



GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING A NEW CHURCH

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Introduction

The church building is not primarily erected to the glory of God. It is a house of the people of God, a place where they come together to worship as a community. Those who share responsibility for a building for liturgy must understand the role of the community when it gathers to worship the Lord, under the leadership of the presiding priest. That role, as presently defined by the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (1963) and post-conciliar documents, represents centuries of development to meet changing needs. The liturgical rites and how they are celebrated find their roots in the witness and worship of multiple generations of God's people; they are not the inventions of "how to do it" specialists.

The building of a post-Vatican II church is an invitation to the community to reflect upon its spiritual roots, on its baptismal call to be a people of praise, on what it means to be church, and on its mission in the world. It is an opportunity for the community, in turn, to pass on to succeeding generations a full expression of its faith.

The construction of a new church is one of the most arduous tasks a parish community could be called to undertake. It involves not only the expenditure of much energy, time, and money, but also the task of the renewal of the "living stones" that comprise the Church. To accomplish this, something must happen before plans are drawn. That something is the empowering of the people of the parish with a share in the planning of the new church.

The empowering process requires of all concerned: prayer, self-renewal, education in liturgy, and dialogue.

If a pastor, building committee and/or parish council were to by-pass this process it would rob the people of God of their right and duty to share in determining the character of the worship space.

It is true that after prayer, education and consultation, someone has the ultimate responsibility to decide. The decision may not please everyone, but it must be informed by the community's involvement.

There are companion documents to these Guidelines - "Policies for Funding and Completion of Parish Capital Projects" outlines an educational program which the parish might follow. In conjunction with that, the Diocesan Liturgical Commission will provide both personnel and resource materials to assist in the educational process.

The Guidelines for the Building of a New Church were prepared by a committee of the Diocesan Building Commission. They are written for anyone involved in a church building project; pastors and their associates, building committees, parish advisory boards, architects, liturgical consultants, musicians, and artists. Also, they are offered as a basis for study in a parish education program.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy names participation in the public prayer of the Church "the primary and indispensable source from which the faithful are to derive the true Christian spirit." These Guidelines are offered to the parishes of the Diocese of London to inspire the building of churches which will support such an experience of "full, conscious, active participation" in the liturgy.

The Church Building

Both for the liturgy of the Eucharist and the physical setting of its celebration, it has been a long journey from early Christian times to today.

A. A BRIEF RECORD OF EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

1. In the early church, Christians worshiped in domestic, table settings. Indeed, they were criticized by the pagans for not having altars and temples. Origin of Alexandria, in the year 248, answered by saying that each Christian is a temple, each believer's heart is an altar where the pure incense of prayer is offered. *cf. NBL, Vol. 13, 74, p. 105.*

Yet there is evidence now that Christian house churches existed during that same period.

"An early example of a Christian house church was uncovered in the 1930's in excavations at Dura Europos in modern Syria. The building had been turned into a church around 232. It contained a vestibule, a courtyard, a baptistry, and a double-sized room for the Eucharist. A wall between two rooms had been removed to make a larger room, which would hold about 100 people. A raised platform or dais was at one end of this room. The baptistry was a smaller room with a tub made of stone, and covered with a canopy. The walls of the baptistry were decorated with frescoes of events from the Old and New Testaments."

NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74, p. 105.

2. The Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity in the early 4th century. In 313, he granted religious freedom to the Roman Empire, and established Christianity as the official religion. These events led to a great influx of converts. The Christians took over civic buildings called basilicas. These Roman meeting halls, once serving business and governmental purposes, were adapted to worship.

Gradually, these magnificent structures came to be seen as the House of God, rather than a house for the people gathered in worship. The buildings came to be called churches. In early Christian times the word "church" had not been applied to buildings. "Church" described the people, the household of believers.

Constantine also promoted the building of major churches in Rome, Jerusalem, and elsewhere. Between 313 and 320, St. John Lateran, the Pope's cathedral church, was built. Then in 324-330, the first St. Peter's was constructed over the tomb of St. Peter. *cf. NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74, p. 106.*

The following were the most striking features of the liturgical arrangement of the Constantinian period churches:

- the Bishop's chair was located in the apse, or the semi-circular end of the basilica.
- the altar was located in the centre of the nave.
- the place for the Word of God was between these 2 focal points.

The influence of the Roman basilicas on church buildings in the Western world has endured to the present day.

3. A modification to the liturgical disposition of the basilicas took place in the 6th century. Pope Gregory the Great moved the altar in St. Peter's Basilica from the nave to the apse so that it would rest over the tomb of St. Peter. This action is seen as the result of a tendency at the time, to combine the celebration of the Eucharist with the cult of the martyrs.

The Church Building Cont'd

Also, by the time of Pope Gregory the Great, attendance of communicants at papal liturgies was waning. In the Middle Ages, communion of the people disappeared totally from the papal mass. It was re-introduced only during the reigns of Pope John XXIII and Paul VI. cf. *Liturgy and Architecture*, by Louis Bouyer, chapter III.

B. TODAY'S CONCEPT OF A CHURCH BUILDING

1. The Second Vatican Council has restored the original concept of Church as the people of God. It also has led to a new understanding of the church building as a place of assembly for worship, a house for God's people, a house of the Church. *cf. NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74, p. 99.*

2. The Second Vatican Council has also called for a liturgy of which all people are active participants and celebrants.

"The church earnestly desires that all the faithful be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations called for by the very nature of the liturgy. Such participation by the Christian people as a 'chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' is their right and duty by reason of their baptism." *CSL #14.*

3. The ordering of the focal points of the liturgy should facilitate the fulfillment of this vision of the Church.

"In order for the faithful to fully participate in the offering of the Eucharistic sacrifice, they must perceive that they are more than spectators at a solemn presentation for their benefit. The offering of praise, the offering of petitions spoken on their behalf, the offering of themselves along with Christ... must take place among the people, not in front of the people." *SHC, p. 65.*

The four liturgical focal points in the church building are the altar, the ambo, the chair, and the baptistry.

C. A BUILDING FOR THE LITURGY

It is the liturgy, then, that should shape the church building.

'When churches are to be built, let great care be taken that they be suitable for celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful.' *CSL #124.*

These concepts constitute the fundamental and guiding principles for the church building today. There is no favoured or designated shape or style. What is vitally important is that the building, its arrangement, its sacred spaces and accoutrements should enable God's people, both to perceive and also to fulfill their role as celebrants of the liturgy.

Hospitality and the Building

Hospitality is a relatively new concern in building. The subject is referred to here and there in the guidelines. It is a subject, however, which deserves its own space.

The Parish a welcoming home! The purpose here is to deal with the physical hospitality of the building, not the spirit of hospitality which should characterize a parish assembly when it gathers for worship. However, that spirit can be encouraged or discouraged by the physical environment.

"Physical hospitality at liturgy seeks a space that helps members of the assembly enter and remain there as active participants. Would a place to hang up coats and stash boots or umbrellas or backpacks be helpful? Are there enough seats? Are the seats comfortable enough without suggesting that the new theatre in town was our inspiration? Is there enough room for a person to stand? Is there room for real processions? Can people see? Can they hear one another? Is the lighting adequate and temperature moderated? Is the place clean? Is a lavatory readily available? These are major issues of physical hospitality."

EAN, Sept. 1990.

An omission in the above quotation is the special consideration that must be given to hospitality toward the physically challenged. Builders who ignore this issue betray a separation of worship from life's realities.

HOW HOSPITALITY SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN THE BUILDING

1. The evidence of hospitality should begin in the narthex of the church. cf. Narthex, p. 5.
2. The seating arrangement should be hospitable, allowing people to see each other as much as possible; to be in visual and audible contact with all the focal points of the liturgy; to move about with ease; to be seated in reasonably comfortable pews. *EACW 31*.
3. There should be a coatroom adjacent to the narthex, if affordable. cf. Narthex, p. 5, and above.
4. The acoustics should be hospitable, allowing the assembly to easily hear the spoken word, and to hear its own voice when it prays in song.
5. The parish should have a supply of hearing-aids for persons with hearing difficulties. cf. Acoustics, p. 28.
6. The seating plan should make provision for people with special physical needs, such as wheelchairs. Parking in the aisle is second-rate accommodation, and dangerous. cf. Seating Arrangement, p. 6.
7. Washrooms should accommodate the needs of people using wheelchairs.
8. The room for reconciliation should allow for easy access by wheelchairs, and an opportunity for anonymous confession. For the sake of the elderly, as well, there should be no step into any type of confessional. cf. Places for Reconciliation, p. 23.
9. There should be reserved parking for the physically challenged, in an area as close as possible to building access.
10. Ramps should have a gradual slope, a non-skid surface, rails for support, and lighting.
11. The door at the top of the ramp should be easy for access by persons with special physical needs, or for a wheelchair.
12. Physical spaces that are inviting and open enhance the experience of being a community in the Lord. Suitable location, comfort, ease of movement, appropriate materials, warmth, visual delight, a human scale and the availability of basic services ranging from handicapped access, to cloakrooms, to washrooms support human interaction. *OPW p. 19*

The Narthex

In Christian architecture great importance has always been attached to the entrance, whether it was a foyer, courtyard, or hall. It is a place of transition, a gathering place where welcome is felt and the forging of community begins already.

