In modern memory, there has been a Pope who has been so outspoken on the topic of art, architecture, and music as Pope Benedict XVI? Central to his thinking was the idea that art and architecture can speak to us. Benedict taught that architecture should make visible the invisible and point us toward the infinite. “I did once say that to me art and the saints are the greatest apologetics for our faith.”2 For instance, in describing Michelangelo’s Sistine ceiling he exclaims, “In that moment of contact between the finger of God and the finger of man, we perceive the point of contact between heaven and earth; in Adam God enters into a new relationship with his Creation, man is in direct relationship with Him, he is called by Him, he is in the image and likeness of God.”3 During his homily at the dedication of the church of the Sagrada Familia in 2010 the Pope said, “Gaudí, by opening his spirit to God, was capable of creating in this city a space of beauty, faith and hope which leads man to an encounter with him who is truth and beauty itself.”4 In fact, during his travels Pope Benedict XVI often commented on great art and architecture and their meaning for believers.

In celebrating the liturgy, Pope Benedict modeled a vision of beauty. Under his eight year reign, a number of new liturgical elements were designed for Saint Peter’s basilica that reflected continuity with tradition: a cathedra canopy for outdoor masses, a new ambo, and beautiful vestments. In his use of the altar rail for giving out communion and his employment of the “Benedictine arrangement” of large crucifix and candlesticks placed on the altar he inspired many Bishops and priests to follow his lead. The intention of these initiatives, he explained, was to re-focus the celebration of the liturgy on Christ rather than on the community that it had become. “The turning of the priest towards the people has turned the community into a self-enclosed circle. In its outward form, it no longer opens out on what lies ahead and above, but is closed in on itself.”5 Pope Benedict offered a remedy to the man-centered church, by returning the crucifix to the center of the altar and “whenever possible, we should definitely take up again the apostolic tradition of facing the east, both in the building of churches and in the celebration of the liturgy.”6 Papal liturgies were models of both, including mass ad orientem on certain occasions.

Running through all of his teachings on art, architecture, and music was Pope Benedict’s theology of beauty. Beauty was seen as fundamental to faith and to the perception of truth. Furthermore, he saw beauty as the finest expression of faith, hope and love. In speaking to artists he said, “Let truth shine brightly in your works and make their beauty elicit in the gaze and in the hearts of those who admire them, the desire and need to make their existence beautiful and true, every existence, enriching it with that treasure which is never lacking which makes life a work of art and every man an extraordinary artist: charity, love.”7 Not surprising that he often brought the concept of beauty into his homilies and addresses. He spoke about the “via pulchritudinis,” or the way of beauty, whose deepest meaning must be recovered by men and women today. “However some 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.”8

It was Pope Benedict’s love of baroque art and architecture that is such a revelation for English-speaking Catholics. He explains that “in line with the tradition of the West, the Council [of Trent] again emphasized the didactic and pedagogical character of art, but, as a fresh start toward interior renewal, it led once more to a new kind of seeing that comes from and returns within. The altarpiece is like a window through which the world of God comes out to us. The curtain of temporality is raised, and we are allowed a glimpse into the inner life of the world of God. This art is intended to insert us into the liturgy of heaven. Again and again, we experience a Baroque church as a unique kind of fortissimo of joy, an Alleluia in visual form.”9

To those who see the promotion of traditional art, architecture, and music as merely an act of nostalgia it must be pointed out that the Pope saw the great masterpieces of Western art as living witnesses to the eternal faith. The Sistine chapel, Gothic cathedrals, and baroque altarpieces continue to speak to those who have eyes to see. The relation between tradition and innovation in Benedict’s thought grows out of Vatican II in which “any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.”10 So what about the place of creativity in new works? “An art that lost the root of transcendence would not be oriented to God; it would be a halved art, it would lose its living root; and a faith that had art only in the past would no longer be faith in the present; and today it must be expressed anew as truth that is always present.”11

† Duncan Stroik
Notre Dame, Easter 2013

(footnotes)
6. Ibid, 70.
10. Sacrosanctum Concilium, 23.
11. Interview of His Holiness Benedict XVI with journalists during the flight to Barcelona, Spain, on the Apostolic Journey to Santiago de Compostela and Barcelona, 6 November 2010.

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A new chapel of Our Lady of Guadalupe was dedicated at the Los Angeles Cathedral last September in conjunction with the cathedral’s tenth anniversary. Archbishop José Gomez of Los Angeles presided over the dedication of the chapel, which houses a relic of Saint Juan Diego’s tilma and a mosaic replica of the miraculous image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. The chapel was designed by Dario Bucheli and Associates with consultation from Father José Castano. The Knights of Columbus and other donors provided funding for the chapel.

September’s reorganization of the Congregation for Divine Worship included the establishment of an office that will oversee liturgical art, architecture, and music. The American-born Benedictine abbot Michael John Zielinski has been named to head the office, which will provide guidelines to ensure that hymns sung during mass and the structure of new churches are adequate and correspond to the mystery being celebrated.

On December 9, 2012, Los Angeles Archbishop José Gomez dedicated the new parish church of Our Savior at the University of Southern California. The church is part of the new 20,000-square-foot Caruso Catholic Center, which serves the Catholic student chaplaincy at USC. With the vision of respecting both the Catholic Church’s building tradition, and the vernacular Romanesque architecture of the USC campus, the parish chose Elkus Manfredi of Boston, MA to design the complex and hired Dr. Steven Schloeder AIA of Liturgical Environments PC in Phoenix, AZ to assist in the liturgical design, iconography, and artist selection process. Perkowitz & Ruth of Long Beach, CA were the local architects of record, and Matt Construction served as General Contractor. The project incorporates significant new works of sacred art including eight monumental stained glass windows by Judson Studios of Pasadena, CA; Stations of the Cross by local artist Peter Adams; a suspended bronze Crucifix by local sculptor Christopher Slatoff; and a Carrara marble tympanum by Jason Arkles from Florence, Italy.

The newly installed Guadalupe Shrine in the Los Angeles Cathedral

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A stained glass dome and tabernacle window grace the interior of the new Saint Martin de Porres church in Lake Charles, L.A. Depicting the Communion of Saints in the dome and Eucharistic angels flanking the tabernacle, the stained glass was created by Foster Stained Glass of Bryan, TX. Six side chapel windows and a narthex window are currently under construction for the church.

Hundreds of pilgrims were evacuated from the shrine town of Lourdes, France when it flooded on October 20, 2012.

The Communion of Saints is depicted in the stained glass dome of the new Saint Martin de Porres church in Louisiana.

The white open air Fiat in which Blessed John Paul II was riding when he was shot in Saint Peter’s Square on May 13, 1981, has been added to the Vatican Museum’s newly renovated Popemobile Pavilion. Exhibiting historic modes of papal transport, this underground display houses more than a dozen papal carriages and nine papal cars.

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On October 4, Pope Benedict XVI traveled to the Marian Shrine at Loreto to entrust the Year of Faith to the Virgin Mary, where Blessed Pope John XXIII had entrusted the Second Vatican Council to the Blessed Mother exactly fifty years before. There at the site of the holy house of Nazareth, Benedict spoke of “the Son of God dwelling in the ‘living house’, the temple which is Mary,” and encouraged the faithful to offer their lives as His dwelling place.

A newly renovated Sacred Heart residence chapel was recently dedicated at Jesuit High School in Tampa, Florida. The renovation included various new wooden details and finishes, including liturgical furnishings, floors, pews, and a classical frame around the apse, inspired by baldacchinos of the baroque era. Joel Pidel was the designer of the project, which was completed for a total cost of $350,000. The chapel is primarily used by the Jesuit scholastics and priests who teach at the high school.

Half of the trademark and literary rights to Margaret Mitchell’s famous Civil War novel Gone with the Wind have been donated to the Archdiocese of Atlanta through the estate of the author’s nephew, Joseph Mitchell. Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory of Atlanta designated $7.5 million of the estate funds to the building fund of the Cathedral of Christ the King, $1.5 million to Catholic Charities Atlanta for immediate use, and another $2 million to a fund for long-term use by the charity organization.

The Catholic Church of St. Filip and Jacob in Vukovar, Croatia recently completed the total reconstruction of its neo-baroque high altar. The original altar was destroyed in the Yugoslavian War in 1991, which left the entire town heavily damaged and over 200 citizens dead. Overseeing the project was the studio of Ferdinand Stuflesser located in Ortisei, Italy.

On October 4, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Marian Shrine at Loreto, Italy. He made a pilgrimage to the site of the holy house of Nazareth, where Blessed Pope John XXIII had entrusted the Second Vatican Council to the Blessed Mother exactly fifty years before.

The new Cathedral of Our Lady of Fatima in Karaganda, Kazakhstan, was dedicated on September 9, 2012. The Neo-Gothic church is located on the site of a former concentration camp where thousands of Catholic prisoners were persecuted during Communist rule. Cardinal Angelo Sodano, dean of the College of Cardinals, gave the dedication homily to the 1,500 people who filled the cathedral. He referred to the cathedral as a “privileged place where we can publicly worship God.” Authorities granted permission for the construction of the cathedral on the Feast of Our Lady of Fatima in 2003.

Archbishop Gregory displays a signed copy of Gone With the Wind.

Archbishop Gregory displays a signed copy of Gone With the Wind.

Cardinal Raymond L. Burke recently dedicated a monument to Blessed Columba Marmion in his titular church, Saint Agatha of the Goths in Rome.
In December, 2012, Franz Mayer Studio of Munich completed the final seven of twelve new stained glass windows for the lower nave of Our Lady of Guadalupe Seminary Chapel in Denton, Nebraska by architect Thomas Gordon Smith. The windows each depict a saint, including Saint Ambrose, Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint Thomas Aquinas, Saint Aloysius, Saint Jerome, and Saint Thérèse of Lisieux. The Studio is currently designing new stained glass windows for the clerestory of the chapel that will continue the iconographic program.

“The beauty of faith is never an obstacle to the creation of artistic beauty,” Pope Benedict XVI stated at the opening of the Pontifical Academies’ seventeenth public session on the theme “Pulchritudinis fidei testi: the artist, like the Church, [is a] witness to the beauty of the faith.”

European experts debated the future of religious heritage buildings at a conference titled, “Extended use for religious heritage” in Venice on November 14-17, 2012. “Extended use” means finding other community and cultural functions that can co-exist with religious activities within church buildings. This can increase resources and support to keep historic places of worship open, in a time when many are being closed, torn down, or sold for alternate use.

A reconstruction design workshop was held in Bologna after earthquakes hit the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy in early summer 2012. Participants in the workshop generated proposals for provisional churches to be constructed quickly and cheaply, providing places for worship where churches were destroyed.

Construction is underway on a new church for Saint William Parish in Naples, FL. Elements of the former 1980s structure, such as the bell tower and stained glass, will be reused in the $11 million project.
On September 13, Archbishop Samuel J. Aquila of Denver blessed and dedicated a new campus for the Augustine Institute, a Catholic graduate school with a focus on the New Evangelization. The Institute was founded in 2005 to provide graduate studies in theology, and currently enrolls sixty students on its campus. Integration Design Group of Denver, CO carried out the renovation for the new campus, which is located in the Denver Tech Center and houses a chapel, television production studio, and coffee bar, in addition to classrooms.

The new chapel for the Augustine Institute in Denver by Integration Design Group.

A layer of living grass turf was installed temporarily throughout the nave of York Minster Cathedral in York, England. The turf covered 16,000 square feet of the thirteenth-century Gothic cathedral, and was installed in conjunction with an annual benefit dinner to raise funds for the continual upkeep of the structure. The dinner took place inside the nave, and was attended by 900 guests. A layer of plastic protected the flooring of the nave from the grass, which was grown using recycled textiles.

Workers landscape the temporarily installed living grass turf in York Minster Cathedral, England.

The Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ was recently dedicated in Tirana, Albania. It is the third largest Eastern Orthodox church in Europe and the main seat of the Albanian Orthodox Church. The cathedral complex also includes a culture and conference center, an amphitheater, and a library. Presiding at the dedication was His Beatitude Archbishop Anastios of Albania, while Albania’s president, Bamir Topi, was in attendance. During communist rule, the Orthodox Cathedral was moved to a remote area, eventually being shut down altogether. The new cathedral is built on the central square of Tirana, a symbol of the triumph and revitalization of the Church.

The new Calvary chapel at the Brompton Oratory was dedicated in July 2012 by Archbishop Antonio Mennini, the Apostolic Nuncio to Great Britain. The three statues, sculpted by Dario Fernandez of Seville, stand against a painting of Jerusalem by British artist Alan Dodd.

A sculpture of Blessed John Paul II by Polish artist Anna Gulak, a recipient of the 2012 annual Vatican Pontifical Academies award honoring artistic work that has made a significant contribution to the development of religious studies, Christian humanism, and artistic expression.

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An exhibition titled, “Roman Catholic Church Architecture in Britain, 1955 to 1975,” has been exhibited at several locations across the United Kingdom, most recently at Saint Augustine Church in Manchester. The exhibition was initiated by Dr. Robert Proctor, a lecturer in the History of Architecture at Glasgow School of Art. The aim of the exhibit was to examine the dramatic changes in both appearance and layout of Catholic Churches in Britain from 1955 to 1975 by looking at a selection of the churches of this period. Dr. Proctor perceived a lack of publication regarding the dramatic shifts in architecture that took place at this time.

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem recently dedicated the new church of Stella Maris in Aqaba, Jordan. The 450-seat church was built for both the existing Catholic community of 750 members as well as in anticipation of a population surge to the city due to new development plans and billions of Jordan Dinars in investments. The construction of a permanent church for Aqaba parallels the hopes that such a structure would impact social problems of the city, which include high divorce rates, domestic violence, and poverty.

Archbishop Charles Chaput dedicated the new Blessed Teresa of Calcutta Church in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, commenting that “in a sense, the dedication of a church is the baptism of a church.” The Knabb Partnership designed the 988-seat building, which cost $7.9 million to be paid over a thirty-year mortgage. The new church reuses a high marble altar, pipe organ, confessionals, and stained glass windows from closed churches in Philadelphia.

December 17 saw the first mass in the newly renovated church of St. Patrick in Erie, Pennsylvania. The total cost of the renovation was $1.4 million.

A 1,600-square-foot ancient Roman mosaic with intricate geometric patterns was recently uncovered under a farmer’s field in southern Turkey.
The Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization, held in Rome Fall 2012, produced a series of propositions. Proposition 20 is entitled 'The New Evangelization and the Way of Beauty,' and Proposition 35 deals with the Liturgy. Following are excerpts:

“In the New Evangelization, there should be a particular attention paid to the way of beauty ... In the formation of seminarians, education in beauty should not be neglected nor education in the sacred arts as we are reminded in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council (cf. Sacrosanctum concilium, 129). Beauty should always be a special dimension of the new evangelization.

It is necessary that the Church be vigilant in caring for and promoting the quality of the art that is permitted in the sacred spaces reserved for liturgical celebrations, guarding both its beauty and the truthfulness of its expression.

It is important for the New Evangelization that the Church be present in all fields of art, so as to support with her spiritual and pastoral presence the artists in their search for creativity and to foster a living and true spiritual experience of salvation that becomes present in their work.”

“The worthy celebration of the Sacred Liturgy, God’s most treasured gift to us, is the source of the highest expression of our life in Christ (cf. Sacrosanctum concilium, 10). It is, therefore, the primary and most powerful expression of the new evangelization. God desires to manifest the incomparable beauty of his immeasurable and unceasing love for us through the Sacred Liturgy, and we, for our part, desire to employ what is most beautiful in our worship of God in response to his gift.”

The remains of King Richard III were discovered in September 2012, when the medieval Franciscan church of the Greyfriars was uncovered beneath a parking lot in Leicester, England. The church was the final resting place for Richard III after his 1485 death at the Battle of Bosworth during the War of the Roses. Under the direction of Richard Buckley of the University of Leicester, ground-penetrating radar was used to find the remains. Findings include window tracery, glazed floor fragments, stained glass, and a possible cloister walk. The debate about where Richard III will be re-interred continues between the cities of Leicester and York.

Saint Patrick Church in Cedar Falls, IA began a $700,000 restoration effort in June 2012. The goal of the restoration is to restore the traditional appearance of the 1916 Romanesque church, which was last renovated in 1970. A new handicap-accessible altar will sit further back in the space, allowing for a seating of 500 people. Additionally, new pews with Romanesque detailing will replace the 1970s era pews, described by parishioners as “the park benches." Responsible for the project are AHTS Architects and Peters Construction of Waterloo, IA.

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Pope Benedict XVI addresses the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization
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The Liturgy in the Thought of Benedict XVI: Appraisal and Appreciation

Giles Dimock, OP

Benedict XVI loves the liturgy, seeing it as our being caught up in the divine mystery of salvation and all during his pontificate he promoted it by his writing, preaching and teaching. His spirituality seems to have not only an Augustinian cast, but also seems to show the influence of the early German liturgical movement, which was much promoted by the Benedictines for whom he has a great love. In this article, we will examine his liturgical evolution from his youth in Germany to his work as the occupant of the Chair of Peter, for which we all are grateful.

Early Life

Much of the liturgical thought of Benedict XVI can be seen in his autobiography *Milestones* which chronicles his life until he was called to Rome. In *Milestones* he describes the Liturgy’s effect on him in his youth as the church year was celebrated by his parish church, especially the darkening of the church for the somber season of Lent. His parents’ gift to him of a child’s missal like their own hand missals drew him more deeply into the holy mysteries as a boy.

When he entered the seminary he encountered the new personalism of Martin Buber alongside the teaching of Saint Thomas whose “crystal clear logic” was “too closed in on itself, at least in the rigid neo-scholasticism” that was presented. At the University, he was influenced by Michael Schmaus who left neo-scholasticism for the new liturgical movement which presented the faith more in the spirit of returning to the Sacred Scriptures and the Fathers of the Church. A personal note could be added here: I find myself in sympathy with him, for I recoiled from an extremely rigid Thomistic formation to study Liturgy and later rediscovered the great wisdom of our elder brother, Saint Thomas. The “new theology” was in the air. One of his professors was influenced by the “mystery theology” of Dom Odo Casel, OSB, another saw the Mass as the center of each day, while the study of Sacred Scripture was seen as the soul of theology ... many themes that would be taken up by Vatican II.

However early on, young Joseph Ratzinger had reservations: a certain “one sided rationalism and historicism” of the liturgical movement in which some saw “only one form of the Liturgy as valid,” i.e. that of the early Church. This was not true of De Lubac whose teaching on the unity of Church as sustained by the Eucharist was deeply influential in his thought.

