of nine years could bring about the necessary revolution in thought and practice required to see a flowering of New Classicism in the Roman Catholic Church.

But to the delight of many architects, clients, and parishioners, a flowering of traditional church architecture has occurred far beyond even the optimistic hopes expressed in the year 2001. The controversial iconoclastic document issued by the Bishops Committee on the Liturgy in 1978, entitled Environment and Art in Catholic Worship, was succeeded and replaced in 2000 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ text Built of Living Stones. Though largely absent of positive theology of art and architecture, Built of Living Stones tossed off most of EACW’s most problematic theological language and firmly rooted its guidelines for art and architecture in the revised General Instruction of the Roman Missal that accompanied Pope John Paul II’s new Missale Romanum.

The wider New Classical movement operative at the time was once considered so reactionary that its practitioners were characterized in the New York Times by a leading modernist architect as “bizarrely backward... Luddites” who “have no new ideas” and were simply “looking for their market niche.” But despite some continued resistance from mainstream architectural professionals, New Classicism matured and carved out for itself a firmly established place in the profession. The Institute for Classical Architecture, founded in 1991 and dominated by domestic and institutional architecture, had grown into a credible place for the study, education, and practice of classical work. Common enough to be almost unremarkable in the architectural press, large university designs routinely provided not only “contextual” campus additions, but designs positively identified as embracing traditional architecture.

Within ecclesiastical circles, certain groundbreaking decisions appeared, notably Bishop Raymond Burke’s decision in 1995 to build a large Marian shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe using classical architecture in the Diocese of Lacrosse. Younger bishops appointed in recent years have become friendlier to traditional architecture and have likewise appointed chancery officials with similar outlooks. Perhaps the peak of success of New Classical architecture for Catholic ecclesiastical use to date was the announcement in September of 2011 that Bishop Burbidge of the Diocese of Raleigh, North Carolina, has proposed a major cathedral commission to be designed by a demonstrated expert in classical architecture, the first new classical cathedral in the United States since the Council, and for many decades before that.

**Postmodernism and New Classicism**

The roots of the New Classical churches seen flowering today are found in several differing sources spanning several decades. The broad phrase, “postmodernism” is widely used to characterize many streams of architectural design which followed the dominance of High Modernism. High Modernism’s iconic glass and steel boxes and sculptural concrete forms were heralded in the 1940s and 50s as the pinnacle of the entire history of architectural development, defined by their rejection of traditional building methods, refusal of actual or apparent load bearing masonry, the complete elimination of traditional ornament, and the truly radical redefinition of all architectural typologies as fundamentally based on those of the engineer’s aesthetic and the materials of mass production.

But even the apparent hegemony of High Modern architecture was never as thorough as its proponents desired it to appear. Much has been made of the “classical survival” or “Gothic survival” church architecture which lasted in an unbroken stream through even the early 1960s, exemplified by church architects like Joseph W. McCarthy and Meyer and Cook in Chicago, the enormous ecclesiastical output of Cincinnati architect Edward Schulte, and the still largely underappreciated Cathedral of Mary Our Queen in Baltimore, a modernized Gothic building dedicated in 1959. An article in a 1955 issue of Church Property Administration magazine claimed that three “traditional” churches were being built for every one “modern” church. Nonetheless, academia and the mainstream architectural practice had without doubt “gone modern” by the late 1940s, and such traditional holdovers were seen as retardataire movements of those who had not accepted the great new age of architecture, and their buildings were not covered in the architectural press.

The year 1966 saw the publication of Robert Venturi’s now famous book Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, a polemical treatise that critiqued the monovalence of modernist design, which he argued could be remedied by looking at complexity in architecture and not simply the mechanistic simplicity of the engineer’s aesthetic. Though written only six years after the consecration of a great Gothic Revival church like the Queen of All Saints Basilica in Chicago, its argument came not from an intellectual underclass, but from an architect trained at Princeton who worked for such notable architects as Eero Saarinen and Louis Kahn. He later taught at the University of Pennsylvania, Yale, and Harvard. Though Venturi’s mantra, “less is a bore” answered Mies van der Rohe’s equally famous quote “less is more,” it was certainly not a broadside for wholesale re-appropriation of the classical tradition.
for Catholic use or otherwise.\(^{10}\)

Although Venturi is hailed as breaking open the possibility of mainstream academic use of traditional architectural forms, the coherent initial phase of postmodernity in architecture lasted for only a few years, and was imbued with a modernist sense of irony and wit intended to remind the viewer of the continued relation of new buildings to the break with architectural tradition espoused by modernism. One finds therefore in this postmodernism a certain kind of faddish relativism which made no specific claims for the classical tradition other than as an interesting Hegelian antidote to the univocality of modernism. Simply stated, postmodernism was not what we know of today as New Classicism.

In the United States, one can not address the emergence of New Classicism in Catholic ecclesiastical architecture without underlining the importance of architect Allan Greenberg. A native South African born in 1938, he learned traditional architectural methods while in architecture school in Johannesburg, though his early work was with leading modernists in Europe. In 1963 he came to the United States, earning a master’s degree at Yale University in 1965. By the early 1970s he had encountered the critique of Yale colleagues Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and became associated with an architectural movement dominated by architects known as “the Grays,” those who rejected modernism’s “black and white” rejection of the use of traditional architectural forms. By the early 1980s, he was established as one of the few architects in the world willing to design buildings using canonical classicism, developing a successful practice largely dominated by private homes and institutional buildings. While not known for church designs, Greenberg’s office became something of an unofficial postgraduate academy, taking in recent architecture school graduates with an interest in classical architecture and teaching them how to make their self-taught and postmodern designs convincingly canonical. Two of today’s leading classical church architects, Duncan Stroik and James McCrery, worked as young designers in Greenberg’s office.