"The process of coming together is the beginning of worship. A gathering place is a presumption that the Lord is already among us as we recognize and greet each other."

SHC, p.9.

The entrance should be as generous and hospitable in size as the community can afford. It should be large enough for social exchange before and after the liturgy. The latter is especially important in a cold climate. Sufficient space should be provided to accommodate liturgical gatherings; processions, blessing of palms, rites relating to the Triduum and the Catechumenate, welcoming at baptisms, weddings and funerals.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The decor of the narthex, as well as the size, should express the spirit of hospitality. Some parishes have placed a statue of the patron saint in the narthex. A proper, artistic rendition is both devotional and welcoming.

Jesus is the host, the gathering assembly are the guests. A welcoming image of Jesus would be fitting in the narthex. "Whoever enters through me will be safe." John 10:9.

2. The gathering space should be enhanced by a "throne", or a fitting base for the processional cross, presuming that the procession to the altar begins there. This is much preferable to having the cross lean precariously against the corner of the wall.
3. The narthex should have access for the physically challenged. cf. Hospitality and the Building; p. 4.
4. Sound outlets in the entrance are necessary for liturgical movements (cf. Above), for the overflow crowds and for parents of restless children. cf. Acoustics. p. 28.
5. It would be helpful if the design of the building allowed for an adjoining coatroom where boots, umbrellas, backpacks, etc. could be stored. Churches are one of the few heated places where people gather inside without removing their extra clothing. cf. Hospitality and the Building, p. 4.
6. The church should have one principal, distinguished and welcoming entrance. The door should be rich, warm and hospitable.
7. A church building should, when possible, be situated within its neighbourhood in such a way that its symbolic function as the house of a holy people is obvious. A transitional space between the walls and parking areas not only accentuates creation's natural beauty but assists in making the transition from the everyday world to one where the ultimate meaning of life is experienced. To be kept in mind as well are the processions and movement of not only the ministers but the whole assembly that are part of the Church's liturgies. *OPW p. 23*

Seating Arrangement

In the early centuries there were no seats for the people when they gathered to celebrate the Eucharist. This endures even to the present in some of the great European churches. The installation of pews originated in the 15th century, and they are usual in our culture.

There is an inescapable connection between the placement of pews and the location of the sanctuary or altar. cf. The Sanctuary. p. 7.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The configuration of pews should allow the people to see each other. The Eucharist is a coming together of the people, a sort of weekly re-union, a gathering of the Lord's people. In a natural family gathering it would be important that people see each other. The same applies when God's people assemble, among whom God is present. cf. Hospitality and the Building, p. 4.
2. Aisles should be sufficiently wide to accommodate the liturgical processions referred to elsewhere in the Guidelines. cf. Narthex, p. 5.
3. Provision should be made for the seating of persons with physical challenges, and for those using wheelchairs. cf. Hospitality and the Building, p. 4.
4. Since the liturgical renewal there has been some movement from pews to more flexible seating arrangements involving the use of individual or inter-locking chairs.
5. Every Liturgical celebration requires that people gather as a worshipping community. Seating for this community can be interlocking chairs which provide controlled flexibility in seating. Pews may also be given an "open" and minimalist design. *OPW p. 25*

For sample designs, see page 30.

The Sanctuary

Historically it is clear that the original liturgical ordering of churches did not include what is known today as “the sanctuary” – cf. *The Church Building* p.2 - the Bishop was seated in the apse (an area which now would be called sanctuary), but the altar and the place of the word were located in the nave. In the 6th century the altar was moved to the apse.

The building and liturgical disposition of churches in Western Europe were influenced by the Roman basilicas, of course, and also by the Syrian and Byzantine churches. Developments in Europe, in turn, would greatly influence the Church in the whole western world.

A. THE FOLLOWING EVENTS HAD A MAJOR IMPACT

1. In the Middle Ages, three of the major focal points of the liturgy were located together in the sanctuary.
“The most common disposition, especially in France, England and Germany, which has come to us through the Middle Ages, simply betrays the progressive clericalization of worship by the fact that the bema, together with the seats of the bishop and clergy, has been brought most of the times into the immediate vicinity of the altar. At a date which cannot be ascertained exactly, probably already in the early Middle Ages, the chancel and choir, as it came to be called, was fenced from the main part of the church by a screen. The screen itself, at least in collegiate churches, came to be a wall, with only a central door leaving a scanty vision of what was happening inside but barring almost completely the people in the nave from any possibility of participation.”* *Liturgy and Architecture* by Louis Bouyer, chapter 5, p. 70.
**Bema, cf. The Ambo, p. 18*
2. The Advent of the Reredos
“At the end of the Middle Ages also at the Renaissance, the altar came to be dominated by a reredos: a more or less elaborated combination of painting and sculptures. Too often the reredos was developed for itself, so as to reduce the altar to a pretext.”
Bouyer, p. 77
3. The Tabernacle on the Main Altar
“In the 13th century the richly ornamented towers, usually on the north side of the altar, made their appearance to house the sacramental bread. It is only at the time of the Renaissance that they were both reduced in height and generally moved to a central place on the altar itself.”
Bouyer, p. 89.

It is easy to discover here the origins of both the pre-Second Vatican Council and the present sanctuary.

B. THE VISION OF THE CHURCH AND THE SANCTUARY

The vision of the Second Vatican Council relative to the celebration of the Eucharist embraces:

- a people sharing in the Eucharist in virtue of their sharing in Jesus’ priesthood. cf. *CSL #14.*
- a people called by baptism to a full, conscious, active participation. cf. *CSL #14.*
- a people who are not merely spectators of the liturgy, but rather celebrate the Eucharist under the leadership of the presiding priest. *cf GIRM Introduction #5.*

This vision makes demands on the physical arrangements for the celebration. When the people of God come to worship together they should enter a physical setting which tells them that they are included. A layperson once observed “the worship area should say who we are and what we do.”

C. *WORSHIP SPACE AS A SYMBOL*

Liturgy occurs in space and time, and therefore it requires a place. Objects from the environment are also drawn in to express what is in the soul. The place of worship is one of these objects. Because of the very nature of the people who occupy it and the activities which occur in it, the worship space must express more than merely practical or functional concerns; it needs to be a place in which it is good to express bodily faith in a full manner through ritualized action. It is a series of places or focal points for the bodily expression of the life of God with God's people, a symbolic embodiment of the faith of the assembly. It sustains both the representational symbols of the assembly and the elemental symbolic dimension.

As a symbol, it must be a place in which the visual sense is engaged, in which colour, surface, the fall of light and the play of shade and shadow are important and in which it is good to move and to physically express the movement of the spirit...

... Liturgy and the symbols of ritual address needs much deeper than the merely functional. They seek to make space for the realm of Holy Mystery and to evoke and to move us as whole persons, body and soul.

OP W p. 40-41.

D. *THE THEATRE-LIKE SANCTUARY*

The stage setting is common especially in churches built before the liturgical reform. Currently, in the building of new churches, there is a commendable effort to realize a configuration of pews which allows the assembly to be near the sanctuary. This is a helpful improvement but does not solve the problem entirely.

If the sanctuary is front and centre, with the pews in radial lines and concentric arcs, the theatre and stage image remains, regardless of the proximity of the people.

The arrangement of pews "can reinforce the idea that the church is a sacred theatre with a dominant stage where the action is taking place, while the people are an audience of passive spectators." NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74, p. 113.

Somewhat overstated perhaps, nevertheless, it remains that the theatre setting gives the impression that the priest is "up there", on stage, in a sacred reserve officiating on behalf of the people. It contradicts the vision of the Church. It gets in the way of the people properly fulfilling their role in celebrating the Eucharist.

E. *THE CHALLENGE*

"The Body of Christ united in one room signals its unity. When a person enters the room, there ought to be the feeling that one is no longer on the outside or on the fringes or wings looking in; one is onstage."