Vatican II

Ratzinger’s account of the consideration of the Liturgy at Vatican II at which he was *peritus* is interesting. He states that the liturgical schema at the Council was not expected to be controversial since no one expected major changes. However from France and Germany pressure was brought to bear to reform the Mass according to the purest form of the Roman Rite in accord with those reforms of Pius X and Pius XII. A model Mass along such lines was rejected by a synod of censiliar fathers in 1967, but it still became the working model for the new Mass. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* said Latin was to be preserved and that the faithful were to be able to sing the Ordinary of the Mass in Latin and clerics were to pray the Office in the same way. This soon became a moot point.

Missal of Paul VI

Ratzinger’s reaction to the introduction of the Missal of Paul VI was somewhat to negative, but not completely so. He was dismayed by the prohibition of the Missal of Pius V (really simply a reworking of that used by the Roman Rite since Gregory the Great). He felt that this was a breach in practice, and, in this, can we not see a hint of the Papal Motu Proprio to come? He felt that much that should have been guarded has been neglected and that many treasures have been squandered away in the new Liturgy made by a committee that often is celebrated in a lackluster way that is boring and bereft of artistic standards. So not all who criticize the current liturgy as banal, in the community celebrating itself are necessarily integralists. His criticism is “that the liturgy is not celebrated in such wise that the givenness of the great mystery of God among us through the action of the church shines forth.” The Church gives us the ritual, but cannot generate the power, the energy at work in these rites, rather it is the wholly Other acting. We can participate actually and really and personally often in deep silence. We participate in the Mystery which is still incomprehensible.

In *Feast of Faith*, Joseph Ratzinger states that he is grateful for the new Missal of Paul VI for the newly added prayers and prefaces, many of which came from other Western rites: the Gallican, Mozarabic, and Ambrosian. He feels the officitory prayers of the old Mass were misleading in that they tended to identify the offering of Christ’s Sacrifice with this part of the Mass rather than with the consecration...
itself. Much of Ratzinger’s criticism is of the interpretation of the new Liturgy in a nontraditional way, with a hermeneutic of discontinuity rather than continuity. This is why he was happy with the indult of Pope John Paul II and perhaps why he followed it with his own Motu Proprio.

Sacrifice

One of Ratzinger’s great theological concerns is to show that the “Eucharist is more than a brotherly meal.” It is primarily the common sacrifice of the Church in which the Lord prays with us and gives himself to us. In Feast of Faith, he gives the history of this procession, the Lord, as head of state visits the streets of each village, a triumphal procession of Christ the Victor in his campaign against death. It is a good practice even if a medieval development and not of patristic origin, because the Church is living and the medieval Church and that of the Baroque era developed a liturgical depth which must be examined before it is abandoned. In the Spirit of the Liturgy our author points out that the medieval transubstantiation debate is the origin of tabernacles of various sorts, exposition, monstrances, processions: “all medieval errors” according to some, but Ratzinger profoundly disagrees. He traces Eucharistic reservation to the early Church which kept it for the ill, and attributes the Franciscan and Dominican evangelization and emphasis on the Eucharist for the Eucharistic doves, ambries, and sacrament towers which were developed to reserve the Eucharist. He states that this medieval devotion was a “wonderful spiritual awakening” and further that “a church without the Eucharistic presence is dead”, a statement with which I heartily agree. Let us conclude this section with his observation that since the Eucharist is the center of life of the Church, it presupposes the other sacraments and points to them. It also presupposes personal prayer, family prayer, extra liturgical prayer such as Stations of the Cross, the Rosary and especially devotion to Our Lady.

Adoration

Since Christ is really present to us in the Eucharist in his risen body, we respond not only by receiving, but also by adoring him in gestures and postures, with kneeling and silence. A rediscovery of the common meal aspect does not wipe out the need for adoration. People, he says, have forgotten that adoration is an intensification of communion, so the Corpus Christi procession is an intensification of the communion procession, a walking with the Lord. In Feast of Faith, he gives the history of this procession, the Lord, as head of state visits the streets of each village, a triumphal procession of Christ the Victor in his campaign against death. It is a good practice even if a medieval development and not of patristic origin, because the Church is living and the medieval Church and that of the Baroque era developed a liturgical depth which must be examined before it is abandoned. In the Spirit of the Liturgy our author points out that the medieval transubstantiation debate is the origin of tabernacles of various sorts, exposition, monstrances, processions: “all medieval errors” according to some, but Ratzinger profoundly disagrees. He traces Eucharistic reservation to the early Church which kept it for the ill, and attributes the Franciscan and Dominican evangelization and emphasis on the Eucharist for the Eucharistic doves, ambries, and sacrament towers which were developed to reserve the Eucharist. He states that this medieval devotion was a “wonderful spiritual awakening” and further that “a church without the Eucharistic presence is dead”, a statement with which I heartily agree. Let us conclude this section with his observation that since the Eucharist is the center of life of the Church, it presupposes the other sacraments and points to them. It also presupposes personal prayer, family prayer, extra liturgical prayer such as Stations of the Cross, the Rosary and especially devotion to Our Lady.
is opened up” and there we are led to eternal glory. Following Bouyer, he states how in the early Syrian churches, the faithful first gathered around the bema for the Liturgy of the Word, and then approached the altar and the East for the Eucharist, facing in the same direction as the celebrant. They were all directed to “conversi ad Dominum”, to look East with him. In Rome, Saint Peter’s, because of the topography of the Vatican Hill, faced West in its apse rather than East, and its altar in the middle of the nave of the church faced the East through the main doors. When Saint Gregory the Great had the altar brought forward over the tomb of Saint Peter, he set the stage for the later development of Mass versus populum. Since other churches in Rome copied Saint Peter’s this custom of facing the people (though not found outside Rome) became the ideal of liturgical renewal even though it was not explicitly mentioned in Sacrosanctum Concilium of Vatican II. Ratzinger is strongly of the conviction that more important than priest and people facing one another is the mandate that they all face ad Dominum. Since re-orienting so many churches would be a daunting and expensive proposition, he suggests having the cross hang above the altar or on the altar, so all can be oriented ad Dominum rather than towards one another. Those who have participated in Papal Masses at Saint Peter’s or followed those celebrated by the Pope in his visit to our country note that the cross (crucifix) was always on the altar facing the Pope, as often were the candles.

**Beauty**

Ratzinger is much drawn to beauty as the radiance of the truth and states in Feast of Faith that Christians must make the church building a place where beauty is at home and further states dramatically that without beauty, the world becomes the last circle of Hell. Theologians who do not “love art, poetry, music and nature can be dangerous (because) blindness and deafness towards the beautiful are not incidental, they are necessarily reflect-ed in his theology.”

Holy images are necessary and all historical forms of art from early Christian to Baroque lay down the principles for sacred art for the future. One should not jettison all art which developed after Saint Gregory the Great. Solemnity and beauty are the wealth of all (including the poor) who long for it and even do without necessities to show honor to God.

**Music**

Benedict XVI, a musician himself, has a great interest in encouraging good church music, even devoting a book to the subject, A New Song for the Lord. His own brother was priest choirmaster of the great cathedral of Regensburg, whose name is synonymous with the great tradition of beautiful chant and exquisite polyphony. Benedict thinks that for the sake of popular participation, we’ve used “utility music” for the people to sing, i.e., that which is cheap and trite, the lowest common denominator. Simple liturgy need not be banal, because true simplicity can come from a spiritual, cultural and historical wealth. The Church must rouse the voice of the cosmos, elicit the glory of the cosmos itself making it too, glorious, beautiful, habitable and beloved. He quotes Saint Thomas Aquinas in the II-IIae of the Summa q 91, a 1, resp.1 to the effect that delight in the Lord, joy in a shared presence of Him, is the result of our praise through which we ascend to God and are brought to a sense of reverence since “vocal worship is necessary not for God’s sake, but for the sake of the worshippers.” Man wants to sing, for, according to Saint Augustine, “to love is to sing,” but listening is also a form of participation: “Listening to great music.
can be interior participation so hearing the choir singing great works of choral music can rejoice the heart and raise up the soul,” and complement simple but good music the congregation can manage.

Sacramentum Caritatis

In his Apostolic Exhortation on the Eucharist, Sacramentum Caritatis (issued after the Oct. 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist) Benedict XVI in his first papal teaching on the Liturgy articulates in his own original manner, the classic Catholic beliefs on the Eucharist as a mystery and sacrifice. The relation of the Holy Trinity to this mystery and indeed especially the Holy Spirit in particular, the relationship of the Church to the Eucharist as well, the Eucharist and the other sacraments are all treated. Finally the Eucharist is related to eschatology and Our Lady in the Pope’s treatment.

It is his understanding of the *ars celebrandi* of the Eucharist that seems most to pertain to the subject matter of this paper. His emphasis on celebrating the rite itself is welcome and even his insistence that this is the best way to the rite itself is welcome and even his emphasis on celebrating the sacred mysteries and singles out the location of the tabernacle. It must be marked by a lamp and readily visible to all in the church. Old high altars may be used or a central location in the sanctuary provided the celebrants chair is not in front of it. Chapels of reservation may also be used according to the judgment of the ordinary. Liturgical music must be good and respect the great heritage of the Church, a theme we have seen before. The structure of the Mass is discussed as well as the Liturgy of the Word with its homily. He speaks of the need of good preaching using the Lectionary texts, and not being afraid to use the four pillars of the Catechism: Creed, Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and Prayer. In the Liturgy of the Eucharist, he calls for restraint in the expression of the sign of peace. Themes we have seen before appear in this document: the interiority of active participation is underscored and Eucharistic Adoration. He raises the question of very large concelebrations which might lose their focus, the unity of the priesthood and underlines too the need for the study of Latin for those studying for the priesthood to be able to celebrate in Latin and to sing in Latin as well.

The Motu Proprio

So as Pope, Benedict XVI gave us a beautiful theology of the Eucharist in *Sacramentum Caritatis* and has also set a new direction in the liturgical life of the Church through his *Motu Proprio* making the old Latin Mass of Pius V more available.

Benedict XVI in this document emphasizes the role of the popes ensuring worthy ritual be offered to the supreme majesty and that particular churches concur with the universal Church not only in doctrine, but also in sacramental signs and also in usages universally accepted by apostolic tradition. These must be observed not only to avoid errors, but also to transmit the integrity of the Faith, because *lex orandi statuit lex credendi* (Saint Prosper of Aquitaine). He then praises Saint Gregory the Great who helped to codify the Roman Rite and had the great Order of Saint Benedict disseminate it all over Europe. He praises the Dominican saint, Pope Pius V, for his renewal of that same rite at the time of Trent.

The far-reaching reform of the Roman Missal by Pope Paul VI and the translation of it into the vernacular he cites as well as the third typical edition of Pope John Paul II. However he notes that “no small numbers” had affection for the old rite and that same Pope allowed the old rite under certain conditions in 1984 (*Quattuor Abhinc Annis*) and further encouraged the bishops to be generous in providing for those attached to the old rite in 1988 (*Ecclesia Dei*). Because he saw that there is still a need and after consulting with the consistory of Cardinals in 2000, Pope Benedict XVI issued his own *Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum* of July 7, 2007, in which he allowed priests to celebrate the Mass of the Missal of Bl. John XXIII. The provisions are as follows:

In an accompanying letter the Pope expressed the fear that some have that this permission would be turning back Vatican II. He states that the ordinary form for most Catholics will be the present rite. Some feel that this move will bring disunity in the Church. He thinks that the use of the old rite requires liturgical formation, the knowledge of the Missal and Latin, and that will not be true of most. Therefore the usage will be smaller. He does note that the two uses of the Roman Rite will be mutually enriching, with new saints and prefaces for the old Missal...
and greater reverence for the Mass in the new Missal. He hopes that this will bring greater unity in the Church, especially it would seem with the dissidents on the right, and this has already happened.

The Pope’s emphasis is on the continuity of the tradition of the Church which he underscored in his Christmas address to the Curia in 2005. Not surprisingly he stresses continuity in his approach to Liturgy. In papal ceremonies, the new Master of the same, Guido Marini mined the tradition for forgotten riches that might be reappropriated for today. Magnificent fiddle-back vestments take their place at papal masses, while at other times the more flowing Gothic still remain. Older thrones and other papal appointments are brought out not as a return to triumphalism, but as objects manifesting beauty in the service of the Liturgy. The restructuring of the Congregation of Divine Worship now gives us an office to encourage liturgical art, architecture, and music. The director of this new department is Abbot Michael Zelinski, OSB, an expert on Gregorian Chant. I think we can expect good things in the future.

So we have seen the liturgical thought of Joseph Ratzinger in its evolving from boyhood and seminary experiences to those at Vatican II, as university professor, Archbishop of München, as head of the C.D.F., and finally as Pope, and yet we see an underlying consistency of principle. How his theology and pastoral direction will affect the Liturgy of the Church as well as his emphasis on continuity we will watch with interest, but I think it bodes well and surely will be his legacy to the Church of the future. Surely we owe a great debt of gratitude for the clarity of thought, the fostering of beauty and the promotion of the liturgy to Pope Benedict XVI, now praying for us.

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(Endnotes)
3 Ibid, 44.
4 Ibid, 49.
5 Ibid, 55.
6 Ibid, 57-58.
7 Ibid, 122.
9 Ibid, 121.
10 Ibid, 119-120.
11 Ibid, 132.
13 Ibid, 132.

Fr. Giles Dimock, OP, studied Liturgy at Notre Dame and at Sant’ Anselmo, and theology at the Angelicum in Rome, earning a licentiate and doctorate respectively. He has taught at Providence College, Franciscan University in Steubenville, the...
In this second section on the location of the tabernacle, liturgical norms of various levels of authority will be cited from liturgical books, canon law, papal documents and instructions from dicasteries of the Roman curia. In each case, the document will be cited with its date of publication and a brief commentary given.

1. 1600 *Caeremoniale Episcoporum*, book 1, c. 12

...another similar [faldistorium should be prepared] in front of the altar, or in front of another place where there is the Most Holy Sacrament, which (place) is usually different from the main altar, and from the altar at which the Bishop or someone else is about to celebrate a Solemn Mass. Now although the most excellent place in the church and the most noble of all is most suitable for the sacrosanct Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the source of all the sacraments, nor are we able with human effort to venerate and adore as much as it deserves and as much as we ought, nevertheless, it is strongly recommended that it not be placed on the main altar or on another altar at which the Bishop or someone else will solemnly celebrate Mass or Vespers, but that it be placed with all decorum and reverence in another chapel or suitable adorned place. Because if it should be found placed on the main altar or on another altar on which the celebration will take place, it must certainly be transferred from that altar to another, lest on that account the rite and order of ceremonies which must be observed in Masses and Offices of this kind be disturbed. This would happen without a doubt if the Blessed Sacrament] remained there, since neither the incensation of the altar, nor the action of the celebrant, nor the movement of the ministers could be observed or take place properly, for it would be necessary every time we cross before the Blessed Sacrament] to genuflect; nor would it be proper for the celebrant to stand in front of it or sit with his miter on. If it sometimes happens for these rites to be celebrated in the presence of a bishop, or by the bishop himself with the Most Holy Sacrament present on the altar – such as on Holy Thursday *in caena Domini*, and Good Friday, and at the Mass which is celebrated on the feast of the Most Holy Corpus Christi before the procession begins – then all the genuflections and reverences must be observed to the letter, and the bishop can never sit or stand without his miter, as it is prescribed in [the rubrics]. And therefore, it is not unbecoming, but rather most becoming if solemn or simple Masses, the above-mentioned reverence and genuflections must absolutely be observed.¹

It is useful to cite this text in full, because Godfrey Diekmann refers to it in a 1966 article to argue that Mass should never be celebrated at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. That does not seem to be the intention of the text, however, which can be summarized as follows:

a. Because highest honor must be given to the Blessed Sacrament, including such ritual prescriptions as genuflecting before the reserved Eucharist.

¹ It is useful to cite this text in full, because Godfrey Diekmann refers to it in a 1966 article to argue that Mass should never be celebrated at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. That does not seem to be the intention of the text, however, which can be summarized as follows:
b. It is strongly recommended that solemn liturgical celebrations (especially Episcopal ceremonial) should not be carried out at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

c. If Solemn Mass is celebrated there, all the rubrics about the proper reverence to the Blessed Sacrament are to be observed ad unguem (with exactitude).

d. Ancient tradition is cited to support the argument that it is most fitting for Masses not to be celebrated at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It would be interesting to explore the context of these instructions. Perhaps the new practice of placing the tabernacle on the main altar, supported so enthusiastically by Saint Charles Borromeo, was making inroads, and the Roman document describes a conservative reaction against this innovation. It should be noted, however, that the issue is not less honor to the Blessed Sacrament, but more, since the complex ceremonial actions of Episcopal celebrations would be irreverent if they ignored the presence of the Reserved Sacrament.

2. 1614 Rituale Romanum, tit. IV, c.1, n.6

“Now this tabernacle, suitably covered with the tabernacle veil (conopaeo) and empty of any other thing, should be placed on the main altar, or on another which is seen to be more appropriate and suitable for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament, in such a way that it presents no obstacle to other sacred functions or ecclesiastical services.”

The Rituale seems to be making a compromise: on the one hand, recommending that the tabernacle be placed on the main altar; on the other hand stressing that its placement should not impede other liturgical services in the sense already given in the Caeremoniale Episcoporum of 1600. Hence the recommendation is for the placement of the tabernacle on the main altar or on some other altar if it seems more worthy for the veneration and worship of so great a Sacrament.

3. 1863 Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

On August 21, 1863, the Sacred Congregation of Rites established that it was not licit to depart from the prescriptions of the Rituale Romanum for the reservation of the Eucharist. This would mean that the Blessed Sacrament must be reserved on the main altar or on some other altar; other older forms (such as the Eucharistic dove, the Eucharistic tower, the wall tabernacle) seem to be excluded.

4. 1917 Codex Iuris Canonici 1265-1269

c.1268 §1: The Most Holy Eucharist may not be continually or habitually reserved unless on one altar only of the same church.

§2: It should be reserved in the most excellent and most noble place of the church and therefore normally on the main altar, unless another [altar] is seen to be more appropriate and more fitting for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament, maintaining the prescriptions of the liturgical laws which pertain to the last days of Holy Week.

§3: But in cathedral, collegiate, or conventual churches, in which choral functions are carried out at the main altar, lest [this arrangement] present an obstacle to the ecclesiastical offices, it is suitable that the Most Holy Eucharist not be reserved at the main altar, as a rule, but in another chapel or altar.

§4: Let rectors of churches see to it that the altar on which the Most Holy Sacrament is reserved be adorned above all the other altars, in such a way that by its very decor it might more greatly move the piety and devotion of the faithful.

c.1269 §1: The Most Holy Eucharist should be reserved in a fixed tabernacle placed in the center of the altar.

