These visible churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place, the dwelling of God with men reconciled and united in Christ. Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Book of Hebrews lists the cloud of witnesses who have gone before us and whom we honor. Under the Christian dispensation we recognize an even greater cloud of witnesses, martyrs and saints, a fraction of whose feastdays we celebrate or include in our churches through iconography. Included in this mix of feastdays are special ones not dedicated to a saint per se but to the Chair of Peter or to the dedication of a church. One such feast is the dedication of the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore (Saint Mary Major) in Rome on August 5. Santa Maria Maggiore is one of the great and most ancient churches in the eternal city, and it is seemingly most appropriate that the Church celebrates a mass in her honor. In one of her earliest appearances as a patroness of architecture, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a wealthy patrician, Giovanni, and to Pope Liberius asking them to build a church on the Esquiline Hill where they would find snow. Snow in August! Romans today remember this feastday with the next best thing, a snowfall of rose petals. The building we honor today was built by a later pope, Sixtus III, immediately after the Council of Ephesus in 431, which was called to combat the teaching of Nestorius and at which the Virgin Mary was given the name of Theotokos. This wonderful three-aisled basilica is said to be the first church named in honor of the Virgin.

This feast of Our Lady of the Snows and the dedication of Santa Maria Maggiore also offer us a number of examples of architectural patronage. First is the patronage of God or of the saint who inspires people to build by inspiration, miracles or direct request. Second is the patronage of the pope, bishop, cleric or religious who develops the vision to build a structure in honor of the Lord and to support devotion of the faithful. Finally, come the community leaders who as patrons employ the fruits of their labor to make an offering of praise. The history of architecture is full of stories of these patrons and their architects. In fact, behind every great church, chapel or altarpiece one can find patrons with vision and funds to do something of great worth as well as talented artists who are moved by the project and the demands of their patrons to produce their finest work. Thus, the Sistine Chapel, Hagia Sophia, Chartres Cathedral, the Brancacci Chapel, Lourdes and many other examples came into being.

Recently, the idea of patronage has fared better in the public realm than in the Church. Think of the new sports arenas, museums, concert halls and university buildings paid for with generous funding of corporations, individuals and families after which these buildings are often named. Yet I believe we are also seeing the concept of patronage making a comeback in the Church. There are stories of churches from Atlanta to California in which the generosity of one or more family allowed these parishes to be more than just functional structures; of Catholic schools from Minneapolis to Texas being started and made possible only because of the vision of laity; and of Catholic university buildings all over the country being paid for by alumni, as we say at Notre Dame, by the “subway alumni.” In the best of these examples, there is a desire on the part of the patrons to make a gift that can serve humanity and honor the Lord. There is also the awareness that quality architecture is worth paying for, and that architects should be encouraged to think boldly.

In Chicago, a particularly creative patron of Catholic architecture has dedicated himself to saving and restoring the city’s great ethnic churches. John Powers has committed himself, his time and his resources to finding innovative ways to keep “dying” churches open. These once flourishing parishes are often in well-built, beautiful buildings designed by talented architects such as Joe McCarthy, Worthman and Steinbach, and Henry Schlacks (the first professor of architecture at Notre Dame). One of Powers’s most recent solutions has been to find new religious orders to inhabit these structures, pay for their basic upkeep, and thus save them from the wrecking ball. History reminds us that the population of Rome decreased from one million in the time of Constantine to as low as 30,000 in the sixth century, and many of the churches were unused for centuries. During the time of Gregory the Great the city may have grown to 90,000 people, and its population ebbed and flowed during the medieval period and especially during the papal “exile” to Avignon. It was during the Renaissance that the “centro storico” of Rome had a major increase in numbers and many churches were refurbished or enriched. It is our hope that in the long run these inner city parishes in Chicago and other cities will become vibrant again. To help garner support for these churches, John Powers has embarked on producing a beautiful book on the Catholic churches of Chicago working with Dr. Denis McNamara of the Liturgical Institute at Mundelein and English photographer James Morris. He is also responsible for Sacred Architecture making the jump to technicolor. We thank him and all of you for your support of the sacred in architecture and pray to the ultimate Patron to continue to raise up patrons of art and architecture for His glory.

Duncan Stroik
August, 2004
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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

2 HUISHGUIHURIHUIRHIRHG. ................................................. Duncan Stroik

NEWS & LETTERS

4 Ave Maria University celebrates first Mass Pugin proposed for canonization U.S. Bishops encourage popular devotions Restoration on Santa Maria Antiqua to begin

ARTICLES

10 A Vacuum in the Spirit: The Design of the Jubilee Church ............................................. Breda Ennis
14 Charles Borromeo and Catholic Tradition .................................................. Matthw Gallegos
19 A Last Long Look at American Sacred Architecture ................................................... Ethan Anthony
22 Lost in Space: New Oratory at Ave Maria University ............................................. Denis McNamara
23 Recaptured Glory: The Renovation of the Bridgeport Cathedral .................................. Sean Tobin

DOCUMENTATION

29 Highlights of the Liturgical Renewal Initiated by Sacrosanctum Concilium . . .Francis Cardinal Arinze

BOOKS

32 Sacred Spaces by Robert Berger ........................................................... reviewed by Dom Forte
33 The Romanesque Revival by Kathleen Curran .............................................. reviewed by Michael Lewis
34 Timeless Cities by David Mayernik ........................................................ reviewed by Ralph C. Muldrow

EXHIBITIONS

35 A Gift to the World: The Legacy of the Popes’ Travels to the New World ............... reviewed by Anne Husted Burleigh

www.sacredarchitecture.org

Journal of the Institute for Sacred Architecture

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The new Church of St. Michael in St. Michael, Minnesota, will be a symbol of unity and full communion between East and West in the Catholic Church. Pastor Fr. Michael Becker, architect Jim O’Brien and consultant Fr. James Notebaart have developed plans for an $11 million Byzantine-style domed church. Making use of local materials and replete with numerical symbolism, the church will house a fresco of “Christ the Ruler of All” in the dome, the sanctuary apse will contain a mosaic of the Blessed Virgin Mary with Child, and the clerestory will display the twenty mysteries of the Rosary in stained glass. The church will also summon the faithful to worship with a bell tower that will mark the sacredness of time as it passes.

In an effort to further reconciliation between Christians and Muslims, a Christian governor in Nigeria recently built a $5 million mosque. With this gesture, Uzor Orji Kalu, the governor of the state of Abia in south-eastern Nigeria, strives for harmony in a country where some records indicate religious conflict has claimed the lives of more than one million people.

The new Orthodox Cathedral in Havana is the first religious edifice built in Cuba in 43 years. The Cuban government funded the building of a small cathedral in historic Old Havana. Cuban President Fidel Castro attended the five-hour consecration of the new Cathedral of St. Nicholas on January 25, 2004. Cuba has an Orthodox population of approximately 2,000 to 3,000, composed primarily of immigrants from Slavic countries during the Soviet era.

Dominican University in River Forest, Illinois, reopened its Rosary Chapel, first built in 1925, after extensive renovation last year. After raising $850,000 in funds, work began on the Gothic Revival chapel to repaint the space and add adjustable light fixtures, a sound system, air conditioning, a new baptismal font, an altar, an ambo, and a tabernacle stand. Although the existing pews, which were crafted by the German immigrant Louis Marks and embellished by him with shields and roses, were removed, many of his original hand-carved details were reused in the design of the new altar and ambo.

Protestants have overtaken Catholics in church attendance, according to a November 2003 Gallup Poll survey of 1004 Americans. 47% of Protestants said that they had attended church in the last seven days, compared to 40% of Catholics. This represents the first time in 49 years that Protestants have exceeded Catholics in weekly church attendance. While Catholic attendance appears to be rebounding from the all-time low of 35% in February 2002 after the emergence of the clergy sexual abuse crisis, weekly Mass attendance has long been gradually declining from the 74% weekly attendance reported in 1955, the first year Gallup collected data measuring church attendance.

Christmas decorations are a relatively new phenomenon in the Eternal City, according to Catholic News Service. A Christmas tree and Nativity scene were first erected in St. Peter’s Square in 1982, but by North American or Northern European standards, St. Peter’s Basilica itself is relatively undecorated with ornamentation celebrating Christmas. Although St. Peter’s stands iconically at the heart of the Catholic Church, “it is a church built over a tomb, and the decoration recalls the life and sacrifice of St. Peter and his relationship with Christ,” said archivist Daniele Pergolizzi.

The Governing Council in Iraq plans to return religious schools and houses of worship seized by Saddam Hussein to their rightful owners. Saddam’s regime nationalized all educational institutions, outlawing independent schools in May 1974. 80 schools and colleges were in existence when the former regime confiscated the independent institutions in March 1975. 15 schools and colleges are scheduled to be returned to the Catholic Church.

Architect Craig Hartman of Skidmore Owings and Merrill with landscape architect Peter Walker and Partners wins an AIA unbuilt design award for the Cathedral of Christ the Light in Oakland. Following the withdrawal of the originally selected architect, Santiago Calatrava, Hartman takes over with this cathedral as his first church design project. Writing of the design concept he says, “I consider light a sacred phenomenon and its introduction within the cathedral is perhaps the most visible manifestation of God’s presence.” Incorporating the sacred geometry of the “Vesica Piscis” the plan is derived from the intersection of two circles from which a sweeping wood and steel trellis system will support a glass roof. The $131 million building project is estimated for completion in early 2008.

Sacred Architecture 2004 Issue 9
Color returns to Amiens Cathedral in France. Following a restorative cleaning in 1992, traces of color were found in the recesses of façade sculptures that date back 800 years. Seen as too invasive, reapplying paint was rejected, but the effect of color has been achieved instead with lighting. Paris-based designers Skertzo have matched the original pigments in light and found a way to project them onto the sculptures. The colored façade can be seen each evening from June to September and during the winter holidays.

According to Elvira Obenbach, “a church is not a museum but the house of God.” Covering 100 churches, convents, and houses of Rome, Obenbach’s book In the Footprints of the Saints of Rome: Guide to the Icons, Relics and Houses of Saints encourages the spiritual discovery of Rome beyond the artistic. “This guide is to fill a lacuna and to lead a pilgrim not to the artistic work but in the footprints of the saints and blessed,” writes the author. She also says, “It is good to remind the public that art is a support, to lead a pilgrim not to the artistic work but to the spiritual discovery of Rome beyond the artistic.”

The World Monuments Fund has released its 2004 watch list of the 100 most endangered architectural sites. The WMF is a nonprofit organization that seeks to preserve the world’s historic, artistic and architectural heritage. Churches on the list include St. Anne’s Church in Prague (which contains a series of Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque Murals, as well as its Gothic truss system, despite its use as a warehouse for the last 200 years) and Iglesia San Jose in San Juan, Puerto Rico (the oldest surviving building in Puerto Rico, as well as one of the earliest examples of Gothic-influenced architecture in the Western Hemisphere). See www.wmf.org.

Neocatechumenal Way opens a chapel on the Mount of the Beatitudes. In Tiberias, Israel, the design for the Domus Galilaeae International Center, originally conceived by Spanish painter Kiko Arguello with Carmen Hernandez and a group of international architects, will serve as a “bridge with the whole Jewish tradition.” The design of the 12,000-square-meter complex, which slopes toward Lake Tiberias and spans three terraces, houses a multitude of spaces from a congressional center and a church to guest rooms. The complex invites Christians to return to Jewish sources to understand the meaning of the Jewish prayers and liturgical celebrations that daily sustained Jesus.

Holy Transfiguration, Skete, an Eastern Catholic monastery on the shore of Lake Superior, adapts traditional Ukrainian design elements typical of country churches in the Carpathians to contemporary needs in a new building project. Designed by Page Onge of Nashville, Tennessee, the 4,500-square-foot monastery is of conventional wood framing and clad with sawn shingles of local cedar. Consecrated on August 24, 2003, by the Most Reverend Steven Seminack, Eparch of St. Nicholas in Chicago, the Byzantine monastery also boasts of several anodized aluminum domes. For more information see www.societystjohn.com.

Augustus Welby Pugin is being proposed for canonization by James Thunder, “Pugin: A Godly Man?” True Principles (Summer 2002 and Summer 2003). Thunder focuses on Pugin the man and not his architecture. He argues that, as with Gaudi, the canonization of an architect would not necessarily canonize his architecture. Thunder examines Pugin’s roles as husband, as father to eight, as friend and colleague, as well as Pugin’s response to adversity, his charity, and above all the evangelical zeal demonstrated in his writings and work.

The Benedictine Monastery of the Holy Cross has been founded in Rostrevor, Northern Ireland, as a sign of reconciliation. Five monks of the Congregation of St. Mary of Mount Olivet, coming from the Abbey of Bec in France, have formed the new community in the interest of bringing the Rule of St. Benedict back to Ireland. The foundation decree states: “Our particular mission is to contribute to reconciliation between Catholics and Protestants in a land marked by reciprocal violence and stained by the blood of Christian brothers and sisters.” See www.benedictinemonks.co.uk.

Copenhagen’s Pentecostal Christians look to “Catholic” symbols for inspiration. Until now Pentecostal Christians in Denmark have avoided symbols such as crosses or candles as being too Roman Catholic. However they are beginning to realize their potential as Rev. Rene Ottesen from Copenhagen’s biggest Pentecostal church stated: “We have lost the symbols, and therefore we have lost the hook on which to hang our faith.” He also added, “The symbols give a physical and tangible dimension to our faith.”

A cathedral in Nottingham, England, hopes to keep its doors open 24 hours a day. Police and social service personnel are now training volunteers to keep watch in St. Barnabas Cathedral. Approximately 100 volunteers are needed to keep open the 19th-century Gothic Revival cathedral by A.W. Pugin.

Working collaboratively with the parish community of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, Anderson-Wise architects transformed an overcrowded church into a massive new space while retaining the intimate feel of the 1911 original. Central to the design is an emphasis on the verticality of the space to heighten the parishioners’ sense of relationship with God. According to Rev. David Henderson, the key of the project is “paying homage to the tradition of the church without replicating it.” The effect is an elegant monastic simplicity for the new 250-person capacity 21,000-square-foot church.

Sacred Architecture 2004 Issue 9
Statistics are explored to find the golden era of American Catholicism. James Davidson, a professor of sociology at the University of Purdue, collected data from the “Official Catholic Directory” on aspects of church life for ten-year intervals between 1930 and 2000. With less than half of its current membership, Davidson found that the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s were the institution-building years in which the Church had more diocesan high schools (2,123), diocesan seminaries (202), and private high schools (1,394) than it has ever had. The 1960s brought new highs in building with records for Catholic hospitals (808), religious order seminaries (497), Catholic colleges and universities (304), and elementary schools (10,503). The number of parishes peaked in the 1970s (19,971) but has since declined. To sum his findings, the 1960s appear to be the golden era, with 1965 being the peak year.

Hope fades for the preservation of St. Stephen Catholic Church as a local historic landmark in South Bend, Indiana. The 93-year-old church was closed in May of 2003 and most of the building’s artifacts, including its stained-glass windows, have been donated or sold to other parishes. While the Historic Preservation Commission stated there was no question that the structure would be eligible both architecturally and historically for landmark status, it has hesitated to take action owing to the lack of any proposals for how to take care of the building once it ceases to be a church.

“St. Peter and the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes” is the largest collection of Vatican artifacts ever to tour North America. The exhibit offers visitors a rare glimpse into the 2,000-year history of the papacy as seen through the lens of 350 objects drawn from Vatican museums and archives, as well as churches administered by the Vatican. This is the first time many of the objects have ever left the Vatican or been on public display. “St. Peter and the Vatican” will be at the San Diego Museum of Art May 15 through September 6, 2004. For more information, visit www.sdmart.org.

Among the victims of the November 20, 2003, suicide bombing on the British Consulate in Istanbul was the community of the Catholic-Chaldean Church. Unless the badly damaged church and offices are renovated the community cannot resume its activities. The German-based Aid to the Church in Need is leading the effort to help and is seeking benefactors for support. Visit www.kirche-in-not.org/e_home.htm.

