As buildings get more complex, owners hire individuals to assist them in working with the architect and contractor. These individuals, who often have a background in architecture or construction, are termed “owner’s representatives” because their role is to help make projects run more smoothly. So when a young pastor without construction experience undertakes a project, he might hire someone to advise him and to whom he can delegate some of the work. However, he may end up delegating away some decisions that he should not and therefore limit the quality of this sermon in stone.

Universities, corporations, and the government often have their own in-house building department due to the amount of construction that they do. My father had a wonderful career travelling the world and monitoring construction for the U.S. State Department. In the Church also some dioceses have a building department whose role is to assist the pastors and look out for the interests of the bishop, usually in minimizing construction errors and cost. Typically the diocesan staff is there to offer advice, to suggest alternative ways of building, and to monitor the work of architects and engineers. The difficulty comes when, in order to prove their worth, staffers go beyond their role and try to make aesthetic, liturgical, or construction decisions for the pastor or architect. When questioned they can always point to projects from the past, such as when Father Sarducci spent millions on Saint Mary’s and the diocese had to pay it off, or when Monsignor McGillicuddy built a hall at Saint Joe’s that is falling down. So the diocesan staffers help to monitor architectural decisions by priests and prevent them from making dumb mistakes. In extreme cases the department has a list of favorite architects, legal agreements, and standard fees that can not be challenged by the pastor or the architect. “This is how we always do it. Take it or leave it,” they say. Particularly painful for some is that after helping the parish cut costs the department charges the parish a fee.

It might surprise some bishops to learn that their building department has become all-powerful and that their priests live in fear of them. While some diocesan staffers tell me that their goal is to get out of the way so the pastor and architect can design a good building, others believe that when it comes to architecture the priest works for them. Does this make sense? Why are laity in the chancery determining who the architect is, how much the pastor can spend, and what the design looks like? Do the bishops know what is being decided in their name? If we consider that the purpose of architecture, whether churches, schools, parish halls, or rectories, is to serve the Church, we understand it as part of her sacred mission. Pastors are responsible for this sacred mission and presumably understand it better than most laypersons, even those with construction experience. On the other hand it is true that pastors may not have experience in the practical side of architecture, but that is what the architect is for.

So what can bishops do? First, trust your priests, who are the shepherds of the flock and entrusted with the salvation of souls. Give them the authority and encouragement to take on building projects for the glory of God and the service of man. Emphasize that architecture is integral to a sacramental faith and the ministry of the priest. Challenge the pastors to educate themselves in architecture and find ways to design, fundraise, and build a building that will best serve their flock. Second, get them to hire talented architects. Third, consider how the diocesan office can best serve the pastor in these expensive projects. With their experience the staff should help the pastor to understand the process of design and construction so that it goes more smoothly. They should respect the authority of the pastor as the leader and respect the role of the architect as directing the design. They should encourage both priest and architect to think in terms of durability and quality in regard to materials and methods of construction.

What if the bishop left it up to the pastor’s discretion whether or not to involve the diocesan experts? That might encourage the diocesan building department to provide services that pastors find worthwhile rather than just being a regulatory agency. To enable the pastor and his architect to do the finest job possible within the parish’s means is the goal. And as much as the diocesan office advises or recommends, in the end it is the shepherd who will be held responsible for spending the funds and constructing a building that will be there for decades to come.

Duncan Stroik
Notre Dame, Fall 2016
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54 From the Publishing Houses: A Selection of Recent Books .............. compiled by Sacred Architecture
The University of Notre Dame has been asked by the Most Reverend Diarmuid Martin, archbishop of Dublin, to establish a Center for Faith and Reason in Dublin, and to steward the Newman University Church there as well. The center opens later this fall and will focus on outreach programs to young professionals, as well as on liturgy, music, a lecture series, and other intellectual activities. Reverend William Daley, C.S.C. has been appointed director of the center, and Steve Warner, the former director of the Folk Choir at Notre Dame, will be the associate director.

Saint Peter the Apostle Parish in Itasca, Illinois, is constructing a new 18,000-square-foot parish facility including a church, gathering space, and administrative offices. Designed by Jaeger Nickola Kuhlman & Associates (JNKA), it will replace the current sixty-year-old church. The Romanesque design of the 750-seat church includes an arched mosaic of Saint Peter above the rose window.

On October 26, the limestone slab believed to be the resting place of Jesus Christ in the tomb of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem was uncovered from its marble cladding for the first time since 1555. The work was part of a $4 million restoration of the early nineteenth-century Aedicule built above and around the burial tomb. The National Technical University of Athens is carrying out the restoration, which is expected to be completed in spring 2017.

Discovery of ancient Roman barracks from the second century were discovered in Rome, near the Coliseum, during digging for a new metro line and station. The barracks are located thirty feet below street level, cover 9,700 square feet, and include a 328-foot hallway and thirty-nine rooms. The head of archeology stated that work on the metro would not be delayed because of the discovery, though there will have to be changes to the station’s design.

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The newly constructed Ukrainian Catholic University’s Church of the Holy Wisdom of God.

The Ukrainian Catholic University’s Church of the Holy Wisdom of God in Lviv, Ukraine, was consecrated on September 11. The church, ironically, is built on the site where the Communist Party had planned to build its administrative and cultural center. The structure itself is divided into three distinct churches: on the ground level is the Church of the Holy Wisdom of God itself, while the lower level houses the Church of Saint Clement, Pope of Rome, and the Church of the Lord’s Grave. The three churches present the main moments of salvation history and facilitate pilgrimages between the three spaces. The new church will be a place of pilgrimage and also serve the university community, providing areas for the sacrament of Reconciliation and academic discussions and meetings.

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The University of Notre Dame is being asked to steward this nineteenth-century church originally built to serve the neighboring Catholic university in Dublin.

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News

Italian police arrested an African immigrant on September 30 for vandalizing four churches in Rome: San Martino ai Monti, the Basilica di Santa Prassede, San Vitale, and San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, where he smashed statues and overturned sacred objects, including ripping a large crucifix off of the wall. The motives for the damage done by the Ghanaian man are still unknown.

An Italian team named Piacenti Restoration Center completed restoration of the mosaics in Bethlehem’s Church of the Nativity this summer. They have been working on the church since April 2013, beginning with the rotting wooden roof, and the restoration project has cost $10 million so far. Custody of the Church of the Nativity is shared by the Franciscans, the Greek Orthodox Church, and the Armenian Orthodox Church, and they were able to come to an agreement about the restoration under a special committee formed by the Palestinian National Authority. The next phase of work will be to restore the fifty pillars and church floor mosaics once adequate funds are raised.

Saint Boniface Church in Chicago, in danger of demolition, was purchased by developer Michael Skoulsky on September 23. The Romanesque Revival church was designed in 1902 by Henry Schlacks but has been closed since 1990. The developer plans to convert the church into fifteen condominiums, build another twenty-four on the currently vacant east lot, and build a new structure for the Chicago Academy of Music next door.

The Marian apparition site of Our Lady of Good Help in eastern Wisconsin was designated a National Shrine on August 15. The church is built on the spot where the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to a young Belgian woman, Adele Brise, in 1859, and is the only approved Marian apparition site in the United States. The Marian apparition was approved by Bishop Ricken in 2010.

Saint Boniface was saved from demolition and will be repurposed as condominiums.

Two new paintings by James Crowley were added to Saint Paul the Apostle Church in South Carolina: on the left is “The Holy Infant of Prague with Angels,” and on the right, “Saint Paul Shipwrecked on Malta.”

Mosaics in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem have been restored, though only about twenty percent of the original mosaics still remain.

A vandal in Rome smashed sacred objects and statues in four churches last September.

Photo: James Crowley

Italian police arrested an African immigrant on September 30 for vandalizing four churches in Rome: San Martino ai Monti, the Basilica di Santa Prassede, San Vitale, and San Giovanni dei Fiorentini, where he smashed statues and overturned sacred objects, including ripping a large crucifix off of the wall. The motives for the damage done by the Ghanaian man are still unknown.
On July 15 Father Michael Morris, O.P. died at his residence at Saint Mary Magdelene Church in Berkeley, California, from colon cancer. He taught both at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology and at the Graduate Theological Union. He wrote many essays on notable works of religious art for the Magnificat publication. His funeral was celebrated on July 22 at Saint Albert’s Priory in Oakland, California.

Father Michael Morris, O.P. was well known for his essays on art on the back cover of the Magnificat publication.

Saint Michael’s Cathedral in Toronto, Ontario, was reopened on September 29, the feast day of Saint Michael the Archangel, after a five-year renovation of the oldest structure in the city. The cathedral was originally completed in 1848 by British architect William Thomas. +VG Architects is now overseeing the $128 million project. Work on the church so far includes repairing the stone foundation and central columns, installing a new organ, repainting the cathedral ceiling, stripping away more recent renovations that clash with the Gothic Revival style, and installing new rose windows in the transepts, a new altar, and a new balcony. In addition, the crypt was excavated and turned into a chapel. Renovations should be finished by 2018.

The renovated nave of Saint Michael’s in Toronto is restored to its original Gothic Revival splendor.

A museum was inaugurated to commemorate Pope John Paul I in his hometown of Canale d’Agordo in the northern Veneto region of Italy. Named the “Albino Luciani Museum,” it was officially opened by Vatican Secretary of State Pietro Parolin on August 26. The date coincides with the thirty-eighth anniversary of John Paul I’s election to the papacy. The museum is located in the city’s old town hall and contains important documents, personal items, and objects used by the pope.

The historic Saint Anne’s Church is closed until necessary restoration work is done.

A new 300-seat chapel at Lansing Catholic High School in Michigan was designed by Swanson Design Studios in collaboration with school president Tom Maloney. Nineteen stained-glass windows from Richard Hanley & Omnibus Studios reflect the communion of saints. The altar furnishings and pews were made and installed by volunteers. Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing dedicated the $1.8 million chapel on March 25, 2015.

The new chapel at Lansing Catholic High School was designed to be a “classroom of the faith.”

On October 30, Bishop Roger Foyes dedicated a new statue of Mary that adorns a new park directly across the street from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky. The park is a volunteer-driven project sponsored by the cathedral parish. The statue of Mary is by sculptor David Frech.

Volunteers from the Covington Cathedral community worked together to build a park that features a statue of Mary.
The Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament in Christchurch, New Zealand suffered extensive damage after an earthquake hit the city in February 2011. Diocesan leaders were originally planning on undertaking a $45 million project to restore the nave, putting off the rest of the church to rebuild later. But they are now considering a more substantial $100 million project that will restore the entire cathedral in one endeavor. No final decision on the project will be made until the new bishop arrives to replace recently deceased Bishop Barry Jones.

The historic shrine of Saint Katharine Drexel will be sold by the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.

Willow Creek is building a new church in Glenview, Illinois, the eighth of its Willow Creek Ministries in the greater Chicago area. The project began in June 2015 and is set to be completed in fall 2016, and the architect involved is Chicago-based Adrian Smith + Gordon Gill Architecture. The program for the building includes a 1,200-seat auditorium, adult ministry spaces, classrooms, a café, and administration offices, as well as additional areas for funerals, weddings and informal events, and several gathering spaces. The church is in the process of raising $15 million to pay for the construction.

The order of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Powhatan, Virginia, has decided to sell their forty-four-acre estate in Bensalem, Pennsylvania. The estate is the site of their motherhouse, as well as a shrine to their foundress, Saint Katherine Drexel. The relics housed in the shrine will be moved to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul in Philadelphia. The decision was made to sell the property because of limited funding, limited vocations in recent years and an aging community. Over half of the 104 members are retired, and only three sisters have professed final vows since Saint Katherine Drexel’s canonization sixteen years ago. The proceeds from the sale will go towards the order’s ministry work and to support the retired sisters.

Saint Francis Cabrini Church in Omaha, Nebraska, is undertaking a project to repair their four historic bronze bells, which haven’t rung in thirty years. The parish has raised $20,000 towards the $22,000 estimated cost of the repairs, to be done by Benjamin Sunderlin. Sunderlin plans to complete the restoration by spring 2017.

Saint Michael the Archangel Church in Crowley, Louisiana, underwent extensive renovations that were completed in time for Christmas 2015. Built in 1912, this $2.8 million restoration was the first since major work was done in the 1970s. Local architects Louis Saab, AIA and Joshua Hoffpauir, AIA worked together on the project. The air conditioning, lighting, and electronics were all updated, and new artwork, marble columns, and paint were added. Father Mikel Polson, pastor, commented that the restoration “can’t help but uplift one’s spirits.”

Debate continues over the future of the damaged cathedral in Christchurch, New Zealand.
The Diocese of Peoria celebrated on August 25 the hundredth anniversary of the death of Archbishop John Lancaster Spalding, the founding bishop of the diocese. The anniversary also marked the completion of the restoration of the diocese’s historic Cathedral of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception. The $2.3 million restoration is the first major renovation in almost thirty years, and the work ranges from repairing extensive water damage to painting the night sky on the ceiling of the church. The ceiling over the altar was painted gold, with new murals and images of Old Testament prophets on either side of the altar. Stained-glass windows were restored as well, and new pews were installed. The restoration was carried out by Daprato Rigali Studios.

Belmont Abbey College in Belmont, North Carolina has undertaken a project to construct a minor seminary on their campus, Saint Joseph College Seminary, as part of the Diocese of Charlotte’s initiative to foster interest in religious vocations. Starting this fall, the seminary is temporarily located on the campus of Saint Ann Church in Charlotte, but plans are underway for construction of the new building. The architect for the project is Michael G. Imber Architects of San Antonio, Texas, and the estimated cost is $7.5 million. More than $4 million has already been committed.

Work continues at Clear Creek Abbey on the sanctuary and apses of the church. The next phase will be to fundraise money to finish the interior with brick and stone.

Cardinal Sarah encourages priests to celebrate the Mass ad orientem.

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The Human Touch
Central Italy has recently been hit with a series of damaging earthquakes. On August 24, 291 people were killed and many historic buildings were destroyed. Several smaller tremors followed, but without causing serious damage until October 30, when another serious earthquake struck. Norcia, the birthplace of Saints Benedict and Scholastica, sustained the most damage from the quake. The medieval Basilica di San Benedetto, built on top of the birthplace of the saints, was almost completely destroyed, with only the façade remaining. Many other historic buildings also suffered slight damage, from Venice all the way to Rome, where cracks were found in the churches of Saint Paul Outside the Walls and Sant’Ivo alla Sapienza.

The Diocese of Pittsburgh, led by Bishop David Zubik, has been developing since April 2015 a planning initiative called “On Mission for the Church Alive!” It is currently on the parishioner-input phase, examining how to strengthen dwindling church attendance and participation, improve worship, and make the most of scarce resources. The initiative was prompted by the fact that the number of active Catholics in the Pittsburgh diocese has been rapidly declining: 914,000 people in 1980 fell to 632,000 in 2015. Bishop Zubik stated, “The number one priority has to be, ‘We need to make our worship better.’”
The Alliance des Arts, the Chapelle des Lazaristes, and the Reliquary Shrine of Saint Vincent de Paul

Simone Zurawski

I. The Historical, Geographic, and Architectural Foundations: Hittorff, Gallois, and Étienne

Located at number 93 rue de Sèvres, and just down the block from the Bon Marché department store in the chic VIème arrondissement, is the Chapelle des Lazaristes, which exemplifies the Catholic Renouveau movement of nineteenth-century France. This is the motherhouse church of the Congregation of the Mission, founded in 1624 by the French Apostle of Charity, Saint Vincent de Paul (1581–1660). But their chapelle is also poised on the street to welcome the faithful to venerate the saint’s reliquary shrine. As such, this setup reprises the Congregation’s first motherhouse chapel at Saint-Lazare on the Left Bank (Fig. 2). The two sites provide the anchors for my analysis of Saint Vincent de Paul’s respective reliquary shrines: the vintage map indicates that “Old” Saint-Lazare is on the Right Bank, clear across the River Seine from “New” Saint-Lazare on the Left Bank (Fig. 2). And these properties were unrelated in respect to their past histories and by every other account, except for one striking historical fact that linked them together in the Restoration; and this connecting thread is illuminated through their sacred architecture: the classical, or Néogrec, façade of the Chapelle des Lazaristes on rue de Sèvres (Fig. 5) appears to reflect, if in a flatter and cheaper mode, and on a reduced scale, the portico of the grandiose church of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul (Fig. 3). Even after listing the other classical churches that went up around Paris at this time, it must be emphasized that these two alone were committed to the name and memory of Vincent de Paul. And their “partnering” came about because the basilica was positioned upon the highest hill of Old Saint-Lazare. That is, while the prison system was appropriating the buildings and grounds near the road (as we know), the internal wheatfields were parcelled and sold to developers—except for the crest of the hill, which was reserved as emplacement by the Crown of Louis XVIII for a parish church. This privileged structure became the showpiece of Jacques-Ignace Hittorff (1792–1867), the renowned professor of architecture at the École des Beaux-Arts, who took charge after his father-in-law Jean-Baptiste Lepère (1761–1844) had stepped aside. Hittorff’s work commenced in 1824, and the long-awaited dedication took place on October 21, 1844, in the monarchy of Louis-Philippe d’Orléans. The plan and grandeur of Hittorff’s Saint-Vincent-de-Paul were meant to imitate the Early Christian basilicas of Rome, above all San Paolo fuori le Mura. Luxuriously decorated besides on the façade and porch and throughout the interior, the programming was effectively based on the architect’s summary of 1838 (published 1842), although embellishments to the nave walls, high altar, apse, and windows were prolonged over several decades and into the Second Empire of Louis-Napoléon (Fig. 4). The décor was implemented by Hittorff’s chosen artists as a collective apology of his strong opinions on ancient polychromy, for he achieved notoriety in claiming, with defiance even, that the surfaces of Greek and Roman temples were covered with saturated encaustic paint, just as the walls of ancient churches were carpeted with vivid mosaic tile.