Canon 1268 specifies that the Blessed Sacrament should be located in the most exalted and noble place of the church. That usually means at the main altar, unless it is more fitting for it to be elsewhere. The canon reflects the concern of the Caeremoniale Episcoporum that in cathedral churches, collegiate churches or conventual churches where functions in choir would impede fitting honor to the Eucharist, it is best that the Blessed Sacrament not be kept habitually (regulariter) at the main altar, but rather in a side chapel or at another altar for the sake of greater reverence.

Canon 1269 §1 affirms that the tabernacle must not be reserved in another form than in a tabernacle and on an obstacle to the ecclesiastical offices, it is suitable that the Most Holy Eucharist not be reserved at the main altar, as a rule, but in another chapel or altar.
altar, thus repeating the 1863 directives.

The other canons in this section cover the following areas:

i. Placement

ii. Construction
   a. Security
   b. Materials
   c. Exterior form
   d. Exterior ornamentation
   e. Interior ornamentation

iii. The tabernacle in relation to other objects of the altar
   a. Inside
   b. Above
   c. In front of

iv. Conopeo (Tabernacle covering)
   a. Obligatory
   b. Type of cloth
   c. Color


“At no time whatsoever has the Apostolic See omitted to recommend to local Ordinaries the protectiveness and caution with which the Most Holy Eucharist, which is reserved in our churches either by common law or by indult, should be diligently safeguarded, lest it should remain in danger of any profanation.”

This instruction is a commentary on the 1917 code, with the goal of promoting a more exact observance of the canons. Once again, it would be interesting to explore the context, for an instruction is necessary only when something is not being done. The main preoccupation seems to be the theft of sacred vessels and the profanation of the Blessed Sacrament, hence the emphasis on the construction of the tabernacle and the necessity for guarding it with the greatest care. This document is cited in a footnote to paragraph 317 of the Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani 2002.

6. 1956 Pope Pius XII, discourse to the participants of an international liturgy conference at Assisi (Sept. 22, 1956)

“The issue is not so much the material presence of the tabernacle on the altar, as a tendency to which we would like to call your attention: that of a lesser appreciation for the presence and the action of Christ in the tabernacle. We content ourselves with the sacrifice of the altar, and we diminish the importance of Him who accomplishes it… The way in which one could place the tabernacle on the altar without impeding the celebration facing the people is subject to different solutions, about which the specialists will give their judgment. The essential thing is to have understood that on the altar and in the tabernacle the same Lord is present.”

Pius XII discerns in the liturgical movement certain trends that alarm him, in particular, a kind of divorce between the presence of Christ in the liturgical action and the presence of Christ in the reserved Sacrament. This theological dilemma could be summarized perhaps as the tension between sacrifice and sacrament, left unresolved by the Council of Trent. This problem will flare up again and again in subsequent years. The immediate issue, however, seems to be the practical problems that arise with the use of a free-standing altar versus populum. What to do with the tabernacle in such a case? Since liturgical law prescribed that the tabernacle must be on the altar, the liturgists found themselves in a quandary.

7. 1957 Sacra Congregatio Rituum, Decretern de Tabernaculo ad Sanctissimam Eucharistiam observandam, AAS 49 (1957): 425-426

1. The norms established by the Code of Canon Law concerning the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist (cc. 1268, 1269) are to be observed devoutly and religiously, nor should local Ordinaries neglect to exercise vigilance over this matter.

2. What is more, the tabernacle must be firmly joined to the altar, such that it is immovable. Normally it should be placed on the main altar, unless another altar is seen as more fitting and more suitable for the veneration and worship of so great a sacrament. This situation ordinarily arises in cathedral, collegiate or conventual churches, in which choral functions are usually carried out, or sometimes in major sanctuaries, lest – on account of the special devotion of the faithful to some object of veneration – the highest worship of latria due to the Most Blessed Sacrament be obscured.

3. On the altar where the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved, the sacrifice of the Mass should be habitually celebrated.

4. In churches where there is a single altar, this should not be so constructed that the priest celebrates...
5. Eucharistic tabernacles placed outside the altar itself are strictly prohibited: for example, in the wall, or on the side, or behind the altar, or in a tower or column separated from the altar.7

This follow up on the discourse of Pope Pius XII in Assisi had as its purpose “ad praecavendos vero abusus, et ut omnia secundum ordinem fierent.”8 It repeats the prescriptions of CIC 1917. To the list of those churches where it is best that the Blessed Sacrament not be on the main altar, the 1957 instruction adds pilgrimage churches or shrines where relics or sacred images on the main altar might detract attention from the Blessed Sacrament. The decree prohibits the placement of the tabernacle anywhere else but on an altar (although it can be on an altar different from the high altar) contrary to other practices of the past, and explicitly denies the possibility of an altar versus populum without the tabernacle if there is but one altar in the church. To those who were hoping for a loosening of the liturgical law in question, the decree came as a great disappointment.9


128: Along with the revision of the liturgical books, as laid down in Article 25, there is to be an early revision of the canons and ecclesiastical statutes which govern the disposition of material things involved in sacred worship. These laws refer especially to the worthy and well-planned construction of sacred buildings, the shape and construction of altars, the nobility, location, and security of the Eucharistic tabernacle, the suitability and dignity of the baptistery, the proper use of sacred images, embellishments, and vestments. Laws which seem less suited to the reformed liturgy are to be brought into harmony with it, or else abolished; and any which are helpful are to be retained if already in use, and introduced where they are lacking.10

While the conciliar text includes the legislation about the tabernacle as something to be reexamined, it does not give any directives as to what specific direction to take. The broad sweep of paragraph 128, however, gives the green light to significant change.


95. The Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid and secure tabernacle, placed in the middle of the main altar or on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or, in accord with lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, also in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church. It is lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.11

This paragraph on the tabernacle is from chapter 5 of Inter Oecumenici, on the construction of churches and altars to facilitate the active participation of the faithful. The context, then, expresses one of the key motives behind the major changes soon to take place: active participation. The options given here lift the restrictions of the 1957 Instruction, which limited the placement of tabernacles to an altar. This text will be interpreted by the reformers as a radical change. Biffi refers to the new emphasis on the altar as the center of the liturgical celebration: this is the theological motivation behind these changes.12

10. 1965 Dubia concerning Inter Oecumenici: Notitiae 5 (May 1965)

Ad n.92 (9): Some priests think that the best place for the celebrant and ministers is behind, in the apse; but lest the altar hide them, they say the chair should be placed higher by at least three steps, so that the people can see them, and so that it is clear that the celebrant is truly presiding. Can this opinion be maintained, especially if in the same apse the throne for exposing the Most Holy Eucharist is placed?

Resp: In response to the first part, affirmative, according to Instructionem 92. In response to the second part, if the tabernacle is in the apse, or if the throne for exposing the Most Holy Eucharist is placed there, the presidential chair should be placed to the side of the altar, somewhat elevated.13

Various dubia were submitted about the Instruction Inter Oecumenici, and the Consilium ad exsequendum responded in its journal Notitiae, stressing that the solutions proposed were not official and had only “valorem orientativum.” Permission was given for a portable altar to be placed in front of the former high altar, so as to allow the celebration of Mass versus populorum. Questions were raised about the place of the celebrant’s chair in relation to altar and tabernacle.

Ad n.95 (10): When Mass is celebrated on an altar placed between the main altar and the people, can the Most Holy Eucharist be reserved on the main altar, even if the celebrant turns his back on the Most Holy Eucharist?

Resp: Affirmative, as long as a) there is truly significant space intervening between the two altars and b) the tabernacle on the main altar is placed at such a height that it is above the head of the celebrant who stands at the foot of the intermediary altar.14

Given the possibility of a double altar with Mass celebrated facing the people, the question arises about disrespect if the priest has his back to the Blessed Sacrament reserved on the former high altar. The dubium is addressed by talking about distance and height, but in actual practice, these qualifications were often not taken into consideration.

(11) Whether the tabernacle can be placed on the left side of the altar versus populorum, and on the other side the cross of the book of Sacred Scripture?

Resp: Negative. One should rather pay attention to art. 95 of the Instruction, according to which “in special cases approved by the local ordinary” the tabernacle can be placed “also in another part of the church which is truly noble and properly adorned,” for example on
articles

the right side of the sanctuary or in the apse.\textsuperscript{15}

One sees here the danger of setting up parallel foci of attention whereby the reserved Sacrament gets the same treatment as the cross or the Bible. Wide latitude is given as to the placement of the tabernacle.


7. An issue closely linked to that of the altar is the tabernacle. We can hardly give here prescriptions of a general and uniform character. An attentive study needs to be made in each case, with due attention to the material and spiritual circumstances proper to each place.

Artists will little by little suggest the best solution. But it is the business of priests to advise them and call attention to the principles that must safeguard the respect and honor due to the Eucharist. It is important to contribute to the development of Eucharistic worship, which should continue under all those genuine forms recognized by the Church as embodying true Christian piety.

Particularly in larger churches, a chapel specially set aside for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist is advisable and might well be used for the Eucharistic celebration during the week, when there are fewer of the faithful participating.

Whatever the solution chosen from among those recommended by the Instruction (\textit{Inter Oecumenici}) n.95, the greatest care should be devoted to the dignity of the tabernacle. If the local Ordinary agrees to its location away from the altar, the place should be truly worthy and prominent, so that the tabernacle is readily visible and is not hidden by the priest during the celebration of the Mass. In a word, the location should make it possible for the tabernacle to serve unmistakably as a sign and to give a sense of the Savior’s presence in the midst of his people.

It is therefore pertinent to take note of solutions sometimes proposed or already in effect that \textit{do not seem really to achieve a satisfactory result}. They would include the following: tabernacles permanently inserted into the altar table or retracted automatically at the time of celebration; tabernacles placed in front of the altar, sometimes on a slightly lower pedestal, sometimes on another altar at a lower level and used in conjunction with the altar of celebration; finally, tabernacles built into the wall of the apse or those placed upon an already existing altar having the celebrant’s chair in front of or below it.\textsuperscript{16}

Cardinal Lercaro’s letter to presidents of the conferences of bishops is an elaboration on \textit{Inter Oecumenici}. Section #7 on the tabernacle is immediately preceded by a paragraph on the altar, in which he says, among other things: “[the desire for celebration of Mass \textit{versus populum}] must not lead to the rash, often mindless rearrangement of existing churches and altars at the cost of more or less irreparable damage to other values, also calling for respect.”

In terms of the tabernacle, Lercaro does not pretend to establish universal norms, although he clearly favors a side chapel. He stresses the nobility of the tabernacle and clearly describes various unsatisfactory solutions which had come to his attention. Some of those unsatisfactory solutions, thought to be temporary in 1965, have lasted forty-five years, and are still in place today.

12. 1965 Dubia concerning \textit{Inter Oecumenici}: Notitiae 7-8 (July-August 1965) ad n.95 (63): Whether, if the main altar is constructed \textit{versus populum}, the Most Holy Eucharist, according to the mind of the Constitution and n.95 of the Instruction, should be reserved on a minor altar distinct from the main altar?

Resp: Affirmative.\textsuperscript{17}

Once the custom was established of celebrating Mass \textit{versus populum}, the preference is clearly given to reserving the Blessed Sacrament on a different altar.


“Moreover let them not neglect making a visit to the Most Holy Sacrament during the day, reserved in the most noble and most honorable place in the churches, according to the liturgical laws, inasmuch as [such a visit], for the sake of Christ the Lord, present in the [Blessed Sacrament] is an increase of the grace of the soul, a pledge of love and the duty of adoration we owe Him.”\textsuperscript{18}

\textbf{The Blessed Sacrament is reserved at a side altar in this 1960s example.}
In his Encyclical Letter, Pope Paul VI responds to increasing confusion about the nature of Christ’s presence in the Eucharist. He mentions the tabernacle only in passing and in a generic way, referring the reader to the liturgical legislation then in force.


6. Altars versus populum and tabernacles

“I have already spoken about this in my letter of 30 June 1965, but by your leave I intend to return briefly to the same subject.

The altar versus populum certainly makes for a celebration of the Eucharist which is truer and more communal; it also makes participation easier. Here too, however, prudence should be our guide. Above all because for a living and participated liturgy, it is not indispensable that the altar should be versus populum: in the Mass, the entire liturgy of the word is celebrated at the chair, ambo or lectern, and therefore, facing the assembly; as to the Eucharistic liturgy, loudspeaker systems make participation feasible enough. Secondly, hard thought should be given to the artistic and architectural question; this element in many places being protected by rigorous civil laws. It should not be forgotten that many other factors, on the part of the celebrant and on the part of the ministers and surroundings, are required to make the celebration genuinely worthy and meaningful.

 Provisional altars, constructed in front of the main altars for celebration versus populum, should gradually disappear, giving way to a more permanent arrangement of the place of sacrifice.

In making these necessary arrangements regarding the altar where Mass is normally celebrated on Sundays and feast days, special care should be taken concerning the positioning of the tabernacle, giving it a place completely worthy of it according to the indications and norms already given by this Consilium. In each and every case where it is intended to put the tabernacle in a place other than on the altar, the Ordinary must judge whether or not all requirements are met in the alternative proposal. It is therefore excluded that a decision of this nature be left to the liturgical commissions, national or diocesan, and even less to individual priests.”

Seven months after his previous letter to the presidents of the conferences of bishops, Cardinal Lercaro addressed various new questions that had arisen. The construction of altars versus populum represents one model of liturgical theology, the post-Tridentine practice of placing the tabernacle on the main altar represents another. Trying to reconcile these two models will prove to be an intractable problem. The Cardinal seems to be trying to stem a tide of unrestrained liturgical innovation taking place without any episcopal control.


After the publication of Pope Paul VI’s encyclical on the Eucharist, Mysteri um Fidei, it was the task of the Sacred Congregation of Rites to issue concrete directives for its implementation. This is the fundamental text that later documents will frequently cite in regard to the tabernacle.

THE TABERNACLE

52. Where the Eucharist is allowed to be reserved in keeping with the provisions of law, only one altar or location in the same church may be the permanent, that is, regular place of reservation. As a general rule, therefore, there is to be but one tabernacle in each church and it is to be solid and absolutely secure.

CHAPEL OF RESERVATION

53. The place in a church or oratory where the Eucharist is reserved in a tabernacle should be truly a place of honor. It should also be suited to private prayer so that the faithful may readily and to their advantage continue to honor the Lord in this sacrament by private worship. Therefore, it is recommended that as far as possible the tabernacle be placed in a chapel set apart from the main body of the church, especially in churches where there frequently are marriages and funerals and in places that, because of their artistic or historical treasures, are visited by many people.

The preference for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in a side chapel, stated by Cardinal Lercaro in “Le renouveau liturgique,” is here reiterated.

TABERNACLE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ALTAR OR IN ANOTHER PART OF THE CHURCH

54. The Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid and secure tabernacle, placed in the middle of the main altar or on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or else, depending on lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church.

It is also lawful to celebrate Mass facing the people even on an altar where there is a small but becoming tabernacle.

TABERNACLE ON AN ALTAR WHERE MASS IS CELEBRATED WITH A CONGREGATION

55. In the celebration of Mass the principal modes of Christ’s presence to his Church emerge clearly one after the other: first he is seen to be present in the assembly of the faithful gathered in his name; then in his word, with the reading and explanation of Scripture; also in the person of the minister; finally, in a singular way under the Eucharistic elements. Consequently, on the grounds of the sign value, it is more in keeping with the nature of the celebration that, through reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle, Christ not be present eucharistically from the beginning on the altar where Mass is celebrated. That presence is the effect of the consecration and should appear as such.

The question of the various presences of Christ (cf. Sacrosanctum Concilium 7) is the theological issue behind this
56. It is fitting that the principles stated in nos. 52 and 54 be taken into account in the building of new churches. Remodeling of already existing churches and altars must be carried out in exact compliance with no. 24 of this Instruction.

Paragraph 24 of the Instruction stressed, among other things, that “care should be taken against destroying treasures of sacred art in the course of remodeling churches. On the judgment of the local Ordinary, after consulting experts and, when applicable, with the consent of other concerned parties, the decision may be made to relocate some of these treasures in the interest of the liturgical reform. In such a case this should be done with good sense and in such a way that even in their new locations they will be set up in a manner befitting and worthy of the works themselves.

MEANS OF INDICATING THE PRESENCE OF BLESSED SACRAMENT IN THE TABERNACLE

57. Care should be taken that the faithful be made aware of the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle by the use of a veil or some other effective means prescribed by the competent authority. According to the traditional practice, a lamp should burn continuously near the tabernacle as a sign of the honor shown to the Lord.20

16. 1970 IGMR, Missale Romanum, March 26, 1970

RESERVATION OF THE EUCHARIST

276. It is highly recommended that the holy Eucharist be reserved in a chapel suitable for private adoration and prayer. If this is impossible because of the structure of the church or local custom, it should be kept on an altar or other place in the church that is prominent and properly decorated.

277. The Eucharist is to be kept in a solid, unbreakable tabernacle, and ordinarily there should be only one tabernacle in a church.21

The 1970 General Instructions clearly prefer the placement of the Blessed Sacrament in a side chapel, while leaving other options open.

17. 1973 De Sacra Communione et De Cultu Mysteriorii Eucharistici extra Missam, (June 21, 1973)

II. Purpose of Eucharistic Reservation

5. The primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum. The secondary ends are the giving of communion and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ present in the sacrament. The reservation of the sacrament for the sick led to the praiseworthy practice of adoring this heavenly food which is reserved in churches. This cult of adoration has a sound and firm foundation, especially since faith in the real presence of the Lord has as its natural consequence the outward, public manifestation of that belief (cf. Eucharisticum mysterium, 49).

6. In the celebration of Mass the chief ways in which Christ is present in his Church emerge clearly one after the other. First, he is present in the very assembly of the faithful, gathered together in his name, next, he is present in his word, with the reading and explanation of Scripture in the church, also in the person of the minister; finally, and above all, in the Eucharistic elements. In a way that is completely unique, the whole and entire Christ, God and man, is substantially and permanently present in the sacrament. This presence of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine “is called real, not to exclude the other kinds of presence as though they were not real, but because it is real par excellence” (Mysterium fidei, 39).

Consequently, on the grounds of the sign value, it is more in keeping with the nature of the celebration that, through reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle, Christ not be present eucharistically from the beginning on the altar where Mass is celebrated. That presence is the effect of the consecration and should appear as such.

7. The consecrated hosts are to be frequently renewed and reserved in a ciborium or other vessel, in a number sufficient for the communion of the sick and of others outside Mass.

8. Pastors should see that churches and public oratories where, in conformity with the law, the holy Eucharist is reserved, are open every day for a least several hours, at a convenient time, so that the faithful
may easily pray in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament.