After 30 years, construction has resumed on a long unfinished church designed by influential modernist Le Corbusier. Begun in 1970, the Church of Saint-Pierre de Firmindy-Vert (a suburb of Saint-Etienne, near Lyon) was designed as part of a project intended to unite dwellings, spiritual life, culture, and sport in a single urban complex, but construction of the church halted due to lack of funds. While the bottom half has been built, it will require a minimum of 17 months to reinforce the structure, complete the interior, and build the shell of the edifice. The structure, which has never been used as a church, will have a small non-denominational worship space, while most of the building will be an annex to the Saint-Etienne museum of modern art.

Pope John Paul II calls for artists to reflect God with their work. Speaking to a group from the Artistic and Cultural Formation Center from Poland, the Pope remarked that “in man, the artist, the image of the Creator is reflected. I say this also so that all present here are conscious that this reflection of God implies a great responsibility.” The Holy Father continued, stressing that one’s talent must be developed in order “to serve one’s neighbor and society with it.” He added, “Artists are responsible not only for the aesthetic dimension of the world and of life but also of the moral dimension. If artists are not guided by good in creativity, or even worse, are led toward evil, they are not worthy of the title of artist.”

The sacrament of reconciliation goes mobile with the blessing of a van in Augsburg, Germany. Supported by the German section of the International Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need, the confessional on wheels will be used during events like World Youth Day 2005 in Cologne and will also offer a chance for people to speak to a priest and receive spiritual counseling.

Grace Church in New York sells ad. space to banks and luxury-car companies on a 140-foot billboard spanning its Gothic façade. Finding it difficult to generate the $2 million funds needed for the restoration of the church, Rev. David M. Rider has had to look for creative solutions to care for what he calls a “high maintenance facility.” Designed by James Renwick, architect of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Grace Church is a landmark building, which means it requires the highest standards in restoration, while receiving no extra funds to follow such mandates. While the ads are temporary, architectural historian Franz Schulze still comments, “It’s rather bad form to smear your name over a very beautiful church façade.”
from both secular and religious communities. Giuseppe Vacca, current president of the Antonio Gramsci Institute, said the crucifix goes beyond the boundaries of Christianity and embraces the whole of humanity as well as forming part of the Italian and European cultural identity. Pope John Paul II also noted that social cohesion and peace are not achieved by eliminating the characteristic religiosity of a culture.

The Vatican has established a website featuring the recently renovated Redemptoris Mater Chapel. The chapel was redecorated with mosaics inspired by the Eastern Church with money given to John Paul II by the College of Cardinals in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his priestly ordination. Designed to capture the theological essence of both east and west—“the two lungs of the Church”—the chapel is the site of the Holy Father’s Lenten retreat. See www.vatican.va/redemptoris_mater/index_en.htm.

The Boudreaux Group Inc. has completed a renovation for St. Peter’s Catholic Church in Columbia, South Carolina. The work incorporates a carefully detailed wood floor and a new baptismal pool that uses the original font. The use of color, murals, and gold leaf has also given new life to the historic interior. According to the architects, every effort was made to use the best of materials and methods to honor this beautiful church.

Archbishop Raymond L. Burke of St. Louis presided over the groundbreaking of the main church at the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin, on Thursday, May 13. The estimated cost of the project is $20 million and is expected to take two and a half years to complete.

Controversy arose in Italy over a local judge’s decision to order the removal of crucifixes from public school rooms. The controversy quieted as it was confirmed that a 1923 government decree, unaltered by the concordat between Italy and the Catholic Church in 1984, provides for crucifixes in Italian schools. Support for the crucifix came with two and a half years to complete. The 1,000-square-foot space provides a connection with the lobby through a stained glass window-wall and envelops the visitor with a woven ceiling “shroud” made of 5,000 separate pieces of wood.

A Slovakian priest works to restore a Catholic parish in Bransik, Russia. Fr. Jan Hermanovsky said many “people in Russia, after the decades of materialism…[have] no idea of the sacred; they do not have the habit of prayer, and make no distinction between going to Mass or to the theater.” Now going to Russia to reopen the parish of Bransik, referring to the fact that the former church has been converted into apartments he said, “I have preferred to purchase a private house for purposes of worship. It still does not have external signs characterizing it as a church, but we will soon place the cross and an image of the Virgin on the façade.”

A visit to Rome should include the “noble” rooms of the Lateran Palace at the Basilica of St. John Lateran. Now open to the public, the old papal residence rebuilt by Sixtus V (1585-1590) includes a wealth of artifacts from past papal households from the desk of Pius VII to the red velvet papal geda used to carry John XXIII. On a guide through the frescoed ten-room apartments Father Pietro Amato quoted Dante saying, “The Lateran is above earthly things.” A ticket to the Lateran Museum will now be included in the entrance fee to the Vatican Museums.

Emerging out of the post-Communist era only a decade ago, the Catholic community in Mongolia now has a cathedral in Ulan Bator. Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, consecrated the cathedral. About 200 faithful make up the Catholic community of Mongolia out of a population of 2.7 million inhabitants. Speaking on the historical roots of Christianity in Mongolia Cardinal Sepe said, “This was possible only because the great Mongol khans … showed a type of wisdom that was rare in the 13th century, namely, tolerance and acceptance of all religions.” The new cathedral is dedicated to Sts. Peter and Paul.

U.S. bishops encourage popular devotions as a means to shape our culture. The bishop’s conference stated, “When properly ordered to the liturgy, popular devotions perform an irreplaceable function of bringing worship into daily life for people of various cultures and times.” The bishops also emphasized the primacy of the liturgy in their document, writing, “Since the liturgy...
is the center of the life of the Church, popular devotions should never be portrayed as equal to the liturgy, nor can they adequately substitute for the liturgy. What is crucial is that popular devotions be in harmony with the liturgy, drawing inspiration from it and ultimately leading back to it.

The Romanesque chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption in Mystic, Connecticut, though new, gives the impression of "a sturdy spiritual beacon that has been watching over the boats on Fisher’s Island Sound for at least a century—maybe several." Designed by Dennis Keefe of Boston, the chapel includes a host of liturgical art crafted by artists associated with the St. Michael Institute of Sacred Art. As an island chapel a nautical theme is prominent throughout, especially in the pegged beams of the ceiling recalling the inverted hull of a ship. The Stations of the Cross, done as medieval manuscript illuminations, reinforce the local setting as the Passion unfolds with important sites on the island forming the backdrop. For further information visit www.endersisland.com.

Church leaders in Romania protest a proposal for Europe’s largest gold mine that plans to bulldoze 8 churches and 9 cemeteries. The mining project at Rosia Montana in Transylvania’s Apuseni Mountains will force at least 2,000 people from their homes and require the removal of Roman remains and relics from the region’s ancient Dacian civilization.

Giuliano Zanchi’s book Lo Spirito e le cose (The Spirit and Things) instructs the faithful on the original meaning the Church expressed in divinely inspired forms of art and architecture. Published by Vita e Pensiero, this work is a “guided tour of Christian churches where physical things re-find their original form and meaning through understanding the ‘spirit’ in which they were created.” From the first “domus ecclesiae” to the Baroque, the author explains each artistic element, from the church square to the altar, that has been assumed into Christian churches throughout history.

Final restoration will begin this summer on Santa Maria Antiqua, one of Rome’s oldest and most prestigious churches. Set at the foot of the Palatine Hill, the church is noteworthy for its varying types of Christian mural decoration spanning centuries. The earliest frescoes date from 536, including a devotional image of the Virgin Mary and Christ Child, and carry through to the ninth century, with a range of styles from a feather light brushstroke to that closely resembling mosaic decoration. Visit www.archeorm.arti.beniculturali.it/sma/eng/index.html.

Bernini’s “Charlemagne Wing” of the Vatican reopened after a decade of restoration with an exhibition of Baroque art. The exhibition entitled “Visions and Ecstasies: Masterpieces of European Art Between the 17th and 18th Centuries” was presented for the 25th anniversary of the pontificate of John Paul II. The mystical experience, featured in this display of Baroque art, was also the focus of Karol Wojtyła’s doctoral thesis, which was dedicated to St. John of the Cross.

John Paul II points to Pope St. Gregory the Great as a guide for future generations in praising his conviction that the history of classical and Christian antiquity “constituted a precious foundation for all subsequent scientific and human development.” In a message sent to the president of the Pontifical Committee for Historical Sciences on the 14th centenary of St. Gregory’s death, the pope remarked, “The future cannot be built by disregarding the past. This is why on several occasions I have exhorted the competent authorities to fully appreciate the rich classical and Christian roots of European civilization, to transmit the lymph to the new generations.”

The Archdiocese of Boston prepares to shut down a significant number of its 357 parishes. Though lay involvement has been encouraged in this stage of the process, parishioners are worried following the announcement of parish closures by archbishop Sean P. O’Malley that they will have almost no chance of successful appeal to higher authorities. Although the architectural and historical significance of the churches is being considered, the archbishop says it is only one factor; other important considerations being the connection of churches to schools and the extent to which a struggling immigrant group relies on a parish.

Called the spiritual heart of Europe by John Paul II, the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela expects to draw ten million visitors in 2004. This year is a holy year for the shrine millions of pilgrims have visited since the 9th century, when, according to tradition, the bones of St. James the Apostle were discovered and brought here. After Rome and Jerusalem, Santiago de Compostela was the third great pilgrimage site of medieval Christendom. The focus of this year’s jubilee is European unity, and the planned events include a pilgrimage April 21-24 by European bishops to commemorate the entrance of ten new countries into the European Union. For more information, visit www.csj.org.uk.

The Liturgical Institute at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary sponsored a conference entitled “Shape of the Liturgy—Shape of the Church,” October 22-24, 2003. Conference speakers addressed the new General Instruction of the Roman Missal and its implications for architecture, hoping to use
insights from the Church’s theology and Tradition to expand upon and give context to the GIRM’s directives.

Michelangelo’s “Moses” is again on view after five years of restoration work on the San Pietro in Vincoli Church where it is housed. With the restoration of the church, which coincided with the 500th anniversary of the election of Pope Julius II, for whom the architectural and sculptural complex serves as a mausoleum, a walled-in window was discovered that now allows the sun to shine directly on the statue. For a virtual exhibition, see www.progettomose.it.

As a customary part of beatification ceremonies, the pope continues to receive dozens of new relics each year. Despite the Vatican placing greater restrictions on the distribution of relics, their presentation is a tradition that won’t go away. While Latin-rite churches no longer require slivers of relics to be sealed in the altars, new relics that are large enough to be identifiable as a body part are often placed in tomb-like urns under the altars. This reflects the original practice of building altars and churches over the tombs of martyrs.

An exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City showed that El Greco’s work still inspires Christian contemplation. Visitors were reminded that there is more to be admired in the late 16th century master’s work than his techniques, but also the religious message infused by this man of faith. Displaying 70 works spanning his career, the show made poignant links to the nature of art today and the ongoing discussion about faith and culture. According to Jim Sullivan, through the work of artists like El Greco “they helped ‘make disciples of all nations’ in the manner of St. Francis: without the need of words.”

The Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture is sponsoring a conference entitled “Epiphanies of Beauty: The Arts in a Post-Christian Culture.” The conference, to be held Nov. 18-20, will examine the variety of ways in which the fine arts can help build a more genuinely Christian civilization in an era that is ever more deeply post-Christian. Further information about the upcoming fall conference can be found at http://ethicscenter.nd.edu.

The Notre Dame Center for Ethics and Culture is adding an additional feature to the journal. Beginning with this issue, letters to the editor will be reviewed for publication and response. Please submit your letters to: Letters to the Editor, Sacred Architecture Journal, P.O. Box 556, Notre Dame, IN 46556 or email: dstroik@nd.edu

A sculpture of Mary by artist John Collier that is part of the first memorial monument to those who died at the World Trade Center. See Sacred Architecture 2003 Issue 8, p.5

Letters

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Building to Endure

To further the discussion of the article concerning Built of Living Stones, I’m curious to discover if the document acknowledges not simply the issues of the forms of architecture, but of their construction.

Whether the forms are traditional or otherwise, there exists a trend in building today to employ similar methods of construction aimed largely at reducing cost. The unfortunate result of this has been to foster the sense of the transitory over the enduring, and has stripped some of the more beautiful recently designed spaces of a necessary feeling of authenticity. That is to say, even where we find communities embracing a traditional language of architecture the result, due to cheaper methods of construction, gives more the effect of a stage set than a sacred space. To initial appearances we read the forms as beautiful and yet upon closer inspection we discover there is no real substance sustaining the poetry.

In a time when novelty and transitoriness are the norm, it is not enough for the Church to seek only a surface architecture, but one that is lasting — a true and genuine witness to our commitment to the building of the kingdom of God.

John Griffin
Oklahoma
A Vacuum in the Spirit
The Design of the Jubilee Church in Rome

Breda Ennis

While on my way in the car to see the new church built by Richard Meier on the outskirts of Rome, named “God the Merciful Father” (in the original Italian, “Dio Padre Misericordioso”), two phrases kept coming into my mind from Pope John Paul II’s Letter to Artists, in which he remarked: “even in situations where culture and the Church are far apart, art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience.” He goes on to mention what the Fathers said at the end of Vatican Council II: “This world in which we live needs beauty in order not to sink into despair.” Even to people unfamiliar with Rome, it will surely come as no surprise to learn that the celebrated beauty of the center of Rome bears no resemblance whatever to the city’s drab suburbs. As we drove along the Via Prenestina on the way to Tor Tre Teste — the site of the new Meier church — I noticed that the architecture along the way got worse and worse. And, of course, when architecture is dull and drab, it tends to create a vacuum in the spirit. But was this vacuum now about to be filled?

We turned the corner, leading to the incline where the church is situated, and I got my first glimpse of the church. Almost at once, however, I began to feel somewhat perplexed. There in front of me I saw a mass of snow-white concrete walls, both curved and straight, held together by glass and surrounded by a pale paved area and a low wall. I walked with two friends toward the front of the church, but it was not clear, at first, just where we were supposed to enter the church. Looking through the glass façade, the eye comes to rest on the wall which divides the nave from the atrium or narthex, and you think that this cannot be the entrance because you do not immediately see the inner door. The two other entrances are between the curved “sails”: one leads to the Day Chapel and the other to the Baptistry area.

When finally we got into the atrium, I found myself in a rectangular space which had, apart from the small geometric holy water font, an inscription on the wall announcing, “This Structure Is a Testament to the Monumental Work of Men in the Service of Spiritual Aspirations. Richard Meier, Architect.” I was surprised by this, not accustomed to seeing the name of the architect so prominently placed in the atrium of the church. To be honest, I rather expected that the inscription might be a quotation either from the Bible or from one of the writings of Pope John Paul II, a text perhaps from his encyclical, “Dives in Misericordia” (published in 1988). The Pope himself had decided that the name of the church should be “God the Merciful Father.”

It was a Sunday, and the parish priest, Don Gianfranco Corbino, was celebrating Mass as we entered. We remained quietly at the back of the church, a good place to observe both the people and the building. My first impression of the nave was that it was really rather small. From earlier publicity and publications, I was expecting to find myself in a vast space with seating for about 700 people. Don Corbino confirmed that it holds, in fact, about 300 people only, or 350 if extra chairs are added. The literature on the church states that it holds 500. The parish itself is a mere seven years old. (The people in the parish had originally been members of a Sunday, and the parish priest, Don Gianfranco Corbino, was celebrating Mass as we entered. We remained quietly at the back of the church, a good place to observe both the people and the building. My first impression of the nave was that it was really rather small. From earlier publicity and publications, I was expecting to find myself in a vast space with seating for about 700 people. Don Corbino confirmed that it holds, in fact, about 300 people only, or 350 if extra chairs are added. The literature on the church states that it holds 500. The parish itself is a mere seven years old. (The people in the parish had originally been members (coming from too many and too varied backgrounds). Criteria were also difficult to establish, and agreement was even more so.

