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John Paul II exhorted priests and seminarians to study in Rome in a message to Argentina’s bishops on the occasion of the inauguration of the Argentine Priests College on Feb. 25, 2002. John Paul II says the city gives students the chance to meet their counterparts from other parts of the world and to experience the places where the early Christians, and other generations of the faithful, showed their fidelity to Jesus, the Pope explained. In addition, a stay “in the Church of Rome, see of Peter and his successors, will serve to increase fidelity to her,” said John Paul II, who as a priest studied in Rome as early as the 1940s.

Cardinal Egan halted the renovation at St. Ignatius Loyola, a treasured Roman Catholic church on the Upper East Side of New York, that was to cost $3 million. As part of the project, the sanctuary would be enlarged, the altar moved closer to the people and the communion rail removed. Archdiocesan officials approved the plans every step of the way. Then Egan stepped in. In a letter to the pastor dated March 6, 2002, he rejected the sanctuary proposal, saying it was unwarranted and harmful to the church’s tradition. He said it was not clear why the sanctuary had to be enlarged, unless it was for concerts or dramatic performances. “The communion rail may be seen as a barrier by some at this moment in history,” he wrote, “and a church built today probably would not have one.” But that does not justify removing it from St. Ignatius, “a beloved testimony to an era of Catholicism that is still highly esteemed.”

In a subsequent interview, Father Modrys, a Jesuit, said he was disappointed by the cardinal’s decision and wished he had received the final decision earlier. But he said he understood the cardinal’s position. St. Ignatius has been staffed by Jesuits since 1866, and the current church, on Park Avenue at 84th Street, finished in 1886, is modeled after the Jesuits’ mother church in Rome, the Church of the Gesù. It was the site of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis’ funeral in 1994. As for the worshipers, Father Modrys said support for the renovation was overwhelming despite the cardinal’s contention that there were significant divisions. A small sampling of St. Ignatius’ parishioners conducted by reporters uncovered significant differences of opinion concerning the desirability of the renovation.

The Cardinal Winning Pro-Life Center opened in Glasgow in March. Current Glasgow Archbishop Mario Conti used his first public engagement to formally open a new pro-life education center named after his predecessor, Cardinal Thomas Winning. The Center is now the base for the Pro-Life Initiative that the Cardinal launched five years ago. The program has since been adopted by the bishops’ conference of Scotland, and 431 babies have been born after their mothers approached the project for help.

A new Vatican document on popular piety emphasizes its positive aspects but warns against practices that border on superstition. The “Directory on Popular Piety and Liturgy: Principles and Guidelines” was prepared by the Vatican Congregation for Divine Worship and the Sacraments. At a press conference, the prefect of the congregation, Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estévez, recalled that the Second Vatican Council stressed that popular expressions of piety “be in keeping with the laws and norms of the Church,” and that “they be in accord with sacred liturgy and, in a certain sense, stem from it, and lead people to it.” “Popular religiosity is a fact that accompanies the life of the Church and that has accompanied it over the centuries,” he said. He cited the example of outstanding Church figures such as St. Teresa of Avila and St. Francis of Assisi. “These are expressions, gestures, attitudes that manifest a personal relation with God: The cross is kissed, the Via Crucis is prayed, pilgrimages are undertaken, there is kneeling at the tombs of saints and martyrs, and conservation of remains of their bodies and clothes,” Cardinal Medina Estévez explained. When “an attitude of liturgical purism tends to eliminate the expressions of popular religiosity, it implies a moral impoverishment for Christian life,” he emphasized. Asked about the need to distinguish between popular religiosity and superstition, the cardinal answered: “The danger of superstition, in a certain sense, is everywhere in the religious phenomenon. It might be that some expression is not totally appropriate, but the solution is not to throw it out, but rather to purify that which is not consistent with faith and revelation.”

The Israeli Army admitted damaging an Orthodox Church “by mistake,” splintering its doors with dynamite during operations against Palestinians in June. The medieval Orthodox Church of St. Barbara is located near the village of Abud, some 15 kilometers (nine miles) northwest of Ramallah. “Nothing made us think that it was a church; it looked like a grotto,” an Israeli army spokesman told the press, explaining that the soldiers were looking for Palestinian suspects.

Giotto’s frescoes in Padua have returned—in full color. Following 20 years of research and eight months of restoration work, the frescoes in Padua’s Scrovegni Chapel have recovered the brilliant blue of their skies, the golden halos and the dark hues of maternal tears that distinguish this pictorial ensemble, considered one of the highest expressions of Medieval painting. The masterpiece includes 103 biblical scenes depicted in 900 square meters of frescoes painted over three years (from 1303-05) by Ambrogio Bondone (1267-1303), who passed into history as Giotto, the renowned artist of the frescoes of the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi.

A Cistercian monastery is taking shape
Antonio Gaudi, “God’s Architect,” recently had the 150th anniversary of his birth celebrated. Queen Sofia of Spain inaugurated the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of Catalan architect Antonio Gaudi (1852-1926), whose cause of beatification was opened in 1994. Gaudi was an inimitable master of architecture conceived as prayer. Maria Antonietta Crippa, professor of architecture history at Milan’s Polytechnic and an expert on Gaudi’s work, explained the breadth of the work of “God’s architect,” as Gaudi is known, over Vatican Radio. “Gaudi is the last architect in cultural continuity with the Western tradition of Christian mold. Without highlighting “ruptures” of an ideological nature, he makes use of the expressions inherited from this tradition, taking structural aspects from the Gothic, interior decorative richness from the Baroque, and creating from these and other styles a new language,” Crippa explained. “Some, and I adhere to this line, believe that Gaudi’s importance lies, among other things, precisely in his capacity to maintain architectural composition profoundly connected to the symbolic dimension of man — therefore, to an imaginative capacity that refers to the fundamental values of life.” “In our times, I would say he is the man who has made contemporary architecture the most popular, the closest to the public. I have seen many people on different occasions marvel at Gaudi’s great ideas, at the moving intuitions expressed in his architecture.”

Orthodox seizure of a church roiled Greek-Catholics in Romania this past March. The Greek-Catholic Church in Romania publicly expressed its indignation over the violent attacks by Orthodox who have repossessed their churches by force. The latest incidence of violence occurred in the city of Ocna-Mures, in Transylvania. Early on March 15 a group of about 40 Orthodox forced their way into a church that had been returned to Greek-Catholics, Metropolitan Lucian Muresan, archbishop of Blaj, reported in statements sent to ZENIT. Around 3 a.m., while the Greek-Catholic parish priest, Father Alexandru Biris, and a group of parishioners were praying inside, a group of Orthodox faithful, led by Father Marcu Cornel and Father Ioan Toceanel, broke into the church by smashing the doors. Police forces on the scene simply evacuated the church and handed it over to the Orthodox, without any official legal justification, said Archbishop Muresan.

John Paul II referred to the universe as “another sacred book” that, together with the Bible, allows man to discover the beauty of God. “With the interior vision of the soul, with religious intuition not distracted by superficiality, man and woman can discover that the world is not dumb but speaks of the Creator,” the Pontiff said January 30th when addressing thousands of pilgrims gathered in Paul VI Hall for the midweek general audience. He was reflecting on Psalm 18(19), part of a yearlong series of meditations on the Psalms and canticles of the Old Testament that comprise parts of the Liturgy of the Hours. “Creation is like a first revelation, which has its own eloquent language,” the Holy Father said. “It is almost like another sacred book whose letters are represented by the multitude of creatures present in the universe.” From St. John Chrysostom, Father of the Church born in Antioch in the fourth century, John Paul II borrowed these words: “The silence of the heavens is a voice that resounds more intensely than a trumpet: This voice cries to our eyes, and not to our ears, the grandeur of the one who made it.” From St. Athanasius, born at the end of the third century, he quoted the following: “The firmament, through its magnificence, beauty and order, is a prestigious preacher of its author, whose eloquence fills the universe.”

If a real-life Indiana Jones wanted to find the Ark of the Covenant, he would only have to turn to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, say partisans in Addis Ababa. All traces of the ark, the sacred chest that Moses had built by divine instruction to safeguard the tablets of the law, were lost after the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. The Ethiopian Orthodox Church, however, appeals to tradition to affirm that a wooden chest covered in gold and decorated with cherubs, and in the care of a solitary Orthodox priest in an Axum church, is the lost ark of the Old Testament. Ethiopian Christians (about 31 million, or half the population) honored the ark in this past March at Temket, the feast of Jesus’ baptism. According to legend, the ark was stolen by Menelik, the son of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, who brought it to Ethiopia. Ethiopia converted to Christianity around the year 330, but the legend of the ark does not arise until the 12th century, in a forthright attempt by the ruling dynasty to proclaim itself heir to King Solomon.
Despite the historical unknowns, the faith of Ethiopian Orthodox in the Axum ark continues. They attribute salvific qualities to it, among them the country’s independence. Ethiopia is the only African country not subjected to colonization in the strict sense, though it was occupied by Fascist Italy from 1936-1941.

The 20th century may have been the most striking in the annals of Christian martyrdom, and a new book shows it with numbers. In two millennia of Christian history, about 70 million faithful have given their lives for the faith, and of these, 45.5 million — fully 65% — were in the last century, according to The New Persecuted. Italian journalist Antonio Socci presented his work during a conference on “Anti-Christian Persecution in the 20th Century” held at the Regina Apostolorum Pontifical Athenaeum. According to the author, the two currents that fuel the persecution of Christians today are Communism and Muslim fundamentalism. Socci said that persecution of Christians is currently most severe in Sudan.

Explosions rocked four churches in Sulawesi, Indonesia, while a separate blast hit Jakarta on New Year’s Day, killing one person, shattering what had been relative calm during religious festivals. Four blasts outside churches in the city — three hit simultaneously as the New Year began — wounded at least one policeman. The Palu blasts were caused by unidentified devices. Some 200 people were in one of the churches when the midnight blasts occurred, a local priest said. No worshippers were hurt.

A Catholic church was inaugurated in Slavutyc, a city built for workers of the Chernobyl nuclear plant. The first Mass was celebrated May 21 by Archbishop Nikola Eterovic, apostolic nuncio in Ukraine, according to the Vidimus Dominum news service. The ceremony of the blessing of the church, dedicated to St. Eugene de Mazenod (1782-1861), founder of the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, was attended by Ukrainian men and women of that religious family, as well as local Catholics. Slavutyc is still considered dangerous because of the radiation resulting from the May 1986 nuclear accident in Chernobyl. In response to a request from local bishops, the first community of Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate began its apostolate in this region in June 1993. Four religious evangelize this territory inhabited by 1.3 million people.

The Mafia attacked six churches in the Sicilian capital of Palermo this past May, including the church of the late Father Pino Puglisi. This priest, whose process of beatification is under way, was killed by the Mafia in 1993. The Italian newspaper Avvenire said that in the "new Palermo" the Church is in the Mafia’s sights. “A Church that stays inside the sacristies does not bother anyone,” the newspaper said. “If Father Puglisi had stayed in the sacristy, he would not have called attention to himself. The Mafia wants us to stay inside the parish and to dedicate ourselves to ‘our affairs.’”

A lack of funds is holding back Catholics in Siberia who want to build churches. Bishop Jerzy Mazur, apostolic administrator of Eastern Siberia, spelled out the problem recently when he visited Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), an association of pontifical right. He spoke about the state of Christianity in Siberia, an area larger than the United States, where only 50,000 of the 16 million inhabitants are Catholic. The apostolic administration, headquartered in Irkutsk, has been in existence since 1999. It sorely needs churches, chapels and parish houses to be built, the bishop said.

The government of Zhejiang province in eastern China demolished the Catholic church of the town of Linjayuan for the third time in 18 months this past year. The town’s residents took advantage of the national holiday, from Oct. 1-7, to reconstruct their church, but the government demolished it Oct. 25. The government made this decision after Catholics refused to become members of the local section of the state-controlled “patriotic” church.

John Paul II sent a message to pilgrims encouraging them to pray the rosary to obtain a deeper knowledge of Christ. The pilgrims were celebrating the centenary of the consecration of Our Lady of the Rosary Basilica in Lourdes, France. The basilica was built after the Virgin Mary’s appearances to Bernadette Soubirous in early 1858 in the Massabielle grotto, in a little French village in the Pyrenees. “Living parable of stone and light, this basilica reveals to pilgrims’ eyes the 15 mysteries of the life of Christ, thus revealing the profound meaning of the rosary,” John Paul II wrote in his message. The Pope stressed that the rosary helps Christians “to know, love and imitate Christ, in order to live the Trinitarian life in him and with him to transform history until its fulfillment in the heavenly Jerusalem.”
The Romanian Orthodox Church is seeking funds to build a national cathedral, a $200 million edifice whose foundation stone was laid in February 1999. The cathedral will be built in Union Square, in the heart of the capital, not far from the patriarchate’s headquarters. The building will accommodate 6,000 people and an area flanking the cathedral will be able to accommodate 20,000 people. The municipality of Bucharest has offered 4.1 hectares (10.1 acres) for the project, which is expected to take five years to finish.