In now turning to the Chapelle des Lazaristes, I have identified Paul-Marie Gallois (1825–1889) as its architect from the sources in the motherhouse archives of New Saint-Lazare. He arrived in 1848 at age twenty-four, fresh out of the École des Beaux-Arts, having taken...
the First Class Prize there in 1847; and in looking ahead, he would be decorat-
ed as Chevalier in the Legion d’honneur (August 13, 1888) in the year before his
death. Instead of visiting Italy, Gallois went to work; and his life-long career
fast became the grands travaux for the chapelle and Hôtel de Lorges com-
pound. In drawing from the scrupu-
loss example set by Hittorff at Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, the Chapelle des Laz-
aristes similarly features a trabeated
colonnade and second-story tribune.
Moreover, in wielding polychromy to
the extent of setting his elements ablaze
in technicolor, Gallois offers a pristine
case for Hittorff’s doctrines on Néogrec
architecture—since his space even more
closely actualized them than the grand-
standing basilica did! Its richness may
now be savored thanks to the recent
campaigns of cleaning and conserva-
tion (1985–1992), which accompanied
the installation of modern mechani-
cal systems. However, in a departure
from Hittorff’s obligation to equip a
new parish church—in an equally new
residential quartier—with splendid fur-
nishings à l’époque (La Belle Époque!),
the purpose of the Chapelle des Lazaristes
was to spotlight the saint’s reliquary
câsse, which marked the top note in
the vanishing point of Gallois’s per-
spective alignment in the nave (Fig. 6).
In other words, the dramatic
framing of the shrine was the rationale
behind all the grands travaux that pro-
claim Gallois’s allegiance to Hittorff.
But far from designing his church from
scratch, Gallois had to negotiate con-
tants that were fixed in place: the reli-
quary casket itself, the extant church in
which it was mounted, and the second
(that is, replacement) high altar, which
got underway soon after his arrival
in 1848. First of all, the câsse bearing
the saint’s corpse had been borne to
New Saint-Lazare on April 25, 1830,
in the ceremony of Solemn Transla-
tion, whence it was placed upon the
altar table in the “primitive” Chapelle
des Lazaristes; this had been raised by
Philibert Vasserot (1773–1844) in haste
over an eighteen-month period and
was consecrated on November 1, 1827.
Its only known plan is included on the
Grand Atlas of Paris, which Vasserot
himself had rendered, but the appear-
ance of the interior was not recorded.
Our information must therefore be
stitched together from the primary

Fig. 2. Jacobs and Blanchard, Plan de Paris … Enceinte de Paris sous Louis Philippe
Ter; engraved map, undated but executed in the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe
d’Orléans, 1830-1848.

Fig. 3. Old Saint-Lazare. The parish church of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, which was built
by Jacques-Ignace Hittorff, beginning in 1824 and consecrated in 1844, view of the
exterior and the street.

Fig. 4. Old Saint-Lazare. Interior view of the church of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul.
sources, conservation reports, and communiqués over its consideration as a Monument Historique. Altogether, these texts reveal that Vasserot’s chapelle was small and had a single nave whose walls were articulated by blind arcades (arcatures) separated by pilasters, and that the ceiling was a ribbed barrel vault (en berceau). Was it intended to be provisional? Its rebuilding seemed inevitable—and the opportune moment came a half generation later with the election of a fiercely ambitious superior general. Jean-Baptiste Étienne (1801–1874) arrived at New Saint-Lazare in 1820 and became one of the first novices and ordinands since the Revolution; his rise in leadership was unstoppable for he was appointed to procureur general while still in his twenties, in 1827.

Being elected superior general in 1843 allowed Étienne to unleash his own vision for the chapelle in anticipating the bicentennial of Saint Vincent de Paul’s death in 1860—that is, once the ecclesiastical realms got restabilized in both the July Monarchy of Louis-Philippe (1830–1848) and Second Empire of Louis-Napoléon (1852–1870), which succeeded the fall of the Bourbons in 1830. In moving forward beyond this lull period, the new superior general hired a bright light from the younger generation, Paul-Marie Gallois. As we know, Gallois arrived in 1848, but was initially occupied at the Hôtel de Lorges. He would then be “tested” on religious architecture two years later in designing a fine classical ædicule for the statue of the Virgin in May 1850 (still in situ in the private garden), and again from 1851 to 1854 in raising the tiny Chapel of the Passion, along with overseeing its décor, which extended the narthex of the chapelle into the corridor leading to the convent next door, whose configuration included Étienne’s private parloir. As part of his learning curve Gallois was sent to inspect the Vincentian seminary chapel in Amiens in October 1850. Soon afterwards Étienne handed him the reins at the Chapelle des Lazaristes!

II. The Reliquary Châsse: Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot père and Charles-Nicolas Odiot fils

As was stated above, the châsse of Saint Vincent de Paul was translated to New Saint-Lazare on April 25, 1830, through the winning stratagems of a younger Étienne; this public procession, which headed out from Notre Dame, took place once the remains had been reauthenticated by the royal surgeon. These were encased in wax and garbed in the saint’s own lovingly preserved vestments to create the corpus sanctum; and upon being deposited in the châsse, the effigy was displayed through the glass vitrine. The saint’s physical presence is amplified by the portrait statuette that stands in glory at the apex of the lid while the angels, which represent Religion, Faith, Hope, and Charity, are confirming his supernatural state of being (Fig. 7). One special feature is the crucifix of ebony and ivory placed on its breast. Long held to come from the deathbed of Louis XIII, whom Vincent de Paul had comforted in his final hours (in 1643), this relic was presented by Archbishop Hyacinthe-Louis de Quélen as one of several contributions from the Archdiocese of Paris. The dazzling châsse was designed by Jean-Baptiste-Claude Odiot (1763–1850), who drafted the large presentation esquisse in watercol-
Fig. 7. New Saint-Lazare. Jean-Baptiste Claude Odiot, père, and Charles-Nicolas Odiot, fils. The current reliquary châsse of Saint Vincent de Paul, crystal and solid silver, designed by J-B-C in 1817 and manufactured by C-N; it was placed upon the altar mensa in the “primitive” Chapelle des Lazaristes in April 1830, and re-installed in the mid-1850s upon the new high altar designed by Arthur Martin, S.J., in the renovated church. The corpus sanctum was fashioned from the skeletal remains of the body and skull, whose exposed face and hands are sealed with wax; the attire is authentic.

or and grisaille against a blue field; it is dated 1817, and the cartouche is inscribed, “Corpus S. Vincentii A Paulo” (Collection Odiot). The piece was then manufactured by his son Charles-Nicolas (d. 1869) in 130 kilos of solid silver that cost 62,757 francs, and it took First Prize in the Exposition universelle of 1827.

Tardieu shows the châsse situated in the Saint Vincent de Paul Chapel at Old Saint-Lazare; this was not the high altar but one of the side chapels, located just left of it in the sanctuary (Fig. 8). The châsse was placed on the equally elegant Rococo mensa, which was carved of multi-colored marble; then mounted on the wall above was a monumental canvas representing the apotheosis of Vincent de Paul—the motif picked up by the Odiot—which was painted in a Late Baroque style by the Dominican artist, Frère Jean-André (1662–1753). The entirety was framed by a triumphal arch that sprang from the doubled Corinthian pilasters, chief among other forms of rinceaux and florid marginaлиa. The effect created by this colorful fusion of Late Baroque, Rococo, and classicizing strains (apropos of the mid-eighteenth century) was stunning and sumptuous. And if the ensemble would inspire some of Odiot’s ideas, to what extent did it influence Gallois in the chapelle of New Saint-Lazare, which called for a change of purpose because the reliquary was uniquely combined there with the high altar?

Viewing the two shrines side-by-side reveals that Étienne and his men steered clear of duplication and nostalgia. Notably, the counterpart to the glorified saint in Jean-André’s tableau is the solid silver likeness at the summit of Odiot’s châsse; this is his only three-dimensional portrait in the chapelle, which prompts admiration of the marble statuettes of saints on the high altar, just below. Étienne brought in the foremost expert in Medieval Christian art to design the high altar in what became the first, and defining, moment of his new-wave grands travaux in the chapelle. This was the remarkable, and overbooked, Jesuit priest Arthur Martin (1801–1856), whom Étienne nailed down in 1850, according to a dated esquisse. Gallois, meanwhile, was preparing to step in once the high altar/reliquary shrine was well underway. Indeed his first sacred works for Étienne were implemented in the year of Father Martin’s drawing (in positioning the statue of the Virgin in the garden and raising the Chapel of the Passion). Did Martin accept the job offer due to convenience? He likely was already residing at the Jesuit house of Saint-Ignace, which is just down the street at 35 rue de Sèvres, whose Neo-Gothic chapel he would design in 1855.

III. The High Altar: Père Arthur Martin, S.J. (1801–1856)

Arthur Martin ranks among the most gifted figures of the mid-century. In starting out as a young priest and published author at age thirty, Father Martin dedicated himself “entièrement à l’étude de l’archéologie” according to the standard Jesuit bibliography, which he restricted to Early and Medieval Christianity in “la science théologique,” and not “par romantisme.” Martin became a prolific writer, artist-designer, and architect, and authority on restoring Gothic architecture; and we may single out his report of August 31, 1847, to the Ministre des Travaux Publics on the stained glass of La Sainte-Chapelle. Moreover, from the monumental in scale on down, nearly every type of artifact seized his eye and mind, and he deserves praise for taking a scientific approach to the industrial arts. His published land-
marks are the volumes cowritten with Charles Cahier, for which he provided the ravishing plates: the monograph on the stained glass of Bourges Cathedral (1842), which earned him a gold medal from the Institut; and Nouveaux mélanges d’archéologie, d’histoire et de littérature sur le Moyen Age, which was begun in 1848 and eventually issued posthumously in four volumes (it is the book most familiar to today’s readers).

We learn also from the standard Jesuit bibliography that Father Martin designed “Plusieurs chapelles de Paris ont aussi été décorées sous sa direction; entre autres, celle de Sainte Geneviève-du-Mont, fait le plus grand honneur à son gout …” It may not be widely known that he created this brightly colored Neo-Gothic shrine, dated to circa 1854–1855, which is purely commemorative since the relics were burned in the Revolution after a conviction of treason. What a powerful contrast it makes, therefore, against the silvery high altar—neo-medieval also but in a different way—which Martin furnished for the bona fide reliquary of New Saint-Lazare! But it earned just a single line buried in his papers in the Jesuit archives. In now beginning coverage with the ending of the story, his high altar was inaugurated by the apostolic nuncio on the feast day of the Annunciation, March 25, 1857, and the plaque beside it mentions him by name: “Altare Maius Huius Ecclesiae, Dirigente P. Arthur Martin S.J. Erectum …” This citation, however, has not led to critical appreciation of Father Martin—all accolades are showered upon the Odiot—an injustice that I am about to set right.

It therefore took seven years to execute the masterpiece, which we know from counting backwards to the esquisse of 1850, mentioned above. Martin devised a theatrical neo-medieval retable that was set into Vasserot’s sanctuary, a hemicyle whose altar table was framed at each side by a column and pilaster (as is known from the plan, extant masonry, and documents). Moreover, Vasserot returned twenty years after his “official” departure to sign off on the Mémoire des ouvrages de Menuiserie of 1847, which refers to the oak stalls in the choir that were carved by the entrepreneur Bugniet. One more salvaged holdover was the French alabaster mensa costing two thousand francs; it was elevated about a foot by Gallois and served as a platform upon which Father Martin stacked three tiers that rise in a crescendo toward the ceiling to support the châsse at the pinacle (Fig. 9). And these lower registers are filled with white marble figures: large statues of four evangelists and eight prophets who stand guard at either side of the châsse; fifteen statuettes perched in colonnaded niches that depict saints with attributes; and eighteen angels (Fig. 11). Moreover, the saint’s celestial sphere became accessible through the “hidden” stone staircases at either side, which allow visitors to approach and descend from the reliquary as never before. Father Martin’s objective, which was penned in the “Courte explication” kept in the motherhouse archives, was to revive medieval devotional practices in which pilgrims had passed beneath the saints’ relics at Saint-Denis. Mentioned also in this memo, along with examples that got published in Mélanges d’Archéologie, is the tradition of depicting apostles on reliquaries and tombs of saints, which was popularized in the twelfth century. This typology was not merely brought back to life but much expanded, with the help of Fontenelle, who was Martin’s contractor and agent. Fontenelle’s two lengthy and itemized Mémoires des Travaux de Sculpture et Marbrerie (dated September 1, 1858, and October 24, 1859), reveal that besides carving the forty-seven statues and statuettes his firm had made, transported, and installed everything else in all media.
the columns and pilasters framing the sanctuary (which supplemented those from Vasserot), the staircases beside the altar, the tabernacle and canopied crucifix, the mosaic tile pavement on the top step (now hidden by carpeting), the fancy “Menuiserie” (referring to the gloriette), and the full complement of architectural garnitures.

Another memo, “Statues de l’Autel de St. Vincent/Retable,” identifies each figure sequentially in two groupings according to the Gospel and Epistle sides; and they are all historical persons in keeping with Martin’s promotion of “la science théologique.” In addition to the Holy Family, he chose saints who lived in the Middle Ages on up through Vincent de Paul’s time—and like him, many had founded religious communities. This once-living chorus thereby testifies to the “humanity” of Saint Vincent de Paul. They include the group of the Virgin and Child, which is centered in the lowest register on axis with the tabernacle, Odiot’s standing portrait of the saint, and the face of Jesus in the gloriette; Jesus’s family members, consisting of Joseph, Anne, and Joachim, and John the Baptist; plus all-male figures such as Denis (the first French martyr), Benedict, Dominick, Bruno, Francis of Assisi, Philip Neri, Francis Xavier, and Vincent de Paul’s mentor and friend, Francis de Sales. This cavalcade reveals one more example of Martin’s lively imagination and the deep scholarly reserves he plumed, and published, in *Mélanges d’Archéologie*. In addition to the medieval devotional practices he sought to revive, the mosaic-tile pavement of the sanctuary resuscitates the floors of ancient Italian churches. And the statuettes are near copies of relief panels carved on the flanks of Early Christian sarcophagi (Fig. 12). Martin enthusiastically sketched and published the specimens he studied in Provence especially, and looked forward to examining the Roman catacombs on what became his last journey in 1856. Father Martin departed for Italy once the high altar and several other projects were either finished or nearly so. But while in Ravenna he succumbed to apoplexy on November 24, 1856, and did not live to attend the dedication in March 1857.

**IV. Paul-Marie Gallois Expands and Decorates the Chapelle, Circa 1855 to 1864**

Gallois, meanwhile, gathered his forces for staging the gleaming set piece to maximum effect and transforming Vasserot’s “primitive” *chapelle* into an exciting contemporary space. First of all, he duly highlighted the medieval scheme of Father Martin’s high altar and the adjacent choir; but instead of picking up on its silvery cream tonalities, which resonate also with Odiot’s *châsse*, Gallois had his decorators, who included frères-coadjuteurs, strike the most daring foils to them by covering the walls and their Nèogrec embellishments with intensely polychromed color, as if shouting out Hittorff’s teachings. Moreover, the linchpin that unifies these competing artistic/historical styles is the triumphal arch, or gateway into the high altar, which was done by the painter-in-residence Frère François Carbonnier (Fig. 13). Did the end result not set the sterling standard for showing off the *alliance des arts* in Catholic architecture of the mid-nineteenth century?

In further acknowledging the neo-

**Fig. 11. New Saint-Lazare. Chapelle des Lazaristes, side view of the high altar.**

**Fig. 12. New Saint-Lazare. Plate from Charles Cahier, S.J., and Arthur Martin, S.J.**

medieval statement of Martin’s high altar, one may step backwards several paces to behold how emphatic it appears in being framed, from the floor, by the graceful oak stalls that were positioned in the choir for the use of the Lazarists (and which were ordered by Vasserot in 1847) (Fig. 10). Gallois then created a border that closed and picturesquely set off this sacred and liturgical zone from the rest of the nave—which is reserved for the laity—with an ornate iron grille (since removed in the late 1980s). These artisinal *travaux de serrurerie* were fabricated in 1856 by the entrepreneur Deschars to imitate the cross of the *Ordre de Saint-Lazare et de Notre-Dame du Mont-Carmel*, whose history goes way back to the medieval origins of Old Saint-Lazare! Deschars was employed besides to install the wholly essential and functional serrurerie, as in the harnesses and braces, which secured the new masonry constructed by the entrepreneurs Beauvais and Roullie. For while maintaining the length of Vasserot’s nave, which terminates at the sanctuary, Gallois extended the footprint laterally, in 1855–1856, by punching through the blind arcades (arcatures) of the walls, thus making them arched openings into a proper side aisle at each flank. The pilasters of Vasserot’s arcuations were left standing to mark the bays, and in front of them Gallois built a nave colonnade consisting of Doric columns, which supports a trabeated entablature. Gallois used its upper edge as the baseline for raising a second-story tribune above the side aisles. And since his plan was thereby wider and higher than before, a soaring new ceiling went up in the magnificently coffered barrel vault; its base is pierced by arched apertures that align with the Doric columns and are rhythmically stretched high and taut across the line. Moreover, the new black and white tiles laid down in the aisles had to meet the grade level of the nave floor, whose pavement in large white blocks was retained. It certainly is a challenge
to distinguish which portions of Vasse-
rot’s fabrique had been demolished and
which furnishings were repurposed,
since the Mémoires des Travaux are pre-
served in various states of legibility, and
some of them are all but indecipherable! In now inspecting the glori-
ous classical decoration, the ornaments
projecting from the plastered surfaces
are molded from pierre plâtre, or carton
pierre, and faux bois, and masked in a
horror vacui of gilding and polychrome
done in oil paint. Despite the outburst,
everything is crisply controlled: the
rosettes punctuating the coffers of the
vault, the dentilization of the archi-
trave, the beaded banding below the
Doric capitals, the angels heads at the
faux keystones of the arches at the base
of the vault, and the rinceaux in the
spandrels. Several motifs come straight
from the châsse, in the ribbon of curvi-
linear foliage that rims the upper lid,
and the acanthus frieze at the base;
did Father Martin chime in with a few
flourishes of his own?