Lessons were learnt after this unhappy episode, and when it was suggested that a church be built to celebrate the Jubilee of the Year 2000, a much smaller commission was established. Only six international architects were invited to present projects, and clear criteria were indicated. It was decided, for example, that the architect chosen for the project would not have to be a Christian believer. And, in the end, the name selected was that of Richard Meier, an architect from New York.
Mass was being celebrated during my first visit, and it soon became clear that there are some serious problems with the acoustics. The priest’s voice was muffled, and bounced off the walls. You heard him and his echo. The same happened when the organist began to play and with the congregational responses. Some technical adjustments have since been made, but it is hard to see how this problem can be completely resolved. The organ itself is a powerful one.

Don Corbino has a very united and active parish. They have published a book of cartoons for children, entitled “Tracce di un cammino” (Traces of a Journey), where the history of the parish is narrated right up to the day the church was consecrated. Numerous gifts were received from other parishes and various associations, e.g., chalices, liturgical vestments, etc. A gift of Pope John Paul II was the awarding of “titular” status to this Jubilee Church, and Cardinal Crescenzio Sepe, prefect of the Congregation for Evangelization, was given the titular title.

When the Mass ended we began to “feel” our way through the church. One thing I love about Roman churches is that, when you move from the nave to the sanctuary, you begin to experience a distinct “change of space.” But this did not happen. The altar itself is a block of travertine resembling a boat. It has the relics of twelve saints, including St. Lawrence, St. Sebastian, and St. Maria Goretti. The long “bench” to the right of the altar I found quite banal (it reminded me of the benches in train stations). And the box-like ambo did not impress me either. Of course, if you have lived for many years in Rome, and been privileged to enjoy the deluge of color within the ancient city, it can be difficult to accustom yourself to stark interiors and raw geometry.

On the positive side, the name of Le Corbusier comes to mind when you consider certain elements in the church, the profound conical window behind the cross, the clear glass slit running around the church etc. But, walking to the end of the nave, and looking back directly at the altar, you suddenly realize that the beautiful Cross — from the 1600’s, a wooden cross and Christ figure made of “papier mache,” a gift from a nearby parish — is not in line with the altar. I found this really disconcerting especially since the altar is supposed to be the sacramental focal point of the church. It is the symbolic “source of light,” from which “rays” stretch out in every direction. But, when the altar and the crucifix are not on the same axis, a visual “tension” is created which is in no way conducive to prayer or contemplation. In relation to the choice of a crucifix for the altar wall, I was curious about the fact that no contemporary artist had been approached to design one. An interior like this would have benefited from a crucifix like the one made by Giuliano Vangi for the Cathedral of Padua in 1997. Vangi’s Christ is made of silver, nickel, gold, and bronze.

During my second visit to the church I had a long chat with Don Corbino about the day-to-day life of his church. He told me that thousands of people have come to see it. When I asked him about the cost of running a church of this complexity, he admitted that the income from the parish could not cover the expenses. I saw that he had a severe cold. He told me that the church heating system is under the travertine floor and this means that, apart from being inadequate, it is necessary to turn it on at least ten hours before any ceremony or Mass. This is, of course, apart from the cost of regularly cleaning the vast quantity of glazed windows (for the church and the parish centre). Rome is famous for scirocco winds from the desert — they tend to leave a thin layer of sand on every surface they find, and they are very frequent. So how are they going to keep the glass clean and the costs down? This is a heavy burden, obviously, for the new church and parish of God the Merciful Father — more a misery, I would say, than a mercy!

As one moves towards the sacristy, through an opening to the left of the altar, there is a large display case. Inside is a collection of chalices, a crucifix, candlesticks etc., designed by the Jewellers Bulgari and donated to the church. An extraordinarily beautiful gift. The chalices are an excellent mix of Renaissance, Baroque and Gothic influences. Not surprisingly they attracted the attention of many of the visitors. The collection itself is situated immediately behind the altar wall on which the great crucifix is hanging. I wondered, though, why it was put in that position. It would, I think, have been a better idea to have kept the collection somewhere in the sacristy. People looking in from the back of the church can see the sacred objects, as it were, “on show.”

The Day Chapel and the Baptistry area are separated from the main nave by an L-shaped wall. These are directly under the massive curved north wall or “sail” and seem to be a little lost in all the pale travertine and white cement. The chapel can seat about 24 people. At the end of the cha-
The confessinals are small cubicules with two seats in each one and the doors are made of wood and glass slits, linking up to the design in paneled wood on the vertical south wall of the main nave. This creates a sense of continuity between the two areas of worship. The priest and the parishioners can be clearly seen inside. I understand that an old-style grating confessional will be added to cater for the pastoral needs of those people who do not like the ‘face to face’ confessional style. Figurative Stations of the Cross are being made, in bronze or stone. The original idea, I understand, was to have each Station represented by a Greek cross.

One of the areas in the church I find most problematic is the baptismal font and where it has been placed. It is just to the left of the nave, in full view of the congregation and the priest at the altar. Again it is a rectangular design in travertine, with an indented centre for the holy water, and in front of it there is a small sloped area. You almost fall over it as you move to the side of the nave. I felt that it is too close to the main altar and that it gets lost in the hub of geometrical constructions nearby, i.e., the confessinals, the organ, the day chapel wall, etc. I would have liked to have seen it placed near the entrance door of the “corridor” which leads to the day chapel. The baptismal font is the place where Christians are initiated into the communion of believers. Only after this initiation are they invited to take their place around the main altar. Here, unfortunately, the font and altar are so near together that it is difficult visually to perceive that they represent two distinct stages in the Christian mystery.

Much has been said and written about the three curved walls, or sails. One’s mind goes back immediately to John Utzon’s Sydney Opera House (1957–73), though the latter is a more exuberant and dynamic structure. The feeling I get from the three curved walls is of a building falling in upon itself — even if the parish building and bell tower “lean against” a strong vertical wall which marks the demarcation line between the church and the rest of the complex. The whole structure is visually very analytical and “cubist.” When I look at old or new churches I always search for that sense of a breakthrough of the sacred into human experience (on a visual level) — what the Romanian scholar Mircea Eliade called “hierophany.” He says that in developed religious systems there are three cosmic levels — heaven, earth, and the underworld, linked together by the vertical “axis mundi.” Church spires, domes and bell towers have this quality, and this is why they are able to soar up above all their surroundings. The Meier church seems to lack this dynamic element. Again I returned, in my mind, to the Le Corbusier church in Ronchamp. In comparison, the Meier church is very rational in its conception, whereas the Le Corbusier church draws you up into its mystical web.

The bells in the tower were cast at the Pontifical Marinelli Foundry and are dedicated as follows: the first and biggest bell to Europe and the Virgin Mary — it contains a list of all normal Jubilees from 1300. The second is dedicated to America and Sts. Peter and Paul, Patron Saints of Rome. The third is dedicated to Africa and St. Charles Borromeo (to honor Pope John Paul II, whose first name is Karlo). The fourth represents Oceania, and is dedicated to St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Thomas Aquinas — the name of the parish which owned the property on which the new church stands. The fifth and last is dedicated to Asia and Sts. Francisco Saverio and Thérèse of Lisieux. Four of the bells list, respectively, the dates of the first baptism, funeral, and wedding in the church, and the date of the laying of the first stone.

When the Vicariato commissioned Meier to construct this church they appointed an Italian engineer, Ignazio Brecchia Fratadocci, to supervise the work. Some modifications were made to Meier’s original project. These relate to the parish center only, where some new spaces were created (relating to the actual needs of the parish). The church authorities made some
decisions of a functional and economic nature. The auditorium was thought to be too big for the actual needs of the parish. The changes made were to reduce to some extent the overall cost of the entire project. The project was supposed to cost five million dollars, but the final cost ran to over twenty-five million dollars. Much of this high expense came from the extra time and study needed to resolve the problems (and the cost of the solutions) relating to the erection of the curved walls.

Inevitably, a project of this scope and complexity calls for extensive sponsorship. Fortunately, many companies were willing to give funds, materials and engineering expertise. What must not be forgotten are the many religious orders and parishes who did fund raising for this Jubilee church. Proceeds from tickets for the annual Vatican Christmas concert also contributed to the cost of building churches in the outlying areas of Rome.

An Italian company called Italcementi began their connection with the Meier project, as economic sponsors. What is interesting is that they ended by being both economic and technical sponsors. This is because their company got involved in the engineering problems related to mounting the precast blocks. They also proposed a new type of white cement, mixed with Carrara Marble inert, called TX Millenium. This material is long lasting and safe from atmospheric agents, heat, wind, and earthquakes. The construction company was Lamaro Appalti S.p.a., and many other companies were also called in to give technical and material support.

It is clear that even if Italy did not “provide” the architect for this project, it did, however, contribute in an incredibly important way to solving the technical problems relating to the erection of the curved walls. Over two hundred precast blocks (each weighing twelve tons) were used to make the “sails.” To put these into place Italcementi invented an enormous skeletal machine which moved on rails. This innovative and massive moving crane was made in the North of Italy. It took three months to assemble and it could not be used if the wind blew at more than 40 km per hour (which happened quite frequently, I believe). Men had to be trained to use this huge machine, which was six meters higher than the tallest curved wall. It took seven months to mount the first curved wall, five months to mount the second, and six months to mount the third. Meier’s original design anticipated that the mounting of the precast blocks would be quicker, at the rate of four blocks per day.

What is so marvelous about many Italian companies is that they do not come to a halt when technical problems present themselves. If no solution can be found using an external source, they try to invent a system or a machine that can do this.

The church authorities were fortunate in finding a strong sponsor like the Italcementi Group. It was clearly important to build a church which would last over time (like the old basilicas) and would not go to ruin after a short time (like many modern buildings). Some technical problems relating to stability and materials presented themselves and, as a result, a group of Italian engineers worked, in collaboration with Meier, to find a way to erect the curved walls and find a material that would stand the test of time and weather. This explains why the project was not finished for the Jubilee year and also why the costs were so high.

Driving back into the center of Rome, after my last visit to Tor Tre Teste, I found that there were still some questions in my mind concerning the Meier church. The Pope’s Letter to Artists spoke of the need for “beauty in order not to sink into despair.” But does the Meier church answer to this need? Certainly, there are elements in the church which aspire to that austere beauty, that austerity of form so often exalted by certain extreme modernist and contemporary tendencies. But what about the people visiting and worshipping there on a regular basis? In what way does the Meier church, as a work of architecture, as a construction in the Roman suburbs, help to fill “the vacuum in the spirit?” Can the building be described, perhaps, as a fine edifice in its own right, but not particularly suitable as a building for sacred worship?

At a time when contemporary culture and the Church can often seem far apart, Pope John Paul II has suggested that art can serve as “a kind of bridge to religious experience.” I agree wholeheartedly. But I doubt very much if the Meier Church succeeds in being that kind of bridge. After several visits to “Dio Padre Misericordioso,” my impression is that, if the building can be described in any sense as a “bridge,” it is a bridge which serves simply to lift us up, or bring us into one of the zones of the (by now) familiar modernist enterprise.

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CHARLES BORROMEO AND CATHOLIC TRADITION REGARDING THE DESIGN OF CATHOLIC CHURCHES

Matthew E. Gallegos, Ph.D.

While the Tridentine documents contained few specific directives regarding the design of Catholic churches in the context of the Protestant Reformation, the Council affirmed the authority of tradition in all matters related to Christianity. It was in that context that one of the main participants in the Council wrote a summation of the Church's tradition regarding the design of Catholic churches. In light of the two most recent documents regarding the design of Catholic churches in the United States, Environment and Art in Catholic Worship (1978) and Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship (2000), it is useful to revisit the understanding of Church tradition that existed prior to their publication.¹

Charles Borromeo (1538–1584), whom the Catholic Church recognizes as a saint, published a summary of Catholic traditions regarding church design fourteen years after the conclusion of the Council of Trent. Borromeo’s publication, Instructioes Fabricae et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, was the central document that applied the decrees of the Council of Trent to the design and furnishing of Catholic churches.² Borromeo officially wrote the Instructioes to direct construction within the Archdiocese of Milan, but his intention was that it have wider usage. Borromeo published the document in 1577, and it was reprinted without major revisions at least nineteen times between 1577 and 1952. Until the late 1960s the architecture and furnishings of most Catholic churches throughout the world were consistent with the Instructioes’ directives.

Borromeo began his treatise with a letter in which he identified that he was compiling the directives from information provided by two sources of authority, one ecclesiastical and the other secular. He wrote:

... this only has been our principle, that we have shown that the norm and form of building, ornamentation and ecclesiastical furnishing are precise and in agreement with the thinking of the Fathers ... and ...we believe it necessary to take the advice of competent architects.³

As an active and influential participant in the Council of Trent, Borromeo had intimate knowledge of the Church’s official decrees and of their intent.⁴ He served as the Papal Secretary of State under Pope Pius IV during the Council’s final sessions. He also was one of the most influential agents of reform after the Council’s conclusion, serving first as the Papal Legate to Italy and then as the Archbishop of Milan. Along with authoring Instructioes, he exerted great influence in the writing of the Church’s revised ceremonial manual, Pontificales secundum ritum et usum Sancte Romane Ecclesie (1561); the decree regarding priest’s seminary training, Cum adolescentium aetas (1563); the revised Roman Breviary (1568); and the revised Roman Missal (1570).

Borromeo’s Instructioes also incorporate ideas that were contained in secular architectural treatises to which he had access.⁵ These included the ancient Roman treatise by Vitruvius, De Architectura (c. 49 BC - 14 AD); Pietro Cateneo’s L’Architettura di Pietro Cateneo Senese (1554); and Andrea Palladio’s I Quattro Libri dell’Architettura (1570). These secular sources as well as Church tradition advocated using platonic forms such as circles, domes and vaults as evocations of perfection and of the heavenly realm. Both Church and Western aesthetic tradition favored the use of an odd rather than of an even number of units so that a composition would always have a clear center. This predilection for centrality and anthropomorphism often resulted in symmetric compositions. If circumstances dictated asymmetry, the right side was favored due to the negative associations within Western civilization of all things related to the left, including the Latin word for left, sinistra.

From this wide range of ecclesiastical and secular sources Borromeo compiled neither a theoretical nor a theological work, but a compilation of the Church’s traditional design elements and organizational strategies for Catholic churches. It was Borromeo’s goal to identify design elements that conformed to official Church teaching and not to advocate a particular aesthetic style. While this is true, Borromeo wrote the Instructioes in the context of the explosion of artistic creativity which typified the baroque aesthetic. The Counter Reformation and the baroque aesthetic were symbiotic. While the Catholic Church was emphasizing that the sacred could be encountered through the senses and most Protestant reformers were rejecting this idea, architects, sculptors, and artists such as Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini, who were working for Catholic clients, were developing the baroque aesthetic. These designers worked with the intention of integrating all the visual arts to maximize the engagement of people’s sensibilities. Despite the boisterous aesthetic
context in which Borromeo was writing, he only occasionally refers to the classical orders or other stylistic issues within the *Instructiones*.

Borromeo organized the text of the *Instructiones* into thirty-three chapters. Thirty chapters focus on the design of typical parish churches, and also include information regarding cathedrals. The last three chapters address the design of churches for oratories, convents, and monasteries. Despite the chapters’ titles, the topics covered are not always clearly segregated within the chapter divisions. The first thirty chapters address six categories of information: a church’s sitting, plan configuration, exterior design, interior organization, furnishings, and decoration.

With regard to a church’s sitting, Borromeo states that a church should be in a prominent location. If natural topography does not provide an advantageous site to give a church visual prominence as well as to guard against floods and dampness, the church should be placed on a raised platform. Borromeo recommends that three or five steps provide access to the platform. If circumstances require that there be a greater number of steps, there should be a landing at either every third or fifth step. Churches are to be free-standing, having no structures directly attached to them other than a sacristy. The residence of the pastor or bishop may be close by or connected to the church by a residence of the pastor or bishop may be attached to or connected to the church by a residence of the pastor or bishop may be attached to a river so that people passing through a town may see them and:

- may make their salutations and reverences before the front of the temple [church].
- Catholics frequently observed this custom by making the sign of the cross, whenever they walked or drove past a church, and men customarily tipped their hats. Borromeo’s sitting directives are also consistent with the hierarchy of building types as they were understood in Western civilization from the Renaissance era until the nineteenth century.