EAN, Sitting Proper, Feb. 1991.

The ideal is set forth here. There are many ways to approach that ideal both in new buildings and renovation projects. This is the challenge to the creative genius of architects and liturgical consultants.

F. AN IMPORTANT OPTION

“The better we know and understand, as from inside, the creative power of the Spirit which has manifested itself in the liturgical forms we have inherited, the more quickly we discover that, far from having to break with tradition to answer the needs of our own times, it is by rediscovering its plenitude that we shall be both free and able to do so. Always presupposing that we look at the liturgical forms not as they may have become, when they were no longer understood and had ceased to be the object of an intelligent, active and fruitful (as the Council says again and again), but as they were in their original freshness!”

Bouyer, Introduction.

Today in many churches the traditional sanctuary has given way to an even more ancient liturgical form which characterized the first Roman basilicas, namely the altar, ambo and chair in relationship to each other and to the assembly, but not located together. A reflection of this is found in St. Peter's Seminary Chapel, London, and in St. Basil's Chapel, Toronto. It is also reflected in many new and renovated churches in North America.

It is very important that the altar and ambo be located on a common axis, so that the Word may be clearly seen as leading to the altar.

It is not to disrespect or reject the traditional sanctuary to say that other liturgical settings, also part of the church's tradition, may better serve the vision of the Church for God's people today.

The Altar

For pagan peoples, as well as for God's chosen people, the altar was always the place for sacrifice. The first altars in the Old Testament were made from gathered stones (Gen. 28:28). Later on, of course, the temple altars were more elaborate.

The table of the Last Supper was no doubt wooden, fitting the time; as were also the tables used in the domestic settings for worship in the early centuries.

In the 4th century, altars made of stone were used in the basilicas converted to worship. At this time the practice of placing relics in the altar originated.

In the Middle Ages, the altar, ambo, and chair were located in the same area (the apse) which became known as the sanctuary. By the end of the Middle Ages the altar had been placed against the rear wall of the apse, and became dominated by a reredos, decorated with paintings and sculptures. The reredos diminished the sign of the altar. *cf. The Sanctuary #2, p. 6.*

In our day the Second Vatican Council has restored both the sign value of the altar and its table simplicity.

These historical references are from *Liturgy and Architecture, Louis Bouyer*; and *NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74*.

A. THE DOCUMENTS AND THE ALTAR

1. The altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible.
GIRM #299
2. In keeping with the Church's traditional practice and what the altar signifies, the table of a fixed altar should be of stone and indeed of natural stone. In the Dioceses of Canada, however, another natural material which is dignified, solid, and well-crafted may also be used, provided that the altar is structurally immobile. As to the supports or base for supporting the table, these may be made of any material, provided it is dignified and solid.
GIRM #301
3. The altar should be designed for the action of the community, led by one priest. Con-celebration should not be a factor in the design. It need not be elongated. A square or slightly rectangular shape is suitable.
EACW #72.
4. There should be only one altar in the church, otherwise the symbolism of the altar is diminished. It is not fitting that an altar should be used as a base for the tabernacle or a statue.
cf. Dedication of a Church #7.
5. The altar should not be a repository for candles, cruets, leaflets, books (other than the sacramentary), flowers, etc.
NBL, Vol, 13, No. 74.

The Altar Cont'd

B. THE ALTAR-TABLE

The altar-table should occupy a central position, though it is not necessarily located on the central axis. It should stand free and be approachable from every side so that ministers may easily walk around it.

Intended for the action of a single priest and an assembly, the altar-table should not be elongated but rather square or slightly rectangular, clearly visible without being monumental, and achieve a balance between the scale of the building and the purpose of the altar. The table form brings to mind most readily the supper of the Lord as the sacred banquet of God's people during the memorial of the cross and anticipation of the kingdom-banquet. An altar is either fixed or movable. Biblical symbols suggest that the table of a well-crafted material may be used. A movable altar may be made of any suitable and dignified material. The assembly space should have only one altar.

Because the altar is holy and sacred to the assembly's action of offering and sharing, it should be attractive, noble and well designed; it does not need additional ornamentation or lettering. Only the bread, wine, and the book required for the Eucharist are placed on the altar; it is never used as a stand for notes, papers or cruets. At least one cloth should be placed on the altar-table during the liturgy of the Eucharist.

OPW p. 26-27

The Ambo

The Mass consists in some sense of two parts, namely the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, these being so closely interconnected that they form but one single act of worship. For in the Mass is spread the table both of God's Word and of the Body of Christ, and from it the faithful are to be instructed and refreshed.

GIRM #28

One of the features of the ancient Jewish synagogue was the "bema", a platform, located in a central position, from which the Word was proclaimed. In the early Christian basilicas the bema was located between the Bishop's chair and the altar. There were two ambos on the bema with the major ambo being used for the gospel reading.

Webster's dictionary describes an ambo as "a pulpit or a raised reading stand in early Christian churches." The Second Vatican Council has revived the name ambo vis-a-vis pulpit, and more importantly has placed new emphasis on the place of the Word in the liturgy.

THE AMBO IN TODAY'S LITURGY:

1. The ambo is one of the four focal points of the church. From it the scriptural readings are proclaimed, the responsorial psalm is sung or read, the homily may be preached (*cf. The Presider's Chair, p. 13*), and the prayer of the faithful is sung or read. The ambo is also the proper place for the singing of the Exultet.
2. No special location for the ambo has been decreed. Its proximity to the altar is usual but not prescribed. The ambo should not be too close to the altar. In that case it would invade the altar's space, diminish the importance of both, and obstruct the gospel procession.
3. If the ambo is not located in the usual sanctuary setting, it is very important that the ambo and altar are on a common axis so that the Word may be clearly seen as leading to the altar. *cf. The Sanctuary, p. 9.*
4. Since the Mass is the celebration of the Word and the Eucharist, the ambo and the altar should be of equal dignity. Their relationship calls for them to be made of similar materials.
5. From the ambo only the readings, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exultet*) are to be proclaimed; likewise it may be used for giving the Homily and for announcing the intentions of the Universal prayer. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should stand at it.

GIRM #309

6. The ambo, or lectern, used for proclamation of the Scriptures should stand alone in an open space, its stature emphasizing its significance without overwhelming other focal points.
 - Good design, materials, and workmanship should make it unnecessary to ornament the ambo with secondary symbols.
 - The close harmony between the table of the word and the Eucharistic table should be evident in harmonious designs of the ambo and altar-table. At the same time, the "two tables" are distinct in shape and location.
 - The ambo is used for the proclamation of the Scripture. It may also be used for the responsorial psalm, the Homily, and the general intercessions. Other ministries of leadership, the song leader, the commentator, or the one making announcements, should have another place, with a smaller stand.

OPW p. 25

For sample designs, see page 25.

The Presider's Chair

In the ancient Jewish synagogues worship was organized around two focal points. They were, in the order of importance, the Ark and a ceremonial seat considered to be the seat of Moses. From this seat the living tradition of God's word was taught.

It would have been from such a seat that Jesus preached after he had proclaimed the scriptures in the temple. Luke 4: 16-21.

The seat of Moses was a place for teaching the Word. Perhaps this explains why the chair may be used today as a place for the homily. cf. below.

The chair of the Priest Celebrant must signify his function of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer. GIRM #310

The presider leads the community in prayer from the chair. He may also preach from the chair. In *Atlas of the Early Christian World* by Van der Meer and Mohrmann, it is stated that the "homily is associated with the cathedra and the reading from scriptural lessons with the ambo." The chair is no minor place. Along with the altar, ambo and baptistry it is one of the four liturgical focal points of the church building.

The chair is a derivative of the chair in the bishop's cathedral church, which represents the primacy of his authority and leadership. The name cathedral comes from "cathedra", the chair. The parish priests preside over the Eucharist as the delegates of the bishop. The presider's chair represents that of the bishop.