Fidel Castro hopes that a religious order of nuns can speed up its plans to open a center for spirituality in Havana. The Mother Abbess of the Bridgettine Order of the Most Holy Savior met Castro to discuss the opening of the ecumenical center. The center, which will be directed by the Bridgettine Sisters, was specifically requested by the Communist leader, Mother Tekla Famiglietti, the abbess, told Vatican Radio. The building will house eight religious and also serve as a hospitality center. “It is a gift that Fidel Castro himself has wished to make to the Order, to commemorate John Paul II’s visit to Cuba,” the abbess said. “We have signed agreements and the works of restructuring will begin as soon as possible, because the Comandante himself has so requested.”

A Vatican official urged shrines to make virtual tours available over Internet during the 3rd European Congress on Shrines and Pilgrimages at the Catalan Shrine of Monserrat. “There are many shrines on the Net and many people ‘visit’ shrines through this modern means of communication,” Archbishop Agostino Marchetto, secretary of the Pontifical Council for Migrants and Travelers, said over Vatican Radio. “For some, this virtual visit is the only way in which they can come into contact with the place,” he added. “Others, on the contrary, first make a virtual visit and then a personal one.”

Church supporters give more to other charities as well, a recent study of the Chronicle of Philanthropy discovered. Households that gave to a place of worship in 2000 contributed an average of $1,391 to their religious institution and $958 to other charities. Households that only gave to non-religious charities, by contrast, contributed only $623 on average—and had much lower volunteer rates.

For the first time since 1054, an Orthodox patriarch of Constantinople celebrated the Divine Liturgy in the Basilica of Sant’Apollinare in Classe of Ravenna, Italy. The mosaics embellishing the walls of the sixth-century structure are considered some of the greatest expressions of Byzantine art. In his homily, Patriarch Bartholomew I expressed his hope that the event would be a harbinger of better relations between Catholics and Orthodox. The patriarch said he was filled with joy and gratitude that God gave him the gift of leading the liturgy “in this ancient sacred church, built when His Church was still united.”

Liturgical artist Ade Bethune passed away in simplicity and poverty May 1, 2002—the Feast of St. Joseph, an appropriate death date for a woman who was involved for much of her life in the Catholic Worker movement. Bethune’s iconography was notable for portraying the saints working. Her funeral was marked by the simplicity of her life: an old blue pickup truck served as her hearse, and the coffin was a long wooden box on which she herself had painted images of the various houses she had lived in over the course of her life.
A highly visible tabernacle is a violation of diocesan regulations, according to Mary Ann Fallon, director of the Office of Liturgy and Spirituality for the Diocese of San Diego. Fallon ordered Father Peter Navarra, pastor of St. Mary’s Church of Escondido, Calif., to take measures to obscure or mask the visibility of the centrally-located tabernacle in the newly-remodeled interior of his church. The fund-raising slogan for the remodeling campaign had been, “Let’s Put Jesus Back in the Center of Our Parish and the Center of Our Church.” Enthusiastic parishioners raised a million dollars for the restoration, the centerpiece of which was the return of the tabernacle to a central location behind the altar.

A new Catholic college modeled on Ex Corde Ecclesiae is taking shape near Atlanta. Southern Catholic College, located in Dawsonville, GA—fifty miles from Atlanta—will open in September 2003. Layman Tom Clements—founder and chairman—envisions a lay-run four-year liberal arts college of about 3,000 undergraduates and graduates, with a firm commitment to the Magisterium. In recent decades, greater Atlanta’s Catholic population has grown from 75,000 to 300,000. Southern will be the diocese’s first Catholic college.

Confessionals are being fitted with windows in the Diocese of San Jose, according to the San Jose Mercury News. The move is in response to scattered reports of young penitents being abused in the confessionals. Only the modern, “face-to-face” confessionals are being remodeled; traditional confessionals, found in about 25% of the parishes, offer no chance for penitent/priest contact.

The quarry where John Paul II worked as a young man will soon become a university campus. During his August visit to Poland, the Pope blessed the fields around the vacant stone quarry south of Krakow where he labored during the Nazi occupation. The new campus of Jagiellonian University will be erected on the city; a highlight will be the construction of an imposing library for the Pontifical Academy of Theology.

Laura Bush visited a Vatican exhibit of 900-year-old Christian frescoes at Texas Tech University before going on vacation in early August. “It’s really going to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for a lot of people to come to see these frescoes,” the First Lady said.

Papal portrait painter J. Nelson Shanks turned down Bill Clinton to finish John Paul II, according to the Philadelphia Inquirer. The Philadelphia artist, who has painted monarchs and dignitaries from around the world, was working so hard this August on his rendering of John Paul II that he had to temporarily turn down a request to travel to Chappaqua, N.Y., to paint former president Bill Clinton.

“Everything under the basilica is more important than what is above ground,” said Archbishop Francesco Marchisano, who is responsible for the physical upkeep of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. In a recent interview with the Catholic News Service, the Archbishop explained that the first-century tomb—believed to be St. Peter’s—located below the world’s largest Christian church dwarfs all the art, sculpture, and expense of the rest of the building in spiritual and historical importance.

Five men were arrested for plotting the destruction of the Bologna Basilica of St. Petronius on Aug. 20, according to the Religious News Service. The five included four Moroccan guest workers and one Italian art historian. The Moroccans took offense at a fresco within the basilica depicting Mohammed being tortured in hell. They were seized along with videotape on which they were heard discussing the need to “bring down” the building.

The Baltimore Cathedral is being restored to the understated Neoclassical elegance envisioned by 19th-century architect Benjamin Henry Latrobe, reports the Aug. 2002 issue of Architecture magazine. In the course of the building’s 175-year life, the interior of the church has been considerably darkened by the removal of skylights (a leak-control quick fix), the addition of dark pews and floor surfaces, and the replacement of clear windows with stained glass. These changes will be undone, and structural issues addressed, by New York firms Beyer Blinder Belle and John G. Waite Associates. The result will be a significantly brighter interior with a calm beauty.

The Catholic Church nearest Ground Zero has experienced ups and downs through the whole ordeal, said pastor Fr. Kevin V. Madigan in a recent interview with Catholic News Service. Although only a few parishioners from St. Peter’s Church—established 1785, the oldest parish in New York City—were killed in the Sept. 11 destruction, the subsequent evacuation of the south end of Manhattan forced away many young families that were building community in the church and sharply reduced mass attendance. During the disaster and the recovery period, the church has been used for numerous different emergency functions, and has seen a wide assortment of visitors, pilgrims, and tourists. Fr. Madagan and his associate priests have been called on to engage in a great deal of counseling with survivors and family members of the deceased. Recently attendance at weekday and Sunday masses has begun to grow again, and the church’s pastoral staff are hopeful about the neighborhood’s eventual recovery.
Ho Chi Minh City received its first Catholic hospital in September, Vatican Radio reported. Thien Phuoc (Grace of God) clinic, inaugurated by Archbishop Jean Baptiste Pham Minh Man in the presence of church, city, and national dignitaries, represents an important step forward in church-state relations in Vietnam. The facility will be staffed by 24 doctors and 26 nurses, mostly women religious. The mission of the clinic will be to serve the needy of this south Vietnamese metropolis, better known by its former name, Saigon.

Russian painter Natalia Tsarkova’s “Last Supper” was exhibited with da Vinci’s masterpiece of the same name in the Shrine of Santa Maria delle Grazie of Milan Sept. 4–11. Tsarkova’s painting was blessed by John Paul II at Easter. The exhibition side-by-side with Leonardo’s immortal fresco was a statement for world peace following the disaster of Sept. 11, the artist explained in an interview with Zenit news service.

St. Pius XII’s sepulcher will be restored with funding from the Knights of Columbus, the Catholic laymen’s group announced in August. The Knights are providing $300,000 to the Fabbrica di San Pietro—the Vatican workshop responsible for architectural preservation—to restore the Peribolo of Clement VII, the Chapel of the Madonna of the Parturient, the Chapel of the Budding Madonna, and the Monumental Sepulcher Chapel of Pius XII.

The Benin Shrine of Our Lady of Peace was consecrated Aug. 26, 2002, by Benin’s Cardinal Bernardin Gantin. The inaugural mass attracted Benin’s president, other high state officials, and 20,000 West African pilgrims. The Shrine, built to seat 6,000, is quickly becoming one of the most important pilgrimage sites in Africa.

Beauty opens the spirit to the mystery of God, John Paul II told the meeting of the Communion and Liberation movement in Rimini, Italy, in late August. Beauty, the Pope explained, is not an evasion of reality as modernity would hold, but rather has a pedagogical power to introduce the human person to ultimate truth, which is finally expressed in Christ. Therefore, beauty can become “an instrument of evangelization,” stated the Pope.

John Paul II dedicated the Divine Mercy Shrine in Lagiewniki, Poland, on Aug. 18, 2002. The basilica and pilgrim center dedicated to St. Faustina Kowalska and the Divine Mercy was built at a cost of $20 million. As recently as 1978, St. Faustina’s writings were banned by the Vatican. While archbishop of Krakow in the 1960s, the Pope had her writings retranslated and was influential in changing the Vatican’s judgment of the polish visionary.

During his homily at the dedication, the Pope offered some thoughts on the significance of shrines and other holy places: “As we dedicate this new church, we too can ask the question which troubled King Solomon when he consecrated the Temple of Jerusalem as the house of God: ‘But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built?’ (1 Kg 8:27). Yes, at first glance, to bind certain ‘places’ to God’s presence might seem inappropriate. Yet even though time and the entire world may be considered his ‘temple,’ God has chosen certain times and places to enable people to experience in a special way his presence and his grace. Impelled by their sense of faith, people journey to these places, confident that there they will truly find themselves in the presence of God.”

One-hundred-year-old architect Harold Fisher received honors as “America’s Oldest Worker” from Green Thumb, an organization promoting employment for the elderly based in Washington, D. C. Fisher founded Harold H. Fisher & Associates, an architectural firm near Detroit, in 1945. He still works 5 days a week for the company. Fisher specializes in church architecture and has designed over 500 Michigan churches for 50 different denominations. “If you like design, you get most of it in churches and theaters.

So I’ve put my life into church work,” Fisher said, “When you say you’ll find peace and closeness to Christ within the church, you have to have that in the design.”

“Diocesan Museums: Preserving our Cultural Heritage for the Community” was the theme of a conference held at the Jubilee Museum at Holy Family Church in Columbus, Ohio. The keynote speaker was the Most Reverend Archbishop Francesco Marchisano, president of the Pontifical Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church and Archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. The focus of the conference was on the importance of diocesan museums which, according to the Archbishop’s assistant, Dr. Christina Carlo-Stella, are vessels of the “living memory” of the Church. Catholic museums should be “active evangelizing and pastoral instruments and not simply elaborated and precious depots of cultural treasures”. For more information on the Jubilee Museum, call 614–461–6204 or email jubileemuseum@columbus.rr.com.

Los Angeles’ “Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels” opened to much fanfare.
The 12-story, $195 million Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels was dedicated on Sept. 2, 2002, by Roger Cardinal Mahony, in the presence of Apostolic Nuncio Grabriele Montalvo, ten other U.S. cardinals, 700 bishops, priests, and deacons, and 2,000 major donors to the project. Designed by Spanish architect José Rafael Moneo, the massive, sandstone-colored cathedral towers over downtown Los Angeles’ flourishing Grand Avenue cultural corridor. The modern-looking edifice is characterized by asymmetrical block forms without true right angles, and—at 333 feet in length (symbolically one foot longer than St. Patrick’s in Manhattan)—it constitutes the largest Cathedral in the U.S., appropriate for the nation’s largest diocese.

The church is integrated into the surrounding plaza—enhanced with fountains and gardens—in order to represent a spiritual journey. Beginning from the plaza—which is visually isolated from the clamor of the surrounding city—the worshiper enters the Cathedral through massive 25-ton bronze doors to the left of the exterior of the apse. A long ambulatory leads to the rear of the nave, offering fleeting glances of the sanctuary’s interior on the way. Only at the end of the ambulatory can the worshiper take in the immense space of the sanctuary’s interior on the way. Only at the end of the ambulatory can the worshiper take in the immense space of the sanctuary and its full visual effect, including polished sand-yellow concrete walls opened by massive clerestories offering ample ambient lighting, and a gently sagging, patterned wooden ceiling giving an unexpected warmth to what otherwise could be an aloof interior.

Response to the cathedral has been mixed, while Moneo’s design has typically been commended for speaking in a modern idiom while incorporating various references to the tradition of church architecture. For example, the sandstone coloration recalls the Spanish mission style, and the interior arrangement alludes to the traditional Latin-cross cathedral floorplan.