III. Place of Eucharistic Reservation

9. The place for the reservation of the Eucharist should be truly preeminent. It is highly recommended that the place be suitable also for private adoration and prayer so that the faithful may readily and fruitfully continue to honor the Lord, present in the sacrament, through personal worship. This will be achieved more easily if the chapel is separate from the body of the church, especially in churches where marriages and funerals are celebrated frequently and in churches where there are many visitors because of pilgrimages or the artistic and historical treasures.

10. The holy Eucharist is to be reserved in a solid tabernacle. It must be opaque and unbreakable. Ordinarily there should be only one tabernacle in a church; this may be placed on an altar or if not on an altar, at the discretion of the local Ordinary, in some other noble and properly ornamented part of the church. The key to the tabernacle where the Eucharist is reserved must be kept most carefully by the priest in charge of the church or oratory or by a special minister who has received the faculty to give communion.

11. The presence of the Eucharist in the tabernacle is to be shown by a veil or in another suitable way determined by the competent authority. According to traditional usage, an oil lamp or lamp with a wax candle is to burn constantly near the tabernacle as a sign of the honor shown to the Lord.

This document is a useful summary of the theological discussion about the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. It repeats many earlier documents, especially Eucharisticum Mysterium of 1967.

18. 1977 Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae et Altar (May 29, 1977)

INAUGURATION OF THE BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL

79. The inauguration of a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is to be reserved, is carried out appropriately in this way…

81. When the procession comes to the chapel of reservation, the bishop places the pyx on the altar or in the tabernacle, the door of which remains open. Then he puts incense in the censer, kneels, and incenses the Blessed Sacrament. Finally, after a brief period during which all pray in silence, the deacon puts the pyx in the tabernacle or closes the door. A minister lights the lamp, which will burn perpetually before the Blessed Sacrament.

The Ordo presupposes that there will be a Blessed Sacrament chapel. No other option is described in the rite.


24. The tabernacle in which the Eucharist is kept can be located on an altar, or away from it, in a spot in the church which is very prominent, truly noble and duly decorated, or in a chapel suitable for private prayer and for adoration by the faithful.

25. The tabernacle should be solid, unbreakable, and not transparent. The presence of the Eucharist is to be indicated by a tabernacle veil or by some other suitable means laid down by the competent authority, and a lamp must perpetually burn before it, as a sign of honor paid to the Lord.

26. The venerable practice of genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament, whether enclosed in the tabernacle or publicly exposed, as a sign of adoration, is to be maintained (cf. De Sacra Communione, n.84). This act requires that it be performed in a recollected way. In order that the heart may bow before God in profound reverence, the genuflection must be neither hurried nor careless.

By the time Pope John Paul II was elected, Eucharistic piety had fallen on hard times. He moved right away to try to correct the situation in his letter Dominicae Cenae (Feb. 24, 1980). Inaeestimabile Donum is the instruction from the Congregation issued to follow up on the Holy Father’s letter. The explicit mention of reverence and genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament seems to reflect the deep Eucharistic piety of Pope John Paul II. It is extremely interesting to note that the order of preference for the placement of the tabernacle has changed here. In the first place, the body of the church is mentioned; either on an altar or not on an altar. In the second place, the possibility of a side chapel is given.

20. 1983 Codex Iuris Canonici, cc. 934-944, especially c.938

938 §1: The blessed Eucharist is to be reserved habitually in only one tabernacle of a church or oratory.

938 §2: The tabernacle in which the blessed Eucharist is reserved should be situated in a distinguished place in the church or oratory, a place which is conspicuous, suitably adorned and conducive to prayer.

938 §3: The tabernacle in which the blessed Eucharist is habitually reserved is to be immovable, made of solid and non-transparent material, and so locked as to give the greatest security against any danger of profanation.

The indications are extremely generic. It appears that the Code did not wish to take a position concerning the placement of the tabernacle, and hence is content to stress that the place must be truly worthy.

21. 1984 De Benedictionibus 919-929

III. Order for the Blessing of a New Tabernacle

1192: The tabernacle for Eucharistic reservation is a reminder of Christ’s presence that comes about in the sacrifice of the Mass. But it is also a reminder of the brothers and sisters we must cherish in charity, since it was in fulfillment of the sacramental ministry received from Christ that the Church first began to reserve the Eucharist for the sake of the sick and the dying. In our churches adoration has always been offered to the reserved sacrament, the bread which came down from heaven.

The description of the blessing of a new tabernacle says nothing about its
place, although the rite offers two options: a procession from the main altar to some other place where the tabernacle is (1197 American edition, 923 typical edition), or a blessing without a procession, which would seem to indicate that the tabernacle is in the sanctuary (1200 American edition, 927 typical edition).

22. 2002 IGMR, Missale Romanum: Editio Typica Tertia

314: In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer. The tabernacle should usually be the only one, be irremovable, be made of solid and inviolable material that is not transparent, and be locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is prevented to the greatest extent possible. Moreover, it is appropriate that before it is put into liturgical use, the tabernacle be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.

315: It is more appropriate as a sign that on an altar on which Mass is celebrated there not be a tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved. Consequently, it is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop: a) either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in an appropriate form and place, not excluding its being positioned on an old altar no longer used for celebration; b) or even in some chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayer of the faithful and organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the Christian faithful.

316: In accordance with traditional custom, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should shine permanently to indicate the presence of Christ and honor it.

317: In no way should any of the other things be forgotten which are prescribed by law concerning the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist. 27

While citing the usual documents which have established theological motives and pastoral precedent, the General Instructions of 2002 introduce a significant innovation. The first choice for the placement of the tabernacle is in the sanctuary, although not on the altar of celebration. The second choice is for a private chapel, with the specification that it must be physically joined to the church and clearly visible to the faithful. This establishes a new model, thus attempting to resolve the tensions between the post-Tridentine discipline and the post-Vatican II rush to a private chapel, with the ensuing confusion. However, with typical Roman prudence, it is the diocesan bishop who decides.

23. 2004 Redemptionis Sacramentum (March 25, 2004)

130. “According to the structure of each church building and in accordance with legitimate local customs, the Most Holy Sacrament is to be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is noble, prominent, readily visible, and adorned in a dignified manner and furthermore “suitable for prayer” by reason of the quietness of the location, the space available in front of the tabernacle, and also the supply of benches or seats and kneelers. In addition, diligent attention should be paid to all the prescriptions of the liturgical books and to the norm of law, especially as regards the avoidance of the danger of profanation.” 28

The context is a long chapter entitled: “The Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist and Eucharistic Worship outside Mass,” in which devotions are highly recommended and abuses are re proved.

In Ecclesia de Eucharistia, the papal document preceding this curial document, Pope John Paul warmly encouraged worship of the Eucharist outside of Mass. In section 49 of Ecclesia de Eucharistia, which deals with outward forms contributing to the dignity of the celebration, it says: “The designs of altars and tabernacles within Church interiors were often not simply motivated by artistic inspiration but also by a clear understanding of the mystery.” The Congregation for Divine Worship issued Redemptionis Sacramentum in order to implement the Holy Father’s directives. The discussion on the tabernacle is very general. One of the concerns seems to be to insure that wherever the placement of the tabernacle might be, there be sufficient space for people to pray.

24. 2007 Sacramentum Caritatis

69. In considering the importance of Eucharistic reservation and adoration, and reverence for the sacrament of Christ’s sacrifice, the Synod of Bishops also discussed the question of the proper placement of the tabernacle in our churches. The correct positioning of the tabernacle contributes to the recognition of Christ’s real presence in the Blessed Sacrament. Therefore, the place where the Eucharistic species are reserved, marked by a sanctuary lamp, should be readily visible to everyone entering the church. It is therefore necessary to take into account the building’s architecture: in churches which do not have a Blessed Sacrament chapel, and where the high altar with its tabernacle is still in place, it is appropriate to continue to use this structure for the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist, taking care not to place the celebrant’s chair in front of it. In
new churches, it is good to position the Blessed Sacrament chapel close to the sanctuary; where this is not possible, it is preferable to locate the tabernacle in the sanctuary, in a sufficiently elevated place, at the center of the apse area, or in another place where it will be equally conspicuous. Attention to these considerations will lend dignity to the tabernacle, which must always be cared for, also from an artistic standpoint. Obviously it is necessary to follow the provisions of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal in this regard. In any event, final judgment on these matters belongs to the Diocesan Bishop.²⁹

This text tries to take into account the difference of church architecture. In older churches where there is a high altar with its tabernacle, two options are mentioned: a) continuing to use the high altar (as long as the celebrant’s chair is not in front of it) and b) using a Blessed Sacrament chapel. In churches of more recent construction, there are two options as well: a) a Blessed Sacrament chapel near the sanctuary, and b) a tabernacle in the sanctuary, preferably in the center of the apse. The order in which these options are listed seems to give preference to a separate Blessed Sacrament chapel, whereas the order given in the IGMR 2002 seems to give preference to the sanctuary.

After surveying twenty-four documents from 1600 to 2007, we are in a position to summarize our results. Leaving theological and pastoral issues for the conclusion of this work, here we wish to simply focus on the question of the placement of the tabernacle. There are three models, consecutive in time: a) 1600-1964, b) 1965-2002, and c) 2002 to the present. Each model contains more than one way of doing things; the important thing is to take note of the order of preference. In addition, each of the three models stresses the general principle that the tabernacle should be placed in the most preeminent and worthy part of the church. The following schema enables one to see at a glance the different models envisaged by different documents.

A. 1600-1964
   * The most prominent and the most noble place of all CE 1600, CIC 1917
   1. Main altar (regulariter). RR 1614, 1863, CIC 1917, 1957, Inter Oec 1964
   2. Another altar, commodius ac decentius venerationi et cultui tanti sacramenti RR 1614, 1863, CIC 1917, 1957, Inter Oec 1964
   3. Side chapel (sacellum)
      + cathedral church (because of ceremonial) CE 1600, CIC 1917, 1957
      + collegiate church (because of ceremonial) CIC 1917, 1957
      + conventual church (because of ceremonial) CIC 1917, 1957
      + pilgrimage churches (because of relics or other objects of devotion) 1957

B. 1965-2002
    * In a most noble place, and safeguarded with the greatest honor possible. MF 1965, EM 1967, IGMR 1970, DeSacCom 1973, CIC 1983
      + because of marriages, funerals, artistic works, EM 1967, DeSacCom 1973
      + because of pilgrimages. DeSacCom 1973
      3. Main altar. EM 1967

N.B. Inaestimabile Donum is somewhat out of character in that the order of preference is changed: first the altar, then a side chapel.

C. 2002 to the present
* In a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer. IGMR 2002, RS 2004
   1. Sanctuary
      + outside the altar of celebration. IGMR 2002
      + In the center of the apse. SacCar 2007
      + In older churches, the high altar with its tabernacle still in place. SacCar 2007
   2. Side chapel. I G M R 2 0 0 2 , SacCar 2007 (N.B. Sacramentum Caritatis lists first a Blessed Sacrament chapel, then the sanctuary).

Conclusion

As this historical and liturgical survey has demonstrated, the praxis of reserving the Blessed Sacrament has changed throughout the centuries, depending on various factors external and internal to the life of the Church. The most recent changes, after the Second Vatican Council, have been caused by shifts in the Church’s self-understanding. When all is said and done, the results have been rather mixed. This can be seen clearly by referring to the Instrumentum Laboris for the October 2005 Synod of Bishops on the Eucharist:

...the positioning of the tabernacle in an easily seen place is another way of attesting to faith in Christ’s Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. In this regard, the responses to the Lineamenta request that significant thought be given to the proper location of the tabernacle in churches, with due attention to canonical norms. It is worth considering whether the removal of the tabernacle from the centre of the sanctuary to an obscure,
A marble freestanding altar with the tabernacle in the apse behind.
Saint John Neumann Catholic Church, Farragut, TN, 2009

as the pro-President of the Pontificio Istituto Liturgico at the Athenaeum of Sant’Anselmo from 1997 to 2000, and is the founding prior of the Monastery of San Benedetto, located in Norcia, Italy, the birthplace of St. Benedict. Father Cassian is also a member of the Society for Catholic Liturgy, and is the author of numerous studies on Roman Catholic liturgy. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI named Father Cassian as a consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

undignified corner or to a separate chapel, or whether to have placed the celebrant’s chair in the centre of the sanctuary or in front of the tabernacle – as was done in many renovations of older churches and in new constructions – has contributed in some way to a decrease in faith in the Real Presence.30

As has been shown, the Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation Sacramentum Caritatis addressed the issue of the placement of the tabernacle, referring back to the provisions of the IGMR of 2002. The conflicting indications present in these texts are supposed to be resolved by good theology and good pastoral sense. It is precisely here that things tend to break down, however, as many thorny theological and pastoral issues remain.

The primary theological issues can perhaps be summarized in the following list: 1) the relationship between the sacrifice of the Eucharist (the liturgical action of the Mass at the altar) and the sacrament of the Eucharist (the enduring sign of Christ’s presence in the tabernacle), 2) the various presences of Christ and their relative sign values, and 3) the true meaning of active participation and the question of the altar versus populum in relation to the tabernacle. It seems to me that all the various discussions about where to place the tabernacle and what it means can be reduced to these three general categories.

The pastoral issues are many, but can be perhaps reduced to one: the crisis of God, as it is sometimes called, as a result of both the first and the second enlightenment (1968), to use a phrase of Pope Benedict XVI. In our very secular age, a spirit of secularization has entered the liturgy also, with a concomitant rejection of sacrality. In the Eucharistic celebration, a strong emphasis has been placed on the horizontal dimension of communion with one another, while the vertical dimension of communion with God has suffered loss. In this context, Pope Benedict’s teaching on reading the Council31 and its accompanying letter, expressing the hope that the reverence and decorum of the Ordinary Form could have a positive influence on the Ordinary Form, could provide some of that good theology we are looking for. The Motu Proprio Summorum Pontificum (2007) and its accompanying letter, as the pro-President of the Pontificio Istituto Liturgico at the Athenaeum of Sant’Anselmo from 1997 to 2000, and is the founding prior of the Monastery of San Benedetto, located in Norcia, Italy, the birthplace of St. Benedict. Father Cassian is also a member of the Society for Catholic Liturgy, and is the author of numerous studies on Roman Catholic liturgy. In 2010, Pope Benedict XVI named Father Cassian as a consultant to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments.

The pas...
5 “Nullo unquam tempore Apostolica Sedes locorum Ordinariorum in sancta Ecclesia prerogativa praebentem, quibus Sacramentis Eucharisticis, quae asseruntur in nostris ecclesiis sive de iure communi sive ex indu, diligenter custodieretur neve ut prophanatione obnoxiae remaneret.” Instructio, paragraph 1. AAS 30 (1938): 192.

6 “Non si trata tanto della presenza materiale del tabernacolo soppia l'altera, quanto di una tendenza sulla quale vorremmo attirare la vostra attenzione: quella di un minor stima per la presenza e l'atto di Consacrazione nel tabernacolo. Ci si accordera del sacrifício dell'altera, e si dimunisce l'importanza di Colui che lo compie... Il modo con cui si potrebbe porre il tabernacolo soppia l'altera senza impedire la celebrazione di fronte al popolo può ricevere diverso giudizio da ciascuno dei presenti da me che gli.specialisti daranno al loro giudizio. L'essenziale è di aver capito che sull'altezza e nel tabernacolo è presente lo stesso Signore.” Documente Pontificia ad instaurationem liturgiam sanctam, ed. A. Bugnini, vol.2 (1965), 36.

7 “Nos populum poni possit et in alio latere crux vel liber sacrae Resp.: Affirmative, dummodo a) spatium vere notabile inter altare maius et populum, potestne asservari SS.ma Eucharistia in 14 Ad .n.95: (10) Cum celebratur Missa in altari, posito inter Notitiae ponitur thronus ad exponendam SS.mam Eucharistiam, sedes n.92. Ad alteram partem: si in abside exstat tabernaculum, vel (Hereafter cited as Texts)


9 I normala Codice Iuris Canonici circa Ss. Eucharistiam asservantur statuta (Can. 1268.1269) sanche religiosese venerabiles sacerdotum sunt; nee omitantar locorum Ordinariorum de hac se sedulo invigilare.

10 Tabernaculum ades firmius cum altera coniungatur, ut inamovibile stabile sit. Venerabilis et a maiore consensu, nisi alius venerabilis et cultui tali sacri cultus et coniunctitatem iniqui, crux vel liber reverenter custodiri debet.

11 “Insuper visitationem sanctissimi Sacramenti, in nobilissimo loco et quam honorificentissime in ecclesiis secundum leges liturgiae, etiam in aedibus magis congruit naturae sacrae celebrationis ut in altari ubi praesens adest in Ecclesia sua gradatim clarescunt, quatenus hoc quod in sacelli fieri potest, pro cuiusque ecclesiae structura et iuxta legitimas presentes, Sacramentum post aurum, in aliquo altari aut extra parte ecclesiae pernobile et rite ornate.” 274.


14 “Non si trata tanto della presenza materiale del tabernacolo soppia l'altera, quanto di una tendenza sulla quale vorremmo attirare la vostra attenzione: quella di un minor stima per la presenza e l'atto di Consacrazione nel tabernacolo. Ci si accordera del sacrifício dell'altera, e si dimunisce l'importanza di Colui che lo compie... Il modo con cui si potrebbe porre il tabernacolo soppia l'altera senza impedire la celebrazione di fronte al popolo può ricevere diverso giudizio da ciascuno dei presenti da me che gli.specialisti daranno al loro giudizio. L'essenziale è di aver capito che sull'altezza e nel tabernacolo è presente lo stesso Signore.” Documente Pontificia ad instaurationem liturgiam sanctam, ed. A. Bugnini, vol.2 (1965), 36.

15 “Nos populum poni possit et in alio latere crux vel liber sacrae Resp.: Affirmative, dummodo a) spatium vere notabile inter altare maius et populum, potestne asservari SS.ma Eucharistia in 14 Ad .n.95: (10) Cum celebratur Missa in altari, posito inter Notitiae ponitur thronus ad exponendam SS.mam Eucharistiam, sedes n.92. Ad alteram partem: si in abside exstat tabernaculum, vel (Hereafter cited as Texts)


17 “Nos populum poni possit et in alio latere crux vel liber sacrae Resp.: Affirmative, dummodo a) spatium vere notabile inter altare maius et populum, potestne asservari SS.ma Eucharistia in 14 Ad .n.95: (10) Cum celebratur Missa in altari, posito inter Notitiae ponitur thronus ad exponendam SS.mam Eucharistiam, sedes n.92. Ad alteram partem: si in abside exstat tabernaculum, vel (Hereafter cited as Texts)

18 “Insuper visitationem sanctissimi Sacramenti, in nobilissimo loco et quam honorificentissime in ecclesiis secundum leges liturgiae, etiam in aedibus magis congruit naturae sacrae celebrationis ut in altari ubi praesens adest in Ecclesia sua gradatim clarescunt, quatenus hoc quod in sacelli fieri potest, pro cuiusque ecclesiae structura et iuxta legitimas presentes, Sacramentum post aurum, in aliquo altari aut extra parte ecclesiae pernobile et rite ornate.” 274.