A. THE PRESIDER'S CHAIR IN TODAY'S LITURGY

1. The chair should be located to allow the presider to see and to be seen by the whole assembly which he is called to lead in worship. It may be necessary to elevate the chair to achieve this mutual visibility.
2. The chair should be related in material, style, and dignity to the altar and ambo.
3. The chair should not be a plush easy chair into which the presider could "disappear". It should allow for presence and dignity. Armrests are recommended. A chair with a throne-like appearance should be avoided.
3. The chair should stand alone, its importance undiminished by adjacent or attached seating. When a deacon or concelebrant is present portable stools or lesser chairs can be provided.
4. The presider presides over the assembly and directs the assembly's prayer. As well as presiding from the chair, the presider must be free to move to the different liturgical centres (font, lectern, table).
5. The presider's chair symbolizes the office of presiding, but it should never suggest domination, for the ordained president is a member of the faith community through baptism.
6. When developing the design of the worship space, the following should be kept in mind regarding the chair:
 - That the presider is seen to be a member of the assembly as well as its leader;
 - That it is placed so that the presider can focus visually on the reading of the Scriptures as well as listen;
 - That there is ample space for all that the presider does at the chair.
7. The design and material of the chair may resemble that of the people's seats, perhaps with the addition of arms. A seat for the deacon may be brought in and situated in relation to the presbyter's chair.

OPW p. 28-29

For sample designs, see page 25.

The Baptismal Font

In recent years the Baptismal Font has acquired the distinction of being linked with the altar, ambo, and chair as a focal liturgical and architectural point in the church. The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is responsible. The restored ritual sequence of Baptism, Confirmation, and Eucharist is now the liturgical norm for entrance into the Catholic faith, and with it has come a renewed interest in baptism, and where and how it is celebrated. This interest has uncovered the richness of the past.

Accustomed minimalism in the celebration of baptism makes it difficult to realize that baptism names us as God's own people. As one Christian writer has said, baptism is "a burial, birth and bath." cf. Romans 6: 3-4, and John 3: 4-5. This powerful symbolism is diminished significantly by the way in which baptism is usually celebrated.

A. THE DOCUMENTS ON A FONT FOR IMMERSION

1. *"As the rite for baptizing either immersion which is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, or pouring may lawfully be used."*
RCIA (Congregation of Divine Worship #22).
2. *"The font should be located near the entrance of the church or in another suitable place where people can assemble for the baptism. It should be a worthy vessel large enough to hold water for the immersion of a child, since this method is the most suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ."*
Rite of Baptism for Children, Pastoral Notes (Canada), p. 258.
3. *"If baptism is by immersion, of the whole body or of the head only, decency and decorum should be preserved. Either or both godparents touch the candidate. The celebrant, immersing the candidate's whole body or head three times, baptizes the candidate in the name of the Trinity."*
Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA) #220A.

The new baptismal font should, therefore, be constructed to allow for the immersion of an infant and the generous pouring of water over the adult. Such constructions (and there are many in North America) generally have an elevated section for the immersion of infants, with the water flowing from that section into a shallow pool beneath, used for adult baptisms. The sight and sound of moving water is a strong sign of the life-giving sacrament.

If this idea cannot be achieved immediately, the font should at least allow for immersion of infants.

The General Introduction to the Rite of Christian Initiation states that while the water rite may be carried out either by immersion or pouring, immersion "is more suitable as a symbol of participation in the death and resurrection of Christ" (no. 22). This suggests that the baptismal font be large enough for immersion, both of adults and children. The Roman Rite has traditionally practiced immersion (the candidate stands or kneels in water which may be of various depths) along with affusion (pouring of water over the candidate's head and body).

Immersion, which is not the same as submersion, is a more full and appropriate symbolic action than affusion alone. New fonts should be constructed to allow for the immersion of infants and for the pouring of water over the body of an older child or adult. If divided into two parts, a shallow pool or basin allows for the immersion of a small child; the deeper main section allows older children and adults to enter up to their knees or chest. The font may have "living" water which runs and recirculates.

OPW p. 24

The Baptismal Font Cont'd

B. PLACE OF THE FONT

“The place of the font, whether it is an area near the main entrance of the liturgical space or one in the midst of the congregation, should facilitate full congregational participation, regularly in the Easter Vigil. If the baptismal space is in a gathering place or entry way, it can have living moving water, and include provision for warming the water for immersion. When a portable font is used, it should be placed for maximum visibility and audibility without crowding or obscuring the altar, ambo and chair.”

EACW #77; cf. above A#2

C. PREFERRED LOCATION

There is a developing consensus in North America that the preferred location for the baptismal font is at or inside the main entrance to the worship area of the church. This location is preferred for many reasons.

1. This allows for the easy participation of the assembly in the rite; some may gather around the font if there is room, others may turn toward the font. The latter occurs at other liturgical celebrations, as well.
2. It gives maximum exposure so that the majority of the people are confronted with a regular, visual and powerful reminder of their baptism.
3. It allows the people to be touched by the water every Sunday. It can be used as the “holy water font.”
4. It provides a dramatic setting for parents to teach their children about baptism, as they are observed so frequently teaching them about the blessing with the holy water.
5. This location provides an excellent setting for the blessing and sprinkling of the people with the holy water when this is done to replace the penitential rite.
6. On the occasion of a funeral, the font located at the entrance is the ideal place for the parish to welcome the body of the deceased member. The final farewell thus opens at the place where his or her Christian journey began. Baptism into the death of Christ is recalled and the promises of resurrection held forth.
7. The baptistry, that is, the area which contains the baptismal font, must be intentionally chosen as the best area in the whole worship space (including the gathering area for the celebration of the sacramental entrance into the Church. Especially at the Easter Vigil, the spatial arrangement should facilitate the community’s gathering at the font. Not only is the assembly able to see, hear, and respond, but the participation of the believing community helps to build up its faith. When prominently situated as a true liturgical centre, the baptismal font reclaims its function as a holy water font. By dipping their hand into the water those already baptized recall their own entrance into the community of faith.

OPW p. 25

D. LOCATION IN FRONT OF THE ASSEMBLY OR NEAR THE ALTAR

1. This position may allow people to see more easily and so to participate in the rite.
2. It emphasizes the relationship between baptism and the Eucharist.
3. There are disadvantages:
 - the probability of competition between the font and the altar, especially if the font is designed for immersion and/or adult baptism. *SHC, p. 51.*
 - the loss to the assembly of the more personal contact with the font. cf. *Section C, No. 1* above. What is “up there” unfortunately takes on the aura of the untouchable.
 - the ritual action is set apart from the assembly; the impression is created of a stage where all the important things happen. *NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74.*
 - it obscures the truth that Christ is present in the assembly as well as in the word and sacrament.

The Baptismal Font Cont'd

E. LOCATION MIDWAY IN THE CENTRE AISLE

1. In this position more people are able to see the ritual action thus encouraging fuller participation.
2. This location highlights the concept that baptism is an initiation into the life of a believing community and so the new Christian experiences the waters of baptism in the midst of this community, surrounded and supported by their prayer and witness.
3. Sufficient space is required around the font for participants and processions. *NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74.*

F. LOCATION ALONG THE SIDE OF THE CHURCH

1. Whether it would encourage participation would depend on the seating arrangement.
2. Sufficient space is required around the font for participants and processions. *NBL, Vol. 13, No. 74.*

G. THE EASTER CANDLE IN THE BAPTISTRY

1. After the Easter Season the candle may be given a place of honour in the baptistry.
2. If the entrance procession begins from the area of the font, the processional cross may regularly stand in the baptistry. These two symbols of the death and rising of Jesus enrich the symbolic value of the font. cf. The Cross.
3. After the Easter season, the paschal candle is placed near the font to recall the connection of baptism with Christ's dying and rising. *OPW p. 25.* This candle, as a sign of Christ the Light, holds an important place during the Easter Vigil and Eastertide. During the remainder of the year, it stands near the baptismal font. Both stand and candle should be large and of good materials and design. No symbols apart from those required by the Easter Vigil ceremonies should be found on the candle itself. The stand might properly be sculptured or ornamented. *OPW p. 30*

For sample designs, see page 25.

The Ambry

The ambry, of ancient usage, is now making a welcome comeback. It is a place (usually a recess in the wall) where the oils are stored and displayed for the edification of the faithful. The Chrism Mass during Holy Week highlights the symbolism of the holy oils in Christian sacramental life. Afterwards, however, the oils are usually stored in a "safe hiding place". The ambry affords both an honoured place for them, and also a constant reminder of these signs of the Lord's healing, life-giving power.

1. The three sacramental oils should be clearly identified and stored in either identical or different styled containers.
2. The baptistry area is a recommended place for the ambry.
3. Direct sunlight can spoil olive oil. The containers should be air-tight. Cork stoppers fail the test. Translucent vessels are preferable to metal containers, some of which react to oil.

Reservation of the Eucharist

The earliest recorded reference to the reservation of the Eucharist was made in St. Justin's *Apologia* in the middle of the 2nd century. The first reference to reservation in private homes was found in the writings of Tertullian about the year 170.