A conference on church art and architecture was held Oct. 30–Nov. 1 at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, in conjunction with the University of Saint Mary of the Lake. The theme of the conference was “Building the Church for 2010.” More information is available from The Liturgical Institute, University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, 1000 East Maple Avenue, Mundelein, Illinois 60060 (ph: 847-837-4542; fx: 847-837-4545), or from the institute’s website: www.usml.edu/liturgicalinstitute.

The new Ave Maria University will be the first U.S. Catholic university constructed in the past 40 years, after having been seeded $200 million from Thomas S. Monaghan, founder of Domino’s Pizza. To be located in southwest Florida, Ave Maria University will consist of an integrated town-university plan.
ANTI-ARCHITECTURE AND RELIGION

Nikos A. Salingaros

In wanting to explain a cultural mystery—why the world renounced emotionally-nourishing buildings, and instead embraced buildings that literally make us ill—one comes up against severe obstacles. It is not that methods for producing humane buildings are unknown, nor that there is a lack of architects to build them; society has made a conscious decision to build what it does. Furthermore, enormous energy is spent in convincing people that our contemporary built surroundings are good, even though almost everyone feels otherwise. There is a basic disconnect between what we feel, and what we are told we ought to feel—or forced to accept. Answers to these questions lead us from architectural theory into social beliefs and systems.

I wish to elaborate an idea that has often been expressed by Neo-traditionalist architects: that all styles are not equivalent in terms of their architectural consequences: some styles have deleterious effects not only on the built environment, but on society as a whole. Contrary to a working assumption accepted eagerly by our contemporary culture, the avant-garde is not harmless. Stylistic pluralism hides a danger because it accepts cults into society, and those cults would like to destroy society.

Within an architectural style, ideas and concepts are tied together that may have no logical relation to one another. Someone builds a novel-looking structure, then comes up with irrelevant explanations for why the structure looks that way. To ensure success, the architect can link the new style to themes that preoccupy society at that time, promising that its adoption will help to move society forward in the desired direction. Building styles that have evolved over millennia do not suffer from such a dishonesty or logical disconnectedness; it is only hastily put-together styles that are flawed in this manner. A particular style’s philosophical underpinning could make some false assertion or statement, yet appear to fit together in a superficially satisfying manner. It is this satisfaction of fit that fools the mind into accepting a stylistic structure; the mind usually does not examine the logical coherence of the whole message. There exists an innate mechanism in the human mind that enables this phenomenon.

It is undeniable that the greatest architectural creations of mankind arose as a response to religious fervor: the desire to express in materials what human beings felt towards their Deity and Creator. Cathedrals, churches, mosques, and temples around the world attest to this fact. Enormous investments of human energy went into creating these structures. With few exceptions, they reveal an absolute honesty of expression.

Religion arises out of the necessity to understand a universe that escapes our comprehension because of its profound and ordered complexity. Religion has in the best periods of human civilization acted to complement our scientific understanding of natural phenomena. It can and does seek to provide answers to questions that are too difficult for science to answer. By presenting a set of guidelines and rituals as a balance against the destructive side of human nature, the world’s religions have successfully held humanity more or less from collapsing into chaos and barbarism.

All religions are based on worshipping some higher form of order, which means that a key aspect of religion is trying to recreate this order as a geometrical expression using physical materials. This process begins with the House of God and religious artifacts, but certainly does not stop there. In the first religions the creative spirit manifested itself everywhere, and not merely...
in special locations or in a special type of sacred artifact. Utilitarian objects were made with the same philosophy of striving to represent the complexity and beauty of the universe—as best understood by human beings at that time—in the things we built. Every religious person accepts that God is indeed everywhere, so for millennia we tried to build everything around us according to a higher logic. While this created a tension with the opposing forces of economy, utilitarianism, fashion, etc., this tension prevented our buildings and artifacts from ever being without life.

Religious belief is usually driven (though not with all people) by a need to accommodate oneself to the mysteries of the universe. A religious mythology provides not only rules for everyday conduct; it also gives consolation and stability against the frightening prospect that there is no meaning to life: that life itself might be a random and inconsequential event. A belief system thus gives purpose to our lives. In the same way, architects need a meaning structure for their profession, and, having abandoned traditional values, they will seek it in cults of their own making.

Architecture has not yet developed a scientific basis. Their only design tactic is a simple and random morphological gesture and coherence. Their only design tactic is an elementary elements of balance, rhythm and intentional violating the most "high-tech" materials for visual excitement—creating "deconstructivist discourses, whereas the texts in English translation make no sense at all. Nevertheless, those texts are read worldwide today; they are part of an established constructivist discourses, whereas the texts in English translation make no sense at all. Nevertheless, those texts are read worldwide today; they are part of an established construction. Deconstructivist architecture can be described as the product of a group of architects creating their own cult by defining a new style of building. The style is easily recognizable as having broken forms, using "high-tech" materials for visual excitement, and intentionally violating the most elementary elements of balance, rhythm and coherence. Their only design tactic is a simple and random morphological gesture that removes sense from form. It is doubtful whether such architects understand the French deconstructivist philosophers, for those writings are in principle not understandable. They do, however, find in them a convenient philosophical underpinning—and a catchy label—to justify their own architectural cult.

Science tries to understand the ordered complexity of the universe. It follows a process of putting together different pieces of insight, obtained by different researchers and by different techniques, into a coherent picture. Sometimes scientists take apart a structure to study its parts, but only so that they can better grasp how the whole works. Deconstruction is the antithesis of this: it is the tearing apart of form just for the fun of it. It destroys the ordered complexity that nature has marvelously synthesized, and from which we ourselves arose. This destruction is quite simply a turning against the evolutionary forces that have created us.

The success of the deconstructivist cult is undeniable, however. Nowadays, the most prestigious architecture schools in the world have opened their doors to deconstructivism, and have hired those architects who have made themselves the prime representatives of this cult. Major corporations, governments, and even established religious institutions compete for their favors, spending money on alien-looking commissions—large sums of money that could otherwise be used to build structures adapted to human beings and the human spirit. In a most absurd—and ultimately destructive—infatuation with an architectural fad, the media promote the cult of deconstructivist images, spreading them while lending them respectability.

Finally, evangelical techniques are misused to sell deconstructivist ideas to third-world countries, by falsely linking bizarre forms with technological progress. Countries that buy this idea then foolishly destroy their vernacular, historic, and sacred buildings in order to supposedly attain a higher level of architectural culture. Quite the opposite eventually takes place after the initial excitement has worn off, as scarce resources are squandered in paying for expensive imported materials such as glass and steel. The result of this is an impending ecological disaster the world over. The damage done to our inherited architectural and cultural heritage is immense.

In so many instances, a
perfectly sound older buildings has been demolished in order to make place for a much inferior new building. Renovation and adaptation are simply not considered—the vestiges of the past must be erased entirely. And yet, both in terms of structural quality, as well as in their connectivity to human beings, many older buildings simply cannot be duplicated today; they would cost much more to build than clients are used to paying nowadays, and few contemporary architects would even know how to build them. Perhaps this envy, the certain inability to approach the superior architectural standards and achievements of those outside the cult, is what drives their destroyers.

Despite the highly-publicized reaction of the various postmodernist architectural styles against early modernism, they have all retained modernism’s intolerance for historical and vernacular structures. As is well known, it is still forbidden to build traditionally, and—when traditional elements are included for whatever reason—they can only appear as “jokes”, and not as integral tectonic components. Those few contemporary architects who do build in more or less traditional styles are viciously attacked by the architectural establishment. If anyone dares to break the twentieth-century taboo against traditional architecture, then that architect risks ending his or her career.

It is no wonder, then, that new traditional buildings spark such violent opposition and outrage from within the architectural community. Interestingly, this revulsion is comparable to that felt by ordinary citizens when confronted with bizarre deconstructivist structures, which in that case is driven by our built-in (“hard-wired” or biologically evolved) instincts for order. As a result of their training, most architects today consider traditional architecture as “impure”, and that part of their professional duty is to purify the world through its elimination. In this conception of things, Neo-traditionalist architects are traitors and enemies of the cult.

It is as if architects formed by twentieth-century ideals have read Hans Urs von Balthasar’s treatise (The Glory of the Lord: Volume I) linking beauty with the love of God—in order to do exactly the opposite. Everything that is natural, beautiful, sacred, and holy is negated, ridiculed, and suppressed; and moreover with a fanatical insistence. Not even the Church itself has been spared. In a remarkable adoption of what is fundamentally unholy, the Church has embraced modernist architecture. The result is that many people do not feel like worshipping anymore in new church buildings that make them ill. They also question the wisdom of a Church that can no longer equate the beautiful with the Holy.

For many millennia, the highest architectural expression was reserved for the House of God. This is true with all peoples and all religions. It is immaterial whether iconography was allowed or not: where it was, mankind created glorious mosaics, frescoes and paintings; where it was not, we created fantastic polychrome tiles, wood carvings, and carpets for our places of worship. Religious spaces in themselves symbolize by their geometry the highest expression of the love of human beings for their Creator. All of this ended abruptly in the twentieth century—not only the creation of enlightened spaces, but also our attachment through architecture to a higher form of order in the universe.

Modernist architects broke up interior space into ill-defined volumes, using broken wall planes and extreme ceiling shapes and angles. A lack of closure (often aggravated by glass walls) destroyed the wholeness of individual rooms. Living spaces were either made cramped by lowering ceilings too far, or uncomfortable by raising the ceiling to two stories. To complement this assault on the user’s senses, hard materials, previously reserved for external surfaces, were introduced into internal walls. In a special irony, modernist architects were commissioned to build churches (some of which were deemed unusable by their intended occupants), and to disfigure older churches through so-called “renovation.”

We find ourselves at a difficult time in architectural history. It appears (and not only to the author) that the leading academic architectural institutions have adopted a philosophy and practice that represents anti-architecture. Furthermore, universities are teaching this anti-architecture to more than one generation of future architects. Persons outside the field naïvely expect that architects know what architecture is about, and that the most famous ones are a reliable guide to follow. Yet, nothing could be further from the truth. The discipline has been taken over by a destructive cult. It is not within the power of this short essay to reverse this catastrophic trend, but at least it can raise a warning flag to the rest of the world about an architecture gone crazy.

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The renovation of the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, received national and even international attention in 2001-2002. Publicity culminated in an uncharacteristic intervention from Rome by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. Usually reticent to interfere in the local Church, Rome made an exception in this case, causing many American Catholics and hierarchy to question the reason for such action. What was Rome’s authority in such local policies as placement of organs, tabernacles, church architecture, and could they veto or delay the local bishop’s decisions on these matters? The archbishop felt the dissension came from only a small number of detractors, who had gained the ear of the Roman authorities. He was required to submit his position to officials in Rome, who had asked that he delay continuance of a renovation that was virtually past the point of no return. He did not submit to that request, the renovation was completed, and the dedication of the renovated cathedral took place in February of 2002.

The Archbishop submitted his resignation that year at age 75, as is required by canon law, and his resignation was accepted in June.

Milwaukee’s cathedral sits in the downtown region of clean buildings, streets, and remarkably well-tended gardens, a few short blocks from Lake Michigan. The cathedral was built on the location of the first Catholic Church in Wisconsin, and has been named a Milwaukee landmark in recognition of its architectural and historical significance. It is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The cathedral’s magnificent tower is appointed with decoration that draws the eye upward from the building facade. It is recognizable as a copy of the old Capuchin Franciscan Church steeple that was destroyed in Dresden, Germany, during World War II. The roof over the long nave stretches across the city block that contains the church and its accompanying buildings. Particularly striking—and a critical part of the recent renovation and restoration—is the refashioning of the old school into parish offices and the creation of an atrium and a garden. The atrium itself is attached to the wall of the cathedral by a glass enclosure that provides a space for gathering before and after the services. It stands in the spot where the former high school once stood. This atrium is meant to express a connection between the sacred and the secular, encouraging parishioners to participate in the outreach ministries that take place nearby in the connecting buildings. The cloister and garden on this north side of the cathedral compliment the surrounding neighborhood of the downtown business center.

The cathedral boasts nearly 1,000 households. Few of this number have children. The parish commitment to the poor and the homeless and many social concerns are reflected in the programs, the use of space, and critically, the cathedral itself. Not many would disagree that this vision to live out the gospel to the poor was encouraged and actively promoted by the former Archbishop. His response to the call of the social gospel has brought forth critics before. In the case of the renovation of his cathedral, and his vision of its purpose at the service of God’s people, he called for cathedral worshippers to live the gospel message outside its walls. The renovation was clearly a statement promoting the social gospel, but may not as successfully express concerns for the Catholic identity of its worshippers, particularly with respect to the architecture and the accoutrements of the cathedral.