V. Brother François Carbonnier
Paints the Linchpin That Unifies the Space

A frère-coadjuteur, François Carbon-
nier (1787–1873), was the supreme
painter-in-residence and Étienné’s very
first protégé. He was born in Beauvais
and baptized as Casimir; in Paris he
studied with Jacques-Louis David and
Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, and
joined David’s other pupils in paint-
ing the massive coronation picture Le
Sacre de Napoléon, of 1806–1807 (Paris,
Musée du Louvre). Then in the Salon of
1812 Carbonnier showed Virgile récitant
l’Enéide au moment où il prononce: “Tu
Marcellus eris . . . ”; it so impressed
Caroline Bonaparte, the Emperor’s
sister and Queen of Naples, that she
hired him to execute her portrait (un-
traced). The most recent information
we have on his technique comes from
the handwritten report that M. Jean-
Jacques Borgetto kindly shared with
me after he had cleaned the canvases at
New Saint-Lazare in 1998, which states
Carbonnier painted in “la pure tradi-
cion classique.” He laid down a solid
ground upon which thin coats of paint
were applied after the preceding colors
had dried, and transparent glazes were
added to heighten luster. His master-
pieces consist of eight monumental
canvases representing the lives of Mary
and Jesus, which are signed and dated
between 1846 and 1864; but were they
planned as a suite? They were mounted
behind the choir stalls after the aisles
were built but have since been taken
upstairs to the tribune. However beau-
tiful they may be in rephrasing strains
from Raphael—who’s cult was all the
rage among Catholic artists—they
hardly factor into the aesthetic regime
of the centerpiece and are therefore set
aside in favor of Carbonnier’s tri-
umphal arch, which plays a pivotal role
in this respect.

This is a wide horseshoe-shaped
band painted in oils on canvas, en gri-
saille; it was attached to the plaster wall
in July 1855 by the mason Beauvais
and three helpers to look like a carved
archivolt beneath the vault at its termi-
nus, that is, just above the threshold
into the sanctuary. Each blunt edge
of the curve is supported by paired
columns that both frame the center-
piece and meet the ending of the colom-
nade at a right angle, on its half of the
nave. The painted archway is thereby
implicated into the architectural setting
and holds the perspective line of all the
elements that are marching inwards
from the straight-edged entablatures
and the fillets lined up on the coffered
vault. Carbonnier respond to the
high altar, besides, in his subject matter
and technique. The cascading figures

that surround Vincent de Paul in the
center and appear together with his
virtues (Simplicity, Charity, and Humil-
ity) resemble high reliefs whose chiar-
oscuro pitches them against a neutral
ground. These “sculptural” characters
are grouped into narrative vignettes
that, at right, depict the missions
of Saint Louise de Marillac and the
Daughters of Charity. And at the left,
Carbonnier features the evangelization
of the priests, most sensationally of
John Gabriel Perboyre (1802–1840) and
Francis Regis Clet (1748–1820), who
had recently been martyred in China—
and whose remains were brought to the
chapelle, where they may be venerated
in their own shrines in the side aisle.

Carbonnier’s triumphal arch there-
fore reads like a cross between two and
three dimensions, and ties together
elements that would otherwise look
discordant: it serves as transition from
sculpture to painting, and its deep
gray tonalities are caught between
the silvery coolness of the centerpice
and the warmth of saturated color on
the entablature and vault. His work
so effortlessly harmonizes pictorial
oppositions that one may ask if their
basic artistic/historical differences—
between the neo-medieval and the
Néogrec—have likewise been recon-
ciled. Moreover, what of Gallois’s con-
version of the “pagan hovel” described
by Charles Rene de Montalembert into
an impeccable Christian church? The
two dilemmas are related—as are their
resolutions, which reside in yet another
“crossover” involving our ultra-Cath-
olic champions of the Early Christian
revival. This trend was activated by the
rebuilding of San Paolo fuori le Mura
following its disastrous fire of 1823,
and it so profoundly altered both Hit-
torff and Father Martin that linking
Classical Antiquity with Early Christi-
anity occupied the heart of their work.
Their enterprises in art and architecture
and published books provide undeni-
able evidence that pagan traditions
were hardly antithetical to Catholicism,
but had been fluently carried over into
the ancient Christian basilicas of Italy.
Hittorff offered Saint-Vincent-de-Paul
as his exemplum, which in fact fol-
lowed the model of San Paolo (as was
mentioned above). And in respect to
Martin, one recurring theme in Mé-
langes d’Archéologie betrays him pon-
dering the roots of his beloved Middle
Ages in the pagan world; and in at least
one passage he observes that the bar-

Fig. 13. New Saint-Lazare. Contemporary
photograph of the high altar of the Chapelle
des Lazaristes, which features a close-up of
the triumphal arch painted in grisaille on
canvas by the frère-coadjuteur François
Carbonnier, and installed in 1855.

Photo: Courtesy of Erik Pronske, M.D.

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barians who invaded Gaul were the truer hostile forces. As if staking out two different posts on the same battlefield, they had generated valid and legitimate alternatives to the fashionable Gothic Revival! In now returning to Gallois’s *chapelle*, we may clearly recognize that the so-called conflict between the classical and the medieval was instead played out as an exercise in Christian modalities which sits tight on the arc of the Middle Ages, if in different time zones: in Father Martin’s evocations of the twelfth century in the high altar, and in Gallois’s “Late Antique” hall overflowing with motifs such as the *rinçaux*, which symbolize Celestial Paradise and bow down, as well, to the research of Father Martin!

VI. On the Alliance des Arts

The Chapelle des Lazaristes manifests a breathtaking unification of concept with design, which in France was called the *travail d’ensemble* (also the *alliance des arts* and *un ouvrage d’art total*) and dominated architectural thinking of the mid-century (by way of the music dramas composed in Germany by Richard Wagner). And if Paul-Marie Gallois and his *grands travaux* have been brought to light in this article, the last words may be granted to Mme C. Di Matteo, Inspecteur Principal des Monuments Historiques of the Ministère de la Culture, who writes this assessment in this article, the last words may be granted to Mme C. Di Matteo, Inspecteur Principal des Monuments Historiques of the Ministère de la Culture, who writes this assessment in

![Fig. 14. Saint Vincent de Paul Church, Chicago, Illinois. Photograph of the sanctuary that was used in the parish’s Centennial Booklet in 1976. The high altar designed by Augustine O’Callaghan was carved between 1903 and 1909 of white Carrara marble, and inlaid with mother-of-pearl and Venetian mosaic tile.](image)

**Brief Epilogue: Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Chicago, Illinois**

In revisiting the other sacred monuments that were built or renovated in Paris in this period, we may wish to evaluate how their programmes stack up against the Chapelle des Lazaristes. But I prefer, first, to take a detour to raise this question: How did the more erudite interpretations of the historical revival in France reach the architects of the Gilded Age of American churches from circa 1870 to 1929? And why are their discourses far from intertwined?

In offering a splendid example close to home, Saint Vincent de Paul Church in Chicago is found at the edge of the DePaul University campus and is administered by Vincentian priests from the Western Province of the Congregation in the United States. It was raised in 1895–1897, twenty years after the parish was founded to serve Irish and German families, by Egan and Prindeville of Chicago; Prindeville was a native of the city and James J. Egan (1839–1914) came from Cork, Ireland. He first studied at the Government School of Design, Queen’s College, Cork, then finished his education in England, which of course was inundated by its own waves of the Medieval Revival. Why would he not sail across the Channel and head to the continent, starting out from Paris, to absorb everything he could? After all, his church in Chicago knowingly combines Romanesque styles on the façade and in the nave with Gothic conventions in the tracery, lofty polychromed interior, and stained glass lancets and *rosaces*, which were ordered from Mayer & Co. of Munich (through its New York office). And like Gallois’s *chapelle*, its focal point is the multiteried high altar that may be similarly experienced through the open expanses of the nave (Fig. 14). It was carved between 1903 and 1909 of shiny Carrara marble, with inlays of mother-of-pearl and Venetian mosaic tile, according to the design of Augustine O’Callaghan, a sculptor who produced an earlier variation (in 1899) for the only other parish that had French associations, Notre Dame de Chicago. Was its general resemblance to Arthur Martin’s consecration an uncanny coincidence? Or were decisions made to recollect Saint Vincent’s shrine in Paris for the benefit of the Vincentians and their parishioners—and those of Notre Dame de Chicago? Since American builders wished to impart the grandeur of European churches, along with their artistic/historical roots in the faith of their fathers, future investigation of the New World counterparts must raise fresh questions in respect to geographic, and political, dislocations. And it must also identify the mediating links—starting at the World’s Columbian Exposition of 1893—which fueled the transmission of knowledge, in preparation for crossing the Atlantic in search of answers at the source. And in thus ending my study at the edge of the docks, it is satisfying to pry open even more dilemmas than I have attempted to address in these pages!

♦

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Endnotes
This article is a preview of my forthcoming books on Old Saint-Lazare and the Chapelle des Lazaristes of New Saint-Lazare. In lieu of endnotes the principal sources are grouped thematically for the sake of simplicity, esp. since documents in the motherhouse archives may not be accessible. Please contact me if...
Omitted from this article are discussions of the exterior, the two sites did not share any known artists in common. Arthur Martin, S.J., are reserved for my monograph; however, the 1852. Its plausible influence upon Gallois’s diocésane, who was succeeded by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in 1878–1843) and Vol. 4, Expansions and Reactions (1843–1789)–1878) of the Congregation of the Mission. Vol. 3, Revolution and Restoration of the Vincentians. A General History of de Paul. Architecture of the Catholic Renouveau in Paris, 2010), esp. 54, 45, is the entry for the triumphal arch, which is neither signed nor dated; moreover, the lack of extant sources and drawings in the Archives of the Maisonneuve suggests they were kept, together with the artist's other effects, in his private atelier, which were lost when the wing was rebuilt. Émile Bellier de la Chavignerie and Louis Auclair, Dictionnaire Général des Artistes de L'École Française … Tome I (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1882–1885; also available online), 604, is the brief entry on Gallois, which is restricted to award-winning student work; more accurately, such as the Préfecture de la Seine and Ministère des Affaires Publique et du Mont de Pitié de Paris (starting in 1855); Gallois was and still is State-owned property (whereas in the Ancien régime the Lazarists owned the church and largely did as they pleased). Moreover, this scenario is complicated by the changes in bureaucratic organization, nomenclature, and laws that accompanied the shifts from one monarchy to another. These are the principal categories of the sources on architecture/decoration—the documents cited in-text and below in the notes are not exhaustive: "Maitre-Autel/ Sculptures. Marbrerie/Bronzes/Canons d‘Autel" (dateable to 1586–1599). This unfocused collection holds the key documents, but not Martin’s esquisse: His letter to Édouard d. January 8, 1856, and the casket; moreover, in his meeting with me, M. Gaube du Gers, who at the time was Président of Odiot Orfèvre, himself with too much work? Légion d’honneur, Numéro d’Ordre des Artistes de L’École Française … Tome 2 (Beauvais: Imprimerie Démocratique de L'Oise, 1925), 125 f., cat. no. New Saint-Lazare: The Lazarist Decorator Frère Carbonnier The monograph-to-date on Frère Jean-Baptiste Étienne is Olivier Estourenge, "Casimir Carbonnier: Peintre Beauvaisien (1787–1873)," in Mémoires de la Société Académique d’Archéologie, Sciences et Arts du Département de L’Oise. Tome XXV. Première Partie (Beauvais: Imprimerie Démocratique de L'Oise, 1925), 52 f., cat. no. New Saint-Lazare: The Lazarist Decorator Frère Carbonnier. The monograph-to-date on Frère Jean-Baptiste Étienne is Olivier Estourenge, "Casimir Carbonnier: Peintre Beauvaisien (1787–1873)," in Mémoires de la Société Académique d’Archéologie, Sciences et Arts du Département de L’Oise. Tome XXV. Première Partie (Beauvais: Imprimerie Démocratique de L'Oise, 1925), 52 f., cat. no. New Saint-Lazare: The Lazarist Decorator Frère Carbonnier. The monograph-to-date on Frère Jean-Baptiste Étienne is Olivier Estourenge, "Casimir Carbonnier: Peintre Beauvaisien (1787–1873)," in Mémoires de la Société Académique d’Archéologie, Sciences et Arts du Département de L’Oise. Tome XXV. Première Partie (Beauvais: Imprimerie Démocratique de L'Oise, 1925), 52 f., cat. no.
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The Second Theme of Architecture: Artistic Beauty

FROM AESTHETICS VOL. II¹

Dietrich von Hildebrand, trans. Rev. Brian McNeil and John F. Crosby

Dietrich von Hildebrand was born in 1889 in Florence, the son of Adolf von Hildebrand, an eminent German sculptor of the late nineteenth century. He grew up immersed in the art and beauty of Florence. He studied philosophy with Edmund Husserl and became an important figure in the world of early phenomenology. Given his upbringing in Florence and his training in phenomenology, he was predestined to do original work in aesthetics. Though Dietrich von Hildebrand is mainly known in the Catholic world for his religious writings, such as Transformation in Christ, and for his philosophical writings, such as Ethics, he has yet to be discovered as the important aesthetician that he is.

We present here a selection from his Aesthetics, which is about to appear in the newly formed press of the Hildebrand Project (www.hildebrandproject.org). The Hildebrand Project exists to bring all of von Hildebrand’s works into English and into print, and above all to bring them into intellectual circulation.

— John F. Crosby, co-translator of Aesthetics

The artistic beauty of buildings depends on very definite means: forms, proportions, material, color, and many other factors. Our special task here is to look at these in detail, but we wish to emphasize explicitly that it is not our intention to indicate rules for the application of these means, rules that would guarantee the artistic value of a building if they were observed. That is not the task of aesthetics, where the situation is completely different than in logic and in ethics. In logic Aristotle established rules for the syllogism, and a flawless conclusion is guaranteed if these are observed. In ethics one can lay down norms that guarantee the moral value of an action. This is not possible in aesthetics.

The beauty of a building, of a picture, of a statue, of a poem, or of a melody is grounded in the special inspiration of the artist. He is entrusted with a mystery that cannot be formulated in a norm in such a way that the artist’s only task would be to fulfill that norm. . . .

It may perhaps be possible to formulate some reasons for the aesthetic disvalue of a building. The failure to fulfill certain conditions may impair a work of art. But the avoidance of these mistakes does not guarantee artistic beauty . . .

It is sometimes asserted that a building is beautiful if it does full justice to the concrete reality that it serves and if it fulfills all the requirements that are demanded by this theme or are indispensable if this theme is to be realized. Those who make such a claim usually have purely practical purposes in mind and affirm that the value of a building depends on how perfect it is under the aspect of achieving this practical purpose. This theory reduces architecture to a mere object of civilization. At the same time, however, it maintains that civilizational perfection also grounds the artistic beauty. This functionalism, which found its chief representative in Le Corbusier, is mistaken on many counts.

The artistic beauty of a building is not in the least a consequence of its perfect functionality. Principles of a purely artistic kind are decisive for the aesthetic value of a building. What beauty an arch can possess, or a tower in its form and color, such as the campanile of the cathedral in Florence or the tower on Saint Mark’s Square in Venice! What could it mean to say that

the unique beauty of the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence is based on the perfect fulfillment of its practical purpose? All we wish to do here is to point out the absurdity of this theory, which confuses artistic beauty with purely technical perfection and reduces the various expressive possibilities of architecture—this world of greatness and beauty—to mere functionality, asserting that the aesthetic value of a building is determined by its functionality.

We cannot emphasize strongly enough that the fulfillment of these practical requirements has no influence on the second main theme, namely, beauty, or the artistic theme. Even if all the practical requirements are satisfied with the greatest perfection, the building can be deadly, ugly, or boring.

As long as we are speaking of the perfection of purely practical purposes, there is a very loose connection with artistic beauty. From the perspective of the practical requirements of daily life, a farmhouse in Tuscany, which is very beautiful thanks to its noble proportions, the material employed, its color, the visible nobility and the poetry of its inner spaces, is certainly not... built in such a way that it facilitates all the practical functions of everyday life, nor is it ideal from a hygienic point of view.