The devout usage of chapels occupies a venerable place in Christian practice. Whether in a university dormitory or amidst a sprawling Gothic chevet, favorite chapels inform the pious memories of many of the faithful. The notion of an intimately arranged chapel summons a certain fascination and esteem, conjuring idyllic thoughts of the zealous knight praying until dawn before battle, or of the instrument of conversion in Waugh’s *Brideshead Revisited*.

Romanticizations aside, chapels are generally regarded as peaceful havens of fervent prayer. At the same time, they can wonderfully illustrate that popular piety and private devotions are not antithetical to the Church’s liturgical life, as was long argued in certain circles. And they may also serve as exemplary models for larger churches. With this in mind, let us examine a handful of chapels recently established by American prelates: four in the United States, and one in Rome.

**Fashioning an Ornament**

Our first example is the private chapel of the Most Reverend David A. Zubik, Bishop of Pittsburgh. Upon his appointment to Pittsburgh in 2007, Bishop-designate Zubik chose not to stay in the large historic residence of his predecessors at Warwick Terrace. He instead opted to live at Pittsburgh’s Saint Paul Seminary, where he himself had entered priestly formation in 1967, and where his presence could help to encourage current vocations.

In 2008, the Hayes Design Group Architects was commissioned to transform the former Diocesan Purchasing offices at Domenec Hall into living quarters and a private chapel. The chapel is situated at the end of a hallway within the bishop’s apartment, and set apart by decoratively carved wooden screens. It was constrained by the existing building dimensions: a 12-foot width and a 14-foot floor-to-ceiling height. The builders also inherited a pair of full-height windows placed symmetrically at the opposite end from the entrance.

A striking feature of the chapel is the swooping bi-level ceiling. Creatively devised by the Hayes Design Group, it transitions from an intimate ceiling height above the nave to an upward, heavenly trajectory above the sanctuary, while maximizing the amount of natural light entering from the windows behind the altar. It also provides a practical solution for concealing ductwork above the lower ceiling.

In order to imbue the room with a sense of the sacred, the Hayes Design Group collaborated with Hunt Stained Glass Studios and New Guild Studio, both local artisans that had done work for diocesan churches. Hunt Studios salvaged and modified twelve stained glass panels from the old Warwick Terrace chapel, each depicting scenes related to the episcopacy. These were then installed in a custom casework and arranged as bay windows in front of the existing windows. New Guild Studio designed the furnishings and vivid finish schemes of the chapel, including a tapestry pattern on the lower portion of the ceiling, and a field of stars on the swooping ceiling plane.

The pre-existing tabernacle of steel and bronze was refurbished and fitted with a new bronze and copper cross. The tabernacle is enthroned on a pedestal before an original oak reredos and canopy, both produced by New Guild Studio. Immediately behind the tabernacle is an exquisite triptych, also an original creation. Executed as an oil painting on wood, the triptych’s center panel depicts the Crucifixion, with the Blessed Mother and Saint John looking on from the wing panels—all encased within a gold-leafed, Gothic wood framework.

The altar, ambo, chairs, and prie-dieux all came from the Warwick Terrace chapel. New Guild Studio refinished and embellished the altar and ambo with color and gold leaf, while affixing Bishop Zubik’s personal coat of arms to the front of the ambo. The four candle holders on the altar were created by Modernist artist Virgil Cantini. The Stations of the Cross were salvaged from a former diocesan parish and fitted against new, cross-shaped panels. Various other items and appointments in the chapel are from the diocesan archive collection of religious artifacts. In a particularly personal touch, upon a shelf on the wall to the right of the altar (when facing into the chapel) rests a vigil candle in honor of the bishop’s late mother, Susan Zubik, along with a bouquet of yellow roses, her favorite flower.

Completed in late 2009, the chapel seats ten. Bishop Zubik himself was actively involved in overseeing the cha-
pel’s construction and character, says David Miriello of New Guild Studio:

Working on the designing of his private chapel with Bishop Zubik was a rewarding experience. We coordinated with him to develop a design concept that would reflect his personal taste and allow us the opportunity to express our own interest in early Christian art forms. We thought of the chapel’s small space as a jewel box or medieval reliquary. Through the use of deep, rich colors, the space attains a sense of intimacy. The painted decorative patterns on the ceiling and the tapestry pattern of the reredos draw on traditional liturgical motifs and complement the architectural forms of the space.

Honoring Saintly Patrons

We turn now to another private chapel, this one belonging to the Most Reverend Kevin C. Rhoades, Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend, IN. After his appointment in 2009, Bishop Rhoades elected to reside in a recently-built rectory located in downtown Fort Wayne, within walking distance of both the cathedral and the chancery. The home did not have an existing chapel, so a parlor near the main entrance was converted into one for the use of the bishop and any visiting family and friends. Aside from the addition of lighting fixtures and a decorative green wallpaper to serve as a backdrop behind the altar, no extensive remodeling was required for the room itself. The dimensions allow for the comfortable seating of a half-dozen worshipers, and plenty of natural light flows in through a large window in the side wall.

Although relatively modest in appearance, the chapel prominently exhibits pieces of singular personal and spiritual significance to Bishop Rhoades. The main crucifix, above the altar, was an ordination gift from his cousins. The image of the Virgin of Guadalupe, placed to the left of the crucifix and above the celebrant’s chair, is from the rector of the Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe in Mexico City, given when Bishop Rhoades celebrated Holy Mass there. The image is a replica of the face of Our Lady of Guadalupe as found on Saint Juan Diego’s miraculous tilma, which is housed in the basilica.

Hanging on the wall opposite the window in Bishop Rhoades’ chapel is a reproduction of a famous painting of Saint Juan Diego by the eighteenth-century indigenous Mexican artist, Miguel Cabrera (who himself was given extraordinary access to make three copies of the tilma in 1752). Bishop Rhoades was consecrated to the episcopate on December 9, the feast of Saint Juan Diego. This image was presented to him by the Hispanic Catholic community in his home diocese of Harrisburg, where he first served as bishop.

Out of respect for his deep devotion to the Mexican Saint and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Bishop Rhoades’ private chapel is named the Chapel of Saint Juan Diego. The reasons that inspired this selection are explained by Bishop Rhoades:

I spent much of my priestly ministry serving Hispanic communities in my home diocese of Harrisburg. The people’s faith inspired me and led to my devotion to Our Lady of Guadalupe and Saint Juan Diego. My chapel in Fort Wayne reminds me of the wonderful people I served. Also, the tender and loving gaze of the Virgin of Guadalupe in the image in my chapel gives me hope and confidence as I remember her beautiful words to Juan Diego: ‘Am I not here who am your Mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your fountain of life? Are you not in the folds of my mantle? In the crossing of my arms? Is there anything else you need?’

Saint Juan Diego, a simple, humble Indian is also a reminder to me that God is glorified by the humble. This loyal son of the Church deeply loved the Virgin and was a faithful disciple of Jesus. I see him as a model of faithful and humble discipleship as well as an intercessor, along with the Blessed Mother, helping me in my ministry as a bishop.

The altar, ambo, tabernacle, and sanctuary lampstand in the Chapel of Saint Juan Diego were all appointments that had previously been used by churches in the diocese; the chapel’s tabernacle coming from Fort Wayne’s Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception. Thanks to a well-maintained Cathedral Museum in Fort Wayne, some of the more noteworthy items from closed churches and abandoned collections have been preserved, exhibited, and judiciously returned to sacred use in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

Both Bishop Zubik’s and Bishop Rhoades’ chapels illustrate the increasing trend throughout the American Church of salvaging sacred items. Whereas old furnishings and other treasures were casually discarded even as recently as fifteen or twenty years ago, today it seems there is widespread recognition that these pieces have, at the very least, some sort of worldly value. Indeed, it is now very much in vogue to seek out restored church goods.

A Vatican Chapel

Our third example of a private episcopal chapel takes us to Rome and the home of His Eminence, Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke. In 2008, then-Archbishop Burke of the Archdiocese of Saint Louis was appointed Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, and he was elevated to the rank of Cardinal during the consistory of 2010.

At Cardinal Burke’s residence in the Vatican, many of the prelates’ apartments have their own chapels. He arranged for the existing chapel space to be renovated, with design work done by Abbé Alexander Willweber of the Institute of Christ the King Sovereign Priest. The chapel measures 12-feet-wide by 20-feet-long, and two pews in the back can seat a half-dozen com-
fortably. For the most part, only the three Sisters who serve in the household are present when His Eminence celebrates Holy Mass, which he offers in both the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms of the Roman Rite. There is a slightly elevated sanctuary, and the faux marble altar is set against a brilliant gold brocade that adorns the walls and other fixtures. The tabernacle is elegantly veiled, and two relics rest on the gradine above the altar: Pope Saint Leo the Great and Saint Gregory Nazianzen, a Western and Eastern Father of the Church, respectively.

Upon entering the chapel, two images are particular focal points. The first is a ceiling fresco of the Three Hearts (depicting the Hearts of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph), which was painted by artisans of the Gipsodeco Artshop in Rome. The second is a framed mosaic of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was executed by the Vatican Mosaic Studio and centrally installed behind the altar. His Eminence graciously shared the following reflection on the history and significance of this distinctive piece:

The devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has nurtured my Catholic faith, especially my faith in the Holy Eucharist, from the time of my childhood. When I arrived in Saint Louis to serve as Archbishop, I found in the dining room of the Archbishop’s Residence a most striking image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. It is among the most beautiful that I have seen and has become my favorite. As I was promoting the devotion to the Sacred Heart in the Archdiocese of Saint Louis, copies of the image, in prayercard format (with the Morning Offering on the reverse side) and in larger formats for enshrinement in the home, schools, and other institutions, were printed. Eventually, the image was reproduced in mosaic by the Vatican Mosaic Studio for a shrine to the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the magnificent Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis which was blessed and enthroned on June 17, 2007.

When I was transferred from Saint Louis to work in the Roman Curia in June of 2008, a most kind and generous friend from Saint Louis had the image reproduced as a mosaic, once again, for enshrinement in my private chapel. Enthroned above the altar of sacrifice and tabernacle, and behind the crucifix, the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus gives artistic expression to the great mystery of God’s immeasurable and unceasing love for us, expressed most perfectly by Christ’s death on the cross for our eternal salvation and by His making ever present for us the Sacrifice of Calvary through the Eucharistic Sacrifice and by His remaining with us in the tabernacle after the Eucharistic Sacrifice. The beauty of the image draws my attention to the infinitely greater beauty of God’s love as I witness it daily in the Sacrifice of the Mass and in the reposition of the Body of Christ in the tabernacle.

Cardinal Burke’s profound devotion to the Sacred Heart is manifested both in the chapel’s artwork and in its title: Sacellum Sacratissimi Cordis Iesu (the Chapel of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus). This chapel is therefore a testament to the fact that the commissioning of remarkable sacred art remains an effective means by which patrons can promote devotions dear to them, while providing the faithful with powerful aids to fruitful prayer and divine worship.

Oratory furnished by the Knights

Inspired by the adjacent basilica by Benjamin Latrobe, the renovated oratory at Archbishop William E. Lori’s residence in Baltimore was a gift of the Knights of Columbus, designed by Rohrer Studio and dedicated in December 2012. Part of the residence dating to 1834, the space was originally the seating area at the top of the stairs on the second floor. The inscription above the altar Santìa Maria Folkìs Tuòs Adiuvà, “Holy Mary, Help Your Children,” invokes the Blessed Virgin Mary, Patroness of the Archdiocese of Baltimore. A trinitarian symbol is the focus of the sunburst of gilded wood, surmounted by angels carrying a crown, signifying Christ as King. The altar of sacrifice is constructed of wood with a calacatta marble mensa, inscribed with five Greek crosses symbolizing the five wounds of Christ. The relic chamber at the front of the altar, visible through the bronze grille, contains the relics of seven saints and beati including Blessed John Paul II, who prayed in this oratory in 1995.
“The House of Mary” in Kansas City

We now look at the Chapel of Our Lady of Ephesus, established by Bishop Robert W. Finn of the Diocese of Kansas City – Saint Joseph. Bishop Finn (who was himself consecrated to the episcopate by then-Archbishop Burke in 2004) enlisted William Heyer, a classical architect based in Columbus, OH, to help create the chapel at the diocesan chancery in Kansas City, MO. Completed in 2011, it is not a private chapel for Bishop Finn’s personal use, but is built on a grander scale and intended for the curial staff of the diocese and for the broader benefit of the diocesan faithful.

The story behind this chapel is truly fascinating, and has its origins in Ephesus, Turkey. According to tradition, the Blessed Virgin Mary last resided in Ephesus under the care of Saint John the Evangelist, until the time of her Assumption (or her “Dormition,” as the Eastern Churches refer to Mary’s falling asleep and subsequent bodily resurrection). Some 1,800 years later, Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey (+1915), a French noblewoman who joined the Daughters of Charity, was sent to nearby Smyrna (now Izmir) to work in a Turkish hospital. While there, she encouraged an expedition to find the ancient home at Ephesus, and with the assistance of a Vincentian priest, she eventually succeeded in identifying the “House of Mary.” After purchasing the land with family money, the house became a shrine and popular destination for pilgrims.

One such pilgrim was Bishop Finn, who celebrated Mass at the shrine a few years ago. While visiting Ephesus, he met with the Archbishop of Izmir about the canonization cause of Sister Marie. Not long thereafter, on account of limited resources and other challenges in Turkey, the Archbishop asked whether Bishop Finn would be willing to adopt Sister Marie’s cause officially. This was approved by the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints in January of 2011. Thus, in an interesting turn of events, the Diocese of Kansas City – Saint Joseph now oversees the cause for sainthood of Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey. It was only natural, therefore, that the new chancery chapel would be informed by this connection, and by Bishop Finn’s special devotion to Our Lady of Ephesus.

In 2010, the diocese had acquired the historic New York Life Building in downtown Kansas City. Constructed in the late nineteenth century and located just a couple blocks from the cathedral, this brick and brownstone Neo-Renaissance building was the first “skyscraper” in Kansas City. A massive bronze eagle sculpture, original to the building, still stands guard over the main entrance and makes a most appropriate icon. The eagle, of course, is the symbol of Saint John the Evangelist, the adopted son of the Blessed Mother. According to legend, Saint John built the home at Ephesus himself.

The chapel is found at the heart of the chancery on the ground floor, occupying the space of a former conference room. In another happy coincidence, the room had already been outfitted with classical elements—an ideal style with which to invoke the ancient Greek city of Ephesus. The pilasters and existing entablature were repainted and gilded during the restoration and conversion into a chapel.

New chandeliers and custom woodwork were ordered for the project, and niches were installed for statues of Saint Paul and Saint John. On an easel in the sanctuary below Saint Paul rests an oil painting of Sister Marie de Mandat-Grancey, depicted holding a miniature version of the home at Ephesus. The tabernacle was obtained from a diocesan parish, while a number of other items, including the high altar and pews, were acquired from recently closed churches in the Diocese of Cleveland.

Bishop Finn collaborated with Heyer’s firm in the design process from the beginning, and the result is some extraordinary symbolism. The freestanding altar designed by Mr. Heyer’s office is a scale model of the house-church in Ephesus, complete with a blind arcade to represent the façade and doorway. A new terrazzo floor was arranged in a geometric pattern to recall the temple of Jerusalem, with a highly symbolic emblem of Our Lady of Ephesus placed in the center. Mr. Heyer provides the following account of how the emblem was devised:

The rose at the center is from the iconic column capitals on the (destroyed) temple of Artemis at Ephesus and an ancient Church symbol of Mary’s purity. The surrounding outer line is symbolic of tower embattlements as they would be seen from above—a direct reference to the headdress of Artemis of Ephesus and symbolic of Mary as ‘Tower’ of Ivory and ‘Tower’ of David. The lilies are Greek symbols of Artemis and ancient Church symbols of Mary’s purity. The alternating pomegranates are classical symbols of fertility and symbols of Mary’s singular fertility in delivering the God-Man, Jesus Christ, to humanity. The crescent moon is an ancient symbol of the goddess Artemis, but transferred to the Virgin Mary as she is the ‘reflection’ of her Son as the moon reflects the light of the sun. Thus the emblem is a representation of the...
Virgin Mary as would be understood in light of ancient symbols of the Church, and particularly those symbols significant to the ancient culture of Ephesus, Turkey.

Fittingly, the chapel was dedicated on August 15, 2011—the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Nonetheless, it is still a work in progress: for instance, there are plans for a future reredos portraying Our Lady of Ephesus, which would take the place of the current Coronation of Mary scene above the altar.

Holy Mass is currently celebrated about once a week in the chapel, with seating for sixty. The Mass is celebrated in both the Ordinary and Extraordinary Forms, with the latter being offered at the high altar. A wooden altar rail is available for anyone who wishes to receive Holy Communion in that manner, and chant is the preferred style of sacred music. In fact, music at the Dedication Mass was chanted completely a cappella.

Some Practical Considerations

The points concerning the presence of altar rails and the use of chant lead us to a couple general observations about trends in Catholic ecclesiastical design.

Until quite recently, it was extremely rare—even mistakenly considered forbidden—to (re)install altar rails in a church, whether new or as part of a restoration. Although no official Church documents ever mandated the destruction of altar rails, the practice was rampant after the Second Vatican Council. This was in spite of the outcry of many of the ordinary faithful, whose pious sensibilities rebelled against the notion, but who had no real recourse presented to them.

In the United States, the norm of receiving Holy Communion while standing was often cited as proscribing altar rails (arguments in favor of their graceful demarcation of the sanctuary notwithstanding). The previous English translation of no. 160 in the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, although not forbidding reception while kneeling, did discourage the practice: “Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm.”

However, the current translation of this passage (revised with the new Roman Missal) simply states: “The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling.” The communicant’s right to kneel (affirmed in the 2004 Roman document, Redemptionis Sacramentum) is reinforced, without qualification. Perhaps this subtle shift will contribute to a re-evaluation of the potential merits of the altar rail in future liturgical designs.

Another critical question in future church construction is the tasteful placement of musicians. This is all the more true for small chapels that experience frequent communal use, where it would be especially unseemly to cram a piano or other musical paraphernalia into the only open space available (i.e., the sanctuary). Time and again, the Church has upheld Gregorian chant and chant-like compositions as the musical style that most properly complements the liturgical action of the Roman Rite. In many ways, chant also most properly complements the Church’s sacred architecture. For the sake of both aesthetics and acoustics, when a place set aside for divine worship is limited in size, the accommodation of a small yet talented schola, comfortable with singing the Mass a cappella even from the pews, would seem an excellent option when feasible.