But even the work of such a committed canonical classicist as Duncan Stroik depended in part upon the appearance of postmodernism in secular academia. As a 1984 graduate from the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, Stroik’s education came under the deanship of architect Jacqueline Robertson, a man deeply involved with the postmodern movement of the 1980s and known for bringing leading postmodernist architects like Allan Greenberg, Robert A. M. Stern, and Leon Krier to the school to discuss architectural practice. Robertson’s 1982 conference on postmodernism brought together twenty-five leading American architects and became the book known as *The Charlottesville Tapes*. Historians and theorists like Carroll William Westfall gave the embrace of classicism and urbanism a deep theoretical base. This short-lived embrace of postmodern architecture at the University of Virginia nonetheless created at least some alumni who would embrace the New Classical mode of architecture. Almost at the peak of the postmodern movement in the mid-1980s, Stroik continued to Yale University to earn a graduate degree, where under the deanship of Thomas Beeby, professors like Robert Venturi, Andres Duany, and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk continued a postmodern approach to architecture and urbanism.

But Stroik credits his awakening as a classical architect to the influence of
Sacred Architecture

Today’s New Classical church architecture also finds an unlikely source in two graduates from the Ohio State University, James McCrery and David Meleca. Though known as an unremarkable program in modernist design in the 1970s and early 1980s, Ohio State’s Knowlton School of Architecture stabilized after the arrival of architect Robert Livesey as chair of the Department of Architecture in 1983. Architects who represented several of the existing strains of postmodernism began coming as critics and teachers to its graduate program: Peter Eisenman, Charles Gwathmey, Stanley Tigerman, Michael Graves, and Charles Moore among others. The school was perhaps best known at the time for its visiting architecture professor, Deconstructivist Peter Eisenman, designer of the campus’ Wexner Center for the Performing Arts. Though the architecture school at the Ohio State University could hardly be called friendly to New Classicism, even an architecture school infused with Deconstructivist thinking had to set itself in the context of postmodernism, since Deconstructivism itself grew as a variant of the postmodern explosion of the modernist breakdown. McCrery listened to the postmodern critics in graduate juries while an undergraduate, but later became philosophically convinced of the Eisenman-inspired theories of Deconstructivism. Meleca’s time at the school came just before Livesey’s reforms, and though he personally had an interest in traditional architecture and urbanism from studying abroad in Oxford, he found no support—and much resistance—from the school itself. McCrery earned a master’s degree at Ohio State and then worked in Eisenman’s office, only later to find himself unconvinced of Deconstructivism’s claims. Inspired by the caliber of Allan Greenberg’s work, he was received into Greenberg’s office where he spent nearly eight years learning and practicing classicism. Later he discovered service of the Church as a vocation within his vocation to architecture. By the late 1980s, the initial postmodern interest as a defined architectural movement was winding down, yet postmodernity’s shattering of the modernist stronghold allowed the emergence of New Classicism. In Columbus, a major move toward practical and tangible use of classical design methods was made possible by a son of Russian-born Jewish immigrants named Les Wexner, retail entrepreneur and owner of The Limited Brands. Wexner had not only been the philanthropist behind Eisenman’s Wexner Center for the Performing Arts, but co-founder of the New Albany Company, founder of the New Albany Company, Monastery of Our Lady of the Annunciation of Clear Creek designed by Thomas Gordon Smith Architects

Thomas Gordon Smith, himself one of the first of the postmodern architects to embrace canonical classicism. As early as the 1980 architecture exhibition at the Venice Biennale, “Smith was almost alone in adopting a literate treatment” of classical forms, earning the praise of architectural theorist Charles Jencks, who wrote: “Smith is the only architect of classical forms, earning the praise of architectural theorist Charles Jencks, who wrote: “Smith is the only architect here to treat the classical tradition as a living discourse.” Stroik was deeply impressed by Smith called himself a “classicist,” and encouraged his students to look broadly at all eras of classical architecture. Moreover, Yale’s legendary art historian Vincent Scully had begun to promote the postmodernism of Robert Venturi. Another art historian, George Hersey, championed Allan Greenberg, notably in an article in Architectural Record, and later wrote The Lost Meaning of Classical Architecture, one of the first systematic attempts to search for the underlying meaning of the terminology of classicism. Here Stroik found a certain completion of thought, combining his love of the classical work of Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia, the urbanism of Europe, and the creative melting pot of intellectual inquiry into architecture’s historic roots evidenced by the visionary leadership of broad-minded academics. He found his first job after graduate school in the office of Allan Greenberg, and was later hired by his mentor Thomas Gordon Smith as a faculty member at the School of Architecture at the University of Notre Dame in 1989, where Smith presided over the founding of the first classical architecture curriculum in the United States in nearly half a century.
a real estate development company in Ohio consciously incorporating traditional architecture as a quality of life issue. The New Albany Company hired the aforementioned University of Virginia Dean Jacqueline Robertson to design a pivotal classical building in the new community: the New Albany Country Club, completed in 1993.

Architects who wanted work at the New Albany development were strongly encouraged to learn traditional architecture for both domestic and commercial designs, and, as one architect who worked there at the time stated, “Columbus got serious about classicism.” Traditionally-minded architects like Brian Kent Jones and John Reagan of Columbus became influential local designers, while Wexner encouraged new architects and builders for the company to study traditional examples, even sending some on a study tour to Colonial Williamsburg. So the New Albany Company as a private enterprise became a critically important tastemaker and place for builders and architects who had otherwise received very little training in canonical classical architecture to learn with a serious approach to New Classicism. Meleca benefitted from this informal design studio while working with Columbus architects. He stayed rooted in Columbus, eventually being asked to develop the architecture for New Albany’s Catholic Church of the Resurrection, a large building inspired in part by Franck, Lohsen, McCrery’s Church of 2010, exhibited at the Liturgical Institute conference which Meleca himself attended. Meleca has since amassed a number of large-scale New Classical Catholic churches in his portfolio. McCrery has made a name for himself as the architect of the aforementioned Church of the Resurrection, New Albany, OH by David Meleca

proposed new cathedral for Raleigh, North Carolina, with a number of church projects in his portfolio and on the boards.