On the other hand, a modern building that fulfills all the practical requirements and is perfect with respect to civilization is usually a wretched construction from the artistic point of view. It almost always radiates an anonymous barrenness, a depressing prosaic character. It is true that it does not possess the triviality and pseudo-beauty of many houses from the second half of the nineteenth century, which are tasteless imitations of Gothic architecture. But its absolute barrenness, anonymity, and soullessness, and the lack of any charm whatever, form an antithesis to artistic beauty that is just as great as the trivial.

If a building serves spiritual purposes, there exists a deep connection between its real theme and its artistic beauty. This is presupposed for the sake of doing justice to the spiritual purpose. The design of the building must also do justice to the genius of

Saint Mark’s Square, Venice.

the spiritual purpose. A church should have a specifically sacred character. It is not enough for it to be a beautiful hall that presents the external aspect of a splendid palace. An essential element of the artistic value of a church is the atmosphere of the sacred, of consecration, of greatness, and of seriousness, all achieved by means of artistic factors. In this case it is certainly correct to hold that the artistic beauty cannot be detached from the real spiritual theme of the church, and that in addition to general artistic conditions, the special character of the house of God must also be realized—but with artistic means.

In the case of a church, it is also meaningless to say: “Satisfy the requirements of the real spiritual theme, and then it is also artistically valuable.” This is because if one is to do justice to this theme, one must do so by means of artistic beauty. The general architectural beauty is presupposed; but we also need the artistic means by which the specifically sacred theme is realized. In the case of a church, the assertion “Satisfy the requirements of the real theme, and then the building is beautiful” would entail a vicious circle, because the real spiritual requirements are fulfilled only through the general artistic beauty and through the special artistic creation of the sacred atmosphere. It is only by means of artistic factors that a building can realize the true character of a church. The extent to which the artist himself is aware of this has no importance. He may be thinking only of the sacred theme and may wish to serve this theme alone, but if he is a true master builder and truly intends the church to be a sacred space, he will instinctively employ those artistic means that alone are able to realize this goal.

Where the spiritual purpose is much more indirectly linked to buildings than is the case with a church—for example, in a theater or a concert hall—its beauty is more independent of its spiritual purpose and is conditioned more strongly by the general bearers of beauty in architecture. Naturally, the beauty of a theater such as the theater of classical antiquity or the Teatro Olimpico of Palladio in Vicenza or the Cuvilliés Theater in the Residence in Munich implies a completely different task than the beauty of a residential house or a palace. A theater necessarily presents a different appearance than a ceremonial hall, thanks to the presence of many seats in one room, the box seats, the graduated staircases, etc. The practical purpose that as many visitors as possible should be able to see and hear what is happening on the stage dictates many tasks from the very outset. But the beauty does not depend on the immanent technical perfection with which these tasks are fulfilled, but on purely architectural factors. The expression of festivity that is essential to a theater must be realized. This requirement of the spiritual theme can be achieved only by means of artistic factors.

In the case of a residential house, the perfect execution of the purely practical living conditions certainly does not guarantee that it will possess artistic value, since a residence should not only serve practical needs. Rather its real theme entails being a worthy place for our intellectual and affective life: in a word, for our life as human beings. And this can be achieved only through the artistic beauty that elevates and nourishes the spirit. Architectural beauty also elevates the whole of our practical life and fills it with the poetry of life. But a residence must not only be architecturally successful, in general terms, and beautiful. It must also
possess a tone that accords with the lifestyle of the person in question, from a simple, beautiful building to a palace.

In those buildings that serve purely practical purposes, in which the practical activities have been robbed of their poetry—buildings that are mechanized and depersonalized—technical perfection and pure functionality have nothing to do with artistic beauty. Railway stations and factories do not offer any artistic stimulus in their real theme. At most they can be built in such a way that they do not have an artistically negative effect. It is a very stupid argument to say that railway stations were uglier in the past because they were built not like railway stations, but like castles. Their ugliness and tastelessness were not based on the discrepancy between the purely pragmatic purpose of a railway station and the technical atmosphere of what went on there, on the one hand, and the castle-like architecture, on the other. The castles that were built at that time display the same tastelessness, which is a consequence of purely artistic, architectural mistakes.

The discrepancy between a purely technical purpose and an architecture that is suitable to a castle is certainly a mistake, but it is not this mistake that makes the building tasteless. Rather it is impossible to erect a beautiful building that corresponds to the sober, neutralized atmosphere of a railway station. If one wishes to achieve congruence between the practical purpose and the architectural character, then the building can at best avoid being ugly. But it is not desirable that it should emanate a completely neutral atmosphere. Independently of its purpose, it can have something monumental and noble, thanks to architectural factors alone. In any case, such a modest architectural value raises it above something that just emanates the world of a railway station.

This is even truer of factories and department stores. What happens in a railway station still has a relatively large amount of the poetry of life. How many great moments of human life take place there: the delight at reunion with someone, the painful farewell, the joyful expectancy at the start of a beautiful journey, the joy at arriving in a beautiful place that one does not know or that one longs to see again! Tolstoy has a fascinating description in his novel *Anna Karenina* of the atmosphere of a railway station and of a train travelling from Moscow to Petersburg.

In the past locomotives had a certain charm. The very act of traveling through many different regions, the whistling of the train, and the echo from the mountains had a certain poetry of life. This is lacking in a factory, a filling station, or a department store, where the neutral, depersonalized rhythm of life is much stronger. It is foolish to make an ideal of constructing buildings that emanate this barrenness and that therefore are an expression that corresponds to the purpose of the buildings. It is much more important that these buildings should still emanate a certain architectural nobility and should not have a negative impact on the city in its architectural beauty. It is absurd to believe that it is untruthful when such a building, instead of emanating this barrenness, possesses beauty (no doubt, a very modest beauty) simply on the basis of its form and proportions, its materials and its color.

One regrets most profoundly that the beautiful palace of the Fabrica de Tabacos in Seville now serves a commercial purpose; but it does not cease to be beautiful, since as an expression it does not correspond to what is now its practical purpose. It would certainly be inappropriate to erect such a building explicitly for a factory. And yet this example shows how in-
We began by pointing out that architecture is clearly distinct from all the other arts in virtue of the fact that it belongs to the concrete world that surrounds us and to the full reality in which we live and move, whereas all the other arts are a world of their own and have their own kind of existence.

This very important element makes possible the close link between architecture and nature, a “marriage” analogous to the one formed by sound and word. At the same time, it has a dimension of delightful that the other arts lack. We see this clearly when we walk through a city like Florence or Siena, or stand in Saint Mark’s Square in Venice. The splendor, the nobility, the genuineness of the Palazzo Vecchio or of Orsanmichele in Florence shines forth from structures that are real—just as real as the hills of Fiesole and Monte Morello. They are parts of the world that really surrounds us and in which we live. This fact has an extraordinary ability to delight us. It signifies a new dimension of contact with this beauty. When we look at the Church of San Marco and the Palace of the Doges, we can scarcely grasp that what stands before us is reality. This irruption of beauty into the world in which we live is a tremendous gift, similar to the beauty of a great and significant landscape. Nature too has this dimension of delightfulness. Its bearers of beauty are real entities; trees, animals, brooks, and rocks belong to the full reality of the external world around us. The landscape, the composition of these entities, is likewise a part of this reality. We have already written about the role of the reality of the beautiful in nature and about the difference between a glorious chain of mountains and a conglomeration of clouds that looks like a mountain range. This applies to architecture as well.

One could object that while the reality of architecture is an important factor for the delight we receive from its beauty, this being delighted is something subjective in its importance for us. It is not a factor for its objective value. To this, we must reply that the new dimension of being delighted is not a purely subjective experience. Being delighted certainly presupposes a person; it unfolds in the spirit of a person. Nevertheless, it is not an arbitrary, subjective experience, but something that is objectively grounded. Secondly, the experience of being delighted also serves to shed light on the completely objective characteristic of architecture. The value quality of beauty is of course not dependent on it; a real building is in one sense not more beautiful than a sketch that is not realized. We see the sketch and apprehend the beauty of the building; we also regret that it was not erected as a building. Becoming real is the bearer of a high value, not only because of the artistic importance of this building for a square, a street, and the entire surrounding area, but also because of the full realization of this bearer of beauty. This full realization is an eminent value.

We mention the unique dimension of delightfulness in architecture, which it shares with nature, because it sheds a light on the high value that architecture possesses in the sphere of full reality. It is obvious that we do not refer here to the value that the fully realized work of art possesses over against the potential work of art, the opera that is staged over against the score, or the drama that is staged over against the drama that exists only in print. Rather we have in mind the fact that architecture
is a part of the reality in which our real life takes place and to which we ourselves belong. This fact objectively distinguishes architecture from the other arts and gives it a special character. It gives architecture unique possibilities of having an impact, and it is the bearer of a value of its own. This does not indeed intensify the beauty of the architecture, but it is a definite value.

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Endnotes
1. Dietrich von Hildebrand, Aesthetics, vol. 2, chap. 6, abridged and edited, trans. Brian McNeil and John F. Crosby (Hildebrand Project, forthcoming 2016). The translation and publication of the Aesthetics was made possible through the generosity of Howard and Roberta Ahmanson together with Dana Gioia and the National Endowment for the Arts, the Cushman Foundation, and the Budnik Family Foundation.

In our work with murals, statue restoration and the iconographic use of symbols and colors, we establish a unified vision of the spiritual. We carry these skills over to decorative painting, plaster restoration, marble cleaning and repair, wood refinishing and furniture restoration. Our work can restore the interior of an historic church, or enhance the interior of a newer building.
In the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, buildings carried great narrative themes, on the exterior by sculpture and on the interior by glass and wall painting. Allied to the art of the Gothic construction, the figural window dominated image-making for four centuries, emerging again in the nineteenth century with the revival of the Gothic building. We look back to these ensembles as moments when image, space, color, light, and materials fuse in a visual concord, seeing the power of glass to enable the designer to sculpt interior space through light. The three components of these buildings—architecture, stained glass, and sculpture—were forged into a single unified whole. Within each church, sculpted or painted images enunciated the creed of the makers while designating the hierarchy of space. In the ideal building campaign, windows were planned from the start and produced as each section of the building was nearing completion. Like the sculpture, they were part of the architectural ensemble, not added embellishment to merely decorate the building.¹

For both its artistic brilliance and its intense production in almost all European countries, stained glass of the Renaissance constitutes a major epoch in the history of architectural decoration. During this time, cities assumed a larger role in economic and civic life, secular patronage of government officials grew substantially, and art was universally seen as a requirement of status, either as a personal possession or as a public statement of largess. Vying to attract such discriminating patrons, artists developed new modes of expression, most important being systems of perspective that evoke actual three-dimensional space. From the end of the fifteenth century to about 1550, and in the Lowlands well into the seventeenth century, leaded and painted windows dominated construction. Monasteries engaged in extensive programs for their cloisters, cathedrals added chapels and even new glazing, and the laity financed new or expanded parish churches. All strove for windows that spoke an artistic language of heightened drama and three-dimensional realism.

The previous era—that of the Gothic—had similarly developed systems of narrative shared in large-scale windows and small-scale works such as manuscripts. Both manuscript and window employed a medallion format dominated by the contrast of blue and red. Realistic recession in space and background setting were minimal; schematic allusion to a door or a ground line served as spatial contextualization. Artists silhouetted figures against uniform grounds, and gesture, not facial expression, defined narrative action. As Peter Breiger, an English art historian, eloquently phrased it, “If the illuminators used the same patterns and model books, it was not simply because they followed the example of the window designers, but because the geometric order establishing sequences and relations was the natural and logical as well as the aesthetically appropriate one to be used by artists, who were taught to visualize human and divine relations in terms of eternal validity, satisfying reason and faith and independent of time.”²

As Gothic architecture became more attenuated and open, the medallion window with its interplay of episodes was replaced by a sequential format reading like a book. Playing to a public with access to private imagery in illuminated prayer books, large volumetric figures in three-dimensional settings appeared. Economically and politically, the rise of a merchant class transformed artistic patronage. The age of great cathedrals was passed, and building concentrated on parish churches, many of them achieving impressive size. No longer were church buildings and their decoration dominated by ecclesiastical taste. Influential families added private chapels to already-established buildings to commemorate their own members. The church was the most important communal building of the village, the site of legal, social, and artistic—as well as religious—activities; these shared practices produced common architectural features. Even within cities boasting a cathedral and several churches built by the religious orders, parish churches were distributed through the area to serve the laity. Imagery was removed from symbolic representation and abstracted forms of
the earlier years. What was important for the laity was a direct, emotional link to the present. No matter how complex a program might be in its full elaboration, the artists consistently touched the hearts and minds of the unsophisticated viewer with images that elicited empathy. The death of the Virgin (Fig. 1), for example, from the Cathedral of Châlons-en-Champagne (bay 38), is part of a window of the life of the Virgin installed in 1509. Tender details appear, such as the distress of the Apostles; Saint Peter wearing a priestly stole gives her Extreme Unction, another blesses with holy water, while another, aided by eyeglasses, reads comforting scripture. This was the image that the faithful all hoped for themselves when their lives came to a close.

The city of Troyes, the capital of the Province of Champagne, exemplifies this era. Its fairs and extensive trade with lands to the east (Germany) and north (Lowlands) made Troyes synonymous with mercantile prosperity. Spared the mortar shelling of the First World War and the bombing raids of the second, Troyes and its neighboring towns emerged with an extraordinary collection of intact buildings retaining their original glazing schema. Notable earlier buildings include the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul, whose construction extended over three centuries. Following a devastating fire in 1181 that destroyed the Romanesque building, the choir dates from 1200 to 1250 and the transept between 1215 and 1310; the nave, only completed in 1505, shows a remarkably coherent program of Renaissance windows in upper openings given by prominent citizens.

Perhaps even more significant is the collegiate church of Saint-Urbain, which marked a watershed in France’s transition from the High Gothic to the Rayonnant style. Jacques Pantaleon of Troyes became pope in 1262, taking the name of Urban IV. One of his first acts was to endow a church on the site of his birthplace (his father’s cobbler’s shop). The plan rejected the High Gothic three-part elevation of arcade, triforium, and clerestory to focus on linking exterior and interior decorative and structural elements through lacy elaborations in glass and stone. An unprecedented amount of light illuminates the interior, facilitated by windows where uncolored, patterned glass frames bands of colorful narrative images. Extensive restorations were made in the mid-nineteenth century, but they respected the integrity of the building and original format of the windows. The glass painters Louis-Germain Vincent-Larcher and especially Edouard Didron based many of the new creations on extant glazing models and medieval manuscript illustrations.

The parish church of the Madeleine, begun about 1490, may stand as a model for the Troyes Renaissance aesthetic. Its magnificent choir screen (Fig. 2), constructed 1508–1517 and set in the interstices between the space for the laity and the clergy, provided a stage for readings, singing, and devotional focus. The architect-sculptor Jean Gailde left orders that he be buried under the screen with the inscription Ci gist Jehan Gualde, maître maçon, qui attend ici la resurrection sans crainte d’être écrasé (Here lies Jean Gailde, master mason, who awaits the resurrection without fear of being crushed). Burial within churches was a privilege reserved for the few; Gailde’s achievements had evidently earned sufficient respect that he not only had his place, but could leave a witty comment of the solidity of his
screen—it would not fall, or “crush” him, before the Last Judgment when Christ would call him from the dead. A tour-de-force of engineering as well as beauty, its three arcades abut massive pillars to the north and south. In the center, the arcades terminate on two unsupported corbels. The suspension of these four points beneath the tribune is mirrored by the three pendant vaults of the interior. A precedent, arguably unknown to the architect, is the 1478–1488 fan vaulting of the Divinity School Library at Oxford. In Troyes the pendant vaults are steeply angled with trefoil molding defining the four major ribs of the vault. On the tribune Christ is suspended on the Cross, flanked by life-size statues of His mother and John the Evangelist. Reliefs above the three arches show Christ in the central quatrefoil, gesturing to two women on His right (the viewer’s left). Two men are placed in the quatrefoil on His left. The iconography may relate to Christ speaking to Mary and Martha, who receive Him in their home (Luke 10:38-42), a theme that would resonate with the dedication of the church to Mary Magdalene.

Many of these choir screens (or jubés in French) were destroyed in later times, so the Madeleine’s is a most welcome vestige. Through the opening in the screen, a visitor can perceive the deeply colored windows of the choir’s apse. Gold as well as red and blue appears to dominate the palette, resulting in compositions of great warmth. The windows exhibit a very modern system of continuous narration (the origin of the bandes dessinées that triumphed centuries later with the stories of Tintin and Asterix): Saint-Eloi, a gift of the goldsmiths of the city (bay 0), Genesis, Original Sin and Redemption (bay 1), Tree of Jesse (bay 2), Life of Saint Louis (bay 3), and Passion of Christ (bay 4). These compositions, especially those of the Creation, Tree of Jesse, and Passion, became models for a large number of other sites. The high demand for windows developed creative responses by the studios, among them not exactly a cartoon, but a model of the same scale. With such a model, the glazing studios could vary the placement of leadline and expand or contract compositions depending on the size of the window opening. Most celebrated may be the images of Genesis (Fig. 3). Starting from the bottom, God creates the sky, the waters, and the earth, separates the dry land from the waters, and then creates Adam from the earth and Eve from Adam’s rib. The flamboyant tracery in the upper quarter of the window (not shown) displays the birth and death of Christ, proclaiming His redemption of the world that God the Father created. The models enjoyed a long life, including Saint-Pierre-ès-Liens (bay 9) at Les Riceys, of 1525. In Les Riceys, images of God creating the earth, the stars, and
the animals, (including horse, lion, elephant, cow, camel, pig, lizard, and snail) repeat the Madeleine’s format. The Creation (bay 40) in the cathedral of Châlons-en-Champagne, installed between 1506 and 1516, shows more variation, including the intimate detail of a solicitous God the Father. After the representation of Adam and Eve eating from the Tree of Knowledge, God then admonishes the guilty first couple; in a following scene He gives them a visibly furry cloak to keep them warm before the final image of a fiery angel expelling them from Paradise.