Sacred Architecture

Borromeo suggests that a church should be large enough to accommodate not only the area’s local inhabitants, but also the large numbers who would congregate from distant places for holy days. He identifies that a church’s interior area should provide approximately four square feet of space for each person who will attend the church regularly.

Seven different chapters in the *Instructiones* address aspects of the exterior appearance of a Catholic church. Borromeo identifies that the church’s entrance facade is its most important exterior wall and that it should contain all of a church’s exterior ornamentation and decoration. Narrative visual embellishments normally should not be placed on a church’s side or rear elevations. In reference to the nature of the front facade’s narrative decoration Borromeo writes:

... there is one feature above all that should be observed in the facade of every church, especially a parochial church. In the upper part of the chief doorway on the outside, there should be ... the image of the most Blessed Virgin Mary, holding her son Jesus in her arms; on the right-hand side there should be the effigy of the saint to whom the church is dedicated, while on the left-hand side ... the effigy of another saint to whom the people of that parish are particularly devoted.

Borromeo recognizes that if circumstances do not allow having three separate images or statues on a church’s front facade, then at least the image of the saint to whom the church is dedicated should be represented.

Borromeo’s directives regarding a church’s exterior doors and windows had both practical and symbolic purposes. He states that a church’s front facade should have an odd number of doors, and if possible reflect the church’s number of “naves” [nave and aisles]. If a church’s central nave is sufficiently wide, three doors should enter directly into the nave in addition to single doors that lead into the nave’s adjacent aisles. Borromeo observed that if a church does not have side aisles, it still should have three doors in its front facade. A church therefore should have a total of three, five or seven doors in its front facade. The central doorway should be the largest and have greater ornamentation, especially if the church is a cathedral, as it accommodates the clergy and their retinue in ceremonial processions. Borromeo’s directives regarding the location of windows are equally specific. His concerns relate to issues of illumination, security, and maintaining a proper decorum within a church. He writes:

- the windows should be constructed as high as possible, and in such a way that a person standing outside cannot look inside.

S. Maria Vallicelli, Rome, 1605
If possible a church’s principle source of interior illumination should be provided by clerestory windows into the church’s nave and windows that are placed high on the walls of the church’s side aisles. All windows should have provisions to guard against unauthorized entry and should be odd in number. If the church has a nave and aisle configuration, the window spacing should align with the center of the spaces that are defined by the columns in the nave arcade or colonnade. If the nave requires additional illumination, a window, preferably round, should be placed above the doorways in the church’s front facade or in the walls of its apse. Borromeo observes that lanterns that project above a church’s roof line and oculi in domes can illuminate either a church’s sanctuary or nave from above, but cautions that such devices are difficult to make watertight. Borromeo is adamant about not placing altars directly under or close to a potential source of water leakage. He also discourages placement of windows in any location where the illumination provided by them would prevent the congregation from having a clear view of either the main altar or side altars.

Borromeo’s directives regarding windows closely follow those of the Renaissance architectural theoretician and Catholic priest Leon Battista Alberti. Alberti stated that: nothing but the sky may be seen through them [the windows], to the intent that both the priests that are employed in the performance of Divine Offices, and those that assist on account of devotion, may not have their minds in any way diverted.

Church tradition as expressed by Durandus held that: ... by the windows, the senses are signified: which ought to be shut to the vanities of this world, and open to receive with all freedom spiritual gifts.

Bells and bell towers are the last exterior features of a church that Borromeo addresses. He states that the purpose of church bells is to call people to liturgy within the church, to mark the hours at which the Divine Office is to be prayed, to mark the times of the Angelus, and to toll the death of one of the faithful. He instructs that bells should be either in a free-standing tower, or in towers that form a part of the church’s front facade. If there is only one tower, it should be on the church facade’s right side as a person approaches the church. If circumstances do not permit the construction of a bell tower, the bell may hang within a pier or buttress in the same location as that of a single tower. A cathedral should have seven bells in its tower, but a minimum of five is allowable. Even the humblest church should have a bell that can be played in two distinct manners.

Although the tower is to be of solid construction, the actual belfry should be open on all sides to allow the sound of the bell to radiate in all directions.

Towers should have a fixed cross at their apex. A clock and a weather vane may be incorporated into a bell tower’s design. The clock’s face should show the day’s, third, sixth, ninth, and twelfth hours to mark the times of the Divine Office. The vane should have two components. The tower’s fixed cross may serve as the vane’s fixed shaft. The vane’s variable component should be the figure of a cock. The fixed cross represents the solidity of faith, while the moveable vane’s cock form represents both perpetual vigilance and the variability of all things other than faith.

A church’s interior organization, furnishings, and decoration are the focus of a major portion of Borromeo’s Instructions. Borromeo identifies that a church’s main altar and sanctuary should be the nave’s axial focus and each transept arm can accommodate a side altar. If a church does not have a transept and/or if the side aisles are of sufficient width, side altars should be the axial focus of a church’s side aisles.

In discussing a church sanctuary’s design, Borromeo states that a sanctuary’s floor level should be an odd number of steps above that of the nave and side aisles. If circumstances permit, the sanctuary’s floor finish should be of a more durable, refined, and carefully crafted material than that of the nave and aisles. The sanctuary’s vault should contain mosaic or other decorative work. A railing at which the congregation receives communion should separate the nave from the sanctuary. The sanctuary’s size should be adequate to accommodate those solemn occasions that involve a large number of clergy.

The main altar holding the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle should be the principle object of focus in the sanctuary while also accommodating the saying of Mass. It should rest at least one step, if not three steps above the height of the sanctuary’s floor level. Side altars should support devotional statues and contain reliquaries. Side altars may directly adjoin a wall but the main altar must be freestanding. The main altar should be made of solid stone or faced with marble and must contain relics of at least two saints. If the main altar is not made of solid stone, an altar stone containing relics, which is also identified as a portable altar, should be within the altar’s top surface.

Borromeo conveys that a decree issued by his regional provincial council of bishops stipulated that the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle should rest on the main altar. This requirement became a part of the Church’s rubrics in 1614. The Ceremonial for Bishops, which was in effect in Borromeo’s episcopal province when he wrote the Instructions, stipulated that in contrast to the requirement for parish churches, the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle in a cathedral was not to be located on its main altar. A cathedral’s tabernacle was to rest on an altar within a separate chapel that was dedicated to that purpose and which was adjacent to the sanctuary. Voelker observes that the Apostolic Constitutions, a fourth-century treatise on religious discipline that was a part of the tradition Borromeo drew...
upon, identified that within the sanctuary of a cathedral: ...in the middle, let the bishop’s throne be placed, and on each side of him let the presbyters sit down.

Such an arrangement required that the altar be located between the body of the nave and the bishop’s cathedra. Borromeo states that the prohibition against placing the tabernacle on the altar in cathedral churches was motivated by the desire to maintain an unimpeded visual sightline between the cathedra and the congregation. Borromeo’s resolution of this requirement within his archdiocese was to raise the tabernacle on columns above the altar, maintaining a line of vision between the congregation and the cathedra. In circumstances where the cathedra, the altar and the tabernacle are all in axial alignment with the nave, a freestanding or suspended canopy, a baldacin, should be placed over the altar and tabernacle.

Borromeo envisioned that most church services would occur during daylight hours when a church’s interior would receive natural light. Despite this circumstance, Borromeo stipulates that certain candles or oil lamps must burn inside a church’s sanctuary, regardless of the natural illumination levels within the building. This requirement was prompted by Catholics’ identification of a burning flame as a symbol of Christ’s presence, because of Christ’s self-identification as “the Light of the World.”

The required artificial light sources within a church’s sanctuary include a lampadarium, which is a lantern whose flame is referred to as the sanctuary light. The lampadarium contains either oil lamps or candles and should be located in visual proximity to the Blessed Sacrament tabernacle. The sanctuary light is to burn whenever the Blessed Sacrament is in the tabernacle. The lampadarium should have three or five lamps; seven in large churches; or a minimum of one in smaller churches. In addition to having the lampadarium close to the tabernacle, six candlesticks should be on the main altar. Only two of the altar candles are to burn during most liturgies, but four or six should burn during Solemn or High Mass and other special observances. In addition to the six candlesticks, Borromeo identifies that a crucifix should be on or above the main altar. Should a church have a diaphragm arch above its sanctuary, the crucifix should be on the diaphragm wall above the arch.

Borromeo does not establish definitive placement for a church’s ambo, which accommodates the proclamation of scripture, or for a pulpit, which accommodates preaching. He states that these furnishings should be convenient to the altar, not block the congregation’s view of the altar, and be situated so the congregation can easily see and hear the ambo’s or pulpit’s occupants. Borromeo states that ideally there should be two ambones, one accommodating the reading of the Gospel, the other the epistle. From the congregation’s viewpoint, the Gospel ambo should be on the nave’s left side and the epistle on its right. A single ambo can fulfill both functions if circumstances dictate that there only be a single ambo. In those circumstances it should be on the Gospel side.

Sacristies should be adjacent to the sanctuary. Ideally, a church should have two sacristies. One would be next to the main sanctuary and the other would be located close to the church’s entry doorway and provide storage for vestments and a place where the ministers could vest. The vesting sacristy’s location by the church’s entry doorway allowed the priest who was saying Mass to initiate and close liturgies with a formal procession, an ancient Church tradition. At the bishop’s discretion, more modest churches could function with only one sacristy if it was located close to the sanctuary.

Four chapters of Borromeo’s Instructio...
Borromeo’s directives regarding iconography and art admonish bishops that it is their responsibility to ensure that the subject matter and quality of the images in churches and the honor shown the images be appropriate. Within his episcopal province, Borromeo required bishops to instruct pastors and artists of their responsibilities in this regard, and to enforce fines or punishment against pastors and artists who failed to fulfill those responsibilities. Borromeo specifically stipulates that window glazing should incorporate images of the saints. He also states that sacred images should not be incorporated into pavement patterns, where the potential would exist that the images would not receive proper veneration. Borromeo recommends that saints’ names should be written under their images if the image’s identity is at all obscure. He also admonishes that great care should be taken that the images within a church represent historical truth or valid theological teachings.

Two Church publications were mainly responsible for disseminating Borromeo’s directives beyond the bounds of the Archdiocese of Milan. These were the description of “The Church and Its Furnishings” in the Roman Missal, and the “Instructions for Consecrating a Church” in The Ceremonial of Bishops. Borromeo was the principal author of both of the revised versions of these documents which resulted from the Council of Trent’s deliberations. Although these publications were modified several times over the centuries, the portions regarding church design remained relatively unchanged and generally were adhered to with minor exceptions worldwide until the twentieth century.

Catholicism is an inherently conservative tradition and one that historically has recognized tradition’s authority. The United States’ National Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy’s Environment and Art in Catholic Worship (1978) was the first document pertaining to Catholic churches in the United States that sought to revise the guidelines contained in the Instructions. That document has been superseded by Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship (2000). While these documents attempt to address the impact of the Second Vatican Council’s reformed liturgy on the design and furnishing of Catholic churches, those parts of Borromeo’s Instructions that are rooted in Catholic theology should not be ignored.

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NOTES:
2. In this article Evelyn Carole Voelker’s, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions Fabricae Et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, 1577: A Translation With Commentary and Analysis, (Ph.D. Diss., Syracuse University, 1977) is quoted. Voelker’s dissertation has three distinct portions; a translation of Borromeo’s text, notes on the text, and commentary. To distinguish here between Borromeo’s text and Voelker’s notes and analysis, whenever reference is made directly to Borromeo’s text, the citation appears as: Voelker, Instructions, and the page number. References made to Voelker’s notes and analysis are cited as: Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, and the page number. In both instances, the pagination refers to Voelker’s text.
6. Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, 43–44.
7. Borromeo, Instructions, on siting see: 35–38 and 122, 359; on the sanctuary’s alignment see: 124. Palladio quotation in Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, 45.
9. Borromeo, Instructions, on church plan configurations see: 51–52; on a church’s interior alignment see: 124, 125; on church entrances see: 75 and 287; on floor area requirements see: 38; on church facades see: 63–64; on the number of doors see: 97–99; on windows see: 109–112.
10. Alberti quotation in Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, 117–118.
13. Borromeo’s Instructiones Fabricae Et Supellectilis Ecclesiasticae, 1577: A Translation With Commentary and Analysis, (Ph.D. Diss., Syracuse University, 1977) is quoted. Voelker’s dissertation has three distinct portions; a translation of Borromeo’s text, notes on the text, and commentary. To distinguish here between Borromeo’s text and Voelker’s notes and analysis, whenever reference is made directly to Borromeo’s text, the citation appears as: Voelker, Instructions, and the page number. References made to Voelker’s notes and analysis are cited as: Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, and the page number. In both instances, the pagination refers to Voelker’s text.
14. This is generally accomplished with a mallet that strikes the bell when it is not tolling, and by tolling the bell, which causes the suspended gong that hangs within the bell to strike the moving bell. The ritual ringing of the Angelus and other occasions that elicit bell ringing require these two types of bell tones; see Durandus, “Of Bells,” in The Symbolism of Churches, 87–97.
15. Borromeo, Instructions, for the sanctuary’s size and the construction and location of altars, see: 143–148 and 194–197.
16. Borromeo, Instructions, 160; and Voelker, Charles Borromeo’s Instructions, 164–168. Voelker establishes that prior to the Council of Trent, the tabernacle was sometimes within a niche on the Gospel side of the sanctuary, in a pyx in the shape of a dove hanging next to the altar, or within a tower somewhere in the sanctuary. Prior to the legislation of 1614, bishops or provincial synods had the discretion to determine the tabernacle’s location within cathedrals.
22. Borromeo, Instructions.
25. There were two directives that were commonly ignored even during Borromeo’s lifetime. One prohibited providing views from private residences into churches for use by wealthy individuals. Examples of the disregard of this directive include Rome’s Pammilio Palace and Church of San Agnese (1645–1650, 1653–1657), the Royal Chapel at Versailles, and the Residenz in Würzburg, Germany. The other directive that generally was ignored required that men and women be segregated not only within churches, but while receiving the sacraments or even upon entering or leaving a church.
Sacred Architecture

A LAST LONG LOOK AT AMERICAN SACRED ARCHITECTURE
Ethan Anthony

During the last five years I have had the great good fortune to be the agent for a last long look at American sacred architecture. My opportunity came as the result of my attempt to save the architecture firm of Ralph Adams Cram.

Twelve years ago I merged my incipient architecture practice with the remnant of the Cram firm. At the time I was astonished to learn that the firm, an icon of the Victorian era, had survived over a century and through the entire period of modernism and post modernism without losing its essential character. I also found myself wondering how it was possible that I had completed architectural school without hearing about the firm, its founder or their work.

As I began to look at the firm and its 100-year body of work, other questions soon followed. How had I graduated from a 100-year body of work, other questions. I also found myself wondering how it was possible that I had completed architectural school without hearing about the firm, its founder or their work.

As I began to look at the firm and its 100-year body of work, other questions soon followed. How had I graduated from architecture school without studying religious buildings? Why was it that my study of monasteries and cathedrals had been on my own after architecture school? Why had it been the credo of the schools I attended that it was unnecessary to study the past beyond Corbusier or Kahn or Rossi. Why had study of masters been replaced by the mirror-like self-fascination of the study of magazines?

Of course, none of these changes had been accidental. During the internationalist ascendency the study of historical periods, styles and orders was replaced in most American architectural schools with the study of modernist examples to support the faculty’s contention that architectural change was legitimate and current and compelling.

And it was not just religious architecture or Roman and Gothic historical precedents that were discarded but also Frank Lloyd Wright (for his immorality) Green and Green (for the lack of interest in handmade things) and every other craft-oriented architect.