Amidst the machinations of the academic and professional worlds of architecture in the 1990s came growing theological clarity, largely around the work of Monsignor Francis Manion, founder of the Society for Catholic Liturgy and then-Rector of the Cathedral of the Madeleine in Salt Lake City. The first issue of the Society’s journal, Antiphon, appeared in 1996 and included its statement of principles in an article entitled, “What is the Society for Catholic Liturgy?” Among the Society’s general principles were expressed deep interest in careful scholarship, a transhistorical view of the many strengths of the Catholic tradition, a renewed attention to Catholic devotional life and its relation to the liturgy and insistence on the importance of artistic beauty, “especially in the areas of music, art, and architecture.” From the outset, architect Duncan Stroik was a member of the Society’s governing board, and other architects in leadership positions have since included Thomas Gordon Smith, Dino Marcantonio, and James McCrery, who now serves as the Society’s president.

Mannion had already put his stated principles to work as cathedral rector, overseeing perhaps the most sensitive renovation of an historic cathedral building since the Council, and helping to found a cathedral choir school. Mannion’s influential contribution on liturgical architecture was made clear in his essay “Toward a New Era in Liturgical Architecture,” which appeared in Studia Anselmiana in 2001. His care-
A perusal of the last thirteen years of Sacred Architecture, diligently produced by the Institute for Sacred Architecture, surveys well the achievements of the last decade and more. Architects like Ethan Anthony, William Heyer, Dino Marcantonio, Michael Imber, Matthew Alderman, Michael Franck and Arthur Lohsen, and many others rightly deserve the publicity and attention that they have received. One would be remiss not to mention the influence of the popular writings of Michael Rose, especially his 2001 book Ugly As Sin: Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Places and How We Can Change Them Back Again, Steven J. Schloeder’s 1998 book Architecture in Communion or the influence of Mother Angelica’s Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Alabama, an early attempt at recapturing Gothic architecture. The New Classical movement in Catholic liturgical architecture has reached something of an adolescence, perhaps even in some places a vigorous young adulthood. Careful study of its leaders, thinkers and practitioners will someday produce a significant chapter in the renewal of sacred art and architecture found in the post-Conciliar and post-postmodern periods.

**Going Forward**

In the year 2000, the National Catholic Reporter featured an article on several of the architects at the center of the University of Notre Dame’s ecclesiastical renewal of architecture. Skeptical of the movement, the article’s author pointed out some of its genuine foibles, but at the same time characterized some of New Classicism’s promoters as people who “trivialized public discourse” and reflected “an attitude of both paranoia and self-righteousness.” To some degree, the author put his finger on one of the weaknesses of some of the post-modern talking points of the 1990s, which often characterized classicism as the new “new,” rather than that which was timeless, enduring, and appropriately. An honest reader has to admit that much of the early New Classical polemic in Catholic architecture was often lacking in underpinnings of biblical and sacramental theology, using instead language borrowed from secular academia. The author claimed that the practitioners of canonic classicism were therefore bound to “ingratiate themselves to today’s tabernacle-obsessed bishops, biretta-topped seminarians, and a handful of cardboard monsignori.” Luckily, sacramental theology in relation to the arts has made great strides as well since the year 2000, though it lags behind architectural practice. But it does seem that the author in the National Catholic Reporter was on the wrong side of history.

A strong signal that New Classical church architecture has been welcomed in from the cold is a 2010 cover story on Duncan Stroik’s Chapel of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity at Thomas Aquinas College in the liturgical journal Faith and Form, an interfaith journal on liturgical arts with a long-standing history of promoting both High Modernist design and low church ecclesiology. By virtue of the sheer scale and excellence of the project, it proved a force to be reckoned with even by those not inclined to agree with its architectural and theological underpinnings. The author of the Faith and Form article was forced to ask as a subtitle, “What Does the Thomas Aquinas Chapel Mean?” precisely because the building brought New Classicism out of the shadows, making it evident that real, effective, liturgically appropriate, highly desired, supported-by-donors, and beautiful-to-look-at architecture is not merely the dream of an enthusiast, but a building that foils the modernist claim that cultural advancement happens through rejection of the past.

The article’s author, architect George Knight, a critic at Yale University’s School of Architecture, recognized the widespread acceptance of traditional church architecture evident today by writing that there is “no shortage of traditional architecture, or at least what aspires to look like traditional architecture, in contemporary church building.” Knight’s quietly-mentioned remark on buildings that “aspire” to look like traditional architecture only hints at perhaps what is the most significant problem affecting traditional architecture today: the extremely common manifestation of pseudo-Classicism, the “strip mall” classicism done by firms with little to no training in traditional architecture hired by clients without the knowledge to recognize canonical classical design.

During the pioneer stages of the recovery of classical tradition, one could almost understand spending money to build buildings full of architectural mistakes, as was particularly evident in the rebuilt Church of Saint Agnes in Manhattan in the mid 1990s. But in 2012, the...
relativist historians convinced of the principles of Hegelian determinism. Though it found some initial nourishment in post-modern academia, New Classicism has in many ways been supported by numerous grass roots movements, whether the readers of Adoremus Bulletin or the concerned bishops, priests, and lay people who read, attend conferences, visit churches and pray, getting ever more grounded in an authentic understanding of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the strong theological and aesthetic leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. Practitioners of New Classicism still face obstacles from pragmatists, ideologically-driven liturgical professionals, misperceptions about the costs and practicalities of traditional architecture, and the continued resistance of professional societies in architecture and liturgy. But the momentum toward a theologically-informed re-engagement with the Church’s great architectural and liturgical traditions is not waning, but growing. And although every movement must be wary of the “change beyond the change,” even an objective observer can foresee in the year 2012—a way that could not be seen in 2001—that a more profound understanding of both the Council’s documents and church architecture is currently at play, with even the hint of glory beyond the horizon.

Dr. Denis R. McNamara is an architectural historian who teaches at the Liturgical Institute at Mundelein Seminary. He has written extensively on sacred architecture, including his recent book How to Read Churches: A Crash Course in Ecclesiastical Architecture.