Troyes built numerous parish churches dating from the early sixteenth century, including Saint-Jean-aux-Marché, Saint-Nizier, and Saint-Pantaléon. Saint-Pantaléon (Figs. 4 and 5) exemplifies the unified interior with its intersection of sculpture, architecture, and stained glass; most of it is painted in a neutral scale to let in greater amounts of light. Grisaille, neutral-colored paint on uncolored glass, accented by silver stain, was the preferred medium for the church’s windows. Glass painters developed highly sophisticated painting techniques to render the three-dimensionality that had become popular in panel painting. Techniques varied, but often stipple washes were applied in layers to give smooth transitions from light to dark. Dark line was used sparingly, often simply as an accent to strengthen the outline of the nose or ear. Sanguine, a russet color, was introduced to produce a reddish tone to lips or a cheek. Often, near life-size figures in volumetric rendering appeared as if a sculptural presence in the lancets of a window. Unlike figures in the small-scale medallions of the thirteenth century, these Renaissance actors utilize facial expression and three-dimensional presence. Saint-Pantaléon’s windows of the south aisle, Infancy and Early Miracles of Christ (bay 4), Passion (bay 6), and the Story of Daniel (bay 8) were executed between 1531 and 1546; all show dramatic narrative executed in warm browns highlighted by variegated yellow tints of the silver stain.

Emotional expressiveness was one of the criteria driving the increased importance of windows in grisaille, where the viewer’s attention would be drawn to line and not color. A striking window (bay 14) dated about 1530 appears midway in the south nave in Saint-Nizier, set above a door. A single subject is presented: the meeting of Joachim and Anna (parents of the Virgin Mary) at Jerusalem’s Golden Gate. The inscription records the image as a donation by husband and wife, Etienne and Jeanne Richier. The composition sets Joachim on the left and Anna on the right, divided by the stone mullion of the window. Behind Joachim we see the angelic annunciation to Joachim as he herds sheep.

The emotional impact is linked to the traditional sculpture in the region (Fig. 5). Renaissance Champagne is prized as a time of great ingenuity in the medium. Saint-Pantaléon has become
a repository for more than sixty sixteenth-century statues gathered from now-closed religious edifices. Calvary groupings, Depositions, and Entombments of Christ were among the most popular subjects. The same elaborate multifigure groupings were standard representations in window narratives such as the Burial and Resurrection (bay 102) of 1522 in Saint-Nizier. See the detail of the Entombment (Fig. 6) with Nicodemus, the Virgin, Saint John, and Mary Magdalen with an unguent jar. The composition parallels that of the well-known eight-figure sculptural group of the Entombment (Fig. 7) in the church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste in Chaource, dated about 1515 and associated with a prolific artist responsible for many other works in the area, including a statue of Martha for Troyes’ church of the Madeleine.10 From a more dramatic and presumably later hand is a fragment in Saint-Pantaleon of a grouping possibly from an Entombment or Deposition, showing John the Evangelist, the Virgin Mary, and most probably Mary Magdalen (Fig. 5). The feeling of shared suffering is palpable. The sculpture and the stained-glass image of Joachim display the same oval facial type, with furrowed brows surrounded by undulating locks of hair. Such emotional directness has made Troyes Renaissance sculpture a prize acquisition for museums. Troyes is represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art via a sculpture of Mary Magdalen (accession number 16.32.160) and an almost life-size statue of Saint Savina of Troyes (or Saint Syra) (accession number 17.190.750).

Even a casual visit to the region is aesthetically, historically, and spiritually rewarding. In this world of internet and digital images, the websites managed by the French Patrimoine provide a visual and textual introduction to this and other regions (http://www.patrimoine-histoire.fr/Patrimoine.html).

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Endnotes
7. Jacques Baudoin, La sculpture flamboyante en Champagne, Lorraine (Nonette, éditions CRÉER, 1990), 98–101. One should also note the tomb monument of Gabriel Faveureau in Troyes’ Saint-Nizier. The inscription proclaims Faveureau an honorable and scientific person, master mason of the church of Saint-Pierre (the cathedral), who died November 20, 1576. A nude figure is shown with a hammer in his hand.

Fig. 6. Saint-Nizier, Troyes, Entombment.
Fig. 7. Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Chaource, Entombment Detail.
FORMING THE IMAGINATION:
ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE AND CHURCH DOWNSIZING IN CHICAGO

Rev. Peter Funk, O.S.B.

Holy Cross Monastery Church, Chicago.

Detail of the façade, Holy Cross Monastery Church.

In a 2010 TED lecture, musician David Byrne made the interesting and counterintuitive observation that musicians create music for particular spaces. Using examples of outdoor West African drum circles, New York clubs, and Gothic cathedrals, he noted that the types of music typically performed in these spaces happens to sound good in just those spaces. We might rephrase this and say that spaces come first, and musicians create music with these spaces in mind.

Therefore architecture (or lack thereof) determines and sets boundaries to the creativity of artists. At the very least, we can say that the creative imagination of the musician and that of the architect (whether it be the Divine Architect of the West African savannah or that of homo faber) influence each other.

I would go further and venture a tentative thesis for this article. Architecture forms the imagination of those who inhabit the buildings produced. This being the case, architects have a serious responsibility. “What kind of persons do I hope to form?” must be answered whenever the shaper of space launches out on a new project. Since buildings are among the most public and enduring of art forms, this is a serious question indeed, for the architect may well be contributing to the aspirations and imaginations of many generations. It follows that sacred architecture would make the most important demands on the architect, since he will be forming the minds of worshippers with an eye toward revealed Truth. He or she must therefore be knowledgeable not only about acoustics and the load-bearing capacities of various materials. The architect must...
know something of human psychology and the ways in which buildings shape our understanding and imagination.

There is a gap between my opening example and my thesis, and at first consideration this gap might appear formidable. Music, after all, is very much a physical production, involving sound waves produced by human voices, plucked and bowed strings, vibrating brass and reed. By contrast, our modern understanding of “religion” usually relegates it to the realm of the nonmaterial or spiritual. It is one thing for stone and plaster to affect practical considerations regarding sound, and something else for it to effect an entire worldview. In the best of situations, of course, there is overlap between the arts and life. Few of us can think of music that does not have a kind of spirit to it, and the worship of God in the Catholic liturgy really does require us to have at hand the material elements of water, bread, and wine. Nevertheless, many assume that the liturgy is in essence separable from buildings, and perhaps even from vestments, thuribles, and veils.

An example: I recently attended a meeting of religious formators and superiors in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Like many American dioceses, we are facing shortfalls of personnel and of funds. Buildings are expensive to maintain. So they are typically among the first objects at risk when budget considerations arise. When parishioners resist the shuttering of their churches, it eases our consciences somewhat to attribute their attachment to a laudable but misplaced nostalgia. One participant illustrated this by asking if any of us religious priests and sisters had joined our communities because of a building. The nods and chuckles of most of those attending suggested that this comment found a receptive audience. The message? People and charism ought to come first. These will outlive the buildings that they happen to inhabit. So we have to be ready to abandon our buildings if need be.

In fact, of course, communities and buildings often enough seem to succeed or fail together. Many of the church renovations that followed the Second Vatican Council blurred the original imaginative visions of our buildings. Might not those whose aspirations and imaginations had been formed by the intelligible order of traditional churches have experienced those renovations as alienating and confusing? And might this confusion have contributed to the disaffection of many churchgoers? Confusion might be a necessary stage on the way to clarity, but if it becomes a permanent state, it no longer leads to truth. Sacred architecture’s role in guiding us into the truth is thwarted. The waning intelligibility of the building contributes to the malaise of a community at risk. Perhaps the changes came about because a community’s aspirations, altered by alien influences, were found to be at odds with the church’s architecture, which thus required alteration. In such a case, a failure would be systemic.

Let me offer a counterexample from personal experience. Cardinal Bernardin invited our Benedictine monastic community to Chicago in 1990, the last time the archdiocese closed a large numbers of churches. When our foundresses discovered the former Immaculate Conception parish church, they sensed immediately that this would be their home. How did they know this? Precisely because the building conformed most closely to their understanding of the community they hoped to become. They were looking for a church that could support the monastic liturgy, a church with a beautiful acoustic, with light, soaring height, and joyous color. The building itself stands as a shorthand statement about the community’s aspirations.

By choosing this building, the monks were making a statement precisely about the charism and the people involved. Thus the charism and people did come first, in a sense, but the choice of a building was crucial in stabilizing the community. When I entered, was it because of the building? In some ways, the building said more about the community than did the words of individual brothers, and did so more convincingly.

The experience of repairing the damage the church suffered during the year it was closed has been something of an archaeological excavation. The deeper the strata, the profounder has been our experience of the architecture and of the liturgy that it supports and guides. As the liturgy was shaped by our restoration of the church, this in turn has shaped the way in which we relate to each other. This is so because we relate to one other, not only as brothers, but as sons of one Father and disciples of one Lord, Whose real presence is communicated sacramentally (and therefore in common) in the liturgy.

Orientation

There is some plausibility in placing a primacy on persons rather than on objects. In fact, this is an oversimplification. “True friends,” wrote C.S. Lewis, “don’t spend time gazing into each other’s eyes . . . They face in the same direction—toward common projects,
goals—above all, towards a common Lord.” In a slightly different vein, but to the same effect, are observations by the sociologist Mary Douglas. In her book *Natural Symbols*, she demonstrates that relaxed intimacy in community is often a product of shared, dense symbols rather than direct communication. Shared symbols allow the imagination to be at ease in the universe and with others. A universe of shared, dense symbols is a majestic universe that ennobles its inhabitants and has a place for everyone.

The breakdown of shared symbols brings certain opportunities, of course. For the talented (and for the ruthless), breaking free of the constraints of shared meaning offers the possibility for realizing personal goals. But the universe has, in this case, become at best a neutral, meaningless place. In a nonsymbolic universe, meaning tends to be supplied by adroit rhetoricians and clever maneuverers. What happens when a church building is denuded of its dense, symbolic language and reduced to a neutral “worship site?”

I suggested early on that genuine sacred architecture orients us toward Truth. Buildings operate as a shorthand statement about a community’s goals for itself and thus its self-understanding. They do so by pointing away from the community, by suggesting something “greater than” the community itself (what philosopher Paul Ricoeur called the “surplus of meaning”), and by guiding the aspirations of the community toward that something else. This “turning toward” a common Lord suggests one of the major areas of alienation between traditional architecture and the liturgical changes that followed the Council.

Until the middle of the twentieth century, liturgical orientation was toward the east. In fact, the very word “orientation” simply means “east-ing,” from the Latin *oriens* or “rising” of the sun. As the Son of Man was expected to return in the east, this common orientation, priest and congregation, made of the sun and the compass point a sign. In this and other ways, the whole cosmos became a dense network of references to God and His work of salvation. This orientation decided the direction the church faced, as well as the placement of many of its important furnishings.

When altars were rotated to allow priests to celebrate “facing the people,” the architecture of many churches was profoundly “dis-oriented.” Symbolic furnishings like the tabernacle and pulpit that had referred to each other and to the overall orientation became displaced and their meaningful connections obscured. In Mary Douglas’s dense symbolic universe, you can touch the web of symbols anywhere and set the whole vibrating. When these connections are cut, meaning is impoverished and the full impact of symbols in reference to the majestic whole is missing.

It is noteworthy that the new stance, that of the priest and community facing each other, is analogous to the primacy of community over building. How?

The Utile and the Gratuitous

Few would maintain that the Church can and should do without buildings entirely. But the idea that religious aspirants do not join communities because of their buildings reduces architecture to a decidedly secondary status within our understanding of the Church. When architects themselves are formed by this notion, architecture appears to be in competition with the community. Buildings must decrease that the congregation can increase. Churches are reduced to the functional and cease to be intentionally formative signs.

When I suggested above that a church could be a shorthand manner of representing a community, I placed the building in the realm of signs. By contrast, the functional church aims to mute any suggestion of signification. It provides the backdrop for the community rather than serving as a signifier of the community’s common striving. Is this desirable? Is it even possible?

The great twentieth-century Catholic poet David Jones grappled with this question. Of particular interest is his 1955 essay *Art and Sacrament.* In it, he introduces a distinction between the “utile” and the “gratuitous.” His claim is that humankind is, by nature, a sign-
Making species. But to make something into a sign is to make it say more, to give it surplus meaning. When I bake a birthday cake, I employ a certain knowledge of chemistry, to be sure. But I do so not as an exercise in chemistry. Nor am I aiming to meet the nutritional needs of those who will consume it. Rather, the cake signifies and, with gratitude, recalls someone’s birth. By extension it signifies the very person whom we are celebrating. That “something more” in a birthday cake, the additional element that makes it a sign, is “gratuitous.” It is not primarily “utile,” as a stolen cake might be of utility to a starving person. The cake is a dense (if humble) and common symbol of the gift of a unique person.

To offer signs is to make a bid to our fellow human beings, to point something out to them and help them to see something about the world. We offer others the opportunity to behold and contemplate something outside of us, and to behold this alongside us. If C.S. Lewis is right, this is a bid for friendship. It is only through signs that we truly can build up community.

This signifying (signum-faciens or “sign-making”) partakes of an order of freedom or “gratuitousness.” (We should note that “gratuitous” is etymologically related to “grace.”) The making of signs requires a gift of self, a tendering of meaning through the exercise of the various arts. In turn, the various arts will be most excellently exercised when artisans understand the sign-value of their work. The problem with the contemporary technocratic mindset and its obsession with efficiency is the reduction of our work to the
merely “utile” or functional.

In this milieu, Catholic sacraments and sacramentals begin to appear as eccentric add-ons to an otherwise “secular” and materialistic world. If instead we human beings are sign-makers by nature, then all human artifacts, be they wood carvings, birthday cakes, or clarinets, point to a sacramental order of reality. It is the peculiar illness of our age to deny this and to reduce things to bare functionality. By doing so, the Catholic sacramental system seems suddenly out-of-step with purported “realism.”

Whereas traditional church architecture extended the sacramental worldview outward, into the very cosmos, more recent trends have aimed at emphasizing the functional in order to focus attention on the community. Yet by turning the focus back on ourselves, we widen the rift between the material world and the spiritual world, between heaven and earth. In our persons, this rift unmoors our spirituality, which becomes personalized and isolating. This in turn allows the secular to seep its way into every unguarded nook of our consciousness. The former sentinels, our once common symbols, have abandoned their posts.

The good news is that Christ, who reconciles heaven and earth, points the way out of this alienation through the gratuitousness of the Incarnation. In Jones’s words, “He placed Himself in the order of signs.” He did this to become the Way to the Father: “He who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:10).”

Defeatism? Or Revivification?

An apparently clear-eyed (efficient) view of the expense of keeping up church buildings tends to see them as liabilities. It may well be the case that we cannot save all of our churches. But before drastic decisions are made, might it be possible to see in many of these beautiful buildings not a liability, but a vital partner in re-evangelization?

If our architecture has ceased to represent for us our common aspirations and hope, might it be possible to relearn the symbolic language that architecture used for so many centuries to shape the Church into a unity of mind, heart, and hope? The language is already inscribed in the buildings, though some of it may be obscured. Such a project would require more than the reading of textbooks on architectural symbols. Two related changes of heart seem to be required.

The first is a willingness to let previous generations point to our common goal, and to respond to their tender of friendship by turning, alongside them, in the same direction. This is most easily seen in a return to ad orientem celebrations (the rubrics of the Ordinary Form of the Roman Rite actually presuppose that the priest and congregation face the same direction). We must be willing to be taught, to be shown by our forebears what it was that they saw. We must therefore be willing to imagine that what they saw was real and not a mere historical accident that has vanished in our postmodern world.

But working with real persons as genuine members of community is often a messy, inefficient thing. This is all the more so when working with impoverished persons, whose lives are often caught in a complex web of constraining circumstances. But the burden is light when common symbols, taught to us by the divine Logos (John 1:1–4), invite us to be at ease with one another.

From the vantage point of a utile, functional universe, the poor are a kind of problem. It is tempting to divert resources from church buildings to programs intended to alleviate or even eliminate the problem that the poor embody (and prudence may require such a diversion of resources at times). But if this leaves us with an impoverished sense of our common goal—a goal shared with the poor, and not one that “they” are preventing us from achieving—then we have little that is truly humanizing and ennobling to offer. In a gratuitous, grace-filled universe, each person is a gift rather than a problem. In a church building that points us toward our common destiny, the Kingdom of God, we all stand side-by-side—rich and poor, male and female, lay and cleric—and turn together to Him Who is our Head and Way. No longer regarding one another according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16), but in the dense, shared symbols of our Church, we behold Him, Who was not ashamed to call us all brethren, and Who presents us to the Father. “Here am I, and the children God has given me (Heb 2:13)”.