Concluding Reflections

This modest sampling of new chapels shows that it is possible to maintain a sense of intimacy without necessarily forsaking a degree of splendor. Moreover, we are reminded that the incorporation of a personal spirituality does not hinder a worshiper’s ability to engage in a sacramental encounter with Christ, but rather nurtures it and lends a unique appeal. As Monsignor M. Francis Mannion wrote, “the restoration of the devotional will render church architecture more genuinely popular; the devotional serves as a key conduit to the liturgical.”

These and other general considerations surrounding sacred architecture are of increasing importance during this time of ongoing liturgical renewal after the Council. Indeed, with the heightened sense of reverence being cultivated by the new English translation of the Missale Romanum, there should be greater impetus to assess how every facet of divine worship could be rendered more transcendent. Sacrosanctum Concilium no. 34 instructed that the liturgical rites “should be distinguished by a noble simplicity”—a characterization that came to be applied to the sacred arts in addition to ritual activity. However, “simplicity” was overemphasized, while the original Latin phrase—ritus nobili simplicitate fulgant—was overlooked. Fulgant (from which we have the English “fulgent”) means “let them flash” or “lighten” rather than “distinguished,” and implies that our worship should shine or “flash with illuminating straightforwardness.”

Sacred places intended for divine worship need not evoke the opulence of Cluny, but they also cannot embrace iconoclasm or disorder and still lay full claim to being a sacramentalization of art and architecture. A noble radiance that fosters an encounter with Christ must permeate the domus Dei. Otherwise, monumental churches that inspire the fascination of our culture yet lack evangelizing beauty may struggle to outshine even the most unassuming of chapels in what matters most.

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“Touchstone exemplifies, in my mind, true ecumenical conversation and cooperation. I look forward to receiving each issue and usually find myself reading each issue in its entirety. Certainly, Touchstone has helped me to think more deeply about many aspects of the Christian faith and of its practice in a pervasively secularized society.”

—Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke, Cardinal Prefect of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura
**Archeology as Friend or Foe: The Churches of the Roman Forum**

David Watkin


Piranesi’s panoramic views of the Forum and its ruinous remains feature six roofed and working buildings which all turn out to be churches: S. Adriano, built into the Senate House, S. Lorenzo in Miranda, built into the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina, SS. Cosmas and Damian, S. Francesca Romana, SS. Luca e Martina, and the now demolished S. Maria Liberatrice. The Forum had become a Christian sacred space. Indeed, it has been a place of worship for about two thousand eight hundred years, and for over half that time the worship has been Christian. The churches were all entered from, and looked on to, the Forum. But the growth of archaeology and the transformation of the space into a designated archaeological site means that those of them that survive now tend to be entered from outside the Forum, in other words from their rear. They have in effect been written out of the Forum’s history. This hostility to them goes back to the early days of the archaeological process: for example, in her three-volumed *Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (1820), Charlotte Eaton dismissed S. Lorenzo as ‘now shut up, but ought to be pulled down’, while Horace Marucchi in *The Roman Forum and the Palatine* (1906) welcomed the recent destruction of S. Maria Liberatrice and called for a similar fate to be meted out to S. Lorenzo.

Nonetheless, the standing buildings that the modern visitor to the Forum sees are still churches which is a nice echo of the ancient Roman Forum where, it should not be forgotten, the great majority of buildings were religious in function, even if modern accounts of the Forum tend to stress its political significance above all else. These churches contain everything that is to be expected in the historic Catholic churches of Italy: frescoes, mosaics, altar pieces, tombs, monuments, shrines, relics, and objects of veneration such as an ancient Roman stone, preserved in S. Francesca Romana, which supposedly bears the imprint of the knees of Saint Peter. However, with the huge decline in Mass attendance and in vocations to the priesthood, following the self-destructive reforms of the Second Vatican Council, the prime function of the churches in the Forum is now to provide a colourful setting for weddings. Nonetheless, as we shall see, they are wonderful places to visit, even if they have become difficult to appreciate for a range of reasons, notably their banishment from the Forum of which they were once a part.

Christianity already had a presence in the city when Saint Peter preached there c. AD 60 and Saint Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth. By the end of the second century or mid-third century, a prosperous Christian community flourished in Rome. The decline of the Roman Empire was associated not so much with the rise of Christianity as with the military anarchy which characterised the third century AD. However, emperors often found Christians a convenient scapegoat and their punishment a symbol of imperial power as well as a reaffirmation of the power of the traditional, pagan, gods. Among those seeking to restore order was, for example, Diocletian (284-305), who reorganised the entire empire, was a great builder, but a persecutor of Christians. But the new religion received a great boost on October 28, AD 312 when Constantine (306-337), a Christian supporter who was formally baptised on his death bed, wrested the city of Rome from his co-emperor Maxentius (306-12). Maxentius had been a major architectural patron, as was Constantine, who built churches as well as public buildings, including the completion of the Basilica of Maxentius in the Forum.

The earliest churches were built on the margins of Rome and thus did not touch the Forum. The great Roman families who dominated the Senate and the centre of the city were still pagan, but Constantine built churches which were mostly in fact memorials to martyrs in Christian cemeteries (this was the origin of Saint Peter’s among several others). These could only be built over tombs and were therefore outside the city in the suburbs. In choosing distant sites in the *suburium*, Constantine helped create the wide spread of the present city and determined its sacred geography – the very earliest large churches being away from the ancient pagan centre of Rome.

The first person to use an ancient Roman building in the Forum as a church was Pope Felix IV (526-30) when he founded SS. Cosmas and Damian. There had been little call for pagan temples to be turned into Christian churches, partly because they remained imperial property even after the suppression of paganism in 395, and so not immediately avail-
In 395 the Roman Empire was also split into two halves, both Christian and both with its own emperor. The eastern, or Byzantine, empire, with its capital at Constantinople, survived until the Turks completed their conquest of it in 1453 with the capture of Constantinople. The short-lived western empire, with its capital first at Milan, and then at Ravenna, was subject to constant barbarian invasion. On its fall in 476, Italy was ruled by the Ostrogoth kings. One of these, Theodoric (493-526), another great builder, appointed Pope Felix IV who, by founding the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, started the ‘Christianisation’ of the Forum. Rome had become virtually an outpost of empire by this time, and its population was falling (from a million or a million and a half to 30,000 by 1309-77). The Forum still retained real clout. Hence it saw a series of ecclesiastical foundations, though modest in some respects in keeping with the smaller scale of the city.

The process of Christianisation was slow. The sixth century saw the creation of at least two churches, SS. Cosmas and Damian and S. Maria Antiqua. S. Martina came in the seventh century; the modest SS. Sergio e Bacco had appeared by the late eighth-century; S. Maria Nova (now S. Francesca Romana) came in the ninth century; and S. Lorenzo by the eleventh century. This is not a particularly impressive list, making it clear that the Forum must still have been dominated by ancient Roman buildings. It was not, however, the kind of depopulated wasteland at this time that it is often supposed to have been. We should note, for example, the stress on the Forum as worthy of continual upkeep by the Byzantine administration in the mid-sixth century; the installation of S. Maria Antiqua at around the same time; the prominent placing of the statue of Phocas in 608; the papal election held in the ancient Comitium before the entire populace in the eighth century; and the maintenance of the paving at the original level until at least the sack of Robert Guiscard and his Normans in 1084.

Unlike the earliest foundations on the periphery of the city, most of the churches founded in Rome in the sixth century up to the time of Gregory the Great (590-604) and the following thirty years were centred on the Forum, the Via Sacra, and the Palatine, at the heart of imperial Rome. These were all adaptations of ancient pagan buildings, despite there being some reluctance to take over imperial property. Indeed, Pope Honorius I (625-38) needed an imperial decree to allow him to take the bronze roof tiles from the Temple of Venus and Rome in the Forum to Saint Peter's, while the same Pope turned the Senate House in the Forum into the church of S. Adriano. It was not until the mid-ninth century that a new church, S. Maria Nova, was to be built as an entirely new building on a site in the Forum. From this point on the city began to disintegrate politically and socially. Between the tenth and thirteenth centuries the impoverished population was reduced to about 35,000, probably dropping to as little as 17,000 during the period from 1309-77 when the popes and the curia were in Avignon.

Saints Cosmas and Damian

The church dedicated in AD 527 to the saints, Cosmas and Damian, physicians from Syria who were supposedly martyred under Diocletian, is one of the most fascinating yet challenging monuments in the Forum. It is fascinating because it shows the complexity of the path from paganism to Christianity, being one of the main Christian monuments of the Forum yet occupying a couple of side rooms of the Templum Pacis (Temple of Peace) – a vast complex built between AD 71 and 79 adjacent to, but outside, the Forum itself, to celebrate Roman victory over the Jews (‘Temple of Pacification’ might be a better translation). It was King Theodoric as representative of imperial authority who gave permission for these publicly owned halls to be turned into a church, while a continuity between paganism and Christianity is shown by the fact that the main hall, probably deserted by c. 520, seems to have served as a medical office in an area which had been settled by doctors in public civil service from the Imperial age onwards. The church thus Christianised an ancient tradition, for, dedicated to two physicians, it was associated with healing and salvation. Like other early churches in the Forum,
it also had a special flavour, not being primarily parish churches or containing relics, but *diaconiae*, that is welfare centres providing food and relief to the poor and to pilgrims. Into this category fell the churches of S. Adriano and S. Maria Antiqua, as well as the little oratory of SS. Sergio e Baco which was built against the south side of the Arch of Septimius Severus.

The church is also challenging, firstly because the frequent changes made to it, right up to interventions by current archaeologists, pose the problem of how to present buildings with such a long history of development. How should we decide to what period or phase of their development they should be put back? Secondly, we now approach the church awkwardly from the modern Via dei Fori Imperiali, via the convent attached to it, rather than as originally from the front, in the Via Sacra as it passes through the Forum. The circuitous route begins at the entrance to the convent through the tall, plain arch of white travertine marble which was added in 1947 by the architect Gaetano Rapisardi. Below the prominent bell turret, the left hand range in ancient brick survives from the Roman building, an effect also aided by the sixth-century gold-ground mosaics in the half-dome of the apse which are among the earliest and most beautiful in Rome. They include depictions of Saints Peter and Paul introducing Saints Cosmas and Damian, in rich red and violet robes, to Christ who is in golden draperies and holds a scroll like an ancient Roman orator. Saint Felix IV on the extreme left, presents a model of the church, while in a band below these figures are twelve lambs symbolising the apostles, and four rivers symbolising the four gospels. The bold figures and shadows show that the illusionistic traditions of Hellenistic art had not been forgotten by these artists.

The apsed crypt or lower church is now fairly featureless apart from fragments of a Cosmati work marble floor. Arigucci continued this marble floor into the circular ‘Temple of Romulus’ so that it formed a noble vestibule to the church. The façade to the Forum of the ‘Temple of Romulus’ was also given at about this time a Baroque flavour with an attractive cupola and a segmental pediment rising high above the front walls. The pediment was needlessly destroyed in 1879-80 though the cupola was surprisingly retained and survives today. The eighteenth-century Neapolitan presepe (crib), recently moved to a domed lobby in one corner of the cloister, was handsomely displayed in this vestibule until around 1990 when the archaeologists destroyed Arigucci’s marble floor. It had been the perfect home for the presepe, a huge and elaborate assembly of many fine figures in terracotta, porcelain, and wood, depicting the Adoration of the Magi.

One can look into the circular ‘Temple of Romulus’, now an empty and functionless vestibule, from a wall of glass installed at the end of the nave of SS. Cosmas and Damian in 2000 and can also enter it from the Forum. But the decorative treatment has been removed from its walls, leaving bare brick, so that it has neither an antique Roman flavour nor a seventeenth-century one. The survival of a well below its floor has led to the suggestion that it may have been associated with the healing arts of the two saints to whom the church is dedicated, an echo of the temple opposite of the twin gods, Castor and Pollux.

Santa Maria Antiqua and Oratory of the Forty Martyrs

We now turn to other ruined buildings which have been excavated and restored by archaeologists where similar problems arise. The church of S. Maria Antiqua, dating from the reign of Justin II (565-78) about fifty years after the foundation of the church of SS. Cosmas and Damian, was the second adaptation in the Forum of an ancient Roman building as a church. This time, it was not a temple that was adapted for Christian use but a square atrium with porticoes near the foot of the Palatine at the back of the Temple of Castor and Pollux. This was part of a complex structure built in the late first century by the side of a great ramp begun by Domitian to lead up to the palaces on the Palatine. It is thus fascinating to see a church being made out of an ancient building whose function was secular, in this case part of the forecourt of an imperial palace. There is also an irony in that the exposure of the remains of S. Maria Antiqua by twentieth-century...
archaeologists was only made possible by the total demolition of the handsome Renaissance church of S. Maria Liberatrice which had been built into it.

In the mid-sixth century, when Rome was politically just a town in a province of the Byzantine empire, its viceroy from Ravenna used the building as part of a guard house to protect the approach to the palace, still on the Palatine. Like the guard house in the imperial palace in Constantinople, it was decorated with Christian murals. As we can tell from archaeological excavation on the site, when the building became the church of S. Maria Antiqua, the original brick piers were replaced by four granite columns surmounted by carved capitals, and an apse was formed out of the solid brick wall mass at the end of the atrium vestibule. The church was also provided with marble and mosaic pavements and many wall paintings from at least the sixth to the ninth centuries, including an early representation of the Virgin Mary wearing a crown as Queen of Heaven, or member of the imperial court. This splendid structure was not to last long. Partly destroyed in an earthquake in 847, its rights and possessions were transferred to a new church of the Virgin Mary, S. Maria Nova within the Temple of Venus and Roma – hence the title Antiqua for this one.

In front of S. Maria Antiqua is the Shrine or Oratory of the Forty Martyrs, in origin a hall of the first century AD whose function, like that of around half a dozen buildings in the Forum, including the enormous Domitianic Hall, we do not now know.

**Santa Maria Liberatrice**

For Piranesi the church of S. Maria Liberatrice was an important landmark in the Forum. It featured prominently in several of his views, defining the south side of the Forum, just as the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda which it faced across the Via Sacra, defined the north side. In the last of its several forms, this was a handsome Renaissance church of 1617. Originally built in the thirteenth century, it engulfed what remained of the church of S. Maria Antiqua after the earthquake. Its main purpose was to commemorate the nearby site of the home of the legendary dragon, chained by Pope Sylvester I (314-35), in fulfilment of a command from Saint Peter in a vision. The name ‘Liberatrice’, referring to the liberation of the inhabitants of Rome from the fearsome dragon, was transferred to the Virgin Mary to whom the church was dedicated. The site is near the House of the Vestals who were traditionally supposed to have fed the dragon. In the twelfth-century account known as the *Mirabilia Urbis Romae* (Marvels of the City of Rome), we are told that near the Church of Saint Anthony, or the oratory of the forty martyrs ‘is a place called Hell because in ancient times it burst forth there and brought great mischief upon Rome.’ The author of this curious but gullible work also referred to ‘the Temple of Vesta, which - it is said - a dragon crouches beneath, as we read in the life of Saint Silvester.’

The mediaeval church of S. Maria Liberatrice was rebuilt in 1617 with a new façade and cupola from designs by Onorio Longhi (1568-1619), father of the more prolific Martino Longhi the Younger. Onorio was the architect of the vast church of SS. Carlo e Ambrogio al Corso in Rome, begun in 1612. His pedimented entrance front at S. Maria Liberatrice, two-storeyed and adorned with round-headed niches and an order of pilasters, was a miniature version of the late Renaissance façade of 1571-84 by Giacomo della Porta (c.1533-1602) at the influential church of Il Gesù in Rome. Over the crossing at S. Maria Liberatrice, Longhi placed a cupola over a low octagonal drum, a north Italian form. The architect Francesco Ferrari (1703-50) restored and enriched...
the interior in 1749 with stuccowork and paintings by leading artists of the classicising trend of the day, Sebastiano Ceccarini and Lorenzo Gramiccia, showing the importance then attached to this church.

However, it is now sadly gone. For nearly three centuries, Longhi’s attractive church was a key element of the Forum but was doomed when the remains of S. Maria Antiqua, first partially uncovered in 1702, were fully excavated in 1900 by Giacomo Boni (1859-1925). In accordance with the archaeological doctrine that the older anything is the more important it must be, Boni, though supposedly upholding Ruskin’s views on sensitive restoration, was bent on demolishing S. Maria Liberatrice in order to expose surviving elements of the original Roman building. In fact, the church proved to have been so solidly built that dynamite was necessary to destroy it. Boni made no proper record of what he had demolished, allowing cartloads of fragments, some featuring faded Early Christian wall-paintings, to be taken away for disposal. During extensive excavations and repairs in 1985-7, the concrete vaults were reconstructed in order to help preserve such paintings as still survive from S. Maria Antiqua, though the church is not normally open to the public.

**Sant’ Adriano**

An even more striking example of re-use and restoration is the church of S. Adriano. Formed in the early seventh century inside the Senate House (which dated to the late third or early fourth century), this church was given a superb Baroque interior in the mid-seventeenth century. In its first conversion in AD 630 the marble steps for the senators’ seats were retained together with the extravagant decoration and splendid furnishings: indeed, these features were valued so much that the Catholic liturgy had to take place around them. S. Adriano was remodelled in the Romanesque style in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century when a tall campanile was added at the rear and antique columns with richly ornamented bases were introduced as spoilia into the interior to make a six-bay nave and aisles. These columns were later encased in a Renaissance pier arcade under Pope Sixtus V Peretti (reigned 1585-90), but a more important and complete remodelling was carried out in 1653-6 by Martino Longhi the Younger (1602-60), whose masterpiece was the dazzling church of SS. Vincenzo ed Anastasio (1646-50), built for Cardinal Mazarin opposite the Fontana di Trevi. The most daringly inventive of the talented Longhi family of architects, he also published poetry and an architectural treatise.

It was not until 1860 that the building which housed Longhi’s masterly church was first identified by an archaeologist as the Senate House. From this moment its survival was threatened, though it was not to be deconsecrated until 1935. The Baroque structures were entirely removed from 1935-8, leaving grim, bare walls, which, unlike Longhi’s work, give no impression whatever of the richness of the antique Senate House. The present wooden ceiling is also modern. One critic has rightly observed that ‘a building such as the Curia offers a warning of the hazards of partial restoration’, for it is hard to see the purpose of ripping out the vibrant work of Longhi which imaginatively demonstrated the timeless continuity of the classical language of architecture. In a masterpiece entirely compatible with the ancient structure, Longhi had contrived to combine references to ancient buildings in the Forum, such as the Temple of Venus and Rome, with modern Baroque architecture. Nonetheless, some visitors see what they wish to see, so that another archaeologist claimed that it has now been ‘restored to its ancient form’. One even believed that ‘it is one of the most splendid interiors to survive from classical Rome.’