(Endnotes)
4. For more on the proposed Raleigh cathedral commission, see NC Catholics (November 2011): 20-23. 34. The architect for the proposed 2000 seat Cathedral of the Holy Name of Jesus is James McCrery of McCrery Architects in Washington, DC.
5. When one desires to preach to the world by use of the eloquent language of architecture, and pray, getting ever more grounded in an authentic understanding of the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the strong theological and aesthetic leadership of Pope Benedict XVI. Practitioners of New Classicism still face obstacles from pragmatists, ideologically-driven liturgical professionals, misperceptions about the costs and practicalities of traditional architecture, and the continued resistance of professional societies in architecture and liturgy. But the momentum toward a theologically-informed re-engagement with the Church’s great architectural and liturgical traditions is not waning, but growing. And although every movement must be wary of the “change beyond the change,” even an objective observer can foresee in the year 2012—a way that could not be seen in 2001—that a more profound understanding of both the Council’s documents and church architecture is currently at play, with even the hint of glory beyond the horizon.

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LIVING STONE: THE BEAUTY OF THE LITURGICAL ALTAR

Randy L. Stice

You are beauty...You are beauty! exclaimed St. Francis of Assisi of God.2 God who is beauty is also Being, the source and sustainer of all that is (cf. Col 1:16-17). Beauty, then, is a category of being, and all beauty participates to some degree in the beauty of God, as the Second Vatican Council taught: “Of their nature the arts are directed toward expressing in some way the infinite beauty of God in works made by human hands.”2 Since beauty is a category of being, in determining the beauty of something one must first know its essential nature. Jacques Maritain called this its “ontological secret,” which he defined as its “innermost being” and “spiritual essence.”3 The ontological secret of things is “the invisible spiritual reality of their being as objects of understanding.”4

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy offers the key to the ontological secret of things used in the sacred liturgy: “all things set apart for use in divine worship should be worthy, becoming, and beautiful, signs and symbols of things supernatural.”5 This is their ontological secret—they are “signs and symbols of things supernatural.” For this reason, the ultimate goal is “noble beauty rather than sumptuous display.”6 Thus, in order to judge the beauty of the liturgical altar, we must determine how it is a sign and symbol of supernatural realities, which in turn requires that we first determine this for the church building.

Before we consider the question of ontology, however, we first need to outline our aesthetic methodology. For this we will turn to Saint Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas taught that beautiful things possess three qualities: integrity, consonantia, and claritas. Integritas refers to completeness and perfection—nothing essential is lacking, nothing extraneous is present. Consonantia is the quality of proportionality in relation to an end, “the goal that God had in mind for it.”7 Claritas, the third element, is the power of an object to reveal its ontological reality. Umberto Eco describes it as “the fundamental communicability of form, which is made actual in relation to someone’s looking at or seeing of the object. The rationality that belongs to every form is the ‘light’ which manifests itself to aesthetic seeing.”8 Something that is truly beautiful has all of its constituent elements (integritas), is proportional to its ultimate purpose (consonantia), and manifests its essential reality (claritas).

In his discussion of consonantia, Eco also describes the important relationship of different but interconnected things, forming what he calls “a dense network of relations....In fact we are free to consider the relation of three, four, or an infinity of things, proportionate among themselves and proportioned also in respect of some unifying whole.”9 “In brief, what is involved is a twofold relation of parts to one another and to the whole of which they are parts.”10 Applied to a church building and its furnishings, this describes a multitude of relations: sanctuary to nave, altar to sanctuary, altar to tabernacle, ambo to presider’s chair, and so on.

Having established our methodology, we can now turn to the question of the ontological secret of the church building and the altar. The ontology of the church building is derived from the ontology of the Church. Lumen Gentium described the Church in the following words:

This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God in which dwells His family; household of God in the Spirit; the dwelling place of God among men; and, especially, the holy temple. This Temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Holy Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.11

Notice how this passage moves from the nature of the Church to the nature of the church building, from biblical images descriptive of God’s dwelling with his people to “places of worship built out of stone” that are “compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.”12 Ontologically, then, the church building is an image of the Temple, and the Holy City, an image of the New Jerusalem described in the Book of Revelation.

The central figure in the New Jerusalem is the Lamb (cf. Rev 21:22-23; 22:1, 3), which provides the context for the ontology of the liturgical altar. It is a symbol of Christ, the center of the thanksgiving made present through the Eucharist, the altar of sacrifice, and “the table of the Lord.”13 First and foremost, the altar is a symbol of Christ, as St. Ambrose asserted in the fourth century: “The altar represents the body [of Christ] and the Body of Christ is the altar.”14 The Catechism summarizes this important symbolism: “the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us.”15

If the altar is the symbol of Christ, then it must perforce also be “the center...
of the assembly, to which the greatest reverence is due.”16 The General Instruction reaffirms this teaching of Eucharisticum Mysterium, describing it as “the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist.”17 Third, the altar is “the place at which the saving mysteries are carried out,” the altar of sacrifice.18 It is the place, says the GIRM: “on which is effected the Sacrifice of the Cross made present under sacramental signs.”19 Fourth, it is the table of the sacrificial meal, “the table of the Lord to which the People of God is convoked to participate in the Mass.”20 Drawing together the last two aspects, the Catechism says, “The altar, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord.”21 An altar that “worthily and beautifully serve[s] the dignity of worship”22 will reveal this fourfold ontology.

Although Church documents do not use Aquinas’ terminology, they do show an implicit awareness of his three elements. In discussing the specifications of the altar, the Church documents address several elements of its integritas, its wholeness or completeness. The GIRM refers to the centrality of the altar: “the altar should occupy a place where it is truly the center toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns.”23 Built of Living Stones makes reference to two other elements, the altar of sacrifice and the table of the sacrificial meal: “The shape and size should reflect the nature of the altar as the place of sacrifice and the table around which Christ gathers the community to nourish them.”24 Each of these passages is addressing what Aquinas termed consonantia.