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Endnotes
2. A generation after Jones, the great Russian Orthodox theologian Alexander Schmemann similarly diagnosed the ills of the West as a denial of “continuity of sacrament with symbol.” See For the Life of the World (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1973) 140.
3. Pope Benedict XVI has a very similar notion to Jones’s, using instead the language of “image.” See The Spirit of the Liturgy (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000), 54-55.
I imagine what the Vatican and Rome would have looked like today if the popes, architects, and other masterminds of this architectural complex would have designed and built something to only commemorate the tragedy of Saint Peter’s death?

Hypothetically speaking, the obelisk may have remained in its original position on Nero’s Circus, perhaps covered in shards of glass to symbolize “brokenness” and a “call to reflection.” The exact spot where Saint Peter was martyred might become a fountain with the shape of an inverted cross (to be jarring rather than awesome) with the names of all the other Christian martyrs engraved in a metallic material surrounding the water source. From these names, red water would cascade down into a hole in the ground, as if the water carried their souls into an abyss of nothingness. Hypothetically, of course, the Vatican complex would have looked like a cemetery, but also a park so that future Christians could have utilized the uncontained “space” for recreation, lamentation, and “meditation.” The overall complex would perhaps have been a reconstruction of Nero’s Circus surrounded by reflective glass, as if the resulting glare was a part of the tragic experience of walking through the site at the time of the killings.

Over the centuries, architects who would have fallen out of fashion would have been fired by trend-seeking popes and the populace seeking newness for its own sake. The site would have become a new way to showcase the vogue architect’s latest and greatest reinvention of a glass box. The basilica that has inspired the architecture of countless churches might have become the headquarters of a religion very different than the one we know today.

Fortunately, the Vatican looks nothing like what was just described, and neither do many of the churches dedicated to martyrs (with the exception of some built in the twentieth century). Saint Peter’s today stands as a witness to how the Catholic Church has, throughout the ages, built architectural and urban complexes which, instead of inducing one to wallow in tragedy and self-pity, uplift the human person and direct our gaze towards eternal life, the City of God.

At its very simplest, “a martyr, or witness of Christ, is a person who . . . is so firmly convinced of the truths of the Christian religion, that he gladly suffers death rather than deny it.”1 But he who “gladly” accepts additionally does so with the conviction and security that there is something greater than this earthly life: life everlasting. Saint Peter’s martyrdom points us to heaven, and so everything built in this saint’s honor must also do the same; otherwise, we are stuck where Peter’s earthly life ended: bloody tragedy.

Saint Augustine of Hippo, one of the great fathers of the early Church, sets a scene for architects to wrap their heads around what heaven would look like by translating “hope in life everlasting” into the earthly built environment. When the Visigoths sacked Rome in AD 410, many pagan Romans interpreted it as a punishment from the old gods for adopting Christianity as the official religion. For Roman citizens, Christian and pagan alike, the fall of the most important city of the known world was a devastating experience—a sour tragedy.

But there had to be hope. Augustine took this opportunity to urge the citizens of Rome to not put their faith in a worldly city, but rather in the City of God. Augustine differentiates the City of Man, based in sin and wrongdoing, from the City of God, founded by God and based in grace. More importantly, he emphasizes Christianity’s eschatological hope and formalizes (though the Book of Revelation had already set this foundation) the idea of the Church as a city en route to becoming the City of God: the New Jerusalem. Its citizens are all those saved by God and living in their resurrected bodies with God for all eternity in a state of eternal happiness and ecstasy.2 Hope in becoming a citizen of this City would trump the negative effects of earthly tragedies, including a brutal martyrdom, for hope views death as a stepping stone to eternal rest.

In the centuries to come, architects would strive to design and build this City of God on earth. While the most obvious example of this New Jerusalem made manifest on earth is the medieval monastery, the following paragraphs will focus on three elements (out of hundreds or thousands) of the architecture of the Vatican that provide a physical sign of this eschatological hope: the approach from the city, the piazza, and the obelisk.

For the pilgrim making a spiritual journey to Rome, the sequence of experiences to approach Saint Peter’s Basilica from the city was and still is crucial to the pilgrimage. Originally, pilgrims would have arrived from Ponte Sant’Angelo through the Borgo Nuovo with a vista that would have revealed a glimpse of the great façade of the basilica, to Piazza San Pietro with Bernini’s elliptical colonnaded space, which would have majestically embraced the pilgrims. This sequence relates to John’s description of the New Jerusalem in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 21:9–11):

One of the seven angels . . . came and said to me, “Come here. I will show you the bride, the wife of the lamb.” He took me in spirit to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of...
heaven from God. It gleamed with the splendor of God. Its radiance was like that of a precious stone, like jasper, clear as crystal.³

In a way, while pilgrims walked through the Borgo, the basilica said, “Come here, I will show you the tomb of Saint Peter,” as it slowly revealed itself in a very theatrical way by creating anticipation for that moment of revelation. Before the bulldozing of the Spina to make way for the present Via della Conciliazione, the end destination (the tomb of Saint Peter) was slowly and carefully revealed from the urban fabric through the piazza, narthex, nave, baldacchino, and finally, the tomb.⁴ Each stage revealed more and more about the Church and Saint Peter. This is an architectural and urban manifestation of eschatological hope: a small physical expression of the history of the City of God and how He has slowly revealed Himself to His people.⁵

The piazza, secondly, serves as a stage for the Church. The tomb of Saint Peter grew over time to become a complex that could accommodate pilgrims venerating the saint’s resting place and at the same time provide space for celebrating Mass.⁶ Today the piazza alone hosts papal audiences, celebrations of Mass, canonizations of new saints, papal funeral processions, and newly elected popes’ greetings, among other events. In short, it becomes an urban amphitheater for the pilgrim City of God. The statues of saints crowning the elliptical portico remind us that they are fellow citizens of the same city and therefore participate in the same celebrations that take place in the piazza. These saints too are part of the “open arms of the Church” that the portico is famous for. One important note to add is the travertine is load bearing, which symbolizes long-term presence and structural soundness, and thus provides a sensation of “rock” in the same way that Petrus is “Rock.” The Church is a pilgrim vessel that will lead us to salvation, and so the physical expressions of this vessel (the piazza) must reflect that it is capable of withstanding earthly time and remain strong, true, and present until Christ returns.

Finally, the obelisk displays another sign of the Church’s enduring presence. This obelisk, which witnessed the martyrdom of early Christians on its previous site, was moved in the sixteenth century under the papacy of Sixtus V. Sixtus, through the engineering marvel used to move the obelisk under the direction of Domenico Fontana, was not only providing a visual landmark for pilgrim wayfinding but also making a statement about the Church Triumphant. The tyranny that had once persecuted Christians had been defeated and the Church stood—and stands today—strong. This obelisk—which had seen the brutal killing of Saint Peter and which before could have signified a deep wound carved into the “rock”—this same obelisk, through a complex, theatrical, and carefully designed piazza, would now become like the wound glowing in glory in imitation of Christ’s resurrected body. Bernini’s piazza does not become the trophy of the Vatican but rather builds on his predecessors to bind their own designs into a cohesive architectural and urban

The Borgo as shown in Nolli’s 1748 Plan of Rome.

The Egyptian obelisk that stands in the center of Saint Peter’s Square was brought to Rome in AD 37 and moved into its current location under the direction of Domenico Fontana in 1586.
complex. All of a sudden, the eschatological hope embedded in the approach, piazza, obelisk, façade, dome, etc. is revealed and comes to fruition. The Catechism says about the resurrection: "Christ ‘will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body.’" And so we, as people made in the image and likeness of God, have the potential, in imitation of Christ, to change a lowly object, tragic circumstance, and “wounded” urban space to make it reflect something glorious.

This mystique flows through the veins of the Vatican and reveals the whole architectural and urban complex as an architectural expression of the Mystical Body of Christ: the Church. The veins spread through the streets of Rome, through the old pilgrim routes, piazzas, obelisks, stones, and ornaments. Every architect and every patron, in his endeavor to make his church grander than his neighbor’s, was also reminding pilgrims of what the City of God can feel like, to the point where the architecture and urbanism becomes sacramental. It is no coincidence that some people refer to Rome as the “Disneyland” for Catholics, because there is so much to remind us of the City of God that in the end, even if we visit as tourists, we are reminded that we too are pilgrims and the Church is, just like Augustine said, our pilgrim vessel that will lead us to the New Jerusalem.

So what would Saint Peter’s have looked like today if the Church had lost its eschatological hope? Rather than permanence and solidity, it would have expressed limited temporality (depending on the warranty of materials, like sealant for all the glass panels). The magnificent architectural and urban complex we know today would stand only as a memorial to remind us of the atrocities committed by Romans to early Christians. The architecture would honor their tragic deaths and not the Reason for which they gave their life. Pilgrims would be visiting the tomb of “Peter” and would wallow in tragic self-pity, no City of God to anticipate. Instead of an urban amphitheater, Piazza San Pietro would have become an urban cemetery. And instead of “Catholic Disneyland,” it would have been referred to as the Catholic version of the World Trade Center.

Endnotes
2. I highly recommend reading Chapter XXX of Book XXII of Saint Augustine’s City of God for a detailed description of the state of man in the City of God: the eschatological man.
4. Via della Conciliazione reveals nearly everything all at once, removing the anticipation from the urban sequencing. However, approaching the piazza through Borgo Santo Spirito provides a historically similar experience to the Spina by revealing Michelangelo’s dome and a glimpse of Bernini’s colonnade.
5. See Books XI–XII of Saint Augustine’s City of God for the history of the City of God.
8. Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 999.
“Touchstone exemplifies, in my mind, true ecumenical conversation and cooperation. I look forward to receiving each issue and usually find myself reading each issue in its entirety. Certainly, Touchstone has helped me to think more deeply about many aspects of the Christian faith and of its practice in a pervasively secularized society.”—Raymond Leo Cardinal Burke

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The concluding section of Josef Pieper’s essay “What Makes a Building a Church?” begins with his admission that his reflections “are, on a practical level, quite useless.”¹ In fact, he gives only two concrete rules for the design of a church building: “first, a simple sheltering element, a separating wall, a boundary line,” and “second, the exclusive reservation of the structure, at least in principle, for purposes of worship.”² The paucity of practical reflections about sacred architecture would make an article on Josef Pieper’s ideas about it impossible, were it not for his insistence on the deep unity between speculative and practical thought. This unity allows Pieper to develop theoretical principles for sacred architecture, while at the same time respecting and preserving room for human creativity, which expresses these principles in the concrete, visible world.

The human being, because of the kind of creature that he is, brings together the speculative and the practical. A human being, as both a material and spiritual being, is uniquely positioned in the created order to glorify God. Of spiritual beings, only a human being can sense material things, and of material beings, only a human being can know and love the good apart from what is material. As a result, only a human being can praise God through the goodness of the material world or to the goodness of God, and only a human being can express rejoicing in God’s goodness through what is material. This proper rejoicing in the material is the sight of its beauty: seeing it as good simply because it is, which it is because its source is the source of all goodness. It is this theme, and Josef Pieper’s nuanced understanding of “good” and man’s relation to it, that shapes his ideas about beauty and the sacred, and so about church buildings.

Josef Pieper spent almost the entirety of his career in Münster, Germany, where he dedicated himself to teaching and to writing philosophy. While his thought is steeped in Thomism and Platonism, in the true spirit of philosophy as the pursuit of wisdom, he also engages any influence that leads to knowledge of the truth. He is perhaps best known in the United States for his book Leisure: The Basis of Culture, in part because this was the first of his works translated into English. This work, as well as his others, is deeply speculative and yet is rooted in and refers back to concrete experience. Above all, his experiences of the wars of the twentieth century and the destruction and ensuing rebuilding of Europe, coupled with the rise of the utilitarianism of fascism and communism and the despair of atheistic existentialism, lead him to emphasize, over and over again, in various ways and in the context of various topics, the fundamental—and gloriously useless—goodness of being, of which the church building is a sign.

The Good of Uselessness

The two specific prescriptions that Pieper gives for a church building follow from his reply to the question “What makes a building a church?” His answer is quite simple and straightforward: “A building becomes a church through consecration.”³ It is the performance of the rite of consecration of a church, not its design, that transforms a building, no matter what it looks like, into a church. Consecration designates that the space within the church walls is space for something that is out of the ordinary: “A church, through a specific act of consecration, has been set apart from the realm of ordinary everyday life marked by considerations of work, wages, job security, usefulness, consumption, and generally by the active pursuit of practical purposes.”⁴

The “everyday,” from which the church building is set aside, is a way of living and seeing the world that is concerned with doing and making things—with putting food on the table and a roof over one’s head, with building roads and bridges and economies, with getting things done. It is the realm of the practical. In this realm, what is good is what is useful. A thing is useful if it leads to some good, but that thing is good if it is useful for some other
good, which is useful for a still further good. In the everyday, we are constantly striving to advance from one good to the next. It is not a realm of rest, but rather one of work and effort, with one good after another always just out of reach, such that our concern and attention is focused only on finding the next useful thing to reach the next useful good.

That which is set apart from the everyday, on the other hand, has an “explicit ‘uselessness.’”5 This includes church buildings. While, in a world suffused with utilitarianism and pragmatism, in which “good” is taken to be identical to “useful,” the word “useless” sounds degrading, that it does so is an indication that we have forgotten the good that is beyond the useful and the practical realm. The role of the church building is to offer sensible reminders of this good that is useless.

The “explicit uselessness” that Pieper ascribes to church buildings is not the uselessness of not being good. Rather, it is the uselessness that derives from what is totally and fully good. This good is “useless” because it is not pursued for the sake of a further good. Its good does not depend on its usefulness. It simply is good.

Being is such a good. Being is not good because it is useful. Instead, it is good because it is created by God. That God creates and sustains being indicates that being is loved by God. Love, Pieper writes, is “saying, ‘It’s good that you exist; it’s good that you are in the world.’”6 God, in bringing Creation into existence and in sustaining its existence, is proclaiming that He desires that existence and He desires only what is good. As Genesis states, God “looked at everything He had made, and found it very good.”7

In giving human beings rationality, God shares with them the ability to do this divine activity of seeing that it is good to be. It is an activity that is at once both useless and fully meaningful. Whereas activities in the workaday world are always for the sake of something else and so derive their meaning from something else, seeing that it is good to be is for its own sake. It is meaningful in itself. In dwelling on the goodness of being, the human being comes to rest. He does not need to continue to work towards some other goal. Rather, he can simply remain in the activity of gazing on what is good. This rest is the activity of contemplation.

Contemplation, Pieper writes, is “a gaze inspired by love.”9 It is also man’s end and his happiness. In contemplation, the intellect dwells on the truth simply to know it, and the will rests in the possession of the good of knowing the truth. As such, contemplation is intensely active, but restfully so, since the goals of the rational activities of knowing and willing, the true and the good, are present and elicit rational activity for its own sake. Unlike practical, useful activities, which always pursue a good external to the activity itself, in contemplation, the good that is the goal of the activity is intrinsic to it. Contemplation is the restful activity of the human being seeing and loving what is good simply because it is good, with no reference to its use.

The Useless Meaningfulness of Beauty and Beautiful Churches

In contemplation, which is the loving gaze on the truth simply because it is good, the human being encounters beauty. Pieper, like Thomas Aquinas, rarely speaks explicitly about beauty, and yet beauty suffuses his whole work. His one, clear description of beauty occurs in his treatise on temperament, where he writes that beauty is the glow of the true and the good radiating from every ordered state of being and not . . . immediate sensual appeal.”9 The perception of “the glow of the true and the good” simply is contemplation. This “glow” is the attractiveness of the true and the good to the human being. Being, under the aspects of true and good, beckons to the human being because he is made for them. His encounter with truth and goodness brings him to the restful activity for its own sake that is his end, fulfillment, and happiness.

Beauty, like happiness, is useless. It is not for the sake of something else. And yet, it is essential to a complete human life. The perception of beauty, which is the experience of resting in the good, reveals the meaningfulness of human life. It is this final good that gives meaning to all other activities that humans do, because they ultimately are directed towards this good. In the sight of beauty, the human being experiences, in some small way, a foreshadowing of his final rest, which is the fulfillment of his being and his activity in gazing on the goodness—and so the beauty—of God in the Beatific Vision.

The recognition that it is good to be, which is the sight of beauty, gives rise to festivity. At the center of being festive is the affirmation that it is good to be. When we see that it is good to be, and that our own existence is good and meaningful, we rejoice. In the midst of everyday busyness and prosaic concerns, however, it is easy to forget the goodness of reality that underlies all that is and so to lose sight of the importance of festivity. Amidst concerns about usefulness, we forget to contemplate and rejoice in the goodness of being; we do not see its beauty.

We must set aside, then, time and space for the feast. Setting aside time and space in which we are not concerned with work and the everyday allows for a disposition different from that of the “workaday” world. The festive disposition is one of receptivity—of being able to rest in the goodness of existence because it is given to us. We do not need to work to make it good. In the feast, we are reminded of the joyful meaning of human life that persists even when we return to the space and time of the everyday. The “uselessness” of the feast shows us the true usefulness of the everyday, such that we are aware of the goodness and meaning of all of human existence.
The most perfect, and most real, festival is the ritual praise of God: “There can be no more radical assent to the world than the praise of God, the lauding of the Creator of this same world. One cannot conceive a more intense, more unconditional affirmation of being.”[10] The festival, as a material expression of the inner affirmation and joy of the goodness of being, then, is perfected in the liturgy. The physical, material action of the liturgy is an expression and outgrowth of the communal contemplation and rejoicing in the goodness of God that is the fulfillment and full actuality of the whole human being in communion with others. It is for this purpose that the church building is consecrated.