Gradually, the purpose of reservation focused on viaticum and communion for the sick. The earliest recorded reference to the Eucharist as an object of worship was made in the year 1450.

The tabernacle as we have known it was virtually unknown until the 13th century. With the advent of the reformation in the 16th century the use of the fixed tabernacle on the main altar became entrenched, because it was seen as a clear testimony to and a defence of Catholic belief in the Eucharist. The reformation prompted the Council of Trent to emphasize the legitimacy of adoring the Eucharist.

The Second Vatican Council has inspired the most extensive Eucharistic reform in the history of the Church. It weeded out the misdirection found there, and embraced the richness. The Church today is the inheritor of that richness.

The official liturgical documents give clear direction on the doctrine of the Eucharist and its expression in liturgical practice.

Historical references are from *Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church* by A.A. King.

A. THE DOCUMENTS AND RESERVATION

1. According to a 1973 Vatican document, *Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass (HCWEOM)*, "the primary and original reason for reservation of the Eucharist outside Mass is the administration of viaticum," i.e. communion to the dying.
2. There are two secondary reasons for the reservation of the Eucharist: the giving of communion to the sick and the adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ present in the sacrament. *HCWEOM, #5.*
3. To respond to our devotional needs as well as to respect the two different aspects of the Eucharist, the Church strongly encourages that the Blessed Sacrament be reserved "in some chapel suitable for the private adoration and prayer of the faithful¹²⁹ and organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the Christian faithful." *GIRM #315b*
4. "The celebration of the Eucharist is the focus of the normal Sunday assembly. As such, the major space of a church is designed for this action. Beyond the celebration of the Eucharist, the church has had a most ancient tradition of reserving the Eucharistic bread. The purpose of this reservation is to bring communion to the sick and to be the object of private devotion. Most appropriately, this reservation should be designated in a space designed for individual devotion.

A room or chapel specifically designed and separate from the major space is important so that no confusion can take place between the celebration of the Eucharist and reservation. Active and static aspects of the same reality cannot claim the same human attention at the same time. Having the Eucharist reserved in a place apart does not mean it has been relegated to a secondary place of no importance. Rather, a space carefully designed and appointed can give proper attention to the reserved sacrament." *EACW #78*

Reservation of the Eucharist Cont'd

5. It is vitally important to understand the difference between the celebration of the Eucharist with the community, and private devotion: the difference between “the active and static aspects of the same reality.” EACW #78

“The Eucharist is seen first of all as an action, a celebration done in Christ’s memory and at this command. With Christ we thank God over bread and wine, which become - by the power of the Spirit - the body and blood of Christ, our food and drink” NBL, Vo. 13, No. 74

6. The Eucharist is reserved for the following purposes and in this order:

- Viaticum to the dying;
- Communion for the sick and for others absent from Mass; *and*,
- *Adoration of the sacred species.*

Communion from the tabernacle during Mass is not foreseen in the church documents since consecration of hosts at each celebration is the norm.

B. WHERE THE EUCHARIST IS RESERVED

“Therefore it is recommended that as far as possible the tabernacle be placed in a chapel set apart from the main body of the Church,” *On the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery* (1967), #53.

The documents then, clearly state that the Eucharist should be reserved in a chapel set apart from the main body of the church. Thus a suitable place is provided for private devotion vis-a-vis corporate worship.

“Apart from the main body of the church” means that the chapel should be within the confines of the church but distinct from and yet accessible to the worship area.

To reserve the Eucharist in a place apart is not to relegate it to a place of unimportance. Indeed, a properly appointed chapel can both honour the Lord’s presence and also help to encourage devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. *cf. Devotional Areas, p. 24.*

It is strongly recommended that the Eucharistic bread be reserved in a chapel, suited to private adoration and prayer, set apart from the main body of the church. A room specifically designed and separate from the major worship space will help avoid any confusion between the celebration of the Eucharist and Eucharistic reservation for the purposes mentioned above. Far from relegating the reserved sacrament to an unimportant place, a Eucharistic chapel, if properly designed and appointed, give it proper reverence and attention. Its atmosphere should be simple and warm, and able to support private adoration without distractions. OPW p. 35

C. THE DOCUMENTS PRESENT A SPECIFIC GOAL

“The place for the reservation of the Eucharist should be truly preeminent. It is highly recommended that the place be suitable also for private adoration and prayer so that the faithful may readily and fruitfully continue to honour the Lord, present in the sacrament, through personal worship. This will be achieved more easily if the chapel is separate from the body of the Church.” HCWEOM #9.

It flows from this and other texts of the documents that one of the special goals in the building of a church should be to achieve the solution preferred so strongly in the documents . . . , a chapel of reservation separate from the main body of the church. In the building of a new church this ideal can easily be achieved.

Reservation of the Eucharist Cont'd

D. NOTES ON THE CHAPEL

1. The tabernacle may rest in a wall niche, or on a pillar or column. It should not be on an altar which is a place for celebration and sacrifice. *cf. The Altar, p. 10.*
2. In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer¹²⁵. The tabernacle should usually be the only one, be irremovable, be made of solid and inviolable material that is not transparent, and be locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is prevented to the greatest extent possible¹²⁶. *GIRM #314*
3. The chapel should accommodate at least 6 - 10 worshippers. Individual chair-kneelers are preferred to pews.
4. The devotional character of the space should create an atmosphere of warmth while acknowledging the presence of the Lord.
5. Quietness, simplicity, beauty should distinguish the chapel.
6. It should support private meditation without distractions. If appropriate iconography or statuary is present they should not obscure the focus of reservation.
7. The chapel should not be used for daily Eucharist.
8. Ideally, the chapel would have access from outside as well as from the main body of the church. The tabernacle should be dignified, solid and immovable, and placed in a wall niche or on a pillar, but not on an altar. A ledge of sufficient depth is needed when the ciborium is to be removed. A single lighted candle or oil lamp should burn at all times.
9. The Eucharistic chapel should be retained for the sole purpose of quiet adoration and prayer. When it becomes necessary to celebrate the Eucharist in an area outside the main worship space, namely on weekdays, it is preferable to appoint a room other than the Eucharistic chapel for this purpose. Celebration of the Eucharist and adoration of the reserved sacrament should clearly appear as two distinct forms of worship conducted at different times. *OPW p. 35*

The Cross

The cross is an ancient symbol of Christian faith. It is central to the Christian life and the whole mystery of salvation. As such it is a basic element in liturgical celebration.

There is a certain ambiguity in the documents concerning the word “cross”. It could be interpreted either as a simple cross, or, as a cross with a corpus (crucifix).

In the Diocese of London the policy is that every church must display a crucifix in one of the several ways indicated in the following.

A. THE PROCESSIONAL CROSS

1. On the altar or close to it, there is to be a cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified. The candles and the cross with the figure of Christ crucified may also be carried in the procession at the entrance.
GIRM #143
2. The cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified, and carried in procession, may be placed next to the altar to service as the altar cross, in which case it must be the only cross used; otherwise it is put away in a dignified place.
GIRM #122
3. The processional cross is understood as the cross of the altar. cf. Above #2.
4. The processional cross should therefore be a visible, striking symbol. The cross is not a proper symbol if it fails either in artistic value or in size. If it is scaled down for a young server, it may not be of adequate proportions. In some parishes the carrying of the processional cross is reserved for adults.
5. There should be one single cross near the altar. Multiplication of the symbol lessens its value. When there is another cross prominently placed in relation to the altar, the processional cross should be put aside until the recessional is commenced. cf. Above #2.
6. The cross is a basic symbol which should be present in every Christian liturgical celebration; as with other symbols, duplication trivializes it. A single processional cross, carried into the worship space and placed there in a stand near the altar during the liturgy, is preferable to hanging an oversized crucifix on a rear or side wall, a distraction from the action of the sacramental representation of Christ's self-offering, or placing an undersized crucifix on the altar-table. If such a processional cross is not feasible, a free-hanging cross related to the altar-table is appropriate.
Our Place of Worship p. 30

B. A CROSS AFFIXED TO THE WALL

The large mounted cross is a powerful sign of the sacrificial love of Jesus, and of his redemptive work. The documents do not recommend a mounted cross in the area of the altar. This is supported by references to the processional cross as the “cross of the altar” and the lessening of the symbolism if multiplied, and the recommendation that the processional cross not be planted at the altar if another cross is prominently displayed in the area. The solution may be to have a mounted cross erected elsewhere e.g., in a devotional area. This may apply to a large cross which is especially revered in a parish.