Romanesque features are powerfully represented in the cathedral’s architecture. Upon entering the church from the west doors—which are no longer the preferred entrance—the eye is directed front and center. An organ has been positioned where once stood a large baldachino, tabernacle, and high altar. Visually, this could make one standing at the front doors wonder: Could this be a concert hall? The renovators had that in mind and knew that the parish would welcome local musicians and concerts as part of the cathedral’s outreach. Nonetheless, they hoped that the altar and the suspended corona and crucifix would be the centerpiece of the cathedral. The effect of the corona is so striking and perhaps so out of place in the Romanesque surroundings that a pilgrim could fear proximity to the sharp base of the cross that threatens to pierce the altar. This “focus of the action of Christ” has been moved to the center of the nave. However, the small size, and the enormous organ which has been positioned closer to where the altar once stood, may have diminished the hope of making this altar the focal point of the cathedral.

The placement of the organ was chosen for acoustical reasons. To place the organ in the apse was never previously an option. Today, as the entrance of liturgical preference seems to be from the atrium on the north side, one is neither immediately engaged by the massive nave nor the permanency of stationary pews which would have directed vision from west to east. Movable chairs have increased the cathedral seating capacity from 748 to 980. The
full number of chairs is not placed in the nave except when there is a need. While this is practical and flexible, like many of the recommendations coming from certain liturgical consultants, it denies the importance of permanency. The concept of permanence so eagerly encourages the hearts of many Catholics. Movable seating may be likened to repeatedly changing the furniture in a favorite room. One may attempt to sit down and only too late realize that a favorite chair has been removed. Voices coming from the chairs may be different than the voices that were said to have come from the pews! One may sit in his own chair, but a pew must be shared with others. Whatever accoutrements may be chosen, the concern over permanence in opposition to transitory furnishings needs to be addressed seriously and in relation to Catholic identity.

The renovation has included a baptism pool, found close to the front doors. Baptism, the entrance into the Church, is expressed in this pool and font of running water, “leading the baptized to the altar and beyond.” Unfortunately, in this case what visually lies “beyond” is actually the organ. Nevertheless, one should praise the understanding of theology found here and the nobility of the materials that were used. Indeed, I was truly impressed in the choice of good workmanship that created an outstanding overall effect. These sacred things lift the hearts and minds of worshippers to God, the source of their strength, and edify their future actions. This vision is expressed in the cathedral’s Mission Statement: “We are committed to worship our God, preach the gospel, and serve our neighbor.”

I was also struck by the attention given to the restoration of the columns and capitals. The use of gold and red and the concern to return to the original colors both enhance the Romanesque architectural appointments. The sense of verticality is uplifting and the lighting is highly effective. The colorful painted medallions of former bishops high on side walls tell a visual story. These decorations not only enrich the sense of history, but also call to mind similar decorations that may be found in some churches of Rome.

The ambo has been positioned immediately in front of the organ. The preacher must walk a minimum of five steps as he enters and stands behind it. It calls to mind a sort of stage or walkway. One might ask if this placement is not reminiscent of one traditional Protestant design, where the pulpit is primary and focuses the congregation on the preaching done there assisted by an organ and hymns of praise. The organ is scheduled to be ready for use in 2005. One wonders whether it will overpower the pulpit that has been placed so close by.

The cathedral’s new liturgical design seems to repeat what so many renovations have done in the recent past. There is a subtle attempt to turn the long nave floor plan sideways, with parts of the liturgy occurring here and there. This direction could disintegrate liturgy into acts of showmanship and entertainment without a permanence of focus that sacred action requires. While it is difficult—sight unseen—to comment credibly about the effectiveness of liturgy here and the effect of the surroundings upon it, my concern is focused not on the liturgy but what is left to celebrate once the liturgy is over. The House of God must stand on its own, a visible comment for all to see; one that not only uses the noblest of materials, but exhibits them so that others may be encouraged by these gifts from God.

All too often, the recent liturgical movement, and the architectural design it inspires, has focused solely on the liturgical action as the purpose of the building. If this is true, the cost to build such a church and the cost of its renovation may be too much to bear for the sake of a few hours a week (Mt. 26:9).

Where is to be found the living presence of God? What does Catholic theology say about it? How is it to be expressed in the building and its architecture? Catholics today who were alive before Vatican II would point to the tabernacle, and say that such a living presence is to be found there. Those who have been trained in theology in the last 30 years would also point to other Christians and the person of the minister.

Many cathedrals have always had a separate chapel for Eucharistic reservation. This cathedral has not. The placement of the tabernacle in a side chapel continues to upset many Catholics. If it were to be replaced with an organ they would be infuriated. The suggestion that separate chapels be created for the Eucharist has been rejected by many Catholics and bishops alike.

There is now evidence of a stronger Eucharistic devotion in the many perpetual adoration chapels constructed across the United States and elsewhere. Many churches have moved the tabernacle back to a central position. Architectural design could be in a state of suspended animation for many years awaiting the outcome of the debate on tabernacle placement.

The Milwaukee cathedral has used the former baptistry as a beautiful setting for Eucharistic reservation. The bronze tabernacle from 1943 sits on plinth fashioned from three columns originally part of the sanctuary baldachino. This sacred space is well appointed and a fitting place for private prayer.

Renovators often use materials from the old in constructing the new. The attempt to incorporate the past in this way, while using the valued materials, does not always achieve the effect of convincing Catholics that tradition has been respected. It can be more expensive to renovate using older materials and the sacred object has been totally changed in the renovation. The sense of what is sacred to many Catholics has been uprooted, and their rituals and symbols have been changed, only to be of...
ferred back to them in a new form for veneration today. Experience teaches us that they are not accepting the gesture positively.

Cathedrals take their names from the Cathedra, or bishop’s chair found there. Such a chair visibly represents the bishop’s teaching authority in the local church. It is an important symbol that should not be minimal. Again, the renovators have used noble materials to create a fitting cathedra from the old marble communion rail. The placement of that chair against the pillars, in juxtaposition to the presider’s chair could be argued as minimal. The chair is raised up on a three-step-high platform. A tapestry with the archiepiscopal Coat of Arms is being created and may have the effect of bringing more fitting prominence to this necessary symbol.

Iconography is one more critical aspect found in the Catholic identity. The shrines and devotional art of St. John the Evangelist Cathedral are evident but nominal at this time. The long range plan is to include more commissioned works of art in the devotional niches along the north and south side walls. Currently, statuary includes a major shrine to “Mary, Mother of the Church.” The bronze and gilt figure is found front and north in a place of prominence. It is viewed at eye level, and although on a small pedestal, the placement may be in conflict with the hope that the saints are to be lifted up as models. A statue of Blessed Pope John XXIII is found on the opposite side of the cathedral. It was placed there to honor the saintly pontiff who inaugurated the reforms of Vatican II. Striking in design, the Pope stands alone, dwarfed by the massive surroundings, not unlike Blessed John himself at the time of the Council.

Other appointments—such as the illuminated 14 Stations of the Cross (replicas of those found in St. Ann Church in Munich), the stained glass windows portraying the 12 Apostles and St. Paul, Venetian mosaic inlays, a white oak statue of Moses, the two chapels of Reconciliation, the day chapel, and an ambry for the reservation of the Holy Oils—all contribute to the beauty of this church. Noble materials have been used in all these examples.

In the light of such a conscientious attention to detail, the use of good quality materials, and the willingness of so many Catholics and benefactors to contribute to the project, one could be led to agree that opposition was insignificant in the face of such a show of support—although it is my belief that an appeal to numbers is counter-productive. Nonetheless, the work is done, there can be no turning back, and a new archbishop has been installed. All that remains now is what can be learned from this renovation to assist us elsewhere. I therefore offer a more positive critique of the experience and the renovation of this church. It may be difficult to move beyond the personalities and vision involved that resulted in the Milwaukee protest, but this must be done for the sake of the Church, not only here but anywhere similar renovations occur.

As a Catholic as well as an anthropologist, I am deeply touched by the customs and history of people. I grieve when those customs and history are either disregarded or seem to be ignored. Church renovations must lead us beyond the subjective, beyond the promotion of reform, to a place where we are more open to see the gifts of God celebrated in the existing customs and history of local people.

I continue to propose that using the wisdom found in the methodology of cultural anthropology is a successful approach to the problems inherent in both architectural and liturgical renewal and design implementation. Many in the liturgical community continue to resist such a process and promote their vision of renewal at all costs. This sentiment is tragically displayed in the plaque found in the west entranceway that marks the renovation. It tells the visitor that this cathedral was “restored, not without some difficulty, exactly to the norms of Vatican II.” It remains forever a reminder that this difficulty was unable to be resolved here, and what was more important than such resolution was the vision of the renovators of how “exactly” the norms of Vatican II must be carried out.

I refuse to believe that this is the last word in Milwaukee or elsewhere. But rather than memorialize unresolved difficulties, let us celebrate the good things that have been done here. And in the future, let us work to offer the world living buildings that express our identity with beauty, raising that identity up, offering it to the world.

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An Italian Connection:

Rome’s Littlest ‘Basilica’ and the Capitol Building in Washington

Breda Ennis

The connection referred to in the title is between a small church building in Rome—the Sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Archetto—and the large and imposing Capitol Hill building in Washington. Both have a cupola or dome which was decorated by the Roman artist, Constantino Brumidi, whose destiny was strongly affected by the political events of his day, both in Italy and in the United States.

The Sanctuary is the most elegant and refined Marian church in Rome, but is probably little known to American visitors and scholars. It was built originally to house a beautiful image of the Madonna entitled Causa nostrae Laetitiae (“Cause of our Joy”), a name given to it by the Roman population. According to popular belief this small painting—the work of the artist Domenico Muratori—was not only strikingly beautiful, but also had miraculous powers. On July 9, 1796, it was believed that the Madonna moved her eyes, and as a result the painting (or “icon”) received great veneration. In fact, from that time until today, large numbers of the faithful have gathered in the sanctuary before the image of the Virgin to recite the Rosary.

In 1850, Count and Countess Muti Papazzuri Savorelli—the owners of the alley and archway—decided to have a church built to house the sacred image. The commission was given to their son-in-law, the famous architect Virginio Vesignani. The work was completed in one year, and the church was solemnly consecrated on May 31 in the presence of numerous cardinals and the King of Bavaria.

The interior of this late neo-classical church is rectangular in shape, with a tiny apse and slight extensions off the area under the mini cupola, which give it the form of a Latin cross. Vesignani considered it his best work. The building has a majestic atmosphere, but since it is small in size the sense of intimacy between the congregation and the sacred image on the altar is never lost. The tiny sanctuary can only seat about twenty people. Architecturally, it is such a living space that one has the feeling that just by stretching out a hand one can touch the altar, and even reach the top of the cupola.

To build this grandiose Christian temple, Vesignani demolished a bedroom in the overhead arch to fit in a small cupola. When one walks up the narrow passage-way from the iron gateway, there is no indication that behind the simple glass doorway lies a tiny nave and a shimmering gilded apse and the altarpiece. The smell of wax from the lit candles heightens the sense of peace and holiness.

The walls are delicately decorated with gilded stucco work, helping to illuminate a space whose only source of natural light comes from the glass panels of the entrance door. In the niches of the walls there are ten Grecian-style stucco angels by Luigi Simonetti. The Archivolt, which rests on two columns of cipollino, is of white marble with inlaid pieces of agate, lapislazzuli, malachite, and diasprous. It is only when one looks up at the minute dome that one sees the work of Constantino Brumidi. He was chosen to decorate the ceiling and dome of this diminutive church, and by January 1851 he had completed his work. In the centre of the mini cupola is a fresco of the Immaculate Conception. The Madonna is surrounded by angels. Below this is a circle of coffers. Four contain frescoes of lively cherubs, and four have what looks like precious stones set in a royal crown. The Madonna in the center anticipates the symbolic figures Brumidi would later fresco in the Capitol in Washington. Other figures he painted here on the cupola’s pendentives, representing four virtues (Wisdom, Prudence, Innocence, and Strength), also anticipate the work in the Capitol.

If one looks closer at the figure of Strength a similarity with the figure of Liberty/Fame in the Rotunda in Washington can be seen. Here the figure is clutching a lion, while the Liberty/Fame figure holds a fasces: a symbol of power carried by Roman Magistrates.

A few years before Brumidi began working on the Sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Archetto, a new Pope was elected. The Pope, Pius IX, started granting constitutional rights to the people of Rome and the Papal States. The City of Rome was granted a municipal government, and the Pope set up a council to advise him on important issues. He fostered the participation of laymen in administering the city, authorised the formation of a civic guard, and received worldwide praise for his actions. Yet, when the Pope refused to support a war against Austria—one of his close allies—the situation developed to such a difficult point that the Pope had to flee for protection to Gaeta. In his absence, the Constituent Assembly abolished the temporal power of the Pope in the city of Rome and proclaimed the Roman Republic in 1849. The population of Rome gave total support to the idea of a Republic, but this led to the intervention of a number of Catholic powers: Austria, France, and the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Napoleon III sent French troops to Rome in April 1849. They took over the city and the Pope returned to power in April 1850.