The Beauty of the Church Building: Silence

Human beings are the only creatures who are able to erect churches. Only human beings can set space and time aside to reserve it in a special and particular way, because only human beings, as rational animals, are both material and spiritual. Man lives in and among what is material and practical, and yet his gaze can penetrate the material and practical world to see and rejoice in the invisible reality that underlies it. It is at this intersection that the church building lies. As such, the church is specifically for human beings, and for the whole of the human being. As Pieper writes, “The edifice of a church . . . is ostensibly not meant to serve a restricted specialized segment of life (as are a hospital or a school, for example), but man as such, in his total being.”[11]

The design of a church, then, should take into account the totality of the human being, both his material and immaterial aspects, his intellect, his will, his passions, and his senses—and their direction to his final end that gives meaning to all of his aspects and activities. The human being is ultimately fulfilled in being related to and receiving reality as it truly is, the pinnacle of which is He Who is the source of all that is. It is this reception for which the church building is set aside and consecrated. While it is consecration and not its design that makes the church a church, given that the church is for the human being whose meaning and fulfillment lies in gazing on the beauty of God, it is fitting for the church building to be designed in such a way that it engages the whole of the human being in the contemplation of beauty and so prepares and points the whole human being to the contemplation of God.

Pieper writes that “the invisible aspect of festivity, the praise of the world which lies at a festival’s innermost core, can attain a physical form, can be made perceptible to the senses, only through the medium of the arts.”[12] The arts, which on the one hand belong to the realm of making and so of the practical, on the other hand belong to the realm of the theoretical and contemplative, because the arts are for contemplation alone. Beautiful music is made to be heard; beautiful visual art is made to be seen. Art is for the gaze, the restful activity, of the senses, which engages also the gaze of the intellect, and so is for contemplation.

In this way, then, beautiful art, whether it is music, painting, or architecture, is “useless”—but in the most meaningful way possible. It is like “the first draught of wine from the jug [that] is not ‘used’, not consumed, but ‘wasted’ and poured out on the waves or the floor as an offering to the gods.”[13] That is to say, it is not wasteful at all, but rather magnificently abundant. Beautiful art, as a material and therefore sensible being that makes evident its goodness in the way that it brings the whole human being into intense and restful activity for its own sake, is a readily apparent sign of the setting aside of space and time for something different from the business and bustle.
of the workaday world.

In so doing, it helps the perceiver to foster and deepen a disposition of receptivity to reality and joy in that reality. The eyes, when presented with something worth seeing, can rest in their activity. The ears, when presented with something worth hearing, can rest in their activity. And in that reception there must be a recognition, first of the goodness of the art because it engages the perceiver in activity that is fitting for him, but then also of the goodness of reality to which this experience points. Beautiful art opens the perceiver to rest in the reception of and joy in reality by moving him to receive what is before him.

This disposition of receptivity is one of silence. Silence is quite different from being quiet. Whereas being quiet is simply not making noise, silence is profound listening. When we listen, we listen for something; we maintain an attentive openness to whatever comes to greet us.

And this is the role of the church building. The church exists, Pieper writes, as a place for liturgical action. And it is especially for that most perfect of all liturgical actions: the Mass. This is no merely human action. It is human activity through which God’s activity transforms objective reality. The whole of the church building exists for the activity that occurs on the altar: God comes to meet man.

Therefore, church buildings should be designed for cultivating receptivity in man towards reality and God. They should be places of silence. The church building echoes, in a material way, the silence, receptivity, and joy through which the human being, in his intensely internal and yet communal participation in the liturgy, experiences the total meaningfulness of his life and of all of reality in the praise and glory of God. In the liturgy, it is God who comes to meet us, but we must be open and waiting to receive Him. A beautiful church prepares us for that reception by cultivating a material and intellectual silence through the restful activity of the senses, the intellect, and the will.

But so abundant and expansive is the beautiful glory of God that, amid its manifestations in the material sphere, there is a great deal of room for variation. As Pieper writes, “The underlying invisible reality that seeks such visible expression, however, can assume many faces.” Whether a church building may be simple although not skimpy, or lavish but not ostentatious, whether a church building be simple or lavish, ornate or ascetic, it must be designed and appointed as an expression of the affirmation of the goodness of being, and so of the beauty of being and of God. The design and construction of church buildings that inspires the human being to silence and so to receive reality and God Himself is, while useless, absolutely essential for the good of the human being. It is “a space where silence rules and true listening becomes possible, the awareness of that kind of reality by which our existence is sustained and ever again renewed and nourished.”

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Author’s Note: Many thanks to Our Lady Seat of Wisdom, Barry’s Bay, Ontario, for their hospitality as I wrote this paper.

Endnotes
2. Ibid., 114.
3. Ibid., 97.
4. Ibid., 100.
15. Ibid., 116–117.
I am a pastor, entrusted by God to be the shepherd of ninety thousand souls across the southern part of the state of Nebraska. Tonight, I’d like to speak to you from my experience as a pastor.

Many of you are native New Yorkers, or at least native to the East Coast. Before I begin, I should probably explain that Nebraska, where I live, is one of those big square states in the middle of the country which supplies a great deal of your food. If you’ve never visited, you should think about it. It really is a wonderful place.

It’s not surprising that I was asked to speak on beauty tonight. It seems that beauty is enjoying a particular moment of interest in Catholic circles right now. In the past few years, Father Robert Barron has written quite compellingly on beauty. In Catholic intellectual circles, there is renewed interest in the theology of aesthetics undertaken by Hans Urs von Balthasar and carried on by various theologians, particularly Pope Benedict XVI. And two years ago, in his apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium, Pope Francis wrote about what he called the via pulchritudinis — the “way of beauty” in the mission of the New Evangelization.

Beauty is having a moment, I think, because beauty is particularly “well-suited” to respond to the challenges of our times. Tonight, I’d like to discuss the way in which the via pulchritudinis can respond to our times, serving a critical function in the New Evangelization of contemporary culture. I’d like to offer a few reflections on the challenges of contemporary culture, and then make three suggestions for the role of beauty in the work of the New Evangelization.

Last year, I was at a conference in Florida, and I lost my iPhone on a bus. I had it when I sat down, and when I checked for it next, it was gone.

Of course, my first thought about losing my phone was that I might have found a good excuse to upgrade to an iPhone 6!

It took five days before I could track my phone down, and it was eventually mailed to me by the kindly bus driver who recovered it.

I wasn’t on retreat when I lost my phone. I was living my ordinary life—just, suddenly, living it more quietly. My e-mails were piling up, but they weren’t buzzing in my pocket. I wasn’t getting texts or able to send them. If I wondered about something I didn’t know, I wasn’t able to look it up immediately.

Instead, I looked upwards, while many of the people around me were looking down at their screens. I had conversations with strangers to pass the time between appointments. When I reached into my pocket, I came upon my rosary before I came upon my device. And when it was time for Morning or Evening Prayer, I opened my breviary instead of opening my app.

Now don’t get me wrong. I am not a Luddite. I like my iPhone, and I was glad to get it back. I have two Facebook pages, I tweet, and I use iBreviary. My staff and family and friends are likely to receive texts from me at all hours. I appreciate the potential of our technology. But I also appreciate the consequences of an overly technocratic culture.

The Greek word for man is anthropos—which literally means “one who looks up”—an upwardly turning creature. Humans alone can look up to the stars in wonder. And if we aren’t careful, we will surrender something of our humanity when we replace looking up in wonder with looking down at our glowing screens.

When we aren’t careful, our technology can make us flat souled—very bored and very lonely. Statistical data has proven this. When we only encounter others through electronic media, we become callous about their humanity. When we watch programs of unspeakable violence in HD, we lose sight of the sacredness of human life. And when we’re hooked to our devices, we are unlikely to marvel at anything in the universe.

Our technology can also have the effect of making us shortsighted: hooked on instant gratification, bored without immediate stimulation, lonely for real connections instead of text messages and tweets and Facebook “likes.”

In Technopoly, Neil Postman says that overly technological cultures, “driven by the impulse to invent, have as their aim a grand reductionism in which human life must find its meaning in machinery and technique.”

This “grand reductionism”—it seems to me—is becoming increasingly more apparent. We focus too often on becoming good processors and producers, manipulators of data, rather than on becoming good human beings—critical minds, and noble hearts—capable of appreciation, engagement, and thought—and hungry for adventure and romance.

“Grand reductionism”—and the loss of wonder and beauty—is a particular danger of our time. And the tendency towards reductionism applies even to American religious culture.

Once, President Obama said that the United States “is one of the most religious countries in the world—far more religious than most Western developed countries.” Demographers and sociologists would agree. Weekly and monthly church attendance is consid-
erably higher in the United States than in many places. So is belief in divinity, in eternal life, and in universal moral norms.

But it is important to understand the substance of prevailing American religious beliefs. Christian Smith is a sociologist at the University of Notre Dame. He’s conducted extensive research on the religious beliefs of young Americans from every major faith group. And he’s concluded that regardless of their religious affiliation, young Americans tend to subscribe to a faith he calls Moralistic Therapeutic Deism.

The dogma of Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is this: God exists and desires that people are good, nice, and fair to one another. God can be called upon to assure happiness and to resolve crises. Being good, nice, tolerant, and fair assures eternal salvation in heaven.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism is the "grand reduction" of religious thought and practice to a set of sentimental and affirming principles, absent the presence of a transcendent, personal, and transformative God. It is a religious faith of mediocrity, of insularity, and of loneliness. It requires no greatness of soul. And it engenders no virtue, no charity, and no heroism.

Moralistic Therapeutic Deism prevails in our culture. Think, for just a moment, about young people you know. Moralistic Therapeutic Deism probably describes the religious faith of most of them.

Christianity is not Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. Christianity is the faith of unmerited greatness—the faith of heroic virtue, unsurpassed hope, and unbounded charity. The Christian life elevates humanity in the great sanctifying process of theosis. By our very baptism, in fact, we are given the capacity to love precisely as God loves. And at the core of the Christian life is a transformative religious relationship with a living person—Jesus Christ.

The mission of the New Evangelization is to proclaim the living person of Jesus Christ to those for whom God is a benevolent, impersonal, and mostly impotent figure.

The Role of Beauty

Tonight, I’d like to suggest three ways in which beauty can bring souls into communion with Jesus Christ. 1. The first is the restoration of the beautiful to the world of art, architecture, and culture.

Lately, I have been reading the British philosopher Roger Scruton. Scruton is a fascinating thinker, and I suggest you look at his work. It is not without serious problems, but it also possesses very important insights into beauty, love, and the religious sense.

Scruton says that today, “beauty is assailed in two directions: by the cult of ugliness in the arts, and the cult of utility in everyday life.”

Saint Thomas Aquinas says that there are three elements to visual beauty: integrity, proportion, and light. Together, those elements make objects beautiful because they point to the integrity, proportionality, and light of reality—in fact, to the ordered and luminescent nature of God Himself. Beauty points to realities—transcendent and eternal realities—and moves our hearts to know them.

We are moved by a painting or a piece of music or a building when it
transmits an internal unity in which a consistent whole is balanced and radiant. Even the depiction of sorrow or loss is beautiful when it reveals the profound meaning of suffering.

But the “cult of ugliness” in contemporary art is intentionally discordant, unbalanced, and dark. In fact, the metric of contemporary artistic value is too often the ability of a work to shock, to deconstruct, or to destroy.

Consider, for example, Marcel Duchamp’s famous Fountain—his submission of a graffiti-ed urinal to a 1917 art exhibition. The work means nothing. It is unbalanced. It offers no insight into existence. It leaves the viewer simply confused and a bit startled. And that seems to be the point. The piece is merely an incarnation of relativistic nihilism.

Today, schoolchildren are taught to view such pieces and to remember that “beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” As they get older, they’re given the idea that beauty hardly exists at all. But beauty is not in the eye of the beholder. Beauty is in the essence of the divine Creator and in the thing itself. And art can transform hearts—and transform culture—when it reflects a glimmer of divine beauty.

Fostering the vocation of artists is critical to the work of the New Evangelization because art forms souls. Beautiful art forms souls for truth and goodness. Ugliness forms souls for ugliness.

In 1999, Pope Saint John Paul II said that the Church must engage in dialogue with the world of art, because art can be a “bridge to religious experience.” He called for a holy alliance of artists, forming an “epiphany of beauty” in contemporary culture.

John Paul II wrote that artists “must labor without allowing themselves to be driven by the search for empty glory or the craving for cheap popularity, and still less by the calculation of some possible profit for themselves.”

Instead, he said, artists can “enrich the cultural heritage of each nation and of all humanity” by creating “a path to the inmost reality of man and of the world,” an “echo of the mystery of creation.”

We’re called to foster the formation of artists whose work transmits the reality of divine love through beauty. We need to ensure that religious institutes and parishes and families foster an appreciation for beauty in art—and foster artists capable of creating “echoes of the mystery.” We need to recognize the spiritual crisis undergirding much of contemporary art and then foster a renewal in creation of the beautiful.

I mentioned the cult of ugliness and the cult of utility. Utility is the driving force of the grand technocratic reduction. And this is manifestly apparent in much of contemporary architecture. The architectural maxim that “form follows function” is a way of saying that design only exists to facilitate production. Architecture is overwhelmed by technocracy. Oscar Wilde recognized the danger of this kind of thinking. “Put usefulness first, and you lose it,” he said. “Put beauty first, and what you do will be useful forever.”

The consequence of utilitarian architecture is borne out in souls, which are conditioned to believe even by the spaces in which they live and work that they exist for no more than production and profit. The Church has worked diligently to encourage Catholics to enter the public square proclaiming the faith. But we should also seriously encourage Catholics to consider the public square itself, and the impact of functionalist architecture on spiritual development. If nothing else, we ought to foster the preservation of buildings—churches, schools, homes—which speak to the soul about the transcendent dimension of ordinary life.

2. My second suggestion is the rekindling of the Christian imagination through literature.

The Russian playwright Anton Chekhov said that “the business of literature is not to answer questions, but to state them fairly.” I’m not certain that is true. Literature does raise questions, but it can also—in the witness of ideas or characters or stories—point us to the final answers, to the permanent things.

Good literature forms a worldview: it offers us insight into our families, our communities, and our selves. Great literature offers us insight into our relationship with God and the world.

I had dinner recently with a very good friend of mine—a former roommate, in fact. He converted to the faith shortly before I did. He was from Kansas City, and his father was the foreman of a bag factory. While we were in college, his father lost his job. My friend, Alan, went home for the summer, and saw that his father was struggling with his recent job loss. His father had never attended college or had any liberal arts education. Alan gave his father the dialogues of Plato. During that long summer, his father read them, slowly—often rereading chapters three or four times. Alan told me during that summer, he and his father had the most extraordinary conversations—about truth and hope and justice and love. A new sense of wonder was awakened in my friend’s
father.

Literature opens our imaginations to wonder. Reading good books exposes the contemplative part of our humanity. Good books can spur in us a sense of justice and charity and generosity. They can expand our souls and inspire our hearts to strive for greatness.

We ought to begin forming Catholic book clubs and literary circles, comprised of ordinary, everyday Catholics, reading and reflecting on important ideas and beautiful stories. Literature forms imaginations and plants seeds of inquiry. And sharing ideas in dialogue allows them to germinate—to move hearts and minds to fruitful relationships with Christ and His Church.

3. My final point is about recovering a sense of wonder in the liturgy. Common worship—liturgy—is a place for formation in Christian wonder. We’ll conclude tonight with Compline—and the experience of common prayer, celebrated beautifully, is likely to stay with you far longer than anything I’ve said tonight.

In Modern Culture, probably his best book, Roger Scruton remarks that “enlightened people often mock the controversies surrounding the liturgy, and profess not to understand the desire for the old words, save for ‘aesthetic reasons.’ They are right to see a resemblance between aesthetic interest and the act of worship. But they are wrong in thinking this resemblance to be merely accidental. The quasi-aesthetic absorption in the holy words and gestures is a component in the redemptive process. In participating, the believer is effecting a change in his spiritual standing. The ceremony is not so much a means to this end, as a prefiguration of it. In the ritual the believer confronts God, and is purified by standing in God’s gaze.”

The absorption of holy words and gestures is a component of the redemptive process. Without our even knowing it, holy liturgy effects change in our hearts. Because good and holy liturgy opens our hearts, lifts up our hearts—sursum corda—as the Preface to the Roman Canon reads, to an experience of transcendent and ineffable mysteries.

Still in his Anglican years, Blessed John Henry Newman crafted seven letters to the editor of The Times of London in February of 1841, in response to an address given by a leading British politician, Sir Robert Peel. Under the curious title The Taworth Reading Room, Newman gives us a unique a distillation of his Anglican thought on education, faith and reason, and the Church. Newman writes, in a rather startling fashion: “Man is not a reasoning animal; he is a seeing, feeling, contemplating, acting animal.” He goes on to say: “The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us. Many a man will live and die upon a dogma: no man will be a martyr for a conclusion.”