C. A LARGE CROSS IN A STANDARD

This cross is portable, and so could serve various liturgical functions. The processional cross may not be able to meet all devotional or liturgical needs of the parish. A particular season or feast such as Good Friday, Triumph of the Cross, a reconciliation service, etc. may call for a larger cross or crucifix.

Music Space

Music is an integral part of the liturgy. The allocation of space must not treat it as an appendage.

“Among the many signs and symbols used by the Church to celebrate its faith, music is of preeminent importance”. *Music in Catholic Worship*, p. 23.

A. THE LOCATION OF THE ORGAN, CHOIR AND INSTRUMENTALISTS

1. “The proper placing of the organ and choir according to the arrangement and acoustics of the church will facilitate celebration. Practically speaking, the choir must be near the director and the organ (both console and sound) . . . the acoustics ought to give a lively presence of sound in the choir area and allow both tone and word to reach the congregation with clarity. Visually, it is desirable that the choir appears to be part of the worshipping community, yet a part which serves in a unique way...A location near the front pews will facilitate congregational singing.” *MCW #38*.
2. The location of the organ should be part of the floor plan, even if installation cannot be immediately achieved.
3. Visually, the choir should be part of the assembly. Since music is integral, the musicians must be integrated into the assembly. The choir and instrumentalists should be located in a significant place, but not in a sacramental area.
4. Since music is an integral part of all the Church’s liturgies, the location of the ministers of music and of the instruments requires careful consideration that is both technical, thus making use of the buildings acoustical characteristics, and liturgical; flexibility is highly desirable. Music ministers must be able to lead and strengthen the community’s song. The choir must be visible and be heard without being radically separated from the assembly. They may benefit from placement on a low, hard-surfaced platform which is not otherwise differentiated from the general assembly. *OPW p. 29*

B. MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

1. “In the Latin Church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem...it adds wonderful splendor to the church’s ceremonies...but other instruments may also be admitted for use in divine worship”. *CSL #120*. Accordingly, the pipe organ remains the strong preference. Parishes are encouraged to consult the diocesan Liturgy Office regarding the feasibility of a pipe organ.
2. Proper space must also be planned for other instruments. *EACW #83*. While the organ and piano may be permanent fixtures, string and wind instruments, and perhaps other keyboard instruments may be carried in and out.
3. “In the Latin church the pipe organ is to be held in high esteem;...it adds wonderful splendor to the church’s ceremonies...but other instruments may also be admitted for use in divine worship” (Constitution on the Liturgy, no. 120). In light of the strong preference for a pipe organ, music directors and other specialists should be consulted regarding the feasibility of such an instrument, even if it is to be installed at a later time. Its location and that of other instruments, including those brought in when they are to be used, will depend on the arrangement and acoustics of the worship space, keeping in mind that placement near the front of the assembly area will most easily support the assembly’s singing. This location, in a place that is significant but not a sacramental area, must be part of the floor plan of worship space. *OPW p. 32-33*

C. OTHER FACILITIES

1. There should be sufficient access to the sound system, electrical outlets, and appropriate microphones. *cf. Acoustics #4, P. 28.*
2. The building must be acoustically favourable to music, instrumental and vocal. It must treat the assembly space as the primary music source. *cf. Acoustics #2 and 3, p. 28.*
3. Musicians need storage space, and a place for rehearsals. If the parish can afford a music room it will be a great asset to the music program.
4. Parish musicians should be consulted in the planning of music space. Perhaps a pastoral musician from outside the parish should be engaged. Architects need expert direction in respect to the location and requirements of music space.

Places for Reconciliation

The objective today is to provide places for reconciliation which are welcoming and which encourage God's people to approach him in a spirit of peace and confidence.

A. THE RECONCILIATION ROOM

1. The room for the Sacrament of Reconciliation should offer penitents a choice between face-to-face meeting with the priest, or the anonymity provided by a suitable divider.
2. A soundproof room will allow the priest and penitent to speak in a conversational tone. A pleasant, relaxed atmosphere is important, along with controlled lighting, heat, and ventilation. A cross or crucifix, the sign of reconciliation in Christ, should be visible from both areas of the room.
3. Instead of a kneeler and armrest, consideration may be given to the provision of a chair for the penitent preferring anonymity. This would serve the special needs of the elderly and those with physical challenges.
4. The usual indicator lights should be on the door. In the instance of the face-to-face penitent or the situation described above, the priest would be required to control the busy signal.
5. The only purpose of the room is a place for reconciliation.
6. This room, a simple chapel within the house of the Church in a location worthy of the celebration of the sacrament, is an integral part of the initial design. A location which allows a view of the font or the altar-table at departure, or in some proximity to the place of Eucharistic reservation, might be considered. The sacrament is celebrated either seated face-to-face or with the anonymity on entering while allowing the penitent to view the chair and small table with a bible intended for face-to-face celebration beyond it. Sufficient light for bible reading and adequate ventilation together with sound-proofing are important. This is a holy space; it should never be used as a lounge or storage area. A place for posting times for the celebration of the sacrament of reconciliation should be incorporated into the exterior design.

OPW p. 34

Devotional Areas

The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* # 13 encourages popular devotions of the Christian people provided that they are in accord with the sacred liturgy.

A church building should nurture Catholic devotion. On the popular level there is a profound need for the tangible and the concrete in religion. The popularity of sacramentals are evidence of this. There are emotional needs and a spirit of fervour which must find expression in prayer.

Devotions can translate doctrines of faith into everyday religious practice, doctrines such as the Eucharist, the saving work of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, the special place of Mary in salvation history and the communion of saints. The health of a devotion may be judged by whether it is rooted in sound teaching and complementary to the liturgy.

A. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

1. The worship area of the church is primarily a place for celebration by the community. Only then does it come alive. Its real beauty and vitality shine forth in celebration. At other times it waits for the community to gather for liturgical action. This underlines the importance of devotional spaces for the faithful when they seek out the church as a place for private prayer and reflection.
2. The Way of the Cross is a precious part of our Catholic tradition. Likewise, appropriate statues and shrines.
3. Areas for objects of private devotion must be subordinate to the primacy of communal worship. For example, statues and paintings not related to the Eucharist should not be located in the area of the altar.
4. The Chapel of the Eucharist is first in order of importance as a place for private prayer. cf. Reservation of the Eucharist.
5. The devotional area may reach outside also through the construction of a shrine e.g. a Marian Shrine.

Art and the Liturgy

Beauty should be the accumulative effect of the church interior: its worship area, liturgical focal points, and accoutrements, devotional areas, the decor, and works of art.

Liturgy should offer an opportunity to experience an awareness of God, a sense of God's presence, a sense of mystery. This is not achieved with words only, no matter how prayerful. Everything in the church must come together to effect this desired experience of God, everything that worshippers see hear, touch and smell. Nothing is insignificant.

"A simple and attractive beauty in everything that is used or done in liturgy is the most effective invitation to this kind of experience."
EACW # 12.

Sumptuousness and excessive cost are not necessary. What is necessary is genuineness and reverent care toward everything that is used or done in liturgy.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy gives special attention to Sacred Art.

"The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as its very own but has admitted styles from every period, according to the proper genius and circumstances of peoples and the requirements of the many different rites in the Church. Thus, in the course of the centuries, the Church has brought into being a treasury of art that must be carefully preserved. The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, on condition that it serves the places of worship and sacred rites with the reverence and honour due to them, in this way contemporary art can add its own voice to that wonderful chorus of praise sung by the great masters of past ages of Catholic faith".
CSL #123.

A. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Furniture and all objects used in liturgy should be designed or selected in consultation with experts in liturgy and art. CSL #122; EACW #84.
1. These objects are too important, too expensive and too enduring to be commissioned or purchased without such consultation. Respect for competence and expertise in all the arts must be encouraged if quality and appropriateness are going to distinguish places of worship.
2. The furniture, sacred vessels, vestments, windows, devotional objects and musical settings should be of noble beauty rather than of sumptuous display. CSL #124.
2. Decisions about decor should be made only after consultation with acknowledged experts in interior decoration.
3. All furnishings and decorations should be honest and authentic. Imitation, artificiality and mediocrity offend the Christian sense of the sacred.
4. Local artists should be encouraged to employ their talents in the service of the community's worship. However, care must be taken to deflect well-intentioned volunteers who lack appropriate qualifications.
5. Specifically designed and commissioned objects are generally preferred to commercially produced goods.