As a consequence, in February of 1851 Brumidi was arrested and imprisoned along with a number of revolutionary leaders. As a captain of the civic guard, he had seized three convents (removing their art works) in order to house troops from
Piedmont who had come to help the Republicans. Now he was accused of stealing some of these artworks. Tried in court, he denied the charges, saying his actions were taken to protect the paintings from French troops. Nevertheless, he was sentenced to 18 years in prison. After a number of petitions to the Pope, some of them signed by the monks of the three convents involved, Pius IX reduced his sentence by two thirds. Two months later, the Pope granted Brumidi full and unconditional pardon and ordered his release, probably remembering that Brumidi had executed an elegant portrait of him five years earlier!

After a few months Brumidi went to the United States. The work he had done on the Archetto church was the last he did in Italy, and indeed one could say it was the seed which grew and flowered wonderfully in the Capitol building. He arrived in New York on the 18th of September, 1852, which was the fifty-ninth anniversary of the laying of the Capitol cornerstone by George Washington. When he finally got his U.S. citizenship he was so proud that he signed one of his works in the Capitol building “C. Brumidi, Artist, Citizen of the U.S.”

Nearly fifty years of age when he arrived, he remained in the U.S. for the rest of his life. A man of great charm and culture, he died in relative poverty. Though very well compensated for his work in the Capitol building, he was a bad manager of his money and was well known for his generosity to friends and people in need.

Brumidi’s artistic training in Rome prepared him very well for the work he would do in the U.S. At the prestigious Accademia di San Luca, he studied painting under Vincenzo Camuccini. He also worked with Filippo Agricola, who was well-known for his interest in historical and religious subjects. His training in sculpture was indebted primarily to Antonio Canova, but also to his disciple Bertel Thorvaldsen—one of the leaders of the classical revival in Italy. Brumidi’s only known sculptures are the four marble lunettes in low relief, two angels, and a crucifixion relief above the altar in the Weld-Clifford Chapel in the crypt of the Church of San Marcello al Corso in Rome (near the Archetto Church). He took great inspiration from the work of Raphael and the murals in Nero’s Domus Aurea. With Camuccini and Agricola he worked on the restoration and decoration of the Vatican’s Third Loggia. His talent for fresco and tempera work can be seen also in the Torlonia Palace in Rome. His knowledge of architecture led him to design a project for a grandiose new avenue from the Quirinale to the Vatican, including a triumphal arch in honour of Pius IX.

Brumidi brought the technique of true fresco, called “buon fresco,” to the United States. In the 1850’s and 1860’s he was the only artist in the U.S. capable of using this technique, which the ancient Romans had mastered centuries before. Later, in the Renaissance, it became important once again, and arrived at a point of perfection with the work of Raphael and Michelangelo in the early sixteenth century. Baroque painters used a thicker pigment, and this was the method that Brumidi learned when the art form was revived again in the early nineteenth century.

The great artistic challenge for Brumidi in Washington was how to blend the modern and the classical, bringing the two
worlds into contact with each other. He responded to this challenge by putting American motifs (flowers, fruit, animals and technological inventions) into a classical framework. Apart from the Rotunda, he was responsible for the decoration—executed by himself or with assistants—of the “Brumidi Corridors” on the first floor of the Senate wing. Done in the Pompeian style, the decoration has a musical harmony inspired by the second Loggia in the Vatican.

Among the rooms Brumidi decorated in the Capitol are the House Appropriations Committee Room (at that time called the House Committee on Agriculture Room), and the Senate Appropriations Committee Hearing Room (formerly used by the Committee on Naval Affairs). He decorated ceilings and walls with elaborately embellished symbolic figures, gilded plaster filigree, happy cherubs, and severe historical portraits. The architecture and the decoration almost become a single unit.

Brumidi’s most excellent work is in the dome of the Capitol. In 1862 he was commissioned to paint a fresco on the concave canopy over the eye of the new dome. He began this massive artistic endeavour in 1865 and finished it in eleven months. “The Apotheosis of Washington” fresco covered a space of 4,664 square feet. It was created in such a way that it could be read clearly from the floor, and be visually correct when viewed from the balcony just below. It depicts President George Washington rising up to the heavens. He is flanked by two figures: Victory/Fame and Liberty. The circle is completed by maidens who represent the thirteen original Sister States. There is a rainbow under Washington’s feet. The six groups of figures around the perimeter of the fresco represent War, Science, Shipping, Commerce, Mechanics, and Agriculture.

What is curious about Brumidi’s destiny is that once again he found himself doing artistic works during a period of political turmoil. He worked right through the Civil War. While he was painting the canopy, President Lincoln was assassinated and the Capitol itself was used as a hospital for injured soldiers. 1

When the canopy was finished, it could be said to rival the grand illusionist ceilings of earlier periods, such as Correggio’s “Assumption of the Virgin” in the dome of Parma Cathedral, or Ruben’s “Apotheosis of James II.” Brumidi also designed a frieze of illusionist sculpture—to go around the base of the Rotunda—depicting scenes from American history. The life-size figures were to be done in sepia grisaille fresco, a monochrome of whites and browns giving the effect of relief sculpture. He began the cartoons in 1877, but was only able to work on the actual fresco for three years, since he died in 1880. He worked right up to the day before he died. Two other artists finished his work.

Even while devoting all this energy to a fine secular building, Brumidi never ceased to give his attention to religious works. In the many pauses in the work on the Capitol building he was able to accept outside commissions. He had met Archbishop John Hughes in Rome, and he had emigrated to the U.S. when the Catholic Church was expanding its building program. He painted his “Mystical Vision of St. Ignatius at la Storta” for the Jesuit Church of St. Ignatius in Baltimore. A lifelong friend, Fr. Benedict Sestini, S.J.—who had come from Rome to Georgetown—recommended him for the Altarpiece for the Church of St. Aloysius on North Capitol Street, near the Rotunda.

Brumidi’s great religious masterpieces include the works he did in the Church of St. Stephen on 28th Street in New York City. He created the fifteen-foot-high “Martyrdom of St. Stephen” and a monumental seventy-foot-high Crucifixion for the altar wall. These are works of his later years. One of his last known religious commissions was the Crucifixion scene executed for the Academy of Mount St. Vincent in Riverdale, New York.

Unfortunately, it is not known if Brumidi ever spoke about the construction of the tiny Madonna dell’Archetto Basilica in Rome. What is curious to reflect on, however, is that he spent approximately the same amount of time working on the ceiling and cupola of the Archetto church in Rome as he did on the gigantic “Apotheosis of Washington” fresco in the Capitol building.

Monuments from the past can often speak to us with a unique and mysterious power and eloquence. What the Sanctuary of the Madonna dell’Archetto and the Capitol Building have in common, however, is that they are both living buildings of the present. One is devoted to the daily religious practices of prayer and the promotion of charitable works, and the other is devoted to the secular activities of government and power. Brumidi’s artistic gifts to both—the great power, beauty, and energy of his conception—are still there for us to marvel at today.

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E. A. Sövik in his influential book Art and Architecture in Worship laid out the theory that sacred space should not be visually distinguished from common spaces, because to do so would limit the sacred to distinct times and places and deny its influence on the entirety of life.

Sövik’s reasoning sounds logical, even profound, but it is a classic case of the triumph of rationality over wisdom, theory over reality. In practice, the removal of the distinction between sacred and common space has not led to the sanctification of all space, but to its profanation. Rather than all space becoming sacred, now no space is sacred. The holiness of liturgical celebration has not spread to every human endeavor, but the banality typical of our public life has spread into worship.

Sövik in fact presents us with a false dilemma: to set aside space as sacred does not imply the de-sanctification of all other space. But how can this be? I suggest we approach the problem of the relationship between sacred and common space through a mystical concept drawn from the well-springs of Sacred Scripture: that of firstfruits.

The key passage for our consideration is Romans 11:16, where St. Paul comments “If the firstfruits are holy, so is the whole batch of dough.” St. Paul’s specific application of this concept in the context of Romans 11 is extremely rich, but need not detain us here; rather it is necessary for us to grasp the principle of “firstfruits.” The ancient Israelites made a practice of bringing the first produce of their harvests as an offering to the Lord’s sanctuary (Leviticus 23:9–14). Later, Jewish custom adapted this practice to non-agricultural circumstances. For example, a Jew making bread may have taken a prime portion of his dough and set it aside as holy to the Lord—perhaps to be made into a loaf for dedication to the Temple. Apparently, it is this practice that St. Paul has in mind.

What is significant for us is that the offering of the firstfruits was regarded as sanctifying the whole batch. The whole harvest became blest; the “whole batch of dough” became holy. I suggest this concept can be seen throughout Scripture in the dedication of time, space, and material goods to God. Thus, the setting aside of the Sabbath as holy to the Lord sanctified the whole week (Genesis 2:1–3), the establishment of the Tabernacle sanctified the whole camp of the Israelites (Exod 40), and tithing upon material goods brought blessing upon one’s entire wealth (Malachi 3:7–12).

One would think that the dedication of part of our time, space, or goods specifically to God would render the rest unholy, but in fact it brings the blessing of God on the whole. I propose we construe the construction of our churches as a firstfruits offering of our physical space to God, that—far from rendering the rest profane—brings a new level of sanctity to all our space. This mystical way of construing the relationship between sacred and common space defies the superficial rationality of Sövik’s approach, but is rooted in revelation and the reality of human experience.

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Sacred Scripture and Tradition:

Theologically-Based Architectural Principles for a New Millennium

Jamie Hottovy

After thirty years of liturgical renewal, we are well placed to assess both the strengths and weaknesses of what has been done, in order more confidently to plot our course into the future which God has in mind for his cherished people,” Pope John Paul II poignantly observes. These strengths and weaknesses must include an examination of the way church architecture has taken form during the period since Vatican II. In order to appreciate fully the direction the Church has taken with respect to sacred architecture, some major theological principles articulated at Vatican II must be considered, such as the use of Scripture as a foundational basis for architectural custom and practice, as well as the development of Tradition as a model for the organic development of ecclesiastical architecture.

The church building plays an integral sacramental role in the liturgy. A church’s structure and design is neither a secondary consideration nor simply a functional shell to protect the worshipping community from the elements. “The celebration of the Eucharist is to be performed in a sacred place, unless in a particular case necessity demand otherwise.” The church building has a sacred function; it is to be suited for sacred celebration. The Catechism of the Catholic Church builds on this foundation: “It is in these churches that the Church celebrates public worship to the glory of the Holy Trinity, hears the word of God and sings his praise, lifts up her prayer, and offers the sacrifice of Christ sacramentally present in the midst of the assembly. These churches are also places of recollection and personal prayer” (1199).

The Rites of Dedication of a Church and Altar do not place primary emphasis on the building’s function, but rather describe the Church in its various mysteries: fruitful, holy, favored, exalted, participating in the worship of God, partaking in the sacraments, and gathering in the hope of salvation. There is a sense of sacredness, of the consecrated, of mystery, all of which are realities that reflect how the Church understands herself and all of which have unlimited possibilities of being captured in sacred architecture.

What theological principles does the Church offer to guide architecture so that it can serve its proper function? A primary principle that imbibes the architectural heritage of the Church is the use of Scripture as a foundational basis for architectural custom and practice. Scripture informs the art of building, all of which pervade the Scriptures:

The Church is called the building of God (1 Cor. 3:9). The Lord compared himself to the stone which the builders rejected, but which was made into the cornerstone (Mt. 21:42; cf. Acts 4:11; 1 Pet. 2:7; Ps. 117:22). On this foundation the Church is built by the apostles (cf. 1 Cor. 3:11) and from it the Church receives solidity and unity. This edifice has many names to describe it: the house of God in which his family dwells; the household of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19, 22); the dwelling-place of God among men (Rev. 21:3); and, especially, the holy temple. This temple, symbolized in places of worship built out of stone, is praised by the Fathers and, not without reason, is compared in the liturgy to the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. As living stones we here on earth are built into it (1 Pet. 2:5). It is this holy city that is seen by John as it comes down out of heaven from God when the world is made anew, prepared like a bride adorned for her husband (Rev. 21).

These architectural references are just an introduction to the many ways Revelation reveals the sacredness and mystery of God’s house. In the church building God is intensely present. Here the sacraments are celebrated. Here Christ is present in the tabernacle. The church structure is the meeting place between God and His people. Christ used architectural imagery and analogy to describe Himself because those examples were tangible, familiar, and graphic. Architecture is part of the human experience, and it lends itself to various layers of symbolism and meaning. The church building—the City of God—points to the eschatological: the place of worship is revelatory of the kingdom of God to come.

From Divine Revelation we can glean much of the consciousness of what the Church is and how it is to be made manifest, not only in its physical reality but also in its spiritual reality. The Prayer of Dedication found in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar is steeped with references to scripture:

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Here is reflected the mystery of the Church. The Church is fruitful, made holy by the blood of Christ; a bride made radiant with his glory, a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith, a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit.