**San Lorenzo in Miranda**

The one place where it is still possible to appreciate the rich drama of the Baroque Forum is the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda. For once, a church has happily been suffered to survive within a Roman temple. First recorded in 1074, it was built within the Temple of Antoninus and Faustina which had been begun in AD 140 by the Emperor Antoninus Pius in honour of his wife who had been declared a goddess by the Senate after her death. Imitated in antiquity, for example in the ‘Temple of Diana’ (c. AD 200) at Evora, Portugal, it later became familiar through the woodcut illustrations by Palladio in his *Four Books of Architecture* (1570), and by the more sophisticated engravings by Antoine Desgodetz of 1682 in his *Les Edifices Antiques de Rome* (The Ancient Buildings of Rome). Palladio could not resist ‘improving’ the temple by setting it in a temenos (a walled sacred precinct), probably inspired by that of the Forum of Caesar, and by enriching its interior with statues.

Its fame inspired modern imitations far afield. The external frieze of the temple is carved with scrolls of leaves of the acanthus plant and candelabra which are placed between pairs of griffins facing each other. Today these are, of course, in a fragmentary and damaged condition so that, except to the specialist, they may be disappointing. Their afterlife, as with so much Roman decorative work, is rather more...
impressive. For example, this frieze was often imitated in buildings without sacred associations, notably by William Kent in his palatial attempt to create an ancient Roman house at Holkham Hall, Norfolk (1734-65). He based his version on the representation of the frieze by Desgodetz, a fact recorded on a nineteenth-century board handed out to visitors to the house. This cites the same source for details in other interiors which Kent took from the Temple of ‘Fortuna Virilis’ (Portunus) and the Basilica of Maxentius in Rome.

In the fifteenth century Pope Eugenius IV (1431-47) not only dismantled the rear wall of the cella to reuse its materials in rebuilding the Lateran Palace but gave the church of S. Lorenzo in Miranda to a guild of apothecaries. Their successors, the Collegio Chimico Farmaceutico, still occupy it, housing their museum in the crypt or lower church. But it is the complete rebuilding of the structure in 1601-14 by Orazio Torriani (d. 1657), and the dramatic incorporation of the ancient temple, that give the present church much of its charm.

The modern approach to it is disappointing, for visitors to the Forum today, coming from the entrance off the Via dei Fori Imperiali, first see the bleak and unadorned largely modern office wing, harshly restored in 1935, at the back of the church. To restore meaning to the building, it should once more be entered from its original doorway in the Forum which should not be impossible to contrive.

Torriani’s new façade is crowned by a tall and ebulliently Baroque broken pediment which was completed later in the seventeenth-century. It is a vivid reminder of the appearance of the Forum as the Campo Vaccino (Field of Cows) in the eighteenth century when it was alive with recent buildings incorporating the remains of ancient Roman ones. The interior of the church with its well restored paintings is little known or visited, though it boasts a High Altar by the great Baroque architect and painter, Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669).

The staircase up to the portico was excavated in 1876, though the modern one is a displeasing reconstruction of it in the inappropriate material of brick. The row of old houses adjacent to the building on the left was demolished in 1899 to excavate the floor of the Basilica Aemilia. The survival of Torriani’s church of S. Lorenzo is astonishing in view of the calls for its destruction by the archaeological purists we have already cited, such as Charlotte Eaton and Horace Marucchi.

Santa Francesca Romana

Shown in countless paintings and engravings, more beautiful and infinitely better sited than SS. Cosmas and Damian, the church of S. Francesca Romana with its twelfth-century Romanesque campanile is one of the most appealing and dominant buildings in the entire Forum. For nearly twelve hundred years, it has demarcated the Forum’s eastern end. It is thus greatly to be regretted that there is no longer any public access to it from the Forum. Instead, visitors have to take a circuitous route up the steep road parallel to the Via dei Fori Imperiali to an area on the side of the church which, though right next to the Basilica of Maxentius, includes an ugly tarmac car park and inhospitable wire fences. With the ecclesiastical rank of a minor basilica like SS. Cosmas and Damian, S. Francesca Romana, combines elements of all major periods from antiquity to the Baroque. Founded in the ninth century, it is one of the most historic, evocative, and appealing buildings in the Forum where its life and richness make it a unique survival in a setting which archaeologists are doing so much to render unattractive and dispiriting. With a classical entrance façade of 1615 below its twelfth-century campanile featuring tiers of arches decorated with majolica, this church is a focal point on rising ground in the Forum.

Originally founded by Saint Leo IV (847-55) in 850 as S. Maria Nova, it was the first major new building in the Forum since classical times. Its name was changed to S. Francesca Romana in 1608 to mark the canonisation in that year of Francesca Buzzi de’ Ponzi (1384-1440), a noblewoman who had founded a Sisterhood of Oblates in the church in 1421. On her husband’s death, she entered this herself and was rewarded by God with the visible presence of her guardian angel with whom she was reported as conversing familiarly. Regarded as the only native Roman to found a religious order, she was canonised as S. Francesca Romana in 1608 and her name added to that of the church of S. Maria Nova. In 1926, she became, somewhat improbably, the patron saint of motorists, presumably in recognition of her association with care and guardianship. On her feast day, March 9, the street leading up to the church from the Via dei Fori Imperiali is, or was, crowded with cars each year.

The church owes its present form to a remodelling in 1608-15 by Carlo Lambardi (1554-1620), a notable Roman architect, and its façade bears the date 1615. Evidently giving much thought to the design of a new building in this prominent position close to the Arch of Titus, Lambardi chose a temple front with a triumphal-arch theme, incorporating a giant order in travertine. He adopted this form from the similar façades of the Venetian churches of Andrea Palladio (1508-80), S. Giorgio Maggiore and the
Redentore. Though Palladio is probably the most imitated architect in history, especially in Britain and the United States of America, it is most unusual for his work to be echoed at this date in Rome where his Renaissance style would have seemed out of date.

The interior of S. Francesca Romana in the rich and noble form given it by Lambardi glistens with Baroque gilding and polychromatic marbles, restored for Pope Pius XII in 1952 but now in need of cleaning. The wide nave, five bays long with a triumphal arch separating it from the apse, has a carved gilt wood ceiling by Lambardi of 1615. Behind a grille on the south wall of the south transept is one of the most extraordinary objects in the Forum which should certainly not be missed by the curious visitor. It is a stone from the Via Sacra with marks which are traditionally the imprints of the knees of Saint Peter as he prayed for the exposure of the wizardry of Simon Magus who had challenged him, and possibly Saint Paul as well, to a competition in levitation in the Forum. By drawing on magical powers, Magus succeeded in flying up to the sky but was killed as he crashed to earth. The site of his fall, brought about by the prayers of Saint Peter, was in the neighbourhood. The story is a curious echo of the Lacus Curtius where, as we have seen, a knight was supposed to have sacrificed himself by leaping into a chasm which opened in the Forum. On another occasion, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, Simon Magus tried to bribe Saint Peter; hence ‘simony’, the buying or selling of ecclesiastical preferment, is named after him.

**San Giuseppe dei Falegnami**

Often overlooked by visitors, blinded by archaeology through no fault of their own, is an intriguing group of buildings close together at the west end of the Forum. Including what can claim to be the most sophisticated building in the entire Forum, the Baroque church of SS. Martina e Luca, these monuments are vitally important for demarcating the north-western extremity of the Forum area. Here, on the north side of the Tabularium, from the present Via di San Pietro in Carcer a Roman road known as the Clivus Argentarius (bankers’ rise) ran between the Capitol and the Quirinal Hills. A surviving section of this road descends to S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami, the church of the Guild of Carpenters who had been settled here since 1540. Their church was built over the ‘Carcer’, the Mamertine Prison, sometimes also known as the Tullianum, either because of the *tullius*, or spring of water which drained through it, or because it was believed to have been constructed by King Servius Tullius (578-535 BC). It has long been venerated because, according to a legend, Saint Peter and Saint Paul were imprisoned here in the reign of Nero, causing the spring to rise miraculously so that they could baptise their fellow prisoners and gaolers. It is a wonderful example of what we have described as the palimpsests, the multiple layers of Christianity and pagan antiquity which are such a feature of the Forum.

Building of the Carpenters’ Guild church of S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami over this cell was begun in 1599 from designs by the architect and archaeologist, Giovanni Battista Montano (1534-1621), a member of the Guild. His inventive reconstructions of ancient Roman buildings, published by his pupil, Giovanni Battista Soria (1581-1651), influenced Baroque architects such as Borromini. Montano’s entrance façade, completed in 1602, includes volutes, aedicules, and two small pediments contained within the larger one. Curiously lacking in carved detail, it looks almost as though it has been refaced in cement. After 1621, Soria continued work on the church which was completed in 1663 by Antonio del Grande (1652-71).

The balustraded double staircase on the façade was mutilated in 1932 to make way for a new and enlarged ground-floor entrance portico in the Mussolini classical style. This was to provide prominent access to what is left of the Mamertine Prison, considered to be of more interest than the church, while at the same time the adjacent houses on the left were unnecessarily demolished.

**Saints Luca e Martina**

A few feet away from S. Giuseppe dei Falegnami is the church of SS. Luca e Martina, a seventeenth-century Baroque masterpiece by Pietro da Cortona, the most distinguished roofed
building in the Forum. It replaced the Early Christian church of S. Martina which had been built by Pope Honorius I in the early seventh century on the site of the Secretarium Senatus, a special court convened to judge senators, built next to the senate house towards the end of the Empire. Depictions of S. Martina are rare but its modest, domestic-looking façade with a tiny bell turret can be seen in an engraving of 1575 by Etienne du Dupérac.

In 1588 the little church of S. Martina was given to the Accademia di S. Luca, founded in 1577 as an academy of painters, sculptors, and architects. Since the evangelist Saint Luke was traditionally an artist, he became the patron saint of painters. The long influential Accademia di S. Luca, closely allied to the papal court and always a great promoter of interest in antiquity, survives to the present day in the Palazzo Carpegna, near the Fontana di Trevi. It was moved here as one of the many casualties of the creation of Mussolini’s great road, the Via dei Fori Imperiali in 1932, and its important collections survive and are open to the public.

To mark its ownership by the Accademia di S. Luca the name of S. Luca was added to that of S. Martina in 1589 and a wooden model for a new church on a slightly expanded site was made by Giovanni Battista Montano, then lecturing on architecture at the Accademia. No funds were yet available for building, but in 1626 Cardinal Francesco Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII, became protector of the Accademia and in 1634 the leading Baroque architect and painter, Pietro da Cortona (1596-1669), was made its principe (head). He was given permission to remodel the crypt or lower church to provide a tomb for himself, but the discovery in it of the body of S. Martina during the excavations in 1634 prompted Cardinal Barberini to pay for an ambitious new church to bring pilgrims to venerate her relics.

Cortona’s church of SS. Luca e Martina, built slowly from his designs in 1635-73, has a two-storeyed façade with a striking convex form which was the first of the celebrated curved fronts of the Baroque churches of Rome. The columns of its upper storey are in the Composite order which, as we have noted, is a characteristically rich, even indigestible, Roman invention, its capitals crowning the acanthus leaves of the Corinthian order with the volutes of the Ionic order. Cortona doubtless chose this order because of the proximity of the Arch of Septimius Severus which is also Composite. Piranesi must have seen this parallel when he included the arch and the church together in his Vedute di Roma. In his day, when the arch was almost half buried, its sumptuous capitals would have been much nearer to eye-level. Architects working in the Forum find various ways of relating their buildings to earlier ones, and the dialogue Cortona conducts between his church and the adjacent arch is one of the most brilliant. He was also careful to place the cornice surmounting his ground floor at the same level as the crowning cornice of the more modest but adjacent Curia.

The domed cruciform interior of SS. Luca e Martina has none of the colour we associate with the Baroque but is an emphatically architectural essay in plastic form, dominated by massive unfluted columns in greyish-white travertine. This is in astonishing contrast to the richly coloured lower church, or crypt, which is not normally open but should not be missed. Joseph Connors described romantically in 1982 how, while the upper church ‘is executed in white travertine and stucco, rich effects of color are displayed in the crypt … [where the] complex system of staircases, dark corridors, and small Hadrianic chambers is meant to evoke the feeling of mystery experienced by seventeenth-century explorers of the crypts and catacombs of early Christian Rome.’ Indeed, in the centre of the shallow apse of the inner chapel in the crypt is an Early Christian throne, preserved from the original church.

With its prominent dome and powerful interiors, SS. Luca e Martina is one of the most impressive Baroque churches in Rome, but its impact has been impaired by the processes of archaeology which have insulated it from the urban setting for which it was designed: first by the lowering of the level of the Forum after 1802, and then by the destruction of the adjacent buildings in 1932 to expose the foundations of ancient remains. The removal of the houses which flanked the church emphasised the fact that Cortona had been unable to complete the façade.

As Anthony Blunt complained in 1982, ‘As it stands now the church is in many ways awkward and naked.’

Conclusion

We have stressed in this article the gripping way in which the religions of the classical and the Christian world interlock culturally and architecturally at every level in the extraordinarily iconic place, the Roman Forum. Since the visitor who misses this challenge of the relationship of ancient and modern, will miss much of what the Forum has to offer, it is hoped that this essay will achieve something if it helps to rescue the Forum from its ugly and depressing role as an ‘archaeological site’, and to reinstate it as an evocative place of haunting and resonant beauty. This might confirm the claim of T.S. Eliot who, considering the ‘conformity between the old and the new’ in his famous essay, ‘Tradition and the Individual Talent’, observed that we ‘will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past.’

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Beacon to Illuminate the World

Address by His Holiness Benedict XVI

Pope Benedict XVI gave the following address at the celebration of First Vespers on the occasion of the 500th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling, 31 October 2012:

Venerable Brothers, Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In this Liturgy of First Vespers for the Solemnity of All Saints, we commemorate the act, now 500 years ago, by which Pope Julius II inaugurated the fresco on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. I thank Cardinal Bertello for the words which he addressed to me and I cordially greet all present.

Why should we remember this event in art history with a liturgical celebration? First of all because the Sistine Chapel is, by its nature, a liturgical hall, it is the Cappella magna of the Vatican Apostolic Palace. Moreover, because the artistic works that decorate it, especially the series of frescoes, find within the liturgy, so to speak, their living environment, the context in which they best express the fullness of their beauty, all the richness and poignancy of their meaning. It is as if, during the liturgical action, this symphony of figures came to life, certainly in a spiritual sense but also in an intrinsic aesthetic sense, for the perception of artistic form is a specifically human act and, as such, involves both the senses and the spirit. In short: the Sistine Chapel, contemplated in prayer, is even more beautiful, more authentic; all of its riches are revealed.

Here everything is alive, in contact with the Word of God everything resonates. We listened to the passage from the Letter to the Hebrews: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering...” (12:22-23). The author is addressing Christians and explains that for them the promises of the Old Testament have been fulfilled: a feast of communion with at its centre God and Jesus, the Lamb sacrificed and Risen (cf. vv. 23-24). The entire dynamic of promise and fulfillment is represented here on the long walls, the work of great Tuscan and Umbrian painters of the second half of the 15th century. And when the biblical text goes on to say that we have approached “the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect” (v. 23), our gaze rises to the Last Judgment by Michelangelo where the background, the blue of heaven, echoed in the mantle of the Virgin Mary, gives the light of hope to the whole vision, very dramatic.

"Christe, redemptor omnium, / conserva tuos famulos, / beatæ semper Virginis / placatus sanctis precibus" — sung in the first verse of the Latin Hymn of this evening’s Vespers. And that is precisely what we see: Christ the Redeemer at the centre, crowned by his Saints, and beside him Mary, in an act of prayerful...
intercession, almost as if to mitigate his terrible judgment.

But tonight our attention is mainly drawn to the great fresco of the ceiling, that Michelangelo, commissioned by Julius II, accomplished in about 4 years, from 1508 to 1512. The great artist, by then famous for his masterpieces of sculpture, faced the task of painting more than a 1,000 square metres of plaster. And we can imagine that the effect it had on those who saw it finished for the first time must have been truly awe-inspiring. With this immense fresco that erupted in the history of Italian and European art — Wölfflin was to say in 1899 using a beautiful and celebrated metaphor — was something like a “violento torrente montano portatore di felicità e al tempo stesso di devastazione”, [surging mountain torrent bearer of happiness and at the same time devastation]: nothing remained the same as before.

Giorgio Vasari, in a famous passage of The Lives, writes in a most succinct way: “Questa opera è stata ed è veramente la lucerna dell’arte nostra, che ha fatto tanto giovamento e lume all’arte della pittura, che ha bastato a illuminare il mondo”, [This work has been and is truly the beacon of our art, that has done much good and given light to the art of painting, that was enough to illuminate the world].

Beacon, light, illuminate: Vasari uses these three words, words not far from the hearts of those present at the Celebration of Vespers on 31 October 1512. But it is not just the light that comes from the wise use of colour with a wealth of contrasts, or from the movement that animates Michelangelo’s masterpiece, but the idea that runs throughout the great ceiling: it is the light of God that illuminates these frescoes and the Papal Chapel as a whole. That light with its power conquers chaos and darkness to give life: in the creation and in the redemption. Indeed the Sistine Chapel tells this story of light, of liberation, of salvation. It speaks of God’s relationship with humanity. With Michelangelo’s talented frescoed ceiling, the gaze is led to review the message of the Prophets, to which are added the pagan Sibyls awaiting Christ, back to the beginning of it all: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1).

With unique expressive intensity, the great artist draws God the Creator, his action, his power, to show clearly that the world is not the product of darkness, chance, or senselessness, but comes from an Intelligence, from a Freedom, from a supreme act of Love. In that moment of contact between the finger of God and the finger of man, we perceive the point of contact between heaven and earth; in Adam God enters into a new relationship with his Creation, man is in direct relation with Him, he is called by Him, he is in the image and likeness of God.

Twenty years later, in the Last Judgment, Michelangelo concluded the great parable of the journey of humanity, drawing our eyes to the fulfillment of the reality of this world and of mankind, to the final meeting with Christ, Judge of the living and the dead.

To pray this evening in the Sistine Chapel, surrounded by the history of God’s journey with man, wonderfully represented in the frescoes above and around us, is an invitation to praise, an invitation to raise to the Creator God, the Redeemer, the Judge of the living and the dead, with all the Saints of Heaven, the words of the canticle in Revelation: “Amen. Hallelujah!... “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great!... “Hallelujah!... Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory.” Amen.