Art and the Liturgy Cont'd

6. Objects which are voluntarily donated to the church should be accepted only after careful screening for appropriateness and quality.
7. Sacred images give warmth to the church and kindle the spirit of devotion. *cf. Devotional Areas, p. 24.*
 - Duplication, which diminishes effect, should be avoided;
 - Their number and prominence should be restrained so as not to divert attention from the liturgical focal points. CSL #125
 - They should be of deep artistic quality and should foster sound religious devotion.
8. The Church has adopted no one artistic style. Over the course of its history every worthy expression of beauty, originating from different peoples and cultures and appropriate to the church environment, has been welcomed. This holds true also for contemporary art “provided it brings to the task the reverence due to the sacred buildings and rites” (no. 123). “Noble beauty rather than sumptuous display” is the principle to be followed when commissioning works of art. Images should be of moderate number and placed in right order; those which foster unorthodox devotion should be removed (no. 125).
9. The constitution requires that church buildings and all furnishings meet high artistic standards, that they echo something of that uniqueness of the created world which comes from God’s Hand, and that they be fitted symbols of the Christian’s self-offering to God.
10. Whether works of art are integral parts of the fabric of the church building, function as objects destined for occasional or frequent use within the liturgy, or are placed in areas established for reflection and devotion, aesthetic quality and their uniqueness as work of the human hand are normative.
11. There is room in ecclesiastical art for both the traditional and the contemporary arts; quality must always be the aim. The Church respects new art forms suited to the people of today according to the mentality of the many different nations and regions (see *Guadium et Spes*, no. 62).
12. The task of the artists is to bring to mind the very creativity of God. Since everything which comes from God’s hand is unique, it is evident that mass-produced items do not suffice.

OPW p. 37-38

B. IMAGES

1. Ordinarily, three dimensional, mass-produced images will not be adequate for use in the space devoted to corporate worship. Icons and pictures of high quality which are reproductions of masterpieces of art may be the exception. Especially with respect to statuary, “when deciding on works of art,...give hearing to the Diocesan Commission on sacred art and...to others who are especially expert (*Constitution on the Liturgy*, 126).
2. An image of Mary, mother of God, and a church’s patron saint are most appropriately placed at the entrance, in the gathering space or in devotional areas adjacent to the main worship space, where the “saints” are those who join with the whole communion of saints in its praise of the triune God. Images should never be duplicated, and care must be exercised in their priority; for instance, a statue representing the Lord is of a different order of importance from that of a saint.

Art and the Liturgy Cont'd

C. GLASS

Glass may be transparent, translucent, coloured or clear. Clear or translucent glass may open onto a small or large natural scene; such vistas bring to mind far more powerfully than words that the world is sacrament and can lead worshippers to give glory to the world's Creator. They must not distract or blind (as might a large eastern – or western – facing window, or a wall of glass behind the ambo or altar table).

D. STAINED GLASS

While it is by no means essential for a Catholic church, stained glass can make a contribution to the dignity of the house of worship. It may be appropriate to use it in connection with a skylight, day chapel or baptismal area. Stained glass windows, of abstract design or with imagery, may provide an excellent “window” to the regional or local culture. Contemporary stained glass often includes sections which are transparent to the outside environment, allowing viewers to recognize the intimate connection between worship and daily life, whether that be city scape or rural landscape. Some regions of Canada have flourishing schools of stained glass artists who could well be commissioned to create an image of the patron saint.

E. VESTMENTS

In keeping with the “noble simplicity” and authenticity that characterizes Christian worship, it can be said that natural fabrics – wool and heavy, dull silks – with an overall weave or design and of excellent, full cut provide suitable and dignified vestures for presider and deacon. Appliquéd symbols should be utilized only very sparingly. A well-cut and cared-for white alb is the appropriate vesture for other ministers, such as acolytes, whose service extends throughout the celebration.

OPWp. 31-32

Audiovisuals

There remains serious doubt among liturgists about the use of audiovisual material within the celebration of the Eucharist. The doubt concerns:

- The danger that it may become a major focus, in conflict with the principal liturgical action.
- The danger that it may be handled unprofessionally, and consequently in a way that distracts from the liturgy.

Nonetheless if the parish plans to use audiovisual material, the design for a new church should make provision for it. Otherwise the future will bring makeshift and offensive arrangements.

Some worship facilities ... use projection, computer data projection, electronic reader panels and, in some cases, full multi-media presentations.

OPW p. 33

Acoustics

Audibility is a primary requirement for participation in the liturgy. A “dead” building, or a “too-live” building is an enemy to the liturgy. Ideally a sound system would not be necessary. Reality is another matter.

A. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

1. An acoustical expert should be engaged while plans are being drawn for the building. “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.”

The representative of the sound company which sells and installs the equipment must not be confused with acoustical expertise. Objective and expert counsel is required.

The sound system should be the best the parish can afford. It is an essential element.

2. A main consideration must be reconciliation of the sometimes conflicting demands of the spoken word and music.
3. The assembly area should be sufficiently “live” so that the congregation can hear itself as the primary voice in worship.
4. Microphone jacks should be installed at all the liturgical focal points, in the music area, before the assembly, here and there amidst the assembly, and in the entrance area.
5. Hospitality should lead to the provision of hearing-aids for the hearing impaired. Special equipment is now available for worshippers to use and leave in the church.
6. In order to achieve a good sense of the principles involved in creating an acoustically excellent worship space, *Acoustics* by Harold P. Geerdes (Pastoral Press, Washington D.C.) is recommended.
7. The materials used and their configuration should enhance the natural projection of the human voice. The use of carpeting should be carefully considered in consultation with acoustical experts. *OPW p. 21*
8. Since the spoken work is the primary means of communication, worship facilities rely on some form of a sound reinforcement system. The system consists of:
 - A loudspeaker system, which can be a centrally located cluster of components (the generally preferred system) or a distributed use of full range components (the alternate when a centre cluster is not feasible);
 - An electronics package, including microphone mixer preamplifiers, power amplifiers, plus all required signal processing equipment such as equalizers, limiters, and electronic crossovers; the microphone mixer/preamplifiers can be a rack-mounted auto-mixer, which provides a fully automated hands-off method of operation and where all electronics equipment is rack mounted and hidden away in a utility room, or it can be a sound-system-operator-controlled mixing console, which is operated from within the congregational seating area;
 - A microphone package;
 - A hearing assistance system.

OPW p. 33

Lighting

Lighting for a church does affect the prayer of the community. Too much light or insufficient light have an adverse effect.

1. The narthex, or gathering place, should have a warm and hospitable atmosphere. Soft, warm illumination is very helpful.
2. The nave should have several levels of illumination available; the nature of the service being celebrated should determine type and measure of lighting.
3. Lighting for the altar, ambo, chair, baptistry and musical space deserve special consideration.

The symbolic meaning of light is normally associated primarily with candles; the paschal candle, the assembly's vigil candles, altar candles, baptismal and votive candles. Occasionally, lighting systems add to the symbolic meaning, as at the Easter Vigil when a space is suddenly bathed in light to symbolize the triumph of the resurrection over death.

Light can give emphasis to various activities and their associated focal points, such as during a vigil or evening prayer, when in a field of low light a bright point is used to highlight a reader and ambo. The adjustment of light levels and focal points can also facilitate changes from liturgical to devotional uses and help to accommodate groups of different sizes.

Finally, light provides ambient or general lighting throughout a space, normally made up of a mixture of natural and artificial light during daylight hours. Natural and artificial sources of light must complement each other, both sources supporting and fostering the activities of the assembly. Flexibility in lighting different areas, the use of different kinds of fixtures and lamps, and the use of dimmers are appropriate. Window patterns which allow sunlight to speak of the wider range of creation, of the heavens, and of the passage of daily and seasonal time are aides to the liturgy.

The Sacristy

It is important to have a vesting room or space near the point where the procession to the altar originates. It is preferable that the usual sacristy be located nearer to the altar.