To understand the architecture of the time we also need to remember the principles of the modernist era. This was the time of the Italian modernists with their manifestos of the liberation of the working classes through machines. And we heard its echoes here in America. Machinery would liberate us to have greater and greater amounts of free time. We would have the enviable problem of finding leisure activities to fill our idle hours.

Machines were going to liberate men from the drudgery of handwork. Futurists actually imagined a time when our hands and other extremities would atrophy through generations of disuse. Only the brain and organs of sense would survive.

During the heavy war boom years of the 1960s, Paolo Soleri imagined an America built of mega-structures that would each house ten thousand in luxury apartments built over floors of automated factories that would produce all the necessities of life quietly below with no human participation. The dwellers above would fill their idle hours in making wind chimes, doorknobs, and other craft items to enrich their apartments with spiritually full items.

In the pre-World War II generation many fine churches of traditional design and relatively expensive high quality materials had been built. In that era (roughly from 1900-1940) the popular mind accepted the concept that it was desirable to commit a high level of resources to the church as an expression of the community’s devotion. The postwar generation adopted a different ideology. New churches built after the war were seen as a financially burdensome problem to be solved as inexpensively as possible.

As a result it was easy for postwar congregations to agree that light entering the building from a skylight above was a symbolic expression of God’s presence replacing more concrete and expensive representations such as stained glass and sculpture. The arts thus finally for the first time in America could be excluded from the religious space. As the mother of the arts, architecture’s exclusion of the arts from religious expression resulted in a reaction in the arts itself. The arts no longer looked to religion as a source of inspiration, and soon art was looking everywhere else: inside itself and in popular culture that blossomed into the void left by religion’s decline as a client.

And this about sums up the situation we find ourselves in at the beginning of the third millennium. Church building has descended to mere auditorium design, empty barns suggestive of illusive nebulous ideas reliant on electronic screens and powerful sound systems as replacements for stained glass and great buildings and art for the television generation. Religious art and architecture are in atrophy with little exemplary work in either produced for the religious institutions of our time.

The Reaction
Many of the architects in my own generation have reacted against the dominant modernist paradigm almost from the start. The first real expression of this reaction was known as postmodernism and led by Peter Blake, Robert Venturi, Charles Moore, and
Robert Stern, Responding to their students’ protests against the dominant paradigm during the seventies, these three postmodernists provided vital articulation of the protest against the loss of humanism that resulted from modernism and the technology culture.

The first step in restoring principles to architecture was to create space for new paradigms by destroying the credibility and removing the current paradigm from its pedestal. This work was done by Peter Blake and others by questioning the legitimacy of modernism and techno-culture. With his book on modernism he exposed the weak philosophical underpinnings and inconsistencies underlying much modernist work.

The second stage of the reaction to modernism was the resurrection and cultural rehabilitation of art and architectural history. Postmodern architects looked back at the remaining examples of traditional architecture that had not been destroyed during the modernist period and began to find pieces and parts to “quote” in their own work. The discovery was exemplified by Robert Venturi in Learning from Las Vegas and the mannerist re-use by Moore in Ray Smith’s SuperMannerism and by Stern in his work.

The current situation in the mainstream of architecture — which one would hardly guess from glancing through the typical architectural magazine — is that traditional forms and styles are back in an enormous wave that has swept across the nation while the magazine editors and “architectural critics” have been pushing alien forms and complaining that no one is following their leadership. As in the 1930s critics say that the mainstream consumer of architecture needs to be led and is incapable of choosing the environment he or she wants.

Where do American churches fit in this great debate about form in architecture? Churches come late to this argument, in large part due to conditions beyond their control. Just ten short years ago most mainline denomination churches I visited complained that their congregations had shrunk to the point that they could hardly afford to maintain their buildings. Many disappeared altogether in the decades of the seventies and eighties. Though the nineties had accomplished a change that reversed the situation.

During the 80s the baby-boom generation began to age into its thirties and forties and raise children. Many parents wanted to have their children educated about religion and spirituality by a church, sometimes but not always the church of their own upbringing. This brought families back to the church and swelled church memberships across the nation. For churches with older buildings this meant finding the means to begin to address the long neglected repair and maintenance of their buildings and this led to many fine restorations and renovations.

Congregations that have grown rapidly have been returning to a building mode for the first time in five decades. The resulting buildings of this new church boom have been largely negative to this time, though a few points of light can be found.

We can understand church architecture of the current era if we see it as separated in four main categories: Barns, Flying Saucers, Regional Styles, and Revivals.

**Barns**

Some denominations build pre-engineered steel sheds more typical of factory, supermarket, or agricultural architecture. They are inexpensive to build and require a relatively small investment per seat. It is unnecessary to address the usually undesirable “aesthetics” of this type of building because these churches have opted out of the architectural discussion about religious art and architecture. As such they do not matter and we hope will be torn down soon and replaced by a building that will show us the true feelings of the congregation about themselves and their God.

**Flying Saucers**

These churches, typical of Baptist and more recently Southern Catholic churches, are the logical extension of the barn form. Necessary gigantic for reasons of marketing or clerical coverage, an attempt is sometimes made to dress up the barn but the essential realities remain. They are exploited formless, barren, and cold caverns with regrettable acoustics and a total lack of imagination. These buildings are intentionally kept cheap as they are seen as disposable. Music is impossible in these buildings without powerful artificial reinforcement.

**Modernist and Postmodern (Regional Styles)**

A few mainline denominations spared the need for very large spaces in recent decades but needing to build nonetheless have requested and received passable but pedestrian church buildings designed by architects with neither experience in nor passion for religious architecture. These architects typically have practices that are predominantly in other building types but are given the commission for other reasons. They are community leaders or members of the congregation whose practice may be in banks, schools, or railroad stations, and the results have usually been recognizable as an example of their signature work in those forms. While the quality of the architecture may be debated on its own merits, it fundamentally misses the point. It is a personal exercise and not a participant in the great discourse on the expression of religion in architecture. In this sense they do not matter.

**Revivals**

This final category in which I personally have practiced, I list last because it has surfaced most recently chronologically and in my view is the highest and best phase of recent developments in church architecture. It is my opinion that development in this area of religious design has the greatest promise for leading to the next higher stage of religious design. Revivals have grown out of the need for congregations to rebuild either from a fire or from a catastrophic event in the life of the congregation. In this category I would include congregations that have split out of differences of principle and viewpoint.

These buildings also have resulted when a congregation has approached the building process with a clear understanding of the meaning that is enshrined in a building and has been willing to sacrifice in the sense of paying more per seat to have a building that has real meaning inherent within it.

These traditional buildings are more costly per seat than the three previous cat-
A Word about Revivals

Finally a word about the work we have been engaged in these last ten years. It has been my great good fortune to participate in the birth of three great new Gothic churches. They have been the first true Gothic churches since the Second World War. Our ability to create these essentially medieval monuments has grown directly out of our work over the past decade restoring and renovating a group of churches designed by Ralph Adams Cram and his firm, designers of some of the finest churches America has ever produced.

In our work in modern times, both in relation to repairing and restoring the churches Cram and his craftsmen built so lovingly and in building a new church meant to look and feel like those Cram and his craftsmen built, we have had no such background to which to turn.

More than fifty years have passed since Cram built his last churches and the workmen who once made the hinges, doors, and windows of those fine buildings have long ago retired. Mechanized production has replaced the loving creation of handicraft, and new sophisticated hand tools have changed the processes.

The aesthetics of architecture have changed to adapt to the new capabilities in part because of the influence of both American industry and its handmaiden, the magazine publishers, and in part because of the influence of the Bauhaus through Harvard and IIT. Architecture has undergone a fifty-year process of adapting to mass production and standardization, and we have come to a point where instead of architects designing individual creative responses to formal challenges we have architects largely choosing pre-designed parts from catalogs. Modern architects have become shoppers.

Because of this change it has been extremely challenging to begin to take a fresh approach to architecture again. Rather than using a tired set of standardized parts in a sterile formal exercise, as touted by Corbusier with his modular strangely based on the height of the average French policeman, we have been taking a fresh look at the design of environment for work, worship, and for study.

This has sometimes meant not only looking anew at the environment and our response but inventing new language for describing it, because after all language can be so defining that use of existing language becomes a confinement in itself.

In the design of a Gothic church this has presented itself as re-learning the old language, which really is learning a new language for the modern. If first one learns anew what a vault, pier choir, retro-choir, reredos, voussoir, and buttress is, one then will inevitably begin to think about design in an entirely different way. The tiresome arguments over the choice of a basis for a standard unit, over alternation of squares or rectangles in a pattern, or the deep inner meaning of geometric forms and shafts of light seem utterly mute when stood next to a great Gothic building with its myriad parts all with a long tradition and a strange internal beauty.

The creation may begin with the creation of spaces and their subdivision into structural bays and vaulted sub-spaces. There follows placement of familiar forms; columns and arches, windows and frames, beams and vaults. Finally there are finishing touches, paneling, and paving. And in all there is attention to the quality of the detail, the hand touches. No longer need we fear the personal touch of the craftsman, for it is welcome here as a mark of its internal dignity and worth.

I have looked back to the original many times in now six trips to Europe in the last five years and in extensive research in our firm archives as well as in reading the original works Cram himself read and cited in his extensive writings. This process has led me to an understanding of many fundamental starting points for the Gothic building and an internal ability to work within the style. As extensive and thorough as this research has been, it has been only a beginning because we in fact are not building in medieval times and must adapt everything we want to accomplish to modern times, methods and cost realities.

This has meant that, strange as it may sound, the modern builder in medieval forms has to invent everything anew. Paradoxically there is far more inventiveness in attempting a Gothic building than in the modern building that now can and often is ordered almost entirely from a catalog. This has been the difficulty and the great excitement of building in this revival style. Finally it will also be the genesis of a new stylistic adventure as industry and human innovation catches up with us and increasingly offers the parts and pieces we need to do this work in catalogs. In this way the form will be easier to produce and the idea will spread far beyond the few initial churches that we have had the great good fortune to design.

Ethan Anthony is the principal of Hoyle, Doran & Berry Architects in Boston, the successor firm to Ralph Adams Cram.
LOST IN SPACE

SUSPICION OF ARCHITECTURE AND THE NEW ORATORY AT AVE MARIA UNIVERSITY

Denis McNamara

The debate generated by the recent release of images of the initial proposal for Ave Maria’s new chapel cuts to the heart of larger discussions which have been circling the Catholic architectural debate for almost 50 years now. Can glass and steel be used for a Catholic church? The answer, of course, is yes. But rather than asking can it be done, the primary question is should it be done? Philosopher David Hume proposed this is/ought problem in the 18th century, and modernist architects have been equating the is and the ought for decades. What is, they claimed, was a twentieth century dominated by machines, glass, steel and industrial production. Therefore, what ought to be was architecture made up of those very things. What is, they claimed, was an architecture that had passed through the age of the priest and attained what is rightly called culture, as Le Corbusier claimed. The great irony with the Ave Maria chapel, of course, is that the very same architecture which heralded the age of rationalistic doubt and the glorification of the machine is now being used to proclaim a new era of traditional Catholic renewal. Certainly this can be done. Again, ought it be done?

It is somewhat edifying to hear that Ave Maria University has hired the excellent liturgical art firm of Talleres de Arte Granda who will no doubt supply beautiful interior appointments for their chapel. It is also good news to hear that the glass model shown in the early news releases is to be greatly revised. However, the fundamental problem remains that the Fay Jones’s Thorncrown Chapel lies at the heart of the design. While Thorncrown is clearly a nice structure — a tiny building of minimal architecture and views to the forest on every side — it succeeds because it is almost anti-architectural. It blends with the natural surroundings, making the viewer feel as if he or she is outdoors when indoors, one of Frank Lloyd Wright’s great architectural concerns. There is indeed a suspicion of architecture at the Thorncrown Chapel, where instead of a building, viewers are given lines of beams. Admittedly, these lines and beams are designed and arranged quite well, but that is all they are. The beams look as if they were ripped on a table saw, just as Frank Lloyd Wright desired in his famous essay “Art and Craft of the Machine,” in which he called the machine the “Intellect mastering the drudgery of earth that the plastic art may live.” Again, we can base a chapel on this philosophy, but ought we?

The answer has to be no. I make this a “soft” no because I understand the allure of Frank Lloyd Wright and Fay Jones. They did wonderful things in their ways. However, a Catholic church ought not to be a machine, nor ought it to look like a machine. It ought to be an icon of heaven, the Heavenly Jerusalem described in chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation. We ought to use an architecture which speaks in sign and symbol in the very architecture itself, in the anthropomorphism of columns and the inherited sign value of classical motifs used by Constantine, Abbot Suger and Michelangelo. It ought not simply to let us look out to the fallen natural world, but to present to us an image the redeemed world, just as an icon of a saint is not a portrait but an image of a Christian infused with the divine energy, aglow with the inner life of God. Vague reminiscences of gothic in glass and steel on a mammoth scale do not signal a Catholic renewal. Rather, they signal the incomplete understanding of what Vatican II tells us real Catholic renewal should be: the sacramental use of art and architecture to give us a foretaste of the heavenly liturgy through sign and symbol. We can try to force glass and steel to represent Catholic language, but we ought not to. It is not suited to the task, and filling it with beautiful Granda statues will not change the fact that the architecture itself remains mute. The opportunity here is great, just as it was at the Los Angeles Cathedral, and what a terrible thing for this opportunity to be lost because we substitute the is for the ought.

Dr. Denis McNamara is an Architectural historian and assistant director at the Liturgical Institute, University of Saint Mary of the Lake.
The Cathedral of St. Augustine in Bridgeport, Connecticut was built from 1865 to 1868, and recently underwent a two-and-a-half year renovation. Under the guidance of Bishop Lori, head of the Diocese of Bridgeport, and through the design of architect Henry Menzies, the cathedral has been returned to its place of splendor and prominence amongst Connecticut’s churches.

Although the church of St. Augustine was a large church when it was built, it was not originally designed to serve as a cathedral. According to Mr. Menzies, this had led to many functional problems over the years, and was a challenge to overcome during the design process. In addition, a series of renovations over the years had left the church bereft of any extraordinary presence deserving of a cathedral. The apse was plain and relatively empty. The finishes inside the church had aged and were subdued. According to Mr. Menzies’ article, “Comments on the Renovation of the Cathedral of Saint Augustine,” the mandate from Bishop Lori was to restore the church and bring back its original glory – using a “contemporary vernacular.” Something modern or new was desired. Bishop Lori also requested that the restoration follow the latest guidelines of the Vatican for church layout, which return to traditional arrangements of the altar and tabernacle.

Under this mandate, Mr. Menzies has provided the Diocese of Bridgeport with an unqualified success. He has met or exceeded all of the published desires of the Bishop with his design. Upon entering the church, a feeling of peace envelops the visitor as the outside world drops away. The new finishes and light inside the cathedral bring a sense of peace and grace to the space, even as one contemplates the interior and the glory of God and his house. The interiors have been re-designed to celebrate the church and to instruct the parishioners through the use of iconography.

**Recaptured Glory**

**The Renovation of the Cathedral of St. Augustine in Bridgeport**

Sean Tobin

*Interior view of St. Augustine Cathedral, Bridgeport, Connecticut, after renovation.*
The centerpiece of Mr. Menzies’ design is the altar, which is, without a doubt, the crowning aspect of the project. The altar is the focus of the church, and the eye is invariably drawn to it from almost any point in the cathedral. The color scheme and floor patterns chosen by Mr. Menzies accentuate the altar’s importance and help to focus the eye. The color scheme inside consists of very pale walls and columns, highlighted by gold capitals. The eye is drawn from the capitals along the ribs of the nave ceiling. The ceiling is painted blue, reminiscent of color schemes of the Renaissance. The ceiling represents heaven, often painted blue to portray the heavens within the structure of the church. The attention is then gathered at more highly colorful areas of the church, such as the altar and side chapels.