The concept of consonantia, proportionality to an end, is also referred to in ecclesial documents. The Introduction to the Order of the Mass states that the altar’s “size and proportions should be appropriate to the normal Sunday Eucharistic celebration, and it should be able to accommodate the patens, ciboria, and chalices for the Communion of the faithful.”25 Consonantia as “a dense network of relations”26 is also implied. Take for example the exhortation in Eucharisticum Mysterium: “Pastors must realize that the way the church is arranged greatly contributes to a worthy celebration and to the active participation of the people.”27 This is echoed by Built of Living Stones:

In considering the dimensions of the altar, parishes will also want to insure that the other major furnishings in the sanctuary are in harmony and proportion to the altar...
natural stone” will strengthen the claritas of the altar, “since it represents Christ Jesus, the Living Stone (1 Pt 2:4).”33 As these references make clear, the altar must clearly show forth its ontological reality.

Beautiful things reveal most easily and completely their ontological reality and convey the attractive power of the Truth. The beauty of a church building will reflect its ontology as the Temple and New Jerusalem and a beautiful altar will manifest its reality as the image of Christ himself, the altar of sacrifice, the table of the heavenly banquet, and the table of thanksgiving.

Saint Thomas Aquinas’ three constituent elements of beauty — integritas, consonantia, and claritas — provide a useful methodology for ensuring that all things destined for the sacred liturgy are worthy, beautiful and able to turn men’s minds devoutly toward God. Fidelity to ontological realities will produce a church building that is “a vehicle for carrying the presence of the Transcendent One”34 in which “every altar...from the greatest to the least, is lit from that golden altar in heaven [Rev 8:3], and becomes its replica on earth, the representation of Our Lord Himself.”35

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(Endnotes)
5. SC, 122.
6. Ibid., art. 124.
9. Ibid., 89.
10. Ibid., 90.
12. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
18. EM, 24.
19. GIRM, 296.
20. GIRM, 296.
21. CCC, 1383.
22. SC, art. 122.
23. GIRM, 299. Italics added.
UPLIFTING OUR GAZE AND SPIRIT: ART AND PRAYER

Address by His Holiness Benedict XVI

His Holiness Benedict XVI gave the following address at a General Audience at Castel Gandolfo on August 31, 2011.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this period I have recalled several times the need for every Christian, in the midst of the many occupations that fill our days, to find time for God and for prayer. The Lord himself gives us many opportunities to remember him. Today I would like to reflect briefly on one of these channels that can lead to God and can also be of help in the encounter with him. It is the way of artistic expression, part of that “via pulchritudinis” — the “way of beauty”, of which I have spoken several times and whose deepest meaning must be recovered by men and women today.

It may have happened on some occasion that you paused before a sculpture, a picture, a few verses of a poem or a piece of music that you found deeply moving, that gave you a sense of joy, a clear perception, that is, that what you beheld was not only matter, a piece of marble or bronze, a painted canvas, a collection of letters or an accumulation of sounds, but something greater, something that “speaks”, that can touch the heart, communicate a message, uplift the mind.

A work of art is a product of the creative capacity of the human being who in questioning visible reality, seeks to discover its deep meaning and to communicate it through the language of forms, colour and sound. Art is able to manifest and make visible the human need to surpass the visible, it expresses the thirst and the quest for the infinite.

Indeed it resembles a door open on to the infinite, on to a beauty and a truth that go beyond the daily routine. And a work of art can open the eyes of the mind and of the heart, impelling us upward.

However some artistic expressions are real highways to God, the supreme Beauty; indeed, they help us to grow in our relationship with him, in prayer. These are works that were born from faith and express faith. We can see an example of this when we visit a Gothic cathedral: we are enraptured by the vertical lines that soar skywards and uplift our gaze and our spirit, while at the same time we feel small yet long for fullness.

Or when we enter a Romanesque church we are spontaneously prompted to meditate and to pray. We perceive that these splendid buildings contain, as it were, the faith of generations. Or when we listen to a piece of sacred music that plucks at our heartstrings, our mind, as it were, expands and turns naturally to God.

I remember a concert of music by Johann Sebastian Bach in Munich, conducted by Leonard Bernstein. At the end of the last passage, one of the Cantatas, I felt, not by reasoning but in the depths of my heart, that what I had heard had communicated truth to me, the truth of the supreme composer, and impelled me to thank God. The Lutheran bishop of Munich was next to me and I said to him spontaneously: “in hearing this one understands: it is true; such strong faith is true, as well as the beauty that irresistibly expresses the presence of God’s truth.”

Yet how many pictures or frescos, fruits of the artist’s faith, in their form, in their color, in their light, urge us to think of God and foster within us the desire to draw from the source of all beauty. What Marc Chagall, a great artist, wrote, remains profoundly true: that for centuries painters have dipped their paintbrush in that colored alphabet which is the Bible. Thus how often artistic expression can bring us to remember God, to help us to pray or even to convert our heart!

Paul Claudel, a famous French poet, playwright and diplomat, precisely while he was listening in the Cathedral of Notre Dame to the singing of the Magnificat during Christmas Mass in 1886, had a tangible experience of God’s presence. He had not entered the church for reasons of faith but rather in order to seek arguments against Christians and instead God’s grace worked actively in his heart.

Dear friends, I ask you to rediscover the importance of this path also for prayer, for our living relationship with God. Towns and villages throughout the world contain treasures of art that express faith and beckon to us to return to our relationship with God. May the visits to places filled with art, then, not only be opportunities for cultural enrichment — that too — but may they become above all moments of grace, incentives to strengthen our bond and our dialogue with the Lord so that — in switching from simple external reality to the more profound reality it expresses — we may pause to contemplate the ray of beauty that strikes us to the quick, that almost “wounds” us, and that invites us to rise toward God.

I end with a prayer from a Psalm, Psalm 27[26]: “One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and contemplate his temple” (v. 4).

Let us hope that the Lord will help us to contemplate his beauty, both in nature and in works of art, so that we, moved by the light that shines from his face, may be a light for our neighbour.

Many thanks.