The Church is holy, your chosen vineyard: its branches envelop the world, its tendrils, carried on the tree of the cross, reach up to the kingdom of heaven.

The Church is favored, the dwelling place of God on earth: a temple built of living stones, founded on the apostles with Jesus Christ its corner stone.

The Church is exalted, a city set on a mountain: a beacon to the whole world, bright with the glory of the Lamb, and echoing the prayers of her saints. The entire Prayer of Dedication proclaims a theology of the Church that is at the same time a faithful virgin and a mother made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is a vineyard no longer a structure in which Christ is a temple built of living stones, founded on the apostles with Jesus Christ its corner stone. The Church is exalted, a city set on a mountain: a beacon to the whole world, bright with the glory of the Lamb, and echoing the prayers of her saints. The entire Prayer of Dedication proclaims a theology of the Church that is at the same time a faithful virgin and a mother made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is a vineyard no longer

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chically, and the dedication of a church is listed first. Such placement highlights the priority that the place of worship has as a place of God’s presence and glorification by His people.

While one foundational principle that has tremendous influence on the Church’s architectural praxis is its reference to Scripture in varied forms of expression, another significant principle that informs Church architecture on many levels is the doctrine of the organic development of Tradition.

As noted throughout Vatican II, the Church is understood as a developing, organic institution. From the time of Christ to the apostolic age and beyond, the Church has seen innumerable developments through the centuries. “[T]he apostles, in handing on what they themselves had received, warn the faithful to maintain the traditions which they had learned either by word of mouth or by letter. . . . What was handed on by the apostles comprises everything that serves to make the People of God live their lives in holiness and increase their faith. In this way the Church in her doctrine, life, and worship perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes.” There is a corresponding development in the manifestation of her churches. This organic development of Tradition is directly corollary with sacred architecture and art.

Reliance on Tradition is a common thread woven through the major documents of Dei Verbum, Gaudium et Spes, and Lumen Gentium; and it is touched upon in Sacrosanctum Concilium. Such widespread mention illustrates the significance of the doctrine and shows how the development of Tradition touches upon many areas in the Church’s teachings.

The organic development of Tradition has a direct influence on the direction the architectural heritage of the Church should take. This principle becomes a paradigm and model for the organic development of architecture and art, which are also steeped in tradition. Based on this fact, Vatican II states that there are to be “no new innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them, and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing.” This directive is framed as such because the Church considers any need for development with the utmost discretion and seriousness.

The whole of Vatican II’s liturgical reform was placed within a context of soberness: “In order that the Christian people may more certainly derive an abundance of graces from the sacred liturgy, holy Mother Church desires to undertake with great care a general restoration of the liturgy itself.” The Church cautiously embarked on liturgical reform because she saw the grave need for change but wanted to be as prudent as possible in implementing that change so as to avoid any abuses or misinterpretations. This is a concern Pope John Paul II revisits: “Although at this stage of renewal the possibility of a certain ‘creative’ freedom has been permitted, nevertheless this freedom must strictly respect the requirements of substantial unity. We can follow the path of this pluralism only as long as the essential characteristics of the celebration of the Eucharist are preserved, and the norms prescribed by the recent liturgical reform are respected.”

Another fundamental consideration included in this principle is that certain changes to the church building are permitted, while other aspects of Church architecture cannot be changed because they are essential in manifesting the appropriate sacred space for
the Mass and the sacraments. “The liturgy is made up of unchangeable elements divinely instituted, and of elements subject to change.”11 There are elemental aspects that no one can change because they are directly instituted by God. “Down to our times liturgy has been looked upon as a sacred heritage, to which additions can cautiously be made, but the basic structure of which, handed down by tradition, cannot be undermined. The substance of the liturgical texts and institutions, which grew out of the life of the primary Church, was laid down in fixed forms in the West as in the East towards the end of Christian antiquity.”12 The Church does not have the power to change these aspects in light of her understanding of Revelation and Tradition.

Appropriate considerations need to be made in order to facilitate the liturgy in its proper form. As the liturgy may be revised, so, too, architectural design may be adjusted; otherwise, liturgical architecture cannot properly fulfill its role. Changes implemented should not be for the sake of change only, but should be carried out thoughtfully and in accord with Church directives because the liturgy is not a matter of variety, change, or trend. “[The liturgy] is concerned with an ever-deeper experience of something that is beyond change because it is the very answer that we are seeking.”13 Freedom in certain areas is permitted (such as for style considerations, availability of materials, or for cultural expression), but other intrinsic aspects of Church design cannot be changed because they are essential in manifesting the appropriate sacred space for the Mass and the sacraments. Ecclesial structures must exist in conformity with the Church’s architectural heritage but in a way that is relevant to the present. This dichotomy—with one aspect rooted in the past and the other adapting to the present and future—is an intrinsic reality of the Church that continues through the ages and affects many facets of church design.

A further element of the organic development of tradition—respect for historical precedent of traditional architectural forms—should be upheld because it is established, enduring, and well-founded. Traditional forms are to be utilized because they are successful models for the liturgy and they transmit the Catholic faith to the people. In the Church’s tradition of development there is continuity with the past, the present, and the future. Although the Church has encouraged new and contemporary forms of art and architecture, she has not turned her back on two thousand years of sacred architectural tradition. The two can co-exist: modern churches with modern amenities can be built, but they can draw upon elements from the Church’s rich architectural heritage. Churches can be simultaneously “modern” and “traditional.” The Church’s architecture grew organically from centuries of development, of inventiveness, and of continuity. “In the history of the Church, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ are always closely interwoven. The ‘new’ grows out of the ‘old,’ and the ‘old’ finds a fuller expression in the ‘new.’”14 The Council calls for an architectural exegesis, a critical interpretation and exposition based on tradition in order to find ways to reconnect ourselves to our heritage as well as to create a culture of spiritual unity and continuity. There needs to be a balance between utilizing the Church’s architectural treasury while conforming to Vatican II directives.

Pope John Paul II proclaims a new springtime in the Church as we embark upon a new millennium. He challenges the Church to reinvigorate her role as patron of Christ and the Church to reinvigorate her role as patron of the arts and architecture, and clarifies the role of the architect to create “spaces to bring the Christian people together and celebrate the mysteries of salvation.”15 The two underpinning principles of Revelation and Tradition as models for ecclesial architecture are fundamental starting points in attaining this goal.

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10 Pope John Paul II, “Liturgy Preserves Faith Experience,” p. 2. Opera artis, in the name of the reform, was a letter that addressed many of the abuses that were occurring in the Church following Vatican II.
13 SC Sacraments and Divine Worship, Holy People, Holy Place, no. 12, 1999.
15 Ibid., p. 21.
ARTICLES

THE SACRAMENTAL SPACE OF THE CELEBRATION

Christ is our new time, and it is this that we celebrate in the night of faith until everything is brought to its completion in the light of the day of his coming. He is also our living space, our “new universe” (see Rev 21:5), and it is in him that we celebrate the mysteries of faith until everything has become “a new heaven and a new earth,” the place where “God lives among human beings” (Rev 21:1f). Even now he is the mysterious place, “hidden in the Father,” in which we sacramentally celebrate the eternal liturgy. But in what sense is this place truly sacramental? How can the space of our world contain the new universe?

“Rabbi, where do you live?” (Jn 1:38)

The economy of salvation that is revealed to us in the Bible and brought to fulfillment in our celebrations is marked from one end to the other by the search for a dwelling place. The first creation already exists under this sign. The earth was inhabitable because God prepared it as a dwelling place for the human beings whom he loves, but it became hostile as soon as fear took hold of the human heart. It is there that God seeks out human beings: “Where are you?” (Gen 3:9). The first sign of the unreliability of this dwelling place is that human beings turn it into a hiding place for their self-centeredness instead of throwing it open for encounter and welcome. Henceforth inhospitable to human beings in flight from their God, it becomes captive to a tragic ambiguity: fruitfulness and death, garden and wilderness, home and exile. In light of this ambiguity the promise that springs from the Father’s heart becomes intelligible: it will be a world that is a dwelling place for children who believe in his love. The ambiguity will be removed, for human beings will be able to dwell in the land of their God only if their hearts become trusting once again.

Go to “a country which I shall show you,” but on one condition: “Leave your country, . . . and your father’s house” (Gen 12:1). When, after centuries of wandering, exoduses, and exiles, the Son himself became a human being, he fulfilled both the promise and the condition: he left his Father and entered this world, but did so in order to lead us and bring us into his Father’s house (Jn 13:1ff; 14:1). The first two disciples had an inkling of this when in response to Jesus’ question, which was a veiled call pregnant with hope: “What do you want?” they asked: “Rabbi, where do you live?” (Jn 1:38). Once the Word became flesh, “he lived among us” (Jn 1:14); once the heart of his mother had become wholly a dwelling place of faith, the faithful Son dwelt in our land. Then everything began to come back to life. The earth on which human beings hide themselves out of fear, and with death as the result, was to become the space in which they would exist in trust and with life as its fruit.

From his conception to his ascension Jesus brought to fulfillment this mystery of the dwelling place. He who contains the universe in his all-powerful word is himself contained as a child in his mother’s womb. He who fashioned Adam from the soil is fashioned from the virginal soil of Mary. “The Word who creates the world comes looking for shelter in a cave.” The cave, prototypical human dwelling place, was regarded at a very early date as the symbol of the birthplace of Jesus. But in this place in which human beings had once sheltered from death, they now encounter the author of their life. That is precisely what the myrrh-bearing women would discover when Jesus had been laid in the final human cave: the tomb. “Why look among the dead for someone who is alive?” (Lk 24:5). At this point, everything is changed. Space, like time, explodes: it is no longer closed in upon itself but is delivered from death and filled with him who contains all things in his very body. From the empty tomb to the closed doors of the upper room, the same mystery of the new universe begins to manifest itself: the “non-place” of the risen Christ becomes, through his victory over death, the new space of our universe. Henceforth his ascension keeps expanding the space of his incorruptible body until it is all in all and the new creation has been brought to completion. “Look, I am with you always; yes, to the end of time” (Mt 28:20).
The Church, House of God

The church of stone or wood that we enter in order to share in the eternal liturgy is indeed a space within our world; it is set apart, however, because it is a space which the resurrection has burst open. It is not a space that platonically symbolizes an abstract universe, but a space in which a world delivered from death really dwells. It is there that we celebrate the liturgy by bringing to fulfillment the mystery of the body of Christ. This place of celebration is the place where the promise of a dwelling is also fulfilled. The very locale, in its sensible materiality, is the place where Christ brings to fulfillment his promise and the expectation of human beings, for in this sacramental space the Father’s house (Jn 14:2) is thrown open to us. Speaking of the icon of Christ, the Second Council of Nicaea tells us: “In Christ himself we contemplate both the inexpressible and that which is represented.” But what is a church, as a sacramental space, if not an icon of the body of Christ, of the “whole” Christ?

We had a glimpse of this earlier when we reflected on the ascension of the Lord as a celebration of the eternal liturgy, for all the actors in the mystery are here present, surrounding the assembly that is here and now celebrating. The space of the church is transfigured; its surfaces with their lively icons open beyond themselves into the space of the coming kingdom; its stones on which the wonders of the mystery of Christ are proclaimed become the living stones of the new Jerusalem. It is because this space is sacramental that the church manifests the Church.

It is clear, however, that we must see this sacramental space through the eyes of faith or we will sink into a subjective symbolism. But the vision of faith is a focused vision; it has a center, and that center is not only the risen Christ under the sign of the Pantocrator or the life-giving cross, but also that which is the sign of his being a “non-place” for death: I mean his tomb. The altar is in effect the point of convergence for all the lines in the space that is the church. It is because of the altar that the space of the church is sacramental. The altar tells us that the body of Christ is no longer here or there in a mortal place, but is risen and fills everything with its presence. This “non-place” for death becomes the place where the paschal sacrifice is offered. That is why a church is not a “sacred” place in the same sense as the houses of worship built by religions that are searching for the godhead. The space of our churches with their icons is a space that is open to the Lord who is coming, a space that is both expectant and filled, a space that supports the world and is drawn to the kingdom; it is the place where the epiclesis of the Spirit occurs and where every offering is transformed into the body of Christ.

The Space of the Body of Christ

All human beings carry within them the dream of a home. For our God it is no longer a dream but a promise, and in Jesus the promise is fulfilled. When we build a church, we carry within us the desire of providing a house, a home, for him and for us. But are we sufficiently mindful that when we build a church the prophecy of Nathan to David is being fulfilled for us: “It is the Lord who will build a house for you” (see 2 Sam 7)? Jesus said the same in his zeal for his Father’s house: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn 2:19). This gracious reversal, this passage to a dwelling in which everything is alive, is precisely the shattering of space that occurs in the resurrection of Jesus. In the resurrection the promise of a dwelling place is also fulfilled.