To set the altar apart, it is raised on three steps above the main floor. The baldacchino dominates the altar, both in size and presence. Mr. Menzies has designed a structure that captures the spirit of Gothic architecture and yet is unquestionably modern. It is made of solid bronze, meticulously crafted in New York. Its structure manages to feel light and reaches toward the ceiling. Above the altar, a wood crucifix is suspended from the structure, and above that, a spire reaches towards the ceiling with the Angel Gabriel blowing a horn at its peak. The bronze structure echoes the ribs of the nave supporting the ceiling. It is a very subtle, but effective, echo or miniaturization of the cathedral above the altar, as is fitting. The baldacchino clearly defines its space and yet manages to be light enough to disappear.

In addition to the baldacchino, the tabernacle, cathedra, altar, and pulpit are all new designs that contribute to the space. Although the cathedra is an antique, the other pieces are of dark Honduran mahogany. The pieces all stand out against the lighter walls and emphasize their importance. The pulpit and screen are unquestionably Gothic, but they are not strictly traditional. It follows in the footsteps of the baldacchino, creating a more modern language of the architecture that speaks to the same spirit that created the cathedral in the 1800s, yet distinctly of the 21st century. The layering of arches on the screen is traditional in nature and serves as a great backdrop to the tabernacle itself. The tabernacle is highlighted by a mosaic of angels flanking a central panel filled with the image of a dove. The iconographic narrative is continued throughout the screen, with carvings and statues representing the apostles adding layers of meaning to the design. The recurring theme of a triptych can be noted throughout the design and is another subtle, yet pleasing, aspect. The interplay of light and dark and layering of foreground and background throughout the altar creates a vibrant energy in the space and further emphasizes the altar as the appropriate focus of the church.

Beyond these aspects, Mr. Menzies has transformed the rest of the space through the restoration of many finishes — seats, railings, and the organ among others. He has also designed new chandeliers for the nave and new doors throughout the complex. In all aspects of the project, the design is sensitive to the traditional and historic aspects of the church and its architectural language yet successfully creates a modern idiom of Gothic architecture. This complements the original spirit and intent of the building and celebrates the new history in the church.

The restored Cathedral of St. Augustine is a resplendent success. Bishop Lori and Mr. Menzies have created a design that recaptures the glory of a cathedral, and created a fitting space to serve as the symbolic center of the diocese. This cathedral is something that should lift the spirits of all celebrants and parishioners — for generations to come.

Sean J. Tobin is a Registered Architect and Fellow of the Institute for Classical Architecture.
You are also God’s building. Using the gift God gave me, I did the work of the expert builder and laid the foundation, and another man is building on it. But each of us must be careful how he builds. For God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation and no other foundation can be laid.” — St. Paul, 1 Cor. 3:10

The foundation of the cross shelters all who are homelesse. “I was a stranger and you received me into your home.”

We live in a time in which it is more likely to run into difficulty for doing something well than doing it poorly. Both Church art and secular art have reached an all time low. It is as always easier to understand how this can happen to secular art, but how did it happen to sacred art as well?

As the Church’s desire to become relevant culturally between the two world wars grew, the Church in America found itself in a peculiar situation. On one hand it still had what it saw as its second-hand European hand-me-downs of art and architecture. It also had to differentiate itself from Anglo-Saxon Protestant society so prevalent in the US. We became suspicious of our own works as if it were the art under the scrutiny of the Reformation.

Our own nudity and all of its metaphorical meanings have all but disappeared from civic and ecclesiastic art, in particular Catholic art. We have returned to the bushes, shaking, unable to answer God’s question as to who told us we were naked. It’s as if we had forgotten that by the time Ghiberti had completed his second set of baptistry doors, the four types of nudity established in Church art were being expressed throughout: nuditas virtualis, such as the young Baptist casting off his garments to demonstrate his abandonment of worldly goods; or nuditas temporalis conditional nudity as in the Susanna at the bath; nuditas criminalis, in the expulsion from the Garden, or the drunkenness of Noah; and nuditas naturalis, as in the Creation of Adam and Eve, all took their proper place and role in church art. However, with political correctness abounding, subjects such as the nudity of Noah would not be permissible and would be considered counter-symbolic since it is insensitive to a person’s dealing with substance. Theologically, we have remained Catholic. Culturally, we have become Protestant with overtones of iconoclasm. But as Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger so aptly puts it, “Iconoclasm is not a Christian option.”

The study of human anatomy was thrown out of the curricula in art schools; and drafting the classical orders was being eliminated from the schools of architecture. Just as the American Renaissance had placed its classical architecture; classical sculpture and painting were to have followed had not both been interrupted by the Second World War. From 1950 onward, the Catholic Church followed the hired hand of the modernist into fields where the flocksliterally were scattered and the good grass was trampled and the waters muddied.

We have learned much by looking to other artists who have heard the call from Eternity and responded as contemporary artists throughout time. If we listen, we can perhaps gain a better idea of ourselves as the created as well as what the Caller asks of us now. Yet we must be mindful that the masterpieces of the past, present, and future are like the stars in the heavens. They can indeed give us our location but we must wait for the darkness and hope for a clear night in order to see them better. Perhaps our darkness was indeed modernism; perhaps our clear night is arriving. Then, once our location in the Third Millennium is learned, the greater question for the maker of sacred arts will be where do we go from wherever we are?

How Modernism Broke the Covenant

As modernism spoke only of the self, it became a gift to self rather than a gift of self.

There were two attributes of modernism that violated the covenant as it was governed by two major conventions of thought. First, there was “traditional modernism,” the need to sacrifice, to omit, to discard something in order to make something unique and novel. But to sacrifice does not mean omit. It means to make holy. Just as a contract is not a covenant, a sacrifice is not an omission. The second attribute of modernism, “conventional modernism,” was when a risk must be taken, no matter how needless or fruitless. Combined they were to make something “original,” something that hadn’t been done or seen before. Quality thus came from novelty and replaced beauty with “new” formalist relations.

With originality as its goal, modernism sought to invent its own language; it took metaphor and replaced it with irony. In its need to sacrifice, it took the alphabet of all classical art and architecture and threw out the vowels. In its need to be original, it took the alphabet of all classical art and architecture and threw out the vowels. In its need to be original, it took this new alphabet without vowels and made words illegible, unintelligible, and unpronounceable, a language that could mean anything, and
called it “untitled.” We soon came to realize that “untitled” was very much indeed a title. If modernism spoke at all, it said, “I will not serve.”

Modernism had convinced an entire populace to expect nothing great from art or artists. Now used to avant-gardism, the public has grown suspicious of themselves if confronted with art they can understand. For Roman Catholics in particular, the modernist collision happened in the sixties when the secular art form, the “pop,” the “folk,” and the avant-garde styles were adopted and mingled with a most misinterpreted version of the Vatican II message encouraging the use of contemporary art and music in liturgy. Contemporary was never meant to mean modernist; it never meant non-representational. For the first time in history, instead of leading the secular art world as it had done for centuries, the Church now followed it. For the liturgical artist and architect, for the painter and sculptor of religious works, it couldn’t have come at a worse time. Its outcome was already being foretold in 1964 by Pope Paul VI, a global advocate for the entire world of sacred arts, in his meeting with artists in 1964:

We can say at times we have placed against you a leaden burden; please forgive us! And then we have abandoned you. We have not explained our things; we have not introduced you into the secret cell where the mysteries of God make man’s heart leap with joy, hope, happiness, and exaltation. We have not had you as students, friends, interlocutors, so you have not known us. Thus your language for the world has been docile, yes, but also tied up, labored, incapable of finding its voice. And thus we have felt this artistic expression unsatisfactory… We have treated you worse, we have turned to surrogates, oleography to works of art of little value and less expenditure, also because we did not have the means to commission things which were great, beautiful, and worth being admired.

Things seemed to changing in 1976 at the 41st International Eucharistic Congress hosted by the Exhibition of Liturgical Art in Philadelphia. Both the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Catholic patrons alike commissioned several works with the centerpiece of the Congress being the commission of one permanent sculpture. It became a standing bronze Christ to be made by Walter Erlebacher and placed in front of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul. It is an Apollo-Christ, clearly reminiscent of our early Christian world in which a beardless young man with the physical attributes of an Apollo are fused and brought to realization in Christ. It is the Eucharistic Lord, the Second Adam, reborn, as he stands young and old, virile and effeminate, living and dying, with arms extended, still bleeding form his costal wound while offering to all his broken bread. As it was and still remains counter to church renovations of its time, it was definitely contemporary but not modernist.

Yet with its many commissions given to some of the country’s most popular gallery artists of the day (all in storage now), the show itself was a hodge-podge of styles of art about art, art for art sake, art about the artist, with only a smattering of that which was truly religious or liturgical. This disdain for quality, for the utilitarian, for the classical, was further echoed in the exhibition’s catalogue liner notes as they went on to denounce the Quattrocento: “In fact, what historians might indicate to be the apex of Church art and art in general may actually signal the real decline, possibly the decadence of sacred art in the West … the Renaissance.”

This argument that the Greco-Roman and the Renaissance periods were pagan in origins and therefore unsuitable or unworthy for contemporary church art and architecture has long needed to be put to rest. Countless Christian attributes predate the birth of Christ, as the Mystery entered Its own creation from the beginning. As we are called on to acknowledge the “anonymous Christian” in those who have not heard the teachings of Christ yet lead their lives in the spirit of Christ, so are we, along with the Church, called to acknowledge the anonymous Christian in art and architecture. The truth is that Christianity has more classical structures than pagan antiquity has ruins.

To follow this anti-classical logic through would call on us to not show our God as having taken on human form, to not show that the Mystery became flesh. After all, the idea of anthropomorphizing one’s god was not primarily Christian, as it can be found in both pagan and nature religions predating the Incarnation. Yet it is ironical that these same critics who despise the use of the classical for its pagan origins or “political incorrectness” seem to have no problem in appropriating the designs of other pre-Christian nature religions for our churches. As Stonehenge replaces the altar and sanctuary, and “medicine wheel” seating replaces the nave, our “worship spaces” becomes theaters in the round. When the corporeal reality of place is lost to bad art and architecture, the spiritual reality of place is lost with it. The true freedom to make something beautiful for the Church and its faithful is placed in exile and its faithful with it.

The beauty due in sacred art and architecture cannot be subject to political correctness as if it were a matter of political rationing. Beauty contains the measure of gift within itself, not the percentage allotted in the art budget. Modernist art and architecture will not be catalogued by some future Vitruvius. There will be no Brunelleschi and Donatello traveling to a modernist Rome to measure its proportions. If modernism broke the covenant, it did so simply on the basis of not giving. When faith and aesthetics do not share a common goal, both are degraded. When aesthetics’ affairs are so ordered as in modernism that there is no recognition of either the moral or visual aesthetic, there can be expected a belittling of the faithful. The faithful have a right to a response from the artist and architect that is a reflection of their beliefs. Wherever, whenever, and however this right is dislocated, the very notion of a serving aesthetic is sacrificed, omitted, for the sanctity of individualism. Thus, so-called sacred art will have no meaning other than that projected by the artist’s ego. There can be no covenant when the goals of the art are separated from the goals of the faith. Sacred art without the faith and faithful being served is a parody and an injustice. The covenant is broken.

The Disregard of Representational Sacred Art

Even with his work among our best religious paintings of the twentieth century, Salvador Dali goes unrecognized for his contribution to sacred art. His “Last Supper” is hung as to not be seen or read as it is placed on a stairwell going to the basement in the National Gallery in Washington DC. Ironically, just as the Christ it depicts, it holds the place of embarrassment, a “stumbling block” that the modernist curator cannot explain to his visitors, that the art historian would rather her students skip over. Yet Dali holds a place for the exten-
sion of Catholic art. His was and is the art of ongoing conversion. However it neither received proper notice from the Church officials or the art critics. For the sake of Dada, art history prefers and needs Dali to be its “bad boy” and would rather not be reminded of his slips into religious art.

In his “Discovery of the Americas by Columbus,” sometimes called the “Dream of Columbus,” Dali depicts the discovering of the New World out of time and place. Here he presents “Christo-Foro,” the Christ Carrier who brings the Ship of Christ with all its crosses as well as his Church to the New World. But simultaneously he, the man, also arrives and discovers this New World found in the Resurrection of Christ. As this Christofooro emerges from the waters of Baptism, he pulls his ship, his cross, to a new shore never to return to his point of departure, never to leave his new discovered true home in Christ. Here this pictorial discovery gives evidence that neither the works inspired by Franciscan or Ignatian spirituality belonged to a certain period of art or Church history. Sadly, in our anxiety to be relevant, this art became unintelligible to us as we allowed modernism to appropriate our Catholic language.

Now through what is called postmodernism, we may have learned that religious, sacred, or liturgical art cannot serve the art community as art does the secular world. The artist of religious work is usually self-educated in the signs and symbols, the forms, the colors and geometry and proportions of sacred art. When we meet others like us, it is the smaller if not the smallest circle of artist friends. Once installed, our commissions are not visited by curators or reviewed by any art reviews. Our works are often reproduced on holy cards, church calendars, and in books, yet we remain “anonymous.” Artists and architects may be called “church ministers,” but too often, they remain nameless, something that Paul VI knew in the long run hurt the Church more than her artists. If we have learned anything from modernism and our history, we know that religious art does not receive notoriety for being novel, from being ironic, or being clever. To have one’s work be such an attraction in the secular world is to be a success. To do so in the religious sector is to have failed at your mission. Obviously this is not work for those without a calling. The paintbrush or chisel in the hand of the “uncalled” is as worthless as the crosier held by the “hired hand.” The former would open windows that lead the flock nowhere, while the latter would simply close or renovate our churches and leave the flocks to scatter. We are left with the question as to how people find us.

Yet despite the efforts and arguments made by art historians, critics, galleries, museums, and teaching institutions, as well as those within the Church hierarchy, classicism, like the Church, the Bride herself, cannot be chronologically framed. It, unlike modernism, is not a linear fashion of one style begetting another and another. Here the modernist view would like us to think that Michelangelo if alive today would be a “liturgical mime performance artist.”

At best, our recent past can provide us with a sense of where we may find ourselves today. By the end of the second millennium, American artists had been working alongside, if not within the secular, thus being both modernist and puritan: the modernist believing that the artist was freest when not tied to the burden of representationalism and the puritan needing to believe all art is by nature superficial, controversial, and always to appear out of place. By their combined definitions, modernism and Puritanism produced an art from what was only acceptable if and when it seemed shocking, if and only when it was inappropriate, and if and only when it was non-representational, all of which sacred art cannot do if it indeed accepts the Incarnation. Should it be any wonder why the tympani reliefs of Creation for the National Cathedral in Washington DC by Fredrick Hart went unnoticed by both the art world and the religious world alike when unveiled in 1984?

The Church as Bride, Daughter, Mother, and Sister of Christ

But if our works are to find themselves in beauty, that must be centered in love. As St. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians, “... I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you together with God’s people may have the power to understand how broad, and long, how high and deep is Christ’s love.” If we take these dynamics and apply the dimensional aspects of the Christ’s love for us in his Church as his Bride, as Daughter, as Mother, and as Sister, we can then apply these same dynamics to our works as artists in Christ.

As Bride she is forever erect, upright. She is always dressed, with her lamp lit and ready for action. Her stature demonstrates her being His chosen. Her height tells of her devotion. Attentive, she is never squat. As she patiently awaits her Master, she wears her veil in the form of a façade. Its design gives us hint to her inner beauty, of her true face, which she takes on as she meets the Groom at the altar. As the Bride of Christ she must be adorned with the finest furnishings, moldings, and ornaments fitting for the holiest occasion. Yet all that she wears from her vaulted ceilings and domes to her tiled floors, points to whom she awaits. In all, she must be well suited for that place where time and eternity meet and heaven and earth kiss.

As the Mother she is the great breath of the Church as she is also the seat, the cathedra in which she holds the infant Christ.
Does the Church need a Renaissance?