- His Holiness Benedict XVI
Call for Papers

*Logos* seeks a readership that extends beyond the academy and is especially interested in receiving submissions in art, photography, architecture and music. Articles should demonstrate a clear exploration of themes related to the intersection of these subjects and Catholic thought and culture.
The Throne of Wisdom


Reviewed by Stephen Murray

E ach great cathedral gathers around itself a group of amateurs—lovers, really—who take upon themselves the task of interpreting and creating the meanings of the great multi-media work: an architectural envelope that leads us to the sublime; luminous multi-colored images that hang, suspended in the darkness; three-dimensional life-like sculptured figures—originally brightly painted—that provided the “virtual reality” of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, and, most important, the living, human, performative dimensions: song, procession, pilgrimage, liturgical performance. In the Middle Ages such liturgical performances performed the interface between the resident body of clergy (bishop and seventy-two canons, plus ancillary personnel at Chartres) and different kinds of lay participant: patron; pilgrim; bourgeois; rusticus. Margot Fassler opens her magnificent new book, The Virgin of Chartres, by locating herself and her work within the context of such Chartrephiles (if I may coin the term), past and present; in the pages that follow, she allows us to excavate layer upon layer of stories that have been told about this, the most-beloved cathedral of all. This is the construction of history.

Ecclesiastical institutions in the Middle Ages competed with each other to establish apostolic roots: the cult of saints and the liturgical arts, as well as the writing of chronicles provided the means by which such “histories” might be constructed. The story-tellers of Chartres took the narrative even further back in time with the myth of a pre-Christian female deity served by a community of priests, a Virgin about to bear (paritura). The cult with its pilgrimage was served by a sacred site: a miracle-working well, identified by eighteenth-century antiquarians as the well in the crypt of Chartres Cathedral. Margot Fassler strips away this layer of story-telling, documenting the relatively late origins of the myth in the fourteenth-century Vieille chronique, and its dramatic post-medieval embellishment.

The Marian dedication of Chartres Cathedral can be documented as early as the eighth century. During the episcopacy of Bishop Giselbert (858-879/85) the cathedral received from Emperor Charles the Bald (reg. 840-877) the gift of the great relic—the Virgin’s tunic—that would provide the essential mechanism for so much subsequent history-making. The author passes over this momentous acquisition with very few words: it is certainly true that the full implication of the event was only realized later through subsequent stories about miracles. The most famous early miracle came in 911 when a Viking band, led by Rollo, attempted to capture Chartres: “When suddenly Bishop Walter charged out of the city, robed as if to celebrate Mass, and bearing the cross and the tunic of the Holy Virgin Mary in his hands…” (17). Rollo, discomfited, withdrew and soon afterwards was baptized—Mary of Chartres had engineered his transformation. Fassler provides the reader with a fascinating account of the way this story was told and retold in subsequent writings; similarly, how the myth of the miracle-working well was fabricated and the story of the ignominious death of Bishop Frotbald during a Viking attack was turned into a glorious victory. Such stories were created and recreated in the tenth and eleventh centuries largely through the liturgy: they certainly helped establish the reputation of this city and bolster the status of counts and bishops at a time (the tenth century) of great instability and struggles between the family of the counts of Champagne/Blois (who controlled Chartres) and the Angevins, Capetians, and Anglo-Normans.

Bishop Odo (967-1003) appears to have been the first to systematically promote the Marian cult with the sancta camisa as its focal point—a major incentive was the need to raise money for the reconstruction of the cathedral, which had burned in 962. And it is from the tenth century that we first begin to hear of the sumptuous châsse that contained the chemise and of custom-designed chants like the Hac clara die sequence added to solemnize the cult of the Virgin.

The principal liturgical development of the tenth-to-eleventh centuries was the assembly of a coherent liturgical book on Advent. Advent is about arrival: adventus. Originating in the ceremony for the reception of a ruler into his kingdom, a key text was found in Psalm 23: “Lift up your gates, O ye princes and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates: and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord, mighty in battle.” The Church transformed the idea and the ceremony to mark the period of the year (four weeks) when the darkest days turned to light announcing the arrival of the Messiah. Margot Fassler repeatedly finds the sources of inspiration for the extraordinary sculptural program of the western portals in the same modes of thought and in ceremonial practices that lay behind the adventus ritual as the column figures that populate the portals line up in a ceremony of greeting.

A devastating fire destroyed most of the cathedral on September 7, 1020, the vigil of Mary’s Nativity. The massive work of reconstruction and the continuing development and propagation of the cult of the Virgin went hand in hand during the episcopacy of Bishop Fulbert (1006-1028). New tropes and sequences were added and sermons preached to develop the theme of Mary’s lineage (prophetic and royal) and the story of her life. Bishop Fulbert’s preaching did much to propagate the metaphor of the stirps Jesse—the Tree of Jesse—an image that was to enjoy a fabulous later life in Gothic art, while the “Book of the Cult,” attributed to Fulbert, provided a narrative for
the life of the Virgin—and inspiration for the famous “capital frieze” that is such an important feature of the portal program of the western frontispiece.

The vibrancy of Fulbert’s episcopacy was later matched by Bishop Ivo (1090-1115). Ivo was a reforming bishop, whose sermons were intended to propagate Christian mysteries to a wide audience: he focused particularly on the story of Mary, seeing the Virgin’s tunic as a metaphor for the entire Church. Like Bernard of Clairvaux, he found inspiration in the Song of Songs.

In 1134 just before the feast of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary when the town blazed with the light of candles, another fire damaged the cathedral. Margot Fassler links the work of reconstructing the western frontispiece with its three portals squeezed tightly together between two towers, with the endowment of choral offices and the production of stained glass windows: critical to her thesis is the notion that portals and glass need to be understood as part of the same program as singing and processions. Particularly important is the way that the ideas developed in liturgy and preaching from Bishops Odo to Ivo found expression in the portal program, which is a vast speculation upon time, especially focussing upon Advent. The passage from Old to New is marked by the emphatic horizontal line of capitals that bring the story of the Virgin and the Nativity and Passion of Christ into present time. The figures lining the portals: kings, queens, prophets, and priests form part of the Old and belong to the lineage of Mary. The three tympana provide glimpses of the New and the yet-to-be. Particularly important is the presence of the Virgin Mary on the right (southern) tympanum as the Throne of Wisdom: the Wisdom of Solomon has been transformed into a new Logos with the incarnation of Christ. The Virgin’s body is the new Temple that is the Church, to be reunited with Christ at the end of time.