- His Holiness Benedict XVI
Transfer of the Covenant


Reviewed by Tod A. Marder

Saint Peter’s Basilica was founded by Constantine around 325 AD and built in a fashion typical of early Christian architecture. By the dawn of the Renaissance in the early 1400s, this structure was dilapidated and in urgent need of repair. Restructuring was begun in the middle of the fifteenth century, but less than fifty years later the goal of shoring up the edifice was supplanted by the grand idea of a completely new building. This campaign was famously sponsored by Pope Julius II (1503-13) and continued by his successors for roughly one hundred years. Direction of the works was first entrusted to the High Renaissance architect Bramante, and he was succeeded by a chain of illustrious followers from Raphael and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger to Michelangelo, Domenico Fontana, and Giacomo Della Porta.

What were the goals of these men? What sort of intellectual program did they embrace, observe, modify, or develop over this long period? To what extent did any programmatic concerns reflect the earlier history of the fabric, contemporary political realities, or individual aspirations and tastes? These are some of the questions taken up in Marie Tanner’s book on Saint Peter’s. Simply put, the book is an interpretation of the Basilica of Saint Peter as the author believes it was conceived by its Renaissance architects and patrons. It also suggests how the building may have been understood and used by informed contemporaries. The presentation is divided into two parts, the first aimed at arguing for a “programmatic antiquarianism” in the concept of the new building (Julius II’s New Saint Peter’s), and the second part introducing a broader group of influences on the design and meaning of the architecture. These two clusters of concerns are fleshed out in a dozen chapters organized thematically rather than chronologically, so that the richness of individual themes is encouraged while sequences of ideas are slurred. The programmatic integrity of the building is emphasized over the more usual parsing of developments over time. With a scope so broad and rich, no reviewer’s account can do real justice to the author’s erudition. What follows will account for some of the concerns raised in the first section of the text.

The first chapter proposes a thematic link between the Basilica and “Etruscan temple” forms, as well as the architecture of ancient Roman baths. The thrust of the argument is that the incorporation of these typically Italic forms in the planning process “served to solidify papal pretensions to Italic primacy in the context of universal theocratic rule.” The second chapter introduces the influence of the “Temple of Peace,” better known today as the Basilica of Maxentius in the planning efforts of Saint Peter’s. The influence is based on associations between this “temple” (although it was never a place of worship) and Roman baths, and their mutual relations to Etruscan tradition as a fitting basis from which a “new Christian architecture” could emerge. In the third chapter the author introduces a literary association of the builders of New Saint Peter’s with Noah as founder of the Etruscan temple, and symbol of papal succession from Old Testament priests and kings. These associations can be found in the writings of Annius of Viterbo, a Master of the Vatican Palace in 1499, and the influential Egidio da Viterbo a few years later, that is, just before the foundation of the New Saint Peter’s in 1506.

The fourth chapter attempts to link Bramante’s archaeological interests in the ancient baths, the “Temple of Peace” (Basilica of Maxentius), and Etruscan tradition. Particular emphasis is laid on the Temple of Peace because, the author explains, it was “the repository of spoils brought by Titus from the Holy of Holies in Solomon’s Temple, demonstrating God’s Covenant with the Jews.” This in turn was construed as proof of the transfer of the covenant to Rome. In chapter five this theme is expanded in pages discussing the figure of Titus in ancient and early Christian history. The theme of the sixth chapter is “spoils,” meaning the association of the Titus-legend, the Jewish spoils from Jerusalem, and relics of Saint Peter’s, especially Veronica’s sudarium and the spiral columns that adorned the high altar, both of which reputedly came from the temple at Jerusalem. Titus belonged to the Flavian dynasty in Roman times, and the author makes a case for the builder of the new basilica of Saint Peter (Julius II) identifying with this emperor. The argument rests on a treatise written in 1508 in anticipation of a Crusade to return the holy city of Jerusalem from Muslim to Christian rule, and associations seen in the fabrics of the Vatican Palace and Saint Peter’s. This, in any event, is the subject of chapter seven, which closes Part One of the book.

In Part Two, the chapters take up the concerns of Nicholas V, who attempted to rebuild the basilica around 1450; the role of Alberti at the court of Nicholas V; the connections between Julius II and the architect of New Saint Peter’s, Bramante; Bramante’s interest in the Holy Sepulchre; and the contributions of Bramante’s followers to these themes.

Those who spend time with this book will discover a wealth of associative material pertaining, closely or loosely, to the conception of the papacy in the Renaissance and its program for New Saint Peter’s. Regardless of whether those associations entirely convince the reader, one cannot leave the book without a deeply enriched
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**Objects of Devotion and Idolatry**


The English reformation was not kind to altars and art. Along with the dissolution and destruction of the monasteries, other acts of iconoclasm were perpetrated during the reign of Henry VIII. Under his son, Edward VI, a plan was put in place to transform the liturgy, the theology, and the art of the English church. Central to the reformers’ goals was the destruction of altars and altar-rails. In their stead they placed lengthwise wooden tables in the middle of the nave. Crucifixes, statues, paintings of saints, and stained glass were destroyed because they were objects of devotion and fostered idolatry. In spite of the short-lived Catholic Restoration under Queen Mary (1553–1558) in which some churches brought back altars and images, the crown supported iconoclasm during the reigns of Elizabeth I and James I. However, not all agreed with the Puritan or Calvinist direction being promoted, including the chapel royal which tended to have a higher liturgy. Under Charles I, Bishop Laud promoted the return of altars to a raised sanctuary surrounded by altar-rails, a liturgy closer to Rome, and even imagery in special cases. Laudianism was fought against by prominent bishops, clergy, and laity who considered it idolatrous and popish. The English Civil War, and the rule of Oliver Cromwell ended the British Counter-reform. However, with the restoration of Charles II many of the ideas of Laud came back into currency and eventually became seen as traditional. The fire of London in 1666 and the subsequent rebuilding of fifty-one of eighty-seven churches by Sir Christopher Wren (whose family were Laudians) saw the reintroduction of the wooden “Protestant altar” and the rail. This book helps to explain the liturgical battles between low and high church during the first 150 years of Anglicanism, while offering a surprising parallel with events in the Catholic Church during the twentieth century.
RINASCIMENTO
by Duncan G. Stroik

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A WHOLE THEATRICAL PRESENTATION


Reviewed by Steven J. Schloeder

Edmund Bishop made an interesting comment that during the Middle Ages, “the Blessed Sacrament reserved was commonly treated with a kind of indifference which at present would be considered to be of the nature of ‘irreverence,’ I will not say indignity.” This is perhaps understandable: the Eucharist, and what we consider to be the “Real Presence” of Christ in the Eucharistic species, could be somewhat taken for granted considering the established place of Eucharistic theology from the early patristic though the early medieval periods. For about a thousand years after the post-apostolic teachings of Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and Irenaeus, few seriously questioned that the Eucharist was the Body and Blood of Christ, as the Lord himself said. Saint Cyril of Jerusalem gives a typical, simple, and eloquent affirmation of this:

Do not, then, regard the eucharistic elements as ordinary bread and wine: they are in fact the body and blood of the Lord, as he himself has declared. Whatever your senses may tell you, be strong in faith. You have been taught and you are firmly convinced that what looks and tastes like bread and wine is not bread and wine but the body and the blood of Christ.3

There was little formal or systematic theology behind such utterances, other than the real theology of taking the words of Christ at their face value. Only after that could they be considered as typology, analogy, tropology, or allegory. In time, the conventional understanding was challenged, first by a ninth century monk named Rathramus and later (more famously) in the eleventh century by Berengarius of Tours. In response, the Scholastics developed the Eucharistic theory of transsubstantiation, with which they robustly defended the words of the Lord. That doctrine was formally articulated for the Latin Church by the Fourth Lateran Council (1215 AD), and subsequently reaffirmed against the Protestants at the Council of Trent in the mid-sixteenth century.

This span of 300 years neatly situates Dr. Timmermann’s magisterial study of the sacrament tower, a large and lofty architectural feature in late medieval churches that housed the Reserved Species, in an age when Mr. Bishop’s concerns about “indifference” could be laid to rest. Timmermann deftly interweaves themes of theology, piety, devotional practice, iconology, architectural form (in particular ‘micronic architecture’), geometry, and politics. He gives us a comprehensive accounting and analysis of what has been a largely overlooked architectural feature that in many ways exemplifies and contextualizes the development of Eucharist theology in the late Middle Ages and the early modern period.

Timmermann begins with a solid presentation of the various cultural currents in chapter one: what he calls “the eucharistic-theological, liturgical-devotional, socio-religious, salvific-economic and architectural discourses” [p. 1]. Be warned that such dense language is typical of Timmermann’s academic writing style, common in dissertation material, which could be rendered more casual and conversational for the lay reader. That said, his grasp and mastery of his subject is evident, and he brings a depth of study to explain the major theological arguments of the scholastics; the way the cultus of Corpus Christi was instrumental in engaging lay participation from a formerly clerical activity; and how anti-Semitism, the Hussite Utraquist controversy (that the Eucharist must be administered under both species), and the later Protestant challenges shaped the display of the Sacrament into grand statements of orthodoxy and ecclesiastical unity. Timmermann shows us how the tower form also served a mnemonic function (actually two): first, for the memory of the donators by whose memory and imagination of the spectator. These five discourses form the recurring filters through which Timmermann examines and analyzes a significant inventory of sacrament towers built over the next several centuries throughout Europe.

In chapter two, Timmermann gives a concise outline of the history of Eucharistic reservation, and shows how the various forms from pyx, dove, ciborium, and wall niches pre-date and lead up to the sacrament tower. The remaining chapters are well detailed, and profusely illustrated investigations into the form, iconography, geometry, and cultural aspects of the sacrament towers. Of particular interest is his accounting of the demise of the sacrament tower as the Church began to prefer the tabernacle form from the time of Trent, mandated in the 1614 Rituale Romanum, and the last gasps of architectural theatrics as the medieval form was Classicized, Baroquified, and Rococoized into fantastical confections of architectural exuberance.

Timmermann’s book is a serious contribution to the study of the dynamics between theology, liturgics, popular piety, and architecture. Perhaps its greatest strength, apart from simply presenting us with a detailed study of this largely unexplored but significant architectural typology, is the wealth of photos and drawings (381 illustrations), many of them from his own camera. This should be a valuable resource for students and practitioners of ecclesiastical architecture, as we re-examine the precedents of our architectural traditions to find new ways of expressing the sacramental reality that informed the great medieval and Renaissance sacrament towers.

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(Endnotes)  
3 Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechesis, no. 22, Mystagogica 4, 6: PG 33, 1102A.
Would you like to get a glimpse into the philosophy of the Liturgical Movement in the 1930s? This period between World War I and Vatican II witnessed some important ideas which were to have a great influence on the renovation and building of Catholic churches. Of central concern was the design of the altar, which is the main topic of this short book first published in 1936. The Liturgical Movement’s goal was to promote simplicity in the design of liturgical elements without being iconoclastic. Geoffrey Webb was an architectural historian and Cambridge professor. His essay on the altar contains wonderful historical and liturgical information on the altar and its appointments: tabernacle, candles, altar crucifix, veils, and linens, as well as elements seldom discussed today such as Eucharistic thrones, testers, antependia, and riddel posts.

Most books are a product of their time, and reading The Liturgical Altar today, one can understand how the liturgical movement may have unwittingly laid the foundation for the minimalist altar and the iconoclastic church of the late twentieth century—all in the name of proper liturgy. By the time of Vatican II, it could be argued that the tabernacle, crucifix, and candles were not integral to the architecture of the altar, and should be moved elsewhere. Baldacchinos and testers were seen as an unnecessary distraction which, along with steps and predella, take away from the liturgical simplicity of the altar. By the 1960s, getting back to the simplicity and austerity of the liturgical altar meant to strip it of any added accoutrements. Brought to its logical conclusion, what we are left with is a bare table, the tabernacle is hidden away, and the sanctuary loses all distinctiveness.

Put in this way it is possible to recognize how the Liturgical Movement of the 1930s, with good intentions, segued into the minimalist altar and the iconoclastic

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River of Fire: The Iconostasis, East and West


Reviewed by Thomas D. Stroka

“...The Christian sanctuary is a type of the places beyond the heavens, containing the throne of the immaterial God.” – Saint Symeon of Thessalonike

The “threshold” of the sanctuary has been called the chancel barrier, templon, choir screen, lettner, jubé, rood screen, iconostasis, and tramezzo. Thresholds of the Sacred, a compilation of papers dating to the 2003 Dumbarton Oaks Byzantine Studies Symposium, remains a crucial reference for the development and the application of these sacred barriers in church architecture.

Joan Branham describes the sequence of barriers within Herod’s Temple. First, the Huldah gates at the south entry to the Temple, followed by immersion in pools, then the Soreq lattice-fence around the Temple courtyards, the Nicaror gate into the Court of the Israelites, then twelve steps to the sanctuary porch, through folding wooden panels and a curtain into the Hekal and Devir, or Holy of Holies. The High Priest would enter the Devir at Yom Kippur with the blood of sacrifice from the altar area, and utter the four-letter name of God.

According to Robert Taft, SJ, the beginning of the Christian sanctuary enclosure can be traced to the mid-fourth century, with the construction of a triumphant arch at the sanctuary platform to distinguish the sanctuary from the nave. Two reasons for the enclosure highlighted by Taft are security and decorum. He cites Saint John Chrysostom’s remarks on the lack of piety among faithful who approach for communion: “We don’t approach with awe but we kick, we raise our feet, we are filled with anger, shoving our neighbors, full of disorder.”

Urs Peschlow discusses the division of the side aisles from the nave in early Byzantine churches, which may have its roots in the screens found in secular basilicas and imperial construction: The Palace of Diocletian in Split had screens between columns in the three-aisled open peristyle. Peschlow does not find a consistent practical use for the aisle screens. Either they served to separate pilgrims venerating relics at martyria churches, or the screens merely provided another surface to decorate with crosses and foliate patterns.

Sophia Kalopissi-Verti discusses the Proskynetaria, the large scale icons which often flanked the screen or templon at the sanctuary. These icons often depicted Christ, the Mother of God, or the patron saint of the church. According to pseudo-Sophronios in his Commentarius liturgicus, the templon is compared with the enclosure of Christ’s tomb, and the Solea or threshold between sanctuary and nave, as a river of fire separating sinners from the just.

Saint Symeon of Thessalonike, cited by Nicholas Constas, wrote Dialogue Against Heresies which provides the theological meaning for veils in the liturgy. The earthly liturgy differs from the heavenly in that the heavenly does not have veils and symbols. The liturgy is proper to each place, and “because we are enveloped in this heavy and mortal load of flesh” we partake of the liturgy differently while on earth. Constas also describes the symbolic value of the veil as firmament, positioned between the heavens and the earth, concealing the visible mysteries of the universe and the invisible mystery of God.

Jacqueline Jung explains the Gothic choir enclosure, and contends that the framing of the view toward the sanctuary at the gate of the rood screen provided an even more profound experience of the Mass for the lay people in the nave. She boldly suggests that the framing effect of the rood screen informed framed compositions in paintings into the fifteenth century, including in works by van Eyck, van der Weyden, and van der Stockt.

Marcia Hall concludes the symposium’s compilation with a piece on the Italian tramezzo, most often found in mendicant churches in order to maintain clausura. Also included in many of these churches was a secondary tramezzo, also called an intermedia, to separate the chiesa delle donne (women) from the chiesa di sopra. While the Council of Trent did not specify the dismantling of tramezzi, many churches had them removed in the second half of the sixteenth century, including Santa Maria Novella and Santa Croce in Florence.

With the use of a plethora of primary sources and beautiful illustrations, the text explains the meaning of sacred barriers and their historic role in delineating the sacred precinct in churches.

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Endnotes:
1. Thresholds of the Sacred, 172
2. Saint John Chrysostom, De Baptismo Christi 4, PG 49:370
More than documentation of the churches of Cincinnati, Messages of Glory is the iconic graphic and spiritual narrative of the Ohio Valley. Chapters such as “Angels” and “The Life of Mary” depict sample illustrations of iconography from area churches. Quotations from Sacred Scripture and prayers provide a deeply spiritual and beautiful text, a perfect tribute to artistic tradition in the City of Seven Hills.


An exploration into the form, meaning, context, function, and symbolism of Medieval religious iconography, this book discusses the multiple levels upon which sacred art and its traditions can be understood. Of particular note is how sacred images served as an aid to meditation for the general public, reminding worshipers of the pious and virtuous lives of the saints. Attention is also given to the artists of these works, which include some of the most profound artists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.


The Benedictine church of Santi Cosmo e Damiano on Venice’s Giudecca Island was used as a military hospital and knitwear plant after its 1805 disbandment. It has not been until recently that the city of Venice has put forth restoration efforts on the church, allowing its collection of frescoes to be visible. This book provides a detailed research into the general history of the church as well as its collection of frescoes dating from the 16th to the 18th centuries.

The Assumption of Mary, Sisters of Charity Motherhouse, OH


This heavily-illustrated book documents the design, construction, and 2006 dedication of noted Post-Modernist Robert Venturi’s chapel at the Episcopal Academy of Newton Square, Pennsylvania. The book includes many of Venturi’s process drawings and draws an insightful parallel to Venturi’s 1950 college thesis at Princeton, which was a chapel designed for the academy.


The sculptural program of the reverse façade of Reims Cathedral has received little scholarly attention despite being recognized as one of the most beautiful sculptural works of the late 13th century. Professor of Art History Donna L. Sadler of Agnes Scott College analyzes the sculptural program of this portion of Reims Cathedral within the context of the cathedral’s history, its architectural antecedents, and its connection to the court of Saint Louis IX.


During the late Middle Ages, Rome was both held up as an ideal and challenged as an authoritative center by cultures throughout the Mediterranean World. This book consists of a collection of articles that discuss the various attitudes regarding Rome in the later centuries of the Middle Ages and their basis within the imaginative force of the ancient city.


One of the first major studies of American ecclesiastical architecture following World War II, this book discusses the diverse and complicated set of issues that emerged as suburbanization and the baby boom required the construction of a new type of worship facility intertwined with technology and social change. The author argues that these structures serve as physical embodiments of a significant and distinct era in American religious history.
“Be immersed firsthand in a rich and exciting historical narrative, getting in on the ground floor of a movement that historians have only recently begun to recognize and chronicle.” - Dr. Denis R. McNamara, The Liturgical Institute

“Interspersing his text with quotes from Church documents on architecture and liturgy, as well as voices of past architects and popes, Stroik weaves a rich tapestry of tradition in continuity, a conception of design that takes the Eucharist as its center.” - Dr. Amanda Clark, The Catholic World Report

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