As Meister Eckhart states, "To be properly expressed, a thing must proceed from within, moved by its form." Here form means pure idea. This could be easily seen as absent in modernist works as they became more obtuse and self-centered. Yet they did nothing less than mirror our contemporary liturgies. As the translation of Et cum spiritu tuo, "and with your Spirit," became "and also with you," our art began to imitate our liturgy. Our salutation to the Holy Spirit within each other as community became an individual greeting to the celebrant's ego.

We have learned now that when faith and aesthetics do not share a common good, as happened in modernism and puritanism, sacred art and architecture degrade the faithful and deprive them of any higher vision. Their view remains no higher than the naked physical properties and processes of the works. The art work fails to rise with the faithful to its higher capacity. Like galleries and museums, many churches still cling to solutions that modernism could never afford, nor was ever willing to give to Ecclesiae. American churches have grown lazy in their search for the best. In many cases, with its order of iconography, it clings to a model that trivializes spirituality, placing catalogue Mary and catalogue Joseph on either side of the altar (or block) as if they were the salt and pepper shakers for the Lord's Supper. The statuary is most often purchased from catalogues for prices beyond the cost of a commission, to have all done by the day of dedication. The only comforting thought that we must continually allow ourselves is the fact that the Church is never complete in time and space. Nor should it be.

As we leave the laboratory of modernism, we face new problems. Like a pickled frog connected to the batteries of museums, galleries, and magazines, modernism doesn't know that it's dead, that its kicks are not real. How do we pull the plug? We will have some problems here. Modernism tried and to some extent succeeded in trying to make beauty untrustworthy. As a result, we live in a time whereby we are more likely to run into difficulty for doing something well than for doing it poorly. Thus, conviction and faith must pervade the painting and sculpture of religious art if it is at all to succeed in its mission.

Great sacred art should point to our expectations. In this it remains forever contemporary in its ability to point and lead us to our higher goals. Here, art history and fashion can and will be put aside as the faithful become willing once again to submit to and trust the influence of willful belief in beauty. The only reality for the true artist is true beauty and the only true beauty is God.

The American Catholic Church longs for a renaissance; not a renovation. It longs for a renaissance, not as an art movement to be replaced with another, but a rebirth of its qualities that reflect the covenant. Like our architecture, our painting and sculpture need to bring us closer to and include us in the mysteries of our faith. Their mission, their message cannot be withered and wasted by the desire to be novel or the fear of borrowing from within our own traditions. To deny our qualities is nothing less than a denial of our transfiguration.

Of course the greatest aspect of transfiguration, of transformation, is still the liturgy, is still the ongoing work of the Church. As such, sacred art remains the work of the new in that it is the work that can always be reborn and, like the Church, extend itself. It is an inclusive and open form that allows for rebirth both within and without. Yet if sacred art and architecture are to function as guide posts along the way, then they must point in a guided direction, not a misleading one. If our destination is Eternity, it is inevitable that a renaissance will occur. For now we must wait for the Church to wake up from the slumber of modernism, to regain its ability to distinguish the difference between novelty and renaissance. We may then ask, does the Catholic Church need a "renaissance"?

Ultimately, the answer is always "yes." The Church needs renaissance because the Church is renaissance.

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Keynote address to the National Convention of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions at the Omni San Antonio Hotel, October 8, 2003. (We have abridged this address to focus on some issues related to liturgy and church architecture – ed.)

Forty Years of Grace through the Liturgy

The celebration of the mysteries of our redemption, especially of the paschal mystery, the suffering, death and resurrection of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the sacred liturgy, is central in and to the life of the Church. Participation in liturgical celebrations is seen by the Second Vatican Council as “the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit” (Sacrosanctum Concilium [SC], no. 14).

Translation. Adaptation. Inculturation

The Second Vatican Council introduced the vernacular into the liturgy and also allowed for properly considered adaptations and inculturation in the rites. This poses a considerable challenge and requires careful consideration...

It is clear that whether in adaptation or inculturation, great care is needed to respect the mysteries of Christ which are celebrated in the liturgy. Writing on the Holy Eucharist, Pope John Paul II says that “the treasure is too important and precious to risk impoverishment or compromise through forms of experimentation or practices introduced without a careful review on the part of the competent ecclesiastical authorities [and] because the sacred liturgy expresses and celebrates the faith professed by all, and being the heritage of the whole Church, cannot be determined by local Churches in isolation from the universal Church” (EE, no. 51).

It is therefore reasonable and indeed obvious that there must be liturgical regulations and norms. With reference to the Holy Eucharist, for example, Pope John Paul II says that “these norms are a concrete expression of the authentically ecclesial nature of the Eucharist; this is their deepest meaning. Liturgy is never anyone’s private property, be it of the celebrant or of the community” (EE, no. 52). That is why Sacrosanctum Concilium already declared that the regulation of the sacred liturgy depends solely on the authority of the Church, that is, on the Apostolic See and, as laws may determine, on the Bishops and the Bishops’ Conference. “Therefore, absolutely no other person, not even a priest, may add, remove, or change anything in the liturgy on his own authority” (SC, no. 22).

The danger is that some people seem to think that inculturation in the liturgy encourages free and uncontrolled creativity. They imagine that according to Vatican II the progressive, modern and enlightened thing to do in liturgical celebrations is to be creative, to be original, to introduce something new, to do it yourself. Pope John Paul writes that “it must be lamented that, especially in the years following the post-conciliar liturgical reform, as a result of a misguided sense of creativity and adaptation, there have been a number of abuses which have been a source of suffering for many” (EE, no. 52).

The truth is that genuine inculturation has nothing to do with the product of the over-fertile imagination of an enthusiastic priest who concocts something on Saturday night and inflicts it on the innocent Sunday morning congregation now being used as a guinea pig. True and lasting inculturation demands long study, discussions among experts in interdisciplinary platforms, examination and decision by Bishops, recognition from the Apostolic See and prudent presentation to the people of God. Moreover, it should be noted that in religious matters, people’s sensitivity and piety can easily be hurt by ill-considered and hasty novelties. In religious practices, most people are understandably conservative in the good sense and unwilling to endure frequent changes.

Even when we give the hasty innovator the benefit of the doubt, that the motivation is a sincere attempt to bring the liturgy home to the people, it remains true that the results are generally disastrous. Unapproved innovations distract and annoy the people. They often draw attention to the priest rather than to God. They generally do not last long. They are often superficial. And they scandalize because they run against Church norms and regulations. If many lay people had only one request to make, they would ask that the priest celebrate Mass, or other rites, simply according to the approved books. Many lay faithful complain that rarely do they find two priests celebrating the Eucharistic sacrifice in the same way. The Roman liturgy is not a free-for-all experimentation field where each celebrant has the option to tag on his cherished accretions. Repeated and laid-down action is part of ritual. The people are not tired of it, as long as the celebrant is full of faith and devotion and has the proper ars celebrandi (art of how to celebrate).

Pope John Paul II laments that “some have promoted outlandish innovations, departing from the norms issued by the authority of the Apostolic See or the Bishops, thus disrupting the unity of the Church and the piety of the faithful and even on occasion contradicting matters of faith.” (VQA, no. 11). “It cannot be tolerated,” he continues, “that certain priests should take upon themselves the right to compose Eucharistic Prayers or to substitute profane readings for texts from Sacred Scripture. Initiatives of this sort, far from being linked with the liturgical reform as such, or with...
the books which have issued from it, are in direct contradiction to it, disfigure it and deprive the Christian people of the genuine treasures of the liturgy of the Church” (VQA, no. 13).

It is therefore clear that inculturation does not encourage banalization or trivialization of the sacred liturgy. Spontaneity run wild can manifest itself in many ways. At the beginning of Mass the priest can trivialize by amusing the people on the weather, by saying “Good morning everybody” instead of “The Lord be with you”, or “The grace of Our Lord...,” which are the proper liturgical opening greetings. He can banalize by an exaggerated autobiographical introduction and trite jokes in his misguided effort to warm the people up for worship! He may not realize that he is now drawing attention to himself instead of to God and the liturgical celebration of the day. Other distractions and even desacralizations can come through dances that offend against good sense and do not help to raise people’s mind to God, loquacious and unnecessary commentaries, over-dosage singing monopolized by the choir which allows no time for personal prayer, and the introduction of bizarre vestments and unacceptable vessels for the Holy Eucharist.

We have dwelt somewhat long on inculturation because the experience of many is that it is often misunderstood and offended against. But genuine inculturation is what Holy Mother Church wants. And the challenge before us is to promote it and not to allow the cockle to grow among the wheat.

Active Participation

The Fathers of the Second Vatican Council stress the importance of the active participation of all the faithful in liturgical celebrations. “Mother Church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious and active participation in liturgical celebrations which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people’ (I Pet 2:9; cf 2:4-4), is their right and duty by reason of their Baptism” (SC, no. 14).

For this to be possible, the clerics must themselves be properly formed in the liturgy. So should religious personnel, catechists and other pastoral agents. No one can give what the person does not have.

It is important to realize that the internal aspect of participation is indispensable as a basis, a requirement and the aim of all external participation. That is why personal prayer, Scriptural meditation and moments of silence are necessary. “The sacred liturgy does not exhaust the entire activity of the Church. Before people come to the liturgy they must be called to faith and to conversion” (SC, no. 9). It is highly advisable to promote moments of silence for individual reflection and prayer during the Eucharistic celebration, at such times as after each reading, and after the homily and Holy Communion. Choirs should resist the temptation to fill every available quiet time with singing.

A sense of reverence and devotion is conducive to interiorized active participation. Prominent among those who influence the congregation in this matter is the priest celebrant. But the altar servers, the readers, the choir and the extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion where they are really needed, do also influence the people by every move of theirs. Reverence is the exterior manifestation of faith. It should show our sense of adoration of God most holy and most high. And our belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist should come across in how the ministers handle the Blessed Sacrament, how they genuflect and how they recite the prescribed prayers.

Liturgical music promotes worship. The Gregorian chant has an honored place in the history of the Latin rite. It is to be noted that even the young people today do appreciate it. Most liturgical singing will understandably be in the mother tongue. The Diocesan or National Music Commission should see that such texts are suitable from the theological and musical points of view before they are approved for Church use.

The Roman Missal wisely notes the importance of common gestures by the worshipping congregation (cf GIRM, nos. 42-44). Examples are times for the congregation to stand, kneel or sit. Bishop’s Conferences can and do, make some specifications. Care should be taken not to appear like regimenting the congregation, as if it were an army. Some flexibility should be allowed, more so as it is easy to hurt people’s Eucharistic sensitivity with reference, for example, to kneeling or standing.

Church architecture also influences active participation. If a church is built and the seats are arranged as in an amphitheatre or as in a banquet, the undeclared emphasis may be horizontal attention to one another, rather than vertical attention to God. In this sense the celebration of Mass facing the people demands from the priest and altar servers a high level of discipline, so that as from the offertory of the Mass it be seen clearly that both priest and people are turned towards God, not towards one another. We come to Mass primarily to adore God, not to affirm one another, although this is not excluded.

Some people think that liturgical renewal means the removal of kneelers from Church pews, the knocking down of altar rails or the positioning of the altar in the middle of the sitting area of the people. The Church has never said any such thing. Nor does liturgical restoration mean iconoclasm or the removal of all statues and sacred images. These should be displayed, albeit with good judgment. And the altar of the Blessed Sacrament should be outstanding for its beauty and honored prominence, otherwise in some so-called restored churches one could rightly lament: “They have taken my Lord away, and I don’t know where they have put him” (Jn 20:13).

When the liturgy is so celebrated that everyone can properly take part, the people are offered a number one opportu-
nity to draw from the primary Christian foundation for their spiritual growth.

Revitalization of Church Life through the Liturgy

In *Vicemus Quintus Annus*, Pope John Paul II thanks God “for the radiant vitality of so many Christian communities, a vitality drawn from the wellspring of the liturgy” (VQA, no. 12). There is no doubt that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* has continued to sustain the Church along the paths of holiness for fostering genuine liturgical life. This re-emphasizes why it is ever important to see that the Council’s genuine directives are followed.

It is a fact that as the Pope says, “some have received the new books with a certain indifference, or without trying to understand the reasons for the changes; others, unfortunately, have turned back in a one-sided and exclusive way to the previous liturgical forms which some of them consider to be the sole guarantee of certainty in the faith” (VQA, no. 11). It must not be presumed that most priests, consecrated people or lay faithful are well informed on the reformed books of the liturgy these thirty years. Ongoing formation continues to be necessary.

Moreover we have to note that the liturgy of the Church goes beyond the liturgical reform. Many young priests, consecrated brothers and sisters and lay faithful are not conversant with the liturgical books of fifty years ago, either because they were born after Vatican II, or because they were infants when it was celebrated. What is above all needed is “an ever deeper grasp of the liturgy of the Church, celebrated according to the current books and lived above all as a reality in the spiritual order” (VQA, no. 14). Under the direction of their Bishops, Diocesan and National Liturgical Commissions are to be encouraged to continue their work along these lines. Moreover, Catholic universities and higher institutes, seminaries, religious formation houses, and pastoral and catechetical centres also have their role to play. There should be a specific aim of promoting widespread formation of the lay faithful in the theology and spirituality of the liturgy.

Devotion to and veneration of the Holy Eucharist outside Mass also have their place. Liturgy promoters must not give the impression that attention to the Holy Eucharist ends with Mass. For centuries, Catholic practice in the Latin rite has held dear visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament, Eucharistic Benediction, Procession and Congress, and Eucharistic Adoration protracted for one hour, or for the whole day, or for forty hours (cf DC, no. 3; EE, no. 25; Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], nos. 1378-1379).

“Popular devotions of the Christian people are warmly commended, provided that they accord with the laws and norms of the Church” (SC, 13). The Directory published by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2002 will be found to be of great help in understanding and guiding these devotions so that they agree perfectly with the Catholic faith, lead to and emanate from liturgical worship and continue to contribute to the life of holiness of the people of God (cf. CCC, nos. 1674-1676; VQA, no. 18).

Looking Towards the Future

As we come to the close of these reflections, it would be good to take a look at the future. A few points of reference are proposed.

The role of the Diocesan Bishop is irreplaceable. “The Bishop is to be considered the high priest of his flock. In a certain sense it is from him that the faithful who are under his care derive and maintain their life in Christ. Therefore all should hold in very high esteem the liturgical life of the diocese which centers around the Bishop, especially in his cathedral church” (SC, no. 41). This truth imposes a heavy responsibility on the Bishop and also calls on the people to recognize his role and to respect and follow his liturgical leadership.

It is normal for Bishops to form Diocesan or National Liturgical Commissions for the carrying out of the liturgical apostolate. Members of such bodies should strive to absorb the genuine Catholic faith and spirit and to avoid pushing private or personal agendas through the Commissions. It is obvious that appropriate relations with the diocesan office, the Bishop’s Conference or the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments should be fostered. Liturgical Commissions should guard against making too many regulations for the people or ignoring directives from higher authorities. When adaptations and inculturated changes by the Church in a country get so many that the Roman rite is somewhat obscured, the fault may lie not just on the Bishops, but also on their Liturgical Commissions and other liturgical experts who advise the Bishops.

The role of the parish priest remains very important. He is the official representative of the Church nearest to most of the faithful. His liturgical formation, his ideas and the way he celebrates the Mass, the other sacraments and the rest of the liturgy, affect most of his people. Whatever can be done to help the parish priest to rise to the height of his calling is to be encouraged.

Church architecture, earlier mentioned in this paper, is so important that I would like to return to it here. The shape of the church building has its importance. As someone has said, a gym that looks like a church is still a gym. Some questions can be of help. Does this church building help to raise people’s minds to God, to the transcendent? Where are the tower, the bell, the Cross? Within the church, is the sanctuary clearly distinguished from the rest of the church? Why were the beautiful altar rails that have been there for one or two centuries removed against the wishes of many of the parishioners?