There is little not to like about this book. It tends at times to be repetitive and could have been a little shorter. This reviewer, an art historian, would have liked a more systematic description and visual documentation of the portals and windows. We may retain some skepticism about the extent that the non-clerical user of the building would actually be able to “see and understand” all, as the author suggests.

But, finally, The Virgin of Chartres is, I believe, destined to find its place amongst the classic works on the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages. It appears at a time when much of the work of many of the scholars of a previous generation who attempted to unscramble the meanings of the great church has been questioned: I think of the writings of Otto von Simson, Erwin Panofsky, and Emile Mâle. Scholarship of the past three decades has sought to establish new ways to unlock the meaning of the cathedral. This book, with its sweeping historical overview coupled with detailed analysis and transcriptions of the liturgical sources and investigation of the images, sets a new standard of excellence.

Stephen Murray, PhD, was educated at Oxford and the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London. He has been teaching Art History at Columbia University since 1986. His publications include books on the cathedrals of Amiens, Beauvais and Troyes; his current work is on medieval sermons, story-telling in Gothic, and the Romanesque architecture of the Bourbonnais.

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The Human Touch
Ritual Space Liberated from Tradition


Reviewed by Lisa Austin

Rituals evolve over time. Recently, a California funeral home offered mourners the option of staying in their car while paying their respects. Holy Ground does not address “drive-thru visitation” but discusses ritual space through a contemporary social-cultural lens. Arie L. Molendijk examines scholarly views of the “holy” and “sacred” and Paul Post offers an examination of spatial-ritual-religious analytical models. Eight other authors consider rituals, shrines, memorials, and spaces of contemplation.

The “sacred” exists in opposition to the everyday, the profane. “Holy ground” and “ritual space” are specific locations where limited sets of symbolic actions occur. But, as Judith Tomnaer says, today people “actively exhibit signs of their mourning”, by creating “fluid, flexible and mobile” rituals. Eric Venbrux describes the “ritual communication” of throwing coins into water as a symbolic attachment to a place. Can any place become sacred? Irene Stengs suggests that the two million who watched the “farewell ceremony” for Theo van Gogh on television were located in temporary “ritualized spaces.” If Jane Doe is watching a funeral while resting from home, is her bedroom a “ritualized space?” Folks who attend funerals can also doze off too, but they are not wearing pajamas.

Stengs reports that after the death of a popular singer, many memorial events were held: a concert in a stadium with coffin arriving by hearse; cremated ashes rocketed into the North Sea; tattooing of loved ones with ashes. A six-part TV mini-series followed. Memorials always involve economic, social, and political influences; but contemporary events are created in a media hothouse. Perhaps our western mourning rituals are only as genuine as the tears for Kim Jong Il.

Several writers address church architecture. Justin E. A. Krosen discussed the Netherlands’ “financially burdensome” churches and reported that even atheists view some re-use options as sacrilegious. Woutler E. A. van Beek writes about Mormon architecture and the Zoetermeer Temple in the Netherlands. If you visit Washington, D.C., take a drive on the Capitol Beltway and watch for the Wizard of Oz-like palace that once inspired this spray-painted message on a nearby overpass: “Surrender Dorothy.” The Washington Temple’s dramatic façade promises a wild interior volume, but when I attended an open house, the windowless conference rooms disappointed. Mormon temples are designed to maximize spaces for meetings; and by limiting access to upper floors, van Beek says that Mormons create a “sacred hierarchy.”

In contrast, the Tor Tre Teste Jubilee Church in Rome was designed with spatial intentionality. Paul Post’s photographs show huge curving walls creating movement reminiscent of an airport terminal. Minus pews and crucifix, the interior functions as a non-denominational place of reflection. Post notes that the sacred was once viewed as being “fundamentally experienced in spatial terms...” and that rituals were “always connected with a place.” Now, Post reports, “events, not buildings” are primary in “assigning meaning” and “Christian worship is not tied to a definite place.” But folks still want their churches! Lizette Larson-Miller documented the painful process of unifying varied cultural expectations to join four parishes in Oakland, California. As churches are shuttered, Jorien Holsappel-Brons discusses the increasing numbers of “rooms of silence” in hospitals, airports, and even shopping malls.

Kenneth Foote says spontaneous shrines are creating sacred space with increasing speed for a wider range of events involving more “voices.” While memorial planning can be a cathartic process for wounded communities, I must note that design by committee and jurying by “stakeholders” can result in conceptually vague examples of “Hallmark-card minimalism” and pedantically literal monuments. In contrast, Maya Lin’s masterful Vietnam Veteran’s Memorial was selected by a jury of elites (architects, landscape architects, and sculptors) in a competition organized by an architect, Paul D. Spreiregen.

Many authors of Holy Ground view both ritual and the sacred as liberated from religion and tradition. While coin tossing, tattoos, tree plantings, concerts, and marches may offer comfort; they seem a thin substitute for traditional rituals. Other than discussion of the Jubilee Church, Holy Ground omits consideration of the aesthetic-architectural-spatial context that grounds much ritual, and is silent on contested spaces. Despite these omissions readers interested in rituals and ritualized spaces will find Holy Ground a source of valuable information on scholarly discussions of contemporary sacred space.

Artist Lisa Austin collaborates with landscape architects, and others engaged with urban space, on social sculpture projects, public art and memorials; she teaches three-dimensional design and sculpture at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. lisa@lisaaustinpa.com

Reviewed by Christ J. Kamages, AIA

Architecture as Icon is a catalogue of a joint exhibit presented at the Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, Greece and Princeton University Art Museum. Editors Đurđić and Hadjitryphonos served as curators of the exhibit, culling artifacts from museums in Europe and the United States. This book and its related exhibit occurs in the recent epiphany of interest in the Art and Architecture of Byzantium, despite Gibbons' portrayal in the Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire, in which the era with the largest time period was portrayed with minor and diminutive attention. Recent major exhibits such the Icons of Sinai at the Getty, The Glory of Byzantium at the Metropolitan in New York, and Holy Image, Holy Space: Frescoes and Icons from Greece at the Walters Museum in Baltimore are emblematic of this new interest in the Byzantine era.