We are more than the sum of our intellects. And the Incarnation, the liturgy, and the Lord Himself are mysteries. These mysteries are sometimes only encountered in modes that reach our senses—that draw us to a contemplation that is deeper and richer than cognition or mental prayer. God is mystery, and the liturgy is, among other things, an encounter with that mystery. Wonder is the only response.

This is why we speak of beauty as something “transcendent.” Every instance of real beauty points beyond itself, toward the infinite perfection of God. He invested this world with many forms of captivating beauty so that created things would lead us to contemplate the transcendent glory of the Creator.

We can think of beauty as a kind of language, through which God speaks to our hearts and souls. He is always speaking in this way—to all of us, believers and nonbelievers alike.

Fostering beauty in the liturgy fosters souls who encounter divine mysteries with an attitude of wonder.

Conclusion

G.K. Chesterton once said that in every age, God gives us the saints that we need. That’s true. In every age, God also gives a pathway by which to bring the world to Jesus Christ.

Today, Pope Francis says that the pathway to Christ is the via pulchritudinis. Beauty responds to the flat-souled, reductive culture in which we live. Pope Benedict wrote often that beauty is an arrow that wounds—by that, he meant that it penetrates hearts which reason or virtue might never touch.

If we are serious about transforming culture for Jesus Christ, beauty has a role to play. Of course, after this lecture, we might all look at our phones for a moment, and when we go home, we might turn on the television. But we need to create space for beauty. We need to foster its cultivation. Beauty will move us to contemplation, and contemplation to Jesus Christ. Beauty will move us to the incarnate Love of God.

Dostoevsky wrote that “beauty will save the world.” It might. But only if we foster beauty, and then invite others to the experience, in order that they might experience the harrowing and transcendent beauty of the Most Blessed Trinity.

This talk was given March 14, 2015, in New York City as part of “The Art of the Beautiful” lecture series sponsored by the Thomistic Institute and the Catholic Artists Society.

The Most Reverend James D. Conley was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wichita in 1985. He was ordained in 2008 to the episcopacy and served as auxiliary bishop of Denver until his appointment as bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln by Pope Benedict XVI in 2012.
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CHURCH INTERIORS
STATUES
RESTORATIONS

Reviewed by George Martin

A building passes a certain threshold when entering its fifties. Whether or not it has aged gracefully after half a century, its presence has been so long as to have gathered both admirers and detractors. And it should hope for a significantly large number of the former, because it is also at this age that a building begins to exhibit needs for repair and upkeep, and if it is fortunate enough to have such a tribe, it will be loved.

Such is the case with Saint John’s Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota, by Marcel Breuer, which is now fifty-six years old. In what can best be described as a biography of this mid-century modern icon, Professor Victoria Young tells the story of the conception, birth, and childhood of the Abbey Church and proceeds to establish for the building a place of prominence not only in the Modern Movement (which it deserves) but in the history and development of Catholic sacred architecture. Her book Saint John’s Abbey Church, Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space, published in 2014, came a year in advance of a 2015 Getty Foundation grant in the amount of $150,000 as part of the foundation’s Keeping it Modern initiative, given to “assist the abbey in drawing a comprehensive plan for the restoration, preservation and maintenance/upkeep” of the church. It should also be noted that Saint John’s Abbey and Saint John’s University, among others, were financial sponsors of Professor Young’s work.

The book, both well written and researched, is most intriguing in the telling of the building’s conception through the marriage (one might also say, “co-branding”) of the Modern Movement (via the Bauhaus in Weimar) and the Liturgical Movement (via Maria Laach in the Rhineland). This conception, occurring during the post-war and pre-conciliar moment, saw both at the apices of their idealism and enthusiasm, and reflects Peter Blake’s sentiment of the midcentury zeitgeist that it must have felt “marvelous to be alive when utopia was young.”

While Professor Young makes a convincing argument for the importance of the Abbey Church in the history of the Modern Movement, and certainly as one of Breuer’s master works, she is less convincing and less thorough in her argument for the church’s importance in the broader expanse of Catholic sacred architecture. Young uses the term “spiritual axis” to describe a “processional way based on monasticism, liturgical reform, and modern design” (p. 67), and yet there is little indication of this application in the building other than the linear arrangement of entry, baptismal font, and altar: an arrangement not at all novel to the modern period. Most conspicuously absent in Young’s telling of the story of the Abbey Church is the context of church building in the United States at the time, and in particular of that going on in nearby Minneapolis and Saint Paul—most notably the work of E.L. Masqueray. Built in the first decade of the twentieth century, the Co-Cathedrals of Saint Paul and Saint Mary (the latter the first basilica in the United States) by Masqueray were significant works not only for the Upper Midwest, but for the United States as a whole. An article in the Fall 1910 edition of American Architect magazine, which included drawings of both cathedrals, noted that “the two Catholic Cathedrals will be . . . when completed, noteworthy achievements in church building for any period; in extent and splendor they promise to surpass anything yet attempted in ecclesiastic work in the United States.” This accolade is very much at odds with what the Abbey would contend in the last paragraph of the invitation letter to architects for the Abbey Church: “Our age and our country have thus far produced so little truly significant religious architecture” (p. 32).

Perhaps the most illustrative aspect of the book, however, is its subtitle. “Marcel Breuer and the Creation of a Modern Sacred Space” informs the reader at the outset that the story is one of a building and its architect. It is also about “modern sacred space,” a term of art which should not be confused with religious architecture, as it refers generally to space which is often only self-referentially “sacred.”

The monks of Saint John’s saw in modern architecture a vehicle for change (a Bauhaus credo is “start from zero”) and an opportunity to communicate the immanence of God at the expense of transcendence. Unfortunately they carried along also the baggage of the modern enterprise as a whole—a project that had no room for God. Sadly, neither does the building.

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Expressions of the Sacred


Reviewed by Reverend Dennis Gill

A short time ago I visited a Carmelite Monastery, and during my conversation with one of the nuns in the speakroom she mentioned that she had just completed Father Lang’s book Signs of the Holy One. Before I could inquire what she thought of the work, she continued with how the book filled her mind with solid and enduring ideas. Liturgical conversations today often include references to the scholarly and informative studies provided by the Oratorian Father Uwe Michael Lang. His and Expression of the Sacred deserves a studied reading to further enrich present day discussions of the sacred liturgy.

The book itself brings together five lectures from various conferences and seminars with a short excursus among them. In his introduction, Father Lang summarized his thesis, which is developed throughout the book with the acknowledgement “of how important . . . nonlinguistic or symbolic expressions are for the celebration of the Paschal Mystery” and how he is “convinced that they are more significant than language itself.” Overall, Lang provides a valid critique of easily accepted ideas on ritual studies, notions of the sacred, architecture, art, and music—a critique that places the action of Christ in the celebration of the sacred liturgy as the starting point for an evaluation of these ideas and not vice versa.

As Father Lang develops each chapter, he culls from a variety of significant sources and studies pertinent data to identify the popular or current thought on the topic. Often, as the author notes, the current thought reveals a departure from a received theological understanding of the sacred liturgy and places the ideas on ritual, architecture, art, and music above the celebration of the sacred liturgy. The corrective that Father Lang employs in each of these topic areas is to re-regard the data collected and provide guidance for a rereading of the data according to principles found in magisterial and papal sources on the sacred liturgy.

There are two chapters in Father Lang’s book that I found especially successful: chapter 3, “Sacred Architecture: Crisis and Renewal,” and chapter 5, “Sacred Music: Between Theological Millstones.” In chapter 3, the author identifies several significant contemporary church buildings and asks of each of them if they are visible signs of the sacred. More importantly, he raises the question of whether or not these same church buildings originated in form from the requirements for the celebration of the sacred liturgy. It is not an uncommon experience today for churchgoers to be bewildered by the style and shape of their place of worship and perhaps not be so much aware of how these same buildings limit access to the fullness of the Mysteries celebrated within them. After a careful presentation of current thought and practice on the topic, Father Lang delivers four universally understood principles to take the current status of church architecture and restore its sacred dimension and theological foundations. At the root of his principles is the determination that “an architecture that is not ready, or even refuses, to let itself be formed by the Church’s liturgy does not work as a church building, as the historical styles of Christianity do.”

In chapter 5, Father Lang gives a succinct presentation of sacred music in the reform of the rites since the Council—an overview of liturgy and music which concludes with remarks on Pope Benedict XVI and sacred music. In these sections of the chapter, the author is clear that church music has a definite purpose related to the celebration of the sacred liturgy and—with some historical consistency—has been regulated to insure that it corresponds to the event and action of the Mysteries of Christ. Frankly, Father Lang laments, “Church music is not in good shape—not everywhere, not in every parish or community, but on balance and in every corner of the Catholic world.” As part of the recovery of sacred music as a sign of the Holy One, Father Lang offers three practical suggestions that aptly address current thought and practice: the serious need to critique often-employed forms of music that are not suited to the action of the liturgy and to instead use music that is, especially from the tradition; the selective use of instruments which lead to the sacred; and the actually singing of the propers, the music and texts intended for the celebration.

Father Lang’s book Signs of the Holy One not only heightens awareness of the many and varied languages that speak of the Mysteries of Christ in the celebration of the sacred liturgy, but also raises the equally compelling point that these languages, to insure their authenticity and integrity, require a grammar that originates in the Mystery the liturgy celebrates.

Father Dennis Gill, ordained a priest May 21, 1983, for the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, is currently the Rector and Pastor of the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul and the Director of the Office for Divine Worship. He lectures on the Sacred Liturgy throughout the country and recently published the book, Music in Catholic Liturgy: A Pastoral and Theological Companion to Sing to the Lord. He is currently working on a book, Ars Celebrandi: An Artful and Careful Celebration of the Eucharist, for Hillenbrand Books.
BOOK REVIEW

De-Altaring at Cambridge?


Reviewed by Joseph Prud’homme

King’s College Chapel 1515–2015: Art, Music and Religion in Cambridge, a large-bound, brilliantly illustrated history coedited by Jean Michael Massing and Nicolette Zeeman, is a clearly written and sharply organized work that offers much for the interested reader. It is perhaps best suited for alumni of or visitors to Cambridge University, and herein lies a basic problem with the text. It seeks evidently to be more than a coffee table tome for cocktail party consumption, but it fails to meet the standards of academic rigor one expects from a serious scholarly study. It falls, as a result, in a sort of uncomfortable terræ media that leaves the more-than-casual reader ultimately unfulfilled.

For the popular audience it provides ample rewards. The chapters are divided among a range of interesting topics, with vivid descriptions of historical developments and with the contemporary artistic events—primarily choral—staged in the chapel ably documented and rightly celebrated. Each chapter provides a wealth of detail and vivid color. The endnotes are self-described radical theologians of modernist liturgical reform (Alec Vidler and Victor de Waal). It was they who drove the Fellows to accept the exceptionally large Rubens painting and demanded that it be positioned behind the altar. Nor does the reader learn that the architects commissioned to update the chapel, who voiced a grave concern about the large art piece’s negative impact on liturgical and architectural meaning. Nor do we learn that the architects were overruled by the radicals and a new architect was retained—a designer of country houses and inner city housing projects—who stripped the altar of its primacy by raising behind it this ill-fitting painting of stupendous proportions, and who did so without even retaining so simple and traditional a symbol as a single altar cross (a cross was later supplied). The overshadowed altar, in turn, was reduced in length to match the dimensions of the real estate mogul’s massive benefaction, and the altar was fitted with a modernist frontal featuring a complex pattern of modern octagons. Nor is there amplified in sufficient detail the strident architectural resistance to the radicals’ designs. We do not learn, for example, that classically trained architects bemoaned how the altar became, in the words of architectural critics Robert Flowright and Bryan Little, “an embalmed art gallery... diminished in stature, in mystery, in reverence, and transformed into a picture gallery... with celebrity art replacing spiritual symbolism, and architectural meaning replaced by interior design.”

 Were these points explored in greater depth, the reader would be reminded of an interesting continuity between reformers in the Anglican tradition in the twentieth century and the Protestant reformers of the sixteenth. As Fincham and Tyacke document, de-altaring was central to many Protestant reformers.

And here, in the 1960s, we see a kind of recapitulation of the de-altaring of sacred space—not through iconoclasm as such but through a museumification of sacred place. By overshadowing the altar rather than complementing it, the prodigious Rubens piece transforms a sacred canopy into something far different. Though itself a powerful religious image, the Rubens piece and its location distract from the altar, centering it and thus, in a curious way, mirroring radical Protestant reform. As a result, the chapel is transformed into a kind of show piece, a secular salon for the idle gawking of beautiful forms and vivid color.

In all, the book is a welcome addition for all seeking a reference source on the highlights of the chapel’s history and a resource of attractive images of the changes in the chapel’s grandeur across the centuries. Buy it, therefore, for a grandson who graduates from Cambridge, or as a momento of a lovely vacation near the Cam. Just do not expect anything like a serious academic treatment.

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Endnotes
2. King’s College Chapel, II.
A Companion on the Way


Reviewed by Michael Wurtz, C.S.C.

This valuable reference companion is a worthwhile addition to any theological library, institutional or personal. Comprised of twenty-two chapters and concluded by a sizeable glossary of useful terms and personalities, this latest addition to the T&T Clark label provides both serious academics and the casual reader with smart analyses and overviews of major themes in liturgy. Of special note is the plethora of well-researched endnotes and rich bibliographical listings which can, among other things, serve as illuminating guides for further research. This feature is especially true in the essays by J. Leachman on cultural research. This feature is especially true in the essays by J. Leachman on cultural research.

Readers of Sacred Architecture will be particularly interested in the chapter on Catholic architecture by Thomas Gordon Smith. As a leader in shaping the University of Notre Dame’s architecture program toward a Neo-Classicist approach, Professor Smith unsurprisingly invokes the timeless lessons of Vitruvius as reliable guides that safeguard church architecture against those elements foreign to the Church and her liturgies while simultaneously encouraging laudable elements of every time and culture worthy of emulation. The editor, Alcuin Reid, a monk of the Monastère Saint-Benoît in France, contributes five chapters, the last of which explains the post-Vatican II history of the usus antiquior or what is today termed the Extraordinary Form of the Mass. This fascinating read details forgotten or little-known events and personalities, and with insightful quotes situates the recent history and current reality of the usus antiquior in the broader life of the Church. It is worth noting that one great doubt held by critics of the 2007 motu proprio, Summorum pontificum, is whether the Extraordinary Form is capable of expressing an ecclesiology presented by the council fathers. This concern arises time and again within both heated debates and fraternal discussions about the intersection of liturgical forms and the implied ecclesiology expressed by those forms. This matter seems not to have been addressed with any thoroughness in the volume at hand. It quite possibly could have been addressed had all those invited to contribute to this compendium accepted. With admirable honesty the editor laments in the introduction over those named invitees who for whatever reason declined to contribute. Proven liturgical scholars in their own right, surely their essays would have brought important considerations to the fore. But we will never know.

Clearly this volume is situated within the context of a post-Summorum pontificum world. As such its value as a reference work is quite evident, and it further distinguishes itself from those volumes listed above. This is not to say that some sort of competition exists between these reference works that have decades between them, but rather that those earlier volumes would never conceive of Pope Benedict’s 2007 motu proprio allowing for a tremendously broader permission for the usus antiquior. But such is the reality of the current liturgical landscape, and the T&T Clark Companion readily grapples with that very reality and in turn assists us, the readers, in understanding the ramifications and fruits of such a declaration.

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Book Review

From the Publishing Houses


In this book, Lia Barelli delves into the history of one of the most complex and multilayered churches in Rome. She outlines the history and origins of the church, documenting each phase with photographs, drawings, and diagrams, and then takes the reader on a tour through the existing structure today. She explains thoroughly every aspect of the building, from the progression of spaces to the history and meaning of obscure art and architectural details, presenting a knowledgeable account of Santi Quattro Coronati.


Religious pilgrimages grew in popularity during the years 1790-1850 in Britain. This book explores the role that the concept of pilgrimage played for architects in those years, arguing that the artistic process itself is a pilgrimage, and that the finished object is a site of pilgrimage for others. Barush draws on a wealth of resources to support her argument: paintings, drawings, manuscripts, letters, reliquaries, and architecture.


This book presents a thorough history of the development of Norwich cathedral close, from its foundation in 1096 through 1700. Gilchrist gathers evidence from various disciplines, such as history and archeology, to examine the buildings and analyze how their use and meaning changed over time. She also examines how the spaces were perceived and used by different social groups, and how the social spaces such as the monastery related to distinctly sacred spaces like the cathedral.


Magness presents an overview of the archaeology of ancient Palestine, from the fall of the kingdom of Judea and the destruction of Solomon’s temple around 500 BC to the Muslim conquest of Palestine around AD 750. Over this span of time she uses abundant archaeological evidence, such as art, architecture, and pottery, to study the dynamic between the various groups inhabiting the region. Emphasis is placed on the archaeology of Jerusalem and the Second Temple period—the time of Herod the Great and Jesus. Magness traces the complicated history of many well-known churches and temples, from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.


This book is a compilation of the drawings and paintings from the European travels of architect Charles Edouard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) from 1907 to 1911. The images, in chronological order, show a progression from intricately detailed drawings and paintings, visible in his beautiful watercolors from a 1907 trip to Italy, to more analytical images, such as a 1911 trip to Rome where his drawings of churches are reduced to quick scribbles and diagrams. Through his sketches and paintings, one observes Corbusier’s style evolve from a fascination with rich detail to a growing interest in pure forms and volumes.
Call for Papers

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