Why is it so difficult to make out where the tabernacle is located? Where is Our Blessed Mother’s statue or image? Is iconoclasm back? I am aware that the renovation of church buildings can be a contentious issue. Bishops and members of Liturgical Commissions have the delicate task of weighing all sides of the question. But before the hammer or compressor machine is applied to objects that have touched the devotional sensitivity of the people for decades or even centuries, those who have to take the decision cannot avoid asking themselves whether there are reasons weighty enough to upset so many people and ask the parish or diocese to pay for the exercise.

My dear brothers and sisters engaged in the promotion of the sacred liturgy throughout the dioceses of this great and vast country, I thank you on behalf of the Holy Father and of the Congregation for the Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for your important apostolate. I rejoice with you for all the graces which have come to the Catholic community through your work. May the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of Our Savior, obtain for you the grace to continue your ecclesial service in joy, peace and grace, and in the comforting assurance that you are thereby fulfilling a vital role in the mission of the Church.

Francis Cardinal Arinze is the Prefect of Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for the Roman Curia.

The full text of this address can be found at www.adoremus.org/1103arinzeaddress.html
Sacred Spaces: Historic Houses of Worship in the City of Angels

Reviewed by Domiane Forte

When compared to other cities around the world, Los Angeles would most likely not rank very high on a list of places to visit beautiful, sacred buildings—that is, until now. What is most striking, especially to residents of Southern California like myself, is not only the realization that Los Angeles is such a rich font of the built sacred environment, but that so many gems are right around the corner. Thankfully, photographer Robert Berger takes us on a visual and written journey across the City of Angels that will leave the reader in awe of the beauty found in so many of her sacred buildings.

A veteran architectural photographer, Berger documented over 300 churches, temples and synagogues for Sacred Spaces: Historic Houses of Worship in the City of Angels eventually selecting 54 for the book, which were all 50 or more years old, and which had special “architectural or historical significance, or were just plain fun to look at.” Those selected represent not only the grand and monumental, but also the humble and vernacular. They are in the wealthiest of neighborhoods, and the poorest. Some are in pristine condition, while others are abandoned. They are houses of worship for Jews, Catholics, Protestants, Buddhists, and Muslims. And they are all fun to look at. With a keen eye for details, as well as artistic composition, Berger offers a well-balanced architectural documentation, in part and in whole, while still capturing the sense of the sacredness experienced if you were to be standing there yourself. While the majority of the book is imagery, each building is coupled with sometimes informational, sometimes factual, sometimes anecdotal histories by noted architectural historian Alfred Willis.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of the book is Berger’s focus on interiors. All too often this is left untreated, as most architectural visual documentaries focus on exteriors, sometimes not giving any treatment to interiors. While still offering overall exterior views, he uses full page photos of interior shots to describe what the congregation would inevitably be more acquainted with, thus transporting the reader to another place and time. It is hard to imagine, after peeking at just one or two images from this book, that even a non-believer would not want to further explore the depth of beauty found inside any one of these buildings. While hopeful more people will visit these churches, synagogues, and temples, Berger is also fearful of the eventual disappearance of many of these sacred buildings, which is always a possibility in Los Angeles’ constantly changing landscape, and thus he provides the ethos of his project.

Nuestra Señora de Los Angeles, founded under the law of the Indies in 1781, was until the 1920s a predominantly Catholic city, at which time it can be described as having become more or less Protestant. Immediately following the Second World War, Los Angeles exploded in population with immigrants from all over the world, especially from the Far East and island countries, who brought with them as many different faiths. Thus Los Angeles began to alter its identity from a generally stable and constant Mexican American outpost, until it became the present-day metropolis, which is ever in a state of flux, and is never the same architecturally or politically for more than a week. Now home to nearly as many faiths as people, Los Angeles cannot be said to have a clearly identifiable architectural “style,” as can be said of the historic centers of most other world cities. However, it is this very diversity which allows the sacred architecture of Los Angeles to span a broad spectrum of architectural styles and types. As Sacred Spaces: Historic Houses of Worship in the City of Angels depicts, this diversity is not merely developed through her various sacred buildings, but it is done with vigor, vitality, and beauty, to a degree which any city of any era would be proud to encompass.

St. Paul’s Roman Catholic Church, Los Angeles

Dom Forte is an architect in Santa Barbara, California.
The Romanesque Revival: Religion, Politics and Transnational Exchange  
364 pp. 180 b/w illus., 8 color plates. $80

Reviewed by Michael J. Lewis

For too long the Romanesque Revival has played the part of poor stepsister to the nineteenth-century’s Gothic Revival. While the Gothic Revival claims a copious scholarly and popular literature, its Romanesque counterpart has consistently been slighted. There is good reason for this. The Gothic Revival was strongly literary in character and boasted such gifted writers as John Ruskin and William Morris, who ensured that its ideas remained in circulation long after its quaint buildings were mocked and mutilated. The Romanesque Revival has no such literary foundation. Its roots are in German historiography and theology, much of it obscure to Anglo-American scholars. And its character was profoundly international, connecting architects, theologians, and intellectuals—mostly liberal Protestants—between Germany, England, and the United States. All this has made it notoriously difficult to capture the sweep and complexity of the movement.

Until now, that is. Kathleen Curran’s splendid Romanesque Revival is a spacious study of the subject, bolstered by research here and overseas. Hers is no easy task, for the revival was much more than a mere nostalgic revival of the round-arched architecture of the early twelfth century. The antiquarian nostalgia was certainly there, but it was offset by an equally strong modernizing tendency, which contended throughout the nineteenth century, and which gave the movement much of its peculiar vitality.

Both impulses were very much at play when the German architect Heinrich Hübsch published his celebrated pamphlet In welchem Style sollen wir bauen? (1828). Although his title is often taken to be a rhetorical question—literally, “In what style should we build?”—Hübsch had in mind something quite concrete. He wrote to advocate what he called the *Rundbogenstil*, literally, “round-arched style,” a modern synthetic style, in which elements from many styles might be brought together in a building that was disciplined and ordered by “objective” considerations of construction.

Objectivity was a concept new to architecture, and surely owes its origin to Hübsch’s early training in philosophy. By appealing to objective principles, rather than to the dead letter of the past, Hübsch gave a permissive cast to the *Rundbogenstil*. Unlike the Greek or the Gothic, styles that once enjoyed great esteem for their artistic qualities, such as the domed churches of Charente, France, with their strong Byzantine influence. These domed churches were exemplary for the vigorous creativity. Instead Curran shows that there was an independent channel of development, one that was intellectually sophisticated, hostile to medieval obscurantism, and broadly cosmopolitan in outlook.

Curran’s forte is institutional history, and she is at her best when documenting the activities of theorists and patrons in institutional contexts, such as Robert Dale Owen (the Smithsonian Institution), William Backhouse Astor (Astor Library, New York), and Philips Brooks (Trinity Church, Boston). The aesthetic life of buildings is generally subordinated to their intellectual roots, which is not altogether inappropriate for a style whose origin was academic. But this causes her to neglect some figures whose buildings are primarily of interest for their artistic qualities, such as the startling range of geologically inventive churches around Coblenz by the Rhenish architect Johann Claudius Lassaulx.

A few elements might have made this admirable volume even better. For example, a discussion of the Cooper Union in New York, a striking combination of a progressive educational program and a technologically advanced *Rundbogenstil* essay by Frederick A. Peterson, a refugee from the failed Prussian revolution of 1848. And more might have been said about the domed churches of Charente, France, with their strong Byzantine influence. These buildings were exemplary for the vigorous French version of the Romanesque Revival, especially the churches of Paul Abadie. They were also studied in England, where they were published by the architect Edmund Sharpe, and perhaps in America as well.

But such is the ambitious scope of this admirable volume that one cavils only with reluctance. The *Romanesque Revival* is absolutely indispensable for any scholar of nineteenth-century architecture.

Dr. Michael J. Lewis is the chairman of the art department at Williams College. His books include *The Gothic Revival* and *Frank Furness: Architecture and the Violent Mind*.
The Art of Embodied Ideas

Timeless Cities: An Architect’s Reflections on Renaissance Italy

Reviewed by Ralph C. Muldrow

In the past, it was a given in education for the arts that one would study the great classics in the given field, be it literature or art, sonatas or cities. Following in the footsteps of the greatest poets and visionaries seemed like a natural, if challenging, approach to rigorous learning that could build upon prior achievements with new innovations. Yet for many generations, art has struggled with an existential angst concerning what it is and what bases there should be for assessing itself. The underlying assumption is that established classics must be dismissed to provide freedom of expression. Ironically, many of these artists then invoke classical mythology and classics of philosophy and literature to canonize many of these bizarre or simplistic creations. Such angst can be digested or refused when isolated to a corner of a gallery; the odd gunshot wound from performance art or dripping underwear can be viewed or avoided. Not so with our cities. In his book Timeless Cities, David Mayernik makes a strong case that our cities are “homes built large,” evocative built environments that either nurture us or weaken us depending on the level of care we give them. Mayernik posits that an awakened concern with triumphs of city planning in the great era of Renaissance Italian urbanism can instill our own cities with meaning and richness which are both plangent and regenerative.

Timeless Cities takes us to five wonderful Italian cities: Rome, Venice, Florence, Siena and Pienza. David Mayernik draws on his own experiences in Italy both as a fellow at the American Academy in Rome and as an architect living and working in Rome and Florence. Mayernik suffuses his descriptive narratives with wisdom from the humanist tradition of the Italian Renaissance. In one of his pithy observations, he says, “Architecture is the art of embodied ideas,” and furthermore, that “cities to the European imagination before the Enlightenment were more than simply places, they were built ideas suffused with cultural memory.” While this seems like a lofty ideal for our time, he convincingly shows us in detail how Renaissance design addressed just those issues.

Mayernik charts the buildings along the Possesso route (the route of the Papal procession between the Lateran and the Vatican) in Rome as conscious respondents to the meaningful history of that recurring event. He notes that the processional route was already conceived of as a metaphorical “bridge” that consciously took in areas of the city that contained memories in the form of relevant historical structures or transformed through centuries, provided a firm grounding that allowed buildings and artists to speak to each other across space and time.”

Another discovery made by Mayernik is a fascinating example of cultures engaging in a dialogue across time: he points out that Bramante’s Tempietto at San Pietro in Montorio has the exact diameter of the oculus of the Pantheon. The idea that the Tempietto sits levitated on a hill in Trastevere conceptually completing the Pantheon with a lantern is an extraordinary Baroque conception. Other striking discoveries by Mayernik arise throughout his discussions of the five Italian cities as he investigates what is great and good about these places.

When one reaches the final chapter, “What We’ve Lost and Why These Ideas Matter Today,” one truly wonders how such stunning history and beauty can nourish our own cities. Yet therein lies Mayernik’s inspiring message: it will not be easy, but it will be surpassingly important to build our cities based on aspirations rather than circumstantial economics. He notes that the cities he discusses are Memory Theaters; when walking in those cities, one senses the accretions over time and experiences them as layered up icons with inherent meanings and associations.

Mayernik believes that a renewed concern with transcendent values could guide us to build the best to which our culture may aspire, celebrating such timeless virtues as Learning, Memory, Justice, the Good Life, Noble Character, Permanence, Harmony, and Transcendent Beauty. To accomplish this, he says we need confidence — confidence in ourselves as worthy city-builders deserving of good places for ourselves and our progeny — and confidence in timeless lessons which we may learn from the classics, from Rome and Florence, Venice and Siena, and from the confident resolve of the artists who created the most memorable portions of those urban realms.

Ralph C. Muldrow is an architect and the Simons Professor of Architecture and Preservation at College of Charleston where he teaches architectural and urban design and history.
A GIFT TO THE WORLD: 
THE LEGACY OF THE POPE’S TRAVELS TO THE NEW WORLD

Reviewed by Anne Husted Burleigh

The largest Vatican collection ever to tour North America, “Saint Peter and the Vatican: The Legacy of the Popes,” completed its four-month stay in Cincinnati, Ohio, on April 18 at the Cincinnati Museum Center.

At the conclusion of its Cincinnati leg, the exhibition will move on to the San Diego Museum of Art, where it will be open from May 15 to September 6.

“Saint Peter and the Vatican” is a brilliant exhibition, a beautiful, often spectacular presentation of 350 works of art, furnishings, and sacred vesture from the Vatican collections. The exhibition leads the viewer through a tasteful, solemn chronological explanation of the papacy, beginning with the erection of the Basilica of St. Peter by Constantine in the 4th century, continuing with the Renaissance basilica consecrated in 1626, and moving into the modern papacy, including the pontificate of John Paul II.

The viewer will be struck by the beauty, intricacy, and variety of papal tiaras, rings, vestments, crosiers, chalices, and so on. Yet the exhibition is clearly intended to emphasize one thing above all: the authenticity of the pope as the rock upon which the Church is built and the authenticity of the Church’s humble beginning inspires the viewer with the realization that the Church rests literally upon Peter’s bones.

In the circus built by the Emperor Caligula (34–41 A.D.) on Vatican Hill, numbers of early Christians were martyred. There, too, during the reign of Nero (54–68), the Apostle Peter was also martyred—crucified upside down. He was buried in the nearby necropolis, where, ancient tradition tells us, his grave was immediately revered as a holy site.

The first monument to be built over the Apostle’s tomb was constructed in the mid-2nd century. When Constantine built his basilica between 320 and 350, he positioned the altar directly over the 2nd-century monument. Likewise, Pope Calixtus II built his altar of 1123 in the identical spot, followed by Pope Clement VIII in 1594 with another altar in the same place. Bernini’s magnificent baldacchino was built above the 1594 altar, with Michelangelo’s dome soaring above it.

The excavations, or scavi, of the ancient cemetery that took place from 1940 to 1957 proved that Peter’s tomb, preserved and venerated from the time of his death and buried four floors directly beneath the altar of St. Peter’s Basilica, is indeed the authentic tomb of the Apostle, the literal rock of the Church.

The viewer should allow a minimum of two hours to see the exhibit. Among the many items to note are the reproduction of the tomb of St. Peter and a gold votive plaque found in the area of the tomb; the mosaic fragment of St. Peter from the Basilica of St. Paul’s Outside-the-Walls; the reliefs from the ciborium of Sixtus IV; and the Mandylion of Edessa, a 3rd–5th-century image of Christ on linen, considered by some to be the oldest known representation of Jesus.

There are also four papal portraits from St Paul’s Outside-the-Walls; a reliquary of Pope Gregory the Great; models of the Constantinian basilica; a mosaic “Bust of an Angel” by Giotto; signed documents by Sangallo the Younger, Della Porta, Maderno, and Bernini; and a glorious 15th-century processional cross. There are 17th-century embroidered vestments of Urban VIII; Michelangelo drawings and letters, including figure studies for the Sistine Chapel ceiling; and Bernini’s terra-cotta sculpture, “Charity with Four Putti,” in which the artist pressed his thumbprint in the clay.

Still more objects include documents of papal conclaves; miters and jewel-encrusted tiaras; ivory and gilded crosiers; papal seals, hats, mantles, gloves, and shoes; amazing cope and crucifixes; chalices and monstrances; missals and missionary letters; a copy of the ancient cathedra, or chair, of St. Peter; letters of Cardinal John Henry Newman and Oliver Plunket; pectoral crosses and hammers for opening the holy doors; and the pastoral staff of Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II.

Finally, at the end of the exhibit is a bronze cast of the hand of Pope John Paul II, with the invitation to each visitor to clasp the hand in friendship and good will.

This exhibit is much more than a panorama of Vatican treasures. It is meant to be—and succeeds in being—an experience of what the Catholic Church gives to the world.

Anne Husted Burleigh lives in Rabbit Hash, Kentucky and writes for numerous publications including “Magnificat.”
Unless the Lord Builds the House

RECONQUERING SACRED SPACE 2000:
THE CHURCH IN THE CITY OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM

This important volume was published in conjunction with the second international conference in Rome evaluating the ongoing renaissance of Catholic architecture. This catalog features over eighty new projects from architects around the world, essays examining the relationships between church buildings and sacred space, and a foreword by Francis Cardinal George expressing the timely importance of the exhibition. Anyone truly concerned with sacred architecture must read this book!

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