Human beings have always felt their houses, their homes, to be prolongations of their own bodies, a kind of second space (after their garments) for their persons. A house humanizes space, makes it habitable,
makes it personal, so much so that the architecture of early houses was based on the architecture of the human body. In Christ the Father performs this marvelous adaptation in a way that is beyond all possible expectations: we become his dwelling place by taking on the form of his Son’s body. This configuration is given visible symbolization in cruciform churches: when the people of God assemble there, they take on the form of the crucified Christ who overcame death; when the river of life flows out into the new Jerusalem, it gives birth to trees of life. The space of a house awaits the presence of its inhabitants and is a sign of the quality of their presence. The sacramental space of a church embodies an entirely new expectation. It is open not only to the assembly that celebrates there but to all who are not yet in it and who are still unaware that their true dwelling place is the body of Christ. This space is a sign not only of the Father who waits and the Spirit who calls, but also of a presence that is unmerited gift, sharing, joy, and peace. Once again, the altar is at the center as place of the cup of salvation and thanksgiving, as table of the banquet of divine love. It is because of the altar that the sacramental space is not only focused and centered but is in movement, the movement being that of the Trinitarian communion wherein the body of Christ expands in self-giving and in praise of God’s glory. The search for a dwelling place that began in the first paradise is here completed at the heart of the Blessed Trinity: “Remain in me, as I in you ... Remain in my love ... just as ... I remain in his [the Father’s] love” (Jn 15:4, 9,10).

Like all the sacramental synergies, the space of our celebrations is in an eschatological condition; that is, in it the kingdom is “already” coming, but the space is given to us precisely because the kingdom is “not yet” fully here. “There is no permanent city for us here; we are looking for the one which is yet to be” (Heb 13:14). The people of God who gather in a church are only the new universe that is coming to us and drawing us; it also expresses our response, our faith-inspired cooperation with the energy of the Holy Spirit. In a human house space mediates presence; in that space, all can be themselves, can listen and speak, can see their relatives and be acknowledged by them. In the house of God, this entirely new space enables us, in communion with one another, to be ourselves in the truth of the heart, to listen to the saving Word, to contemplate him and be accepted by him. The silence in which we are wrapped is part of the sacramental space of a church. As silence of the heart, it is our answer to the word that transforms us; as silence of the eyes, it is our self-offering to the light that transfigures us. Then, like the seer on Patmos, and in faith that is increasingly purified, we can “turn around to see who is speaking to us” (see Rev. 1:12). The risen Christ, the Word and Icon of the Father, will increasingly become our “new universe.” We will be able to depart from the church and the sacramental space without leaving the Lamb who is our temple in the Spirit. Abiding in him—and he in us—we will doubtless cease to celebrate his liturgy, but we will begin to live it.

This essay was originally published as a chapter in Wellspring of Worship by Jean Corbon, Paulist Press, 1988. Rev. Corbon taught in Beirut, was involved in writing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, and served on numerous ecumenical commissions.

Reviewed by Duncan Stroik

"The lighting is bad, you can’t hear the guys up front, and it’s uncomfortable."—Description of St. Paul’s cathedral in London by Pastor Lee Strobel of Willow Creek church.

If you want to understand what happened to Catholic architecture in the second half of the twentieth century it is illuminating to study what happened to Protestant architecture in the latter half of the nineteenth. The parallels are striking and the intentions of the church leaders are surprising. When Church Became Theatre is a well-written and researched book which could be interpreted as a sort of Dying of the Light for Protestant architecture. The saga begins at day one of the Reformation with the replacement of the visual and sensual ritual of the Mass with the verbal and textual sermon. This novelty led to a destruction of the material culture of medieval Christianity through iconoclasm and also the search for a new kind of church architecture. To aid listening and to emphasize the centrality and authority of the preacher, the altar was replaced by a large pulpit. While the Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Presbyterians, and Anglicans followed the medieval model of an axial rectangular room, other Protestants placed the pulpit on the long side of the room. Centrally-planned churches, which had seen a Catholic revival during the Renaissance, were promoted by Martin Luther as better for sermon-centered services. The Huguenot Temple in Lyon of 1566 was a circular building with a full balcony and curved seating along the walls. Architect to the king, Philibert de L’Orme, designed a Huguenot Temple at La Rochelle, described as "an octagon, of unequal sides, with three principal doors in the Corinthian Order, an open roof as at Lyon, and benches arranged ‘en amphitheatre.’" During the eighteenth century Protestant churches such as Die Frauenkirche in Dresden employed circular or oval plans within a Baroque aesthetic similar to Catholic churches of the time but with the addition of semicircular balconies, curved raked seating, and centrally-located pulpits. This church type allowed the minister to make eye contact with the audience and enhanced the minister’s power while also enhancing the importance of the audience.

However, these theatre-like churches were the exception in early Protestant worship, and none survive. The thread continues in the rise of evangelicalism and outdoor revivals of the eighteenth century. Wesley, Whitefield, and others preached to large crowds of people in the landscape, and, at times, in places that were considered to be natural theatres. Tents were set up on level ground and the preacher usually spoke to the crowd from a platform, or even up on the slope, where elevation expressed religious authority. In America, the architectural equivalent began with Charles Grandison Finney and the Second Great Awakening in the 1820’s and 1830’s. The movable revival tent was replaced by rented churches, municipal halls, and commercial spaces chosen for their location and audience capacity. In 1832, Finney was installed as minister in a converted playhouse in New York City, a building previously seen as a den of iniquity. The Chatham Street Chapel succeeded in attracting a spectrum of people from the middle and lower classes drawn by Finney’s experiential type of religion. "The Chatham, like all theatres, created a distinctive spatial relationship between the audience members and the actor on stage. In the theatre, pleasing the audience members was paramount: their desires had to be met." The stage allowed the preacher to gesture and pace back and forth, while raked seating, balconies, and proscenium arches offered good sightlines and acoustics. In 1836, Finney and friends built a new church based on the Chatham Theatre and named it the Broadway Tabernacle, a revival space for the converted. The audiorium seated 2,500 in curvilinear pews with the pulpit, choir stalls and organ pipes on stage. Like some eighteenth-century German and French developments in theatre design, the Broadway Tabernacle leveled the hierarchy among the audience by giving everyone a good view and a comfortable seat. The ability to view one another across the room emphasized the member’s participation in a shared enterprise as well as encouraged a homogeneity, and a certain respectability.

By the 1860’s numerous evangelical congregations had begun to adopt the fashionable Gothic aesthetic combined with the theatre type for their churches. With the ebbing of revivalism with its altar calls and movement, churches sought audience participation through singing and even in a limited liturgicalism. As cities grew and congregations prospered, churches often moved to the suburbs where their affluent members lived, making these churches more elitist and segregated. Richardsonian Romanesque and Neo-medieval churches with asymmetrical bell towers and cruciform exteriors masked interiors with fan

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shaped, semi-circular theatres. These interiors were large and wide in order to bring large numbers of people within the sound of a preacher’s voice, while sightlines were enhanced by sloping floors and the absence of interior columns. A preaching stage raised above the main floor held pulpit, communion table, and chairs. An elevated choir loft with a large case of organ pipes was located above the pulpit. Architect Stanford White explained why the theatre type was adopted wholesale by evangelical congregations. “The congregation’s attention is concentrated upon the minister and as his function is entirely that of addressing the congregation, the whole architectural treatment should concentrate and lead up to this point. It is essentially a problem in which air, lights, comfort, seeing, and hearing must not only not be interfered with, but dictate the forms and treatment.”

Direct quotations from secular theatre architecture abounded, including marquis lighting, proscenium arches and semi-private opera boxes rented by wealthy members or used by expectant mothers. Projection booths for lantern slides and upholstered opera seats were also employed. In order to make churches as comfortable as secular concert halls, architects came up with new mechanisms for heating and cooling church auditoriums, skylights for lighting, automatic vacuuming systems, and listening tubes. According to Kilde “these buildings show that evangelicals embraced progress and strove to keep the church relevant in contemporary life.” But to stay relevant meant also to change often the medium and the message. Services became more liturgical, but were performed in the setting of the amphitheatre sanctuary with its emphasis on a corporate body of equals, who were often superior to the clerical performer on stage. On the other hand, the theatre space also encouraged audiences to remain quiet and passive as they focused their attention on the stage, especially when it came to organ, choir, and orchestra performances.

The Neo-medieval auditorium church peaked in the 1890’s with the movement towards more traditional and more accurate Christian typologies like the basilica or cruciform Gothic church. This was spurred on by the Gothic revival, as well as the growing sophistication of well-traveled Americans and their beaux-arts trained architects. Proponents of the Gothic revival found the auditorium churches too comfortable, too feminine, overly domestic, and lacking beauty. Congregationalist writer John Scordford criticized the location of choir in the theatre church, and said that the minister appeared as a presiding officer or a king on his throne rather than a leader of worship. Emphasis on the new churches of the twentieth century was to be on worship. Those who embraced this correct Gothic revivalism in the early twentieth century tended to be more progressive, believing that traditional styles and liturgical worship could actually foster Christian unity. The exception to this was found in the rise of fundamentalism in the 1920’s, which re-appropriated the use of the theatre type as seen in Moody Memorial church in Chicago and Boston Avenue Methodist in Tulsa. As this book shows, the architecture of the “mega church” movement which became noticeable toward the end of the twentieth century is firmly rooted in strategies that evangelical congregations adopted in the 1870’s, albeit now in a more stripped-down vocabulary.

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2 Kilde, When Church Became Theatre, p. 33.
3 Kilde, p. 116.

Reviewed by Thomas Dietz

Cosmatesque ornament refers specifically to the patterned cut-marble monuments produced during the late medieval period by—or under the direct lineage of—the Cosmati family. While principally Roman in both its patronage and location, the influence of the Cosmati is evident throughout central Italy. These Italian sites are referenced in general before a detailed analysis of the paving of San Clemente is provided. The only known non-Italian site for Cosmatesque ornament, Britain’s famed Westminster Abbey, receives a substantial degree of analysis and consideration as well.

The book moves in a clear and consistent manner through a wide array of material directly related to the discussion of Cosmatesque ornament. The writing, despite a translation from Spanish to English, is particularly lucid and direct. Terminology is defined before being used in context, and particular attention is paid to the proper reference of appropriate visual examples. As a whole, this volume is amply and adequately illustrated, providing the necessary visual context to comprehend the author’s various contentions and observations.

Most readers will be content to focus on the first chapters, which provide an excellent primer for the various factors that led to the development of Cosmatesque ornament during the twelfth century. The traditions that blended together to form medieval ornament and their relationship to Cosmatesque design is discussed in further detail.

The Cosmati were principally decorators and worked within the context of existing structures. As such, the liturgical structure of existing churches is a primary concern in the analysis of Cosmatesque ornament. Each individual component of the religious architecture of the time is therefore explained.

The author’s proposed antecedents of Cosmatesque ornament are then investigated. This analysis attempts to explain the origins of various Cosmatesque motifs while elaborating on the author’s contention that cut-marble patterns are essentially a development from antique Roman mosaics.

The geometric patterns of Cosmatesque ornament are then discussed with particular attention to their classifications and underlying geometry. It is at this point in the book that a glossary of specialized terminology is introduced to the reader. These terms are clearly defined and illustrated, providing the reader with a thorough understanding of the particular stylistic language of Cosmatesque ornament. Mathematical relationships are explored in some detail, even going so far as to relate more contemporary mathematical formulations like the famed Sierpinski Triangle (a mathematical relation of the triangle shape and its smaller inversions) to medieval ornament.

The main portion of the book concludes in an attempt to deduct meaning from the quincunx (a form generally constructed as a rectangle comprised of five circles, with one circle in the center of four additional smaller circles). This is potentially the most interesting aspect of this volume, since it analyzes the meaning of the quincunx against known symbols of medieval ornament. This section of the book is highly symbolic, and delves further into the actual meaning and purpose of Cosmatesque ornament than any of the previous chapters.

The final chapter—a comprehensive analysis of the choir paving of the church of San Clemente in Rome—may be a bit too esoteric for the casual student of architecture. Most readers will be inclined to survey the meticulously detailed watercolor of the choir paving rather than engage this chapter’s decisively abstruse text. As with most things architectural, the true test of beauty ultimately lies in what the eye perceives rather than what factual analysis demonstrates.

With that in mind, this book provides an excellent collection of illustrations. The ornament of this period is beautiful in its simplicity and may provide an excellent sourcebook for architects interested in the tasteful blending of color and pattern through near symmetries. Those who seek a greater grasp of the political and historical framework under which the Cosmati operated (or, rather, the political and historical framework of Italy during the late medieval period), will be quite satisfied with this book. In addition, this work is a valuable resource for readers developing a greater understanding of the nature of Christian symbolism in late medieval ornament.