This project intends to revisit the importance of the elements of architecture and space in Byzantine icons and other representations rather than the focusing only on the holy figures in conventional scholarship. The book is a soft-bound but thick volume, divided into two parts, with the first comprised of a series of essays by the editors and additional contributors, and the second representing the catalogue of the Byzantine pieces. The items, including panel icons, models, liturgical ware, reliquaries, coins, and jewelry, were selected for their common incorporation into a built environment.

The first chapter written by Đurđić sets up the framework for the book, affirming the recent surging interest in Byzantine art by western scholars, and outlining the divergent developments of western and eastern representation and understanding of space. He reminds us, “for Westerners, art was a means of representing reality and at times even bettering it, while for Byzantines, art was never an end in itself, but a facilitator of access to the spiritual world, the indescribable, non-containable universe of the divine spirit” (7). An icon is not merely a picture or representation, but a window and a bridge to a spiritual reality. The essay goes on to present examples from the collection which illuminate a certain aspect of the icon, including a reliquary in the form of a Serbian monastery closed during Ottoman rule, which peasants used for prayer and adoration when not allowed to enter the church. Đurđić also presents a very interesting and potent counterpoint between Masaccio’s Holy Trinity fresco, with its important one-point perspective, and a Russian icon of the Crucifixion. While the two pieces depict the same subject in a similar composition, Masaccio’s use of perspective draws the viewer into the space, which is divided into earthly and heavenly zones of cube and dome, with Christ mediating. The Russian icon places the Crucifixion in front of a planar wall of Jerusalem, providing a symbolic kind of division and an overall sense of infinite, uncontained space. Next he briefly describes the typical iconostasis of an Eastern church as an unfolded, condensed church building serving as an interface between the altar and the congregation, with examples such as panel icons which appear to be an unfolded map of a church interior, organizing the myriad saints and prophets in two dimensions.

Additional essays explore a range of interrelated topics symbolic interpretations of Early Christian architecture, with renderings of church architecture from mosaics of the period, and the idea of space in Byzantine thought, naturally taking the Trinitarian form of “earth, heaven, and beyond heaven,” corresponding to the three parts of the church―narthex, nave, and sanctuary. The fourth chapter explores the previously unstudied practice of architectural drawing and model making in Byzantium. Ancient orthogonal drawings and scale models had been known of in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Greece, but continuous use could only be speculated. Sketches from Giuliano da Sangallo, Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, and Villard de Honnecourt are contrasted with a nineteenth-century builder’s sketch for a house in Athens, which to modern western eyes appears unrealistic or cubist, but demonstrates a different understanding of the organization of space and elements, and relies on the concept of time as an element in the experience of the building and the drawing.

The second half of the book contains the catalogue of artifacts, including a polycandelon in the form of a church with the exterior and interior synthesized, thirteen-century stone models...
of church forms, architectural censers, and many icons which incorporate an architectural motif or structure, whether it be a single element such as a tower or saint’s shrine, or an overall organization of figures representing a church or a city. The catalogue is grouped into themes, from Generic Representations, Specific Representations, Symbolic Representations, finally culminating in Jerusalem, orienting the entire book towards that holy city and its liturgical meaning. It is in this section that we find the cover image of the book, the icon illustrating the Hymn to the Virgin, “In Thee Rejoiceth...”. This Russian icon from the sixteenth-century served as a guide to the hymn within the liturgy of Saint Basil the Great, giving visual form to the priest’s silent prayers to all the ranks of saints. The base of the icon is a band of martyrs, saints, and bishops, looking up toward the central enthroned Virgin Mary with Christ Child, who are surrounded by the archangels in front of a multi-domed church and paradisiacal palm trees. The image and its accompanying hymn intend to lift prayers from the earthly realm to the heavenly realm, transcending finite space and directing the sung hymn to she who is “wider than the heavens.” The icon, often thought of as a devotional tool, unites private prayer, liturgy, music, painted image, and architecture.

In Orthodox theology the icon is “a window to heaven.” Architecture as Icon offers a provocative theme that projects the transformative nature of Byzantine architecture, as witnessed and documented by Vladimir’s emissaries of Kiev in 988 AD, one of the greatest evangelical conversions in history, where it was proclaimed, “We did not know whether we were in heaven or on earth. For on earth there is no such splendor or such beauty, and we are at a loss how to describe it.”


In the middle of the book, Nichols covers some architectural principles and contemporary difficulties, including the domestication of church interiors. He proposes suggestions for the altar and tabernacle, and states that the church building is an icon of the spiritual reality of the Church. He writes a chapter on the theology and history of the Russian icon, and another on the poet Paul Claudel and sacred art. Ultimately, Nichols argues that Christian identity can and should inspire high culture in both the East and the West.


The author is a priest of the Community of Saint Martin, which celebrates the Mass of Paul VI in Latin. Easy to understand, this book gives an overview of the history and theology of the liturgy. Aillet also looks to a reconciliation of the two forms of the Latin rite.


This book provides beautiful color illustrations of Italian altarpieces painted between 1250 and 1500, most of which are in the collection at the National Gallery in London. Scott Nethersole of the Courtauld Institute of Art, London, explores the original purpose of the altarpieces and how they were made.


Dykes Bower was a 20th-century British architect who rejected modernism and emphasized fine detail and craftsmanship. He built four new churches, including St John’s at Newbury, and designed the high altar and baldacchino at Saint Paul’s Cathedral. This book reveals Dykes Bower’s work and his widely unknown career.


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It was Cardinal William O’Connell, who commissioned the Roman artist Gonippo Raggi to decorate the interior of the chapel in 1908.

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