This room, or series of rooms, serves a number of purposes:

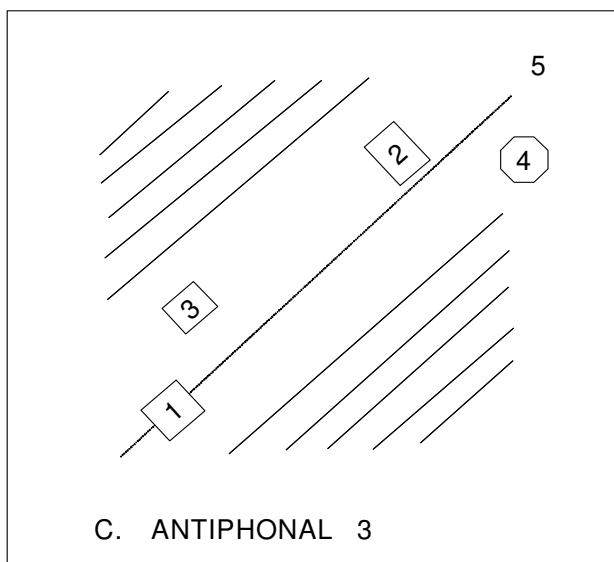
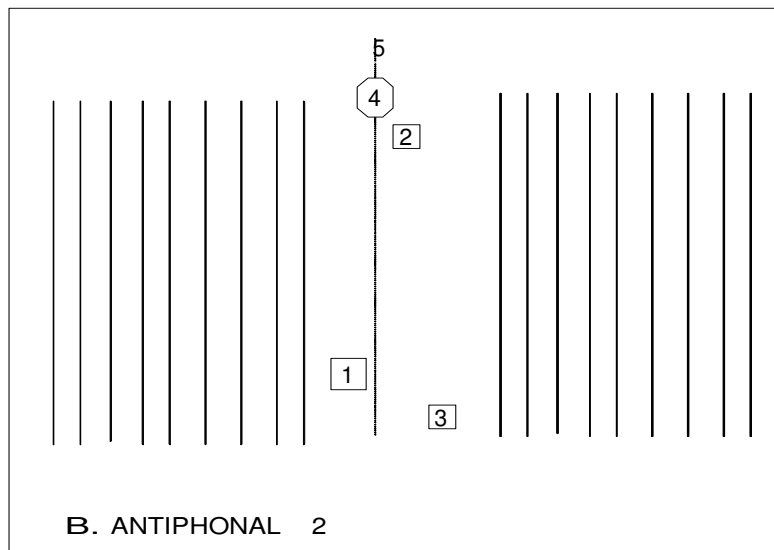
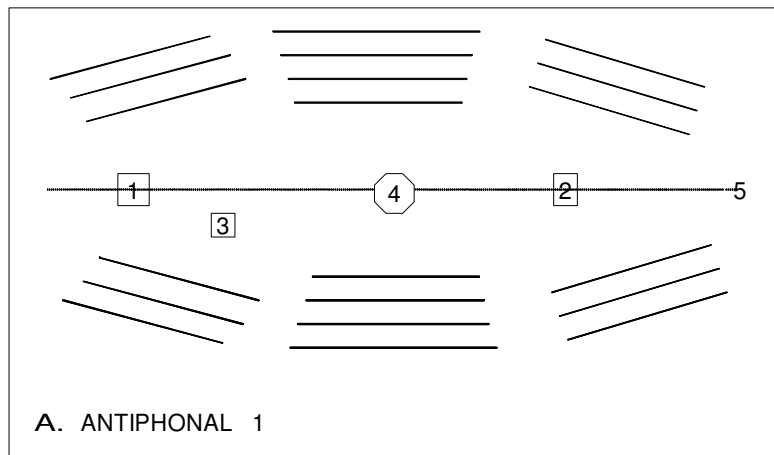
- A vesting area;
- A place from which controls for lighting, sound and mechanical systems are often operated;
- A preparation area which serves the needs of ambo, altar and seasonal display places;
- A storage area for a wide range of garments, cloths, small furnishings and vessels (and seasonal hangings).

The furniture and fittings needed are those suitable to each of its functions:

- A closed space for items which are best hung such as albs, chasubles and banners;
- Drawers for items such as stoles, linens and palls;
- Lockable storage with sliders for vessels, sound equipment, and other valuable accoutrements;
- A sink with hot and cold running water and in some dioceses a separate sink which drains to the earth, and a full length mirror.

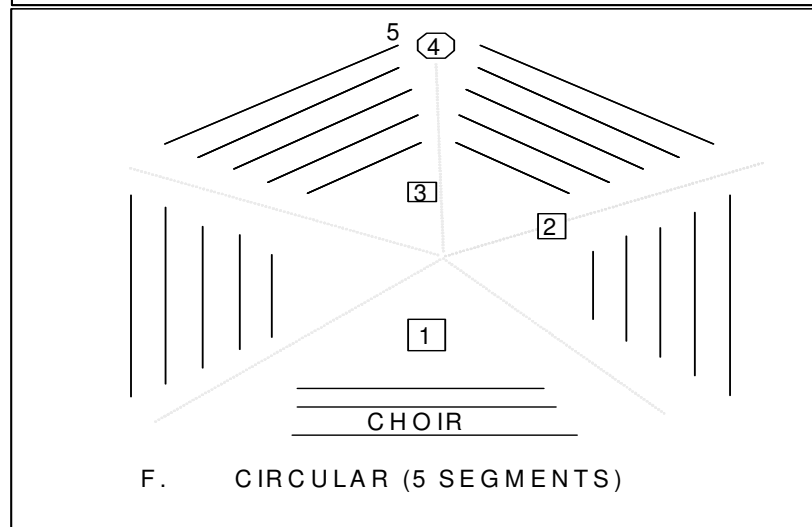
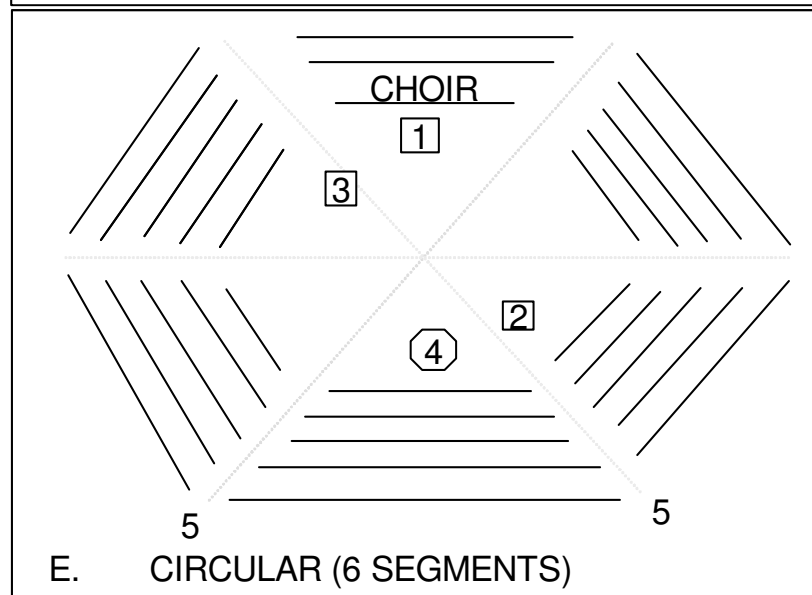
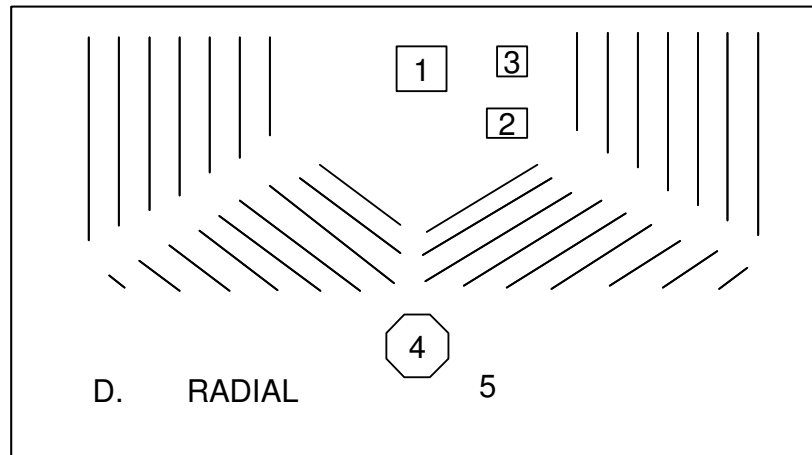
OPW p. 35-36

Some Samples of Basic Designs for the Worship Area



Legend

- 1. Altar
- 2. Ambo
- 3. Chair
- 4. Font
- 5. Entrance



Reference Code

CSL

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Documents of Vatican II, 1963

EACW

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EAN

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GIRM

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HCWEOM

Holy Communion and the Worship of Eucharist Outside Mass

Decree, Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship, 1973

MCW

Music in Catholic Worship, 1972

Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, USA.

NBL

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Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 90 Parent Ave., Ottawa, Ontario.

OPW

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Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops Ottawa, Ontario: November 1999

SHC

Shaping a House for the Church

Marchita Mauck, Liturgy Training Publications, 1990.

Acknowledgements

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