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Reviewed by Noah A. Waldman

The announcement of the rebirth of Classical Architecture has been largely ignored. How else to explain the current atmosphere in the profession of neurotic self-reflection on semiotics and theory? Or the implicit belief that no architect can be truly great unless he has a syntactic theory to explain what his work “means,” how it “means,” or how architecture can have meaning at all? Why the endless conferences? Why the architecture schools and journals comprised of men who talk and talk, yet have no significant works of architecture to their credit?

Are such men who stand in judgment of the profession really architects? Such men would prefer to approach architecture through analogous reasoning and “rigor” rather than through knowing and loving it from the inside. For it is far safer to build a temple of words than a temple.

While talk of architecture raged during the 70’s and 80’s (as it still rages) there was a man who emerged on the architectural scene who loved architecture not on account of any theory, but due to its own strange and living beauty. It may be argued that this one man, Thomas Gordon Smith, is the greatest and most influential architect of the age. His architectural intuition was early recognized by men of such diverse dispositions as Philip Johnson and Paolo Portoghesi. His vision of the architectural language as “Classical” knows no limit. And his vision of the architect, modeled on Vitruvius but moving beyond him, is undoubtedly horizons beyond that of the established architectural profession itself. His works fearlessly combine vernacular and Classical elements in a manner which unites the Ancients’ love of line and proportion with the Moderns’ exuberant sense of color, abstraction and light. Too “nostalgic” for the moderns and too experimental for the emerging camp of Palladian purists, Smith’s work defies categorization. There is no one—Borromini or Corbusier—that this magnanimous man will not consider.

But his work, always respected, is often misunderstood. We might say that Smith is the Cezanne or Edwin Lutyens of his day, straddling the old and new orders of things in a synthesis that is uniquely his.

In context of my own familiarity with Smith’s work, the recent monograph, Bernard Maybeck’s “Temple of the Wings” through his years at the American School in Rome leading up to the Venice Biennale of 1980, John portrays a man of great tenacity, who suffered early struggles and dead ends, yet who became even more resilient and polymathic. John shows us that Smith, never abandoning a view of architecture as expression through fusion of opposites, came to see (as he still does) the architect and his work as involving an analogous self-synthesis of human virtue. Archaeologist and historian, theorist and teacher, gentleman and worker — a man must become all these if he is to be an architect. As the ideal physical man is the model of architectural proportion, so the ideal moral man is the model of architectural virtue. Thus the story of Smith’s architecture also becomes a story of Thomas Gordon Smith the man.

The monograph has many fine plates (some reversed by accident so that Latin inscriptions read backwards), though I wish there were more. In particular we would do well to have more photographs and details of the Civic Center in Cathedral City, California. The design development of this one project, evolving from Beaux-Arts simplicity into complex elisions of volumetric blocks of color and shadow, reveals Smith as master of the language. The recently completed Godfrey House (there is a photograph of this work on the title page opposite his Vitruvian House) located in the enfolded greenery of southwestern Wisconsin, represents an even more compact synthesis than that achieved at the Civic Center. With forms reminiscent of Michelangelo and Ictinus, this modest and comfortable villa has the vigor of Smith’s early works, though it surpasses them in sophistication. His brilliant plan, which incorporates ideas from Guarini and Palladio, brings into effortless coherence a work of architecture that is altogether modest and perfectly functional. A single monograph and essay could be issued on this one work alone.

Smith’s work on Clear Creek monastery in Oklahoma is not represented in John’s monograph at all. The “Oklahoma Escorial” is still in design development, and it will undoubtedly take years to build—such is the view of time as eternity characteristic of monks. Judging from preliminary plans and perspectival studies, this, too, will represent one of his greatest works.

How can it be that the designer of such a sober monument to revived monasticism is the same man who conceived the daring Godfrey house? Such is Smith’s peculiar, and therefore misunderstood, genius. Here is a man who can bring any two forms into harmony.

Long after the words and papers of today’s conferences have been forgotten, the works by Thomas Gordon Smith will still speak for themselves and live as they do: Janus-faced, Classical and modern. About them, future generations will say with definitive certainty: “Here architecture was reborn.”

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Reviewed by Dino Marcantonio

The battle for the Church's building program is being waged on two distinct levels. On one level, the architectural level, the key issues revolve around the character of the building, or what is often called the architectural "style." Two questions that often arise in this respect are: should a church be recognizable as a church? and, is modernist architecture appropriate? On a higher level, the liturgical level, the key issues center on the so-called furniture: that is, how the altar, the tabernacle, the baptismal font, and the pews should be arranged. The latter discussion is the more critical one, since it more directly touches upon the lex orandi, the law of prayer, and even upon doctrinal matter.

Broadly speaking there seems to be an impulse on all sides to link the architectural character and the liturgical problems. Those more intent on preserving as much as possible the Church's liturgy as it had developed up to the Second Vatican Council generally tend to favor traditional, representational architectural forms. And likewise, those inclined to "reform" seem generally to favor an abstract, anti-representational architecture, an approach which is also in the ascendancy in the architectural profession at large.2

There may very well be a good reason why architectural character and liturgy find themselves linked in this way; however, so far as this author knows, it has never been well explained. The history of the Church's building program for the last fifty years certainly is quite suggestive that there is some fundamental connection. However, for the most part, confusion has reigned regarding the principles which are motivating the church's building program on both the architectural and the liturgical levels, and whether the apparent implications are real or illusory.

Michael DeSanctis, in his new book Building From Belief, embraces the "reformist" program, some of whose landmarks tend to include: a de-emphasis of the ontological distinction between the ministerial priesthood and the common priesthood; a de-emphasis of the sacrificial nature of the Mass in favor of that of a communal meal; a de-emphasis of Christ's physical presence in the Blessed Sacrament in favor of His presence in the liturgical assembly; etc. Most of the readers of this article are undoubtedly familiar with the program. Unfortunately, DeSanctis missed the opportunity to sort out many of the various problems that program poses. His intention, he states at the outset, is to lay out the theoretical foundations for recent Catholic church design, a tantalizing prospect.

Clear explanations from first principles are essential at this point if we are to have any hope of a productive discourse; indeed, a discourse which unites the faithful rather than divides them, as has too often been the result for the past generation. Yet he never rises to the occasion. He supplies us with a great deal of anecdotal evidence in support of his agenda, both from his own experience, and that of various pastors who have renovated their churches, and from this point of view the book does provide some information which could be useful to architects, pastors, and the faithful. DeSanctis also provides a few observations of his own regarding the reasons Liturgical Design Consultants face the opposition they do among laymen. The solution, he proffers, is more adult education. Yet he does not tell us with sufficient precision what such a course of instruction would say to be convincing. So many questions are still left unanswered.

One does wish he had simply dealt more squarely with the substantive criticisms of recent church design that have already been leveled in the public realm. While he mentions a few of his most serious critics (the St. Joseph Foundation and the periodical Catholic Dossier, for example), he essentially resorts to painting himself and others of his mind as victims of mere ad hominem attacks. And at one point he dodges, stating that really we ought not argue about the "furniture" since society has so many more serious problems that need our attention.

Direct criticisms aside, he might also have answered the serious critiques of recent archi-liturgical innovations by such figures as Msgr. Klaus Gabler and Cardinal Ratzinger. Alas, he ignores them as well.

He outlines with candor the hostility between modernist art and Catholicism. (Perhaps unintentionally, he uses the terms "modern" and "modernist" interchangeably, betraying some philosophical confusion.) Quoting from historian Leo Steinberg, modernism "invites us to applaud the destruction of values which we still cherish . . ." (p. 66). And quoting Chaucer scholar John Gardner, modernist artists are "put off by the Church's compulsion to prescribe 'nice, neat laws' . . ." (p. 68). Oddly, DeSanctis does not explain how the objective antagonism he points out can be resolved. How can an art which hates "nice, neat laws" be reconciled to a dogmatic religion?

In practice, devout Catholic artists have been known to embrace artistic Modernism. The saintly composer Olivier Messiaen stands out, for example. Nevertheless, we are still left with the question as to whether there is an objective contradiction here.

There is an argument to be made that Modernism springs from the notion that there can be no sure knowledge of an objective reality. Thus the artist and architect will tend to produce one of two things: a work of architecture which is a working out of the architect's subjective state (be it emotional, intellectual, psychological, etc.); or a work of architecture that is a stimulus for a type of subjective state on the part of an observer. The priority is always the subject. The result in churches is an architecture which is very abstract in the sense that either the religious sentiments of the architect are laid
DeSanctis provides little archaeological or theological basis for the picture he paints of the Church’s building program, so it is doubtful that it will be the source of unity he hopes it to be. Such a book does need to be written; however, it must be admitted that in the current climate that book would have to be much longer than Building From Belief. The Church is simply not speaking with the clarity She once did regarding matters liturgical and theological. The faithful see bishop against bishop, and novelty pitted against tradition. The most spectacular example of late was Cardinal Medina-Estevez’s failed attempt to abort Archbishop Weakland’s cathedral renovation in Milwaukee. The faithful are left with an unsavory choice between a blind and credulous obedience (which has never been part of the Church’s practice) to pastors and bishops in the prudential matter of church design, and the painstaking working out and relearning of the principles that could underpin a long-lasting building program. And for the latter, the faithful have no choice but to rediscover the Church’s traditional teachings. Once they have done that, traditional churches are sure to follow.

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There is a debate as to whether what ensued liturgically after Vatican II was a true reform or actually a new liturgy. In the preface to the French edition of Msgr. Klaus Gamber’s The Reform of the Roman Liturgy, Cardinal Ratzinger termed the Novus Ordo “a fabrication, a banal, on-the-spot product.”

There is a small group which is attempting to unite traditional architecture with reformed liturgy, sort of a melding of Bugnini with Bernini. But so far this is a relatively limited effort. The only examples are the Church of 2010, sponsored by the Liturgical Institute of late was Cardinal Basil Hume. The reverse does not exist: that is, a unifying of traditional liturgy with modernist architecture.

... the priest acting in persona Christi celebrates the Sacrifice of the Mass and administers the Sacraments... Christ is also present through preaching and the guidance of the faithful, tasks to which the priest is personally called.... From Address of John Paul II to the Plenary Session of the Congregation for the Clergy, November 23rd, 2001, §1.

Louis Bouyer, Liturgy and Architecture, 1967, p. 41. Bouyer also dismisses as “fanciful” the notion that the atrium could have served for worship, a notion nevertheless maintained by DeSanctis.
COMMUNITY AND TRANSCENDENCE

Most Reverend Daniel Beuchlein, O.S.B.

Before my appointment to Indianapolis I began the planning for the renovation of the Cathedral of the Diocese of Memphis, which is coming to completion as we speak. The renovation of the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis preceded my installation as Archbishop in 1992. Thus, my experience in these matters is based more broadly on the building of more than an ordinary number of new parish churches and also the renovation of numerous church buildings. I suggest two points for consideration related to this latter experience but which, I think, apply to cathedrals as well.

1) My primary concern is that we continue to seek a balance, perhaps a creative tension, in the sacred environment between lifting minds and hearts to God and encouraging a sense of community among the celebrant and worshipping assembly at Eucharist. It seems to me that in the last several decades we have worked hard to accommodate our church buildings to provide more effective worship by placing the major emphasis on community. I believe it is time to encourage greater consciousness of the transcendent element which is of the essence of Christian worship in the Catholic tradition. Our primary action as an assembled particular Church, especially at Eucharist, is worship of God.

It seems to me that upon entering our churches there should be an immediate sense of being present in sacred space, suggested especially by sacred art and certain devotional signs familiar in our tradition. The gathering assembly needs external, visual, and familiar sacred imagery—I am not simply speaking of art for art’s sake. Otherwise, as one commentator put it, without the aid of familiar external sacred signs, the assembly has to recreate itself constantly.

Visual sacred art and images are as important in our day as ever before. In previous eras of the Church, when a large number of people were not literate and when books were spare, visual art and imagery were essential for evangelization. I submit that for different reasons, people in our day are no less in need of visual help in being evangelized and in sensing an atmosphere for worship.

I also have a strong preference for the visibility of the presence of the reserved Blessed Sacrament from the main body of the church. I believe that the reserved Sacrament has a hallowing effect in our churches as compared to other facilities where we gather.

2) My second major point has to do with the quality of material used in the construction and renovation of our church buildings. It is a complex issue. Financial challenges and the dearth of craftsmen and artisans control much of our facility planning and the design and quality of our sacred furnishings. Simply put, resorting to dry-wall and other insubstantial or faux materials is rather prevalent. I worry that too soon our successors will face failing facilities.

As a final note: looking back at the numerous churches I have dedicated, blessed or consecrated, the pattern and shape seem more repetitive than necessary.

Thank you for your commitment to creating beautiful cathedrals and sacred houses of worship.

The Most Rev. Daniel Beuchlein, O.S.B, Archbishop of Indianapolis, originally gave this talk at the Cathedrals Conference at the University of Notre Dame in the Fall of 2001.