Christians do not build temples: Christians are temples!

A church building is a place where the Church — God's people of praise — gathers to worship God and celebrate the presence of the risen Lord among us. The form of our churches is based on and reflects our theology of the Church, and in turn, shapes the way we express our faith in our worship.

In this issue, we look at several important considerations about our church buildings:

• What they have meant in the past, and what they should mean today;

• How they will be designed or arranged to provide for better liturgical celebration in our time;

• The place and meaning of art in Christian worship.

Bulletin 74 provides many opportunities for personal and community reflection on the meaning and use of church buildings today.
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INTRODUCTION

TEMPLES OF GOD

The final book of the bible has many images for the heavenly kingdom and its liturgy. One of these images portrays the Church as the new Jerusalem, splendid and glorious: it does not have a temple, for its temple is the Lord God and the Lamb; it needs no sun or moon, for God's glory and the Lamb are its source of light (see Rev. 21: 1-27).

Temples of the Lord: Christ spoke of his own body as the temple of God (Jn. 2: 21-22). Paul told us that we are God's building, founded on Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3: 9-11). We are holy temples of God, and his Spirit lives within us (1 Cor. 3: 16-17). Our bodies are parts of the body of Christ, and temples of the indwelling Spirit. We are to live for God's glory; in the end, he will raise us as he raised Christ (1 Cor. 6: 14-20).

Called to praise: In Christ, the Father has chosen us from all eternity to be his holy people, living blameless lives before him and singing his praises through Christ our Lord (Eph. 1: 3-14).

God is present: God's presence among his people has long been recognized. In the Old Testament, he was present through the prophets, priests, and kings, through his word, and in his all-encompassing power. He was present in a special way in the temple, but was not limited to this place, for he is the Lord God of the universe: Blessed is he for ever!

Jesus is present: In Jesus, God became present among us in a new and wonderful way: the Word pitched his tent and lived in our midst, as one of us. He is our Emmanuel, God who is with us (Mt. 1: 23). After his resurrection and ascension, he remains at the right hand of God, in unending praise and in intercession for his kingdom. Yet, as promised (Mt. 28: 20), he is with us to the end of time: in his Church, in his word, in his ministers, in his sacraments (Liturgy constitution, no. 7); in all who are needy (Mt. 25: 31-46); with us whenever two or three gather in his name (Mt. 18: 20). He continues to be with us through the power of his Holy Spirit.

* * *

These elements — God's presence in Christ, and our common vocation to be holy people of praise through Christ in the Spirit — are the basis of our understanding and use of buildings in our worship. A church building is first of all the house of the Church — the place where the Church, the beloved people of God in this place, gather in the Spirit to hear the word of the Lord and to offer praise to the Father through Jesus Christ.
The following articles talk about the Church (God's holy people), and then about churches (buildings in which these people worship).

WE ARE THE CHURCH

The Church is not primarily an organization or a structure: it is the whole Christ, the people of God with Christ as its head and with us as its members.

There are many images in the New Testament for the Church which Christ began. These are listed by Vatican II in the Constitution on the Church, nos. 6-7. All these images are like facets of a diamond, each showing part of its beauty, reality, and mystery in a new way. If we were to consider only one or two of these images, we would be quite limited in our perception of the Church of God.

In 1974, Avery Dulles helped us to see how models or images of the Church influence our thinking and our action (see “Helpful reading,” at the end of this article). Our ecclesiology affects our liturgy, our attitudes in prayer and worship, and our openness to God’s mercy in Christ.

Liturgical renewal: Since the debates on liturgy at Vatican II in 1962 and 1963, we have seen many changes — in structures, forms of worship, language, ceremonies, prayers, and even in attitudes. But the real renewal is just beginning. Now that the furniture has been moved, we can begin to feel at home in the renewing Church: now we can seek to grasp the mystery of the Church a little more, and see it more as God sees it.

In the scriptures and in our tradition (including the liturgical texts and rites of our heritage), we may come to see a little more what the Spirit wants the Church to be today. This is to be seen both in today’s world — of which we are a part, and which we are called to serve and save — and in prophets and ministers being raised by the Spirit in our time.²

Christ’s Church: We do not make the Church exist. It is Christ our Lord who invites us to be his people, who buries each of us in his death and gives us new life in his resurrection. It is Christ who calls us to baptism, and who sends his Spirit to guide our lives as members of the body of Christ.

Where do we find the Church? Two modern documents help us to see how the Church is to be seen today in its worship. These are the Constitution on the Liturgy and the General Instruction of the Roman Missal.³

¹ The English word “Church/church” comes through old English and German from the Greek kyriakon, meaning the Lord’s, or belonging to the Lord. The Scottish word “kirk” is also derived from the Greek term.


³ GI: This abbreviation indicates the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. Written as a pastoral introduction and explanation of the rites of Mass, it is found at the beginning of the sacramentary; it is given on pages 11-54 of the Canadian edition.
• Around our bishop: When the people of God gather around the bishop — assisted by his presbyters and other ministers — and are one in prayer and in liturgical worship (especially in celebrating the eucharist), the Church is revealed “most clearly” (Liturgy constitution, no. 41; GI, no. 74).

• Around our pastor: When the parish community gathers for worship, particularly in the Sunday eucharist, the universal Church is made visible in this place (Liturgy constitution, no. 42; GI, no. 75).

To these must be added, of course, that we find the Church in its Christian action: serving in love, witnessing to the truth, suffering, obeying God’s will, advancing his kingdom, proclaiming his word and his glory.

Our Church today:

• Temptation: Jesus told his disciples that they should not lord it over others as pagans did: they are to serve others as he did (Lk. 22: 24-27; Jn. 13: 13-17). “Triumphalism” was a current topic during the years of Vatican II. Is it still a temptation in today’s Church? (What about our buildings? our human laws restricting certain people and vocations from specific ministries? our prejudices, misconceptions, fears?)

• Always in need of reformation: The Church, says the Council, is always holy, and yet “always in the need of being purified,” as it constantly follows “the path of penance and renewal” (Constitution on the Church, no. 8).

The Council set out to reform whatever observances and practices could be renewed (Liturgy constitution, no. 1; see also no. 21). This renewal needs to be carried out by each generation.

• Standing in the need of prayer: We need to pray for the Church — for all of us: parents and children, laity, ministers, religious; pope, bishops, and priests; all categories and types of believers; for the strong and the weak. Day by day, we ask God to strengthen us with his Spirit, to help us to obey his will, to guide us in doing his work and extending his kingdom. If we do not pray for the Church each day, who will?

• Church in this place: Though we are a pilgrim people, most of us live in one place for a period of time. We have to remember that we — not the building at the corner of University and Main — are the Church in this place.

• Mission of the Church today: What are God’s people supposed to be doing today? We are here to continue the work of Christ: to give glory to God by our words and our lives, and to help to save the people he has created.

* * * * 

4 The Liturgy constitution gives further references to St. Ignatius of Antioch, who was martyred around the year 110. See his letters in Early Christian Writings: The Apostolic Fathers, edited by Maxwell Staniforth (1968, 1972, Penguin, Hardmondsworth, Mdx.), pages 61-131. See particularly his letter to the people of Magnesia, no. 7 (pages 88-89); of Philadelphia, no. 4 (page 112); and of Smyrna, no. 8 (pages 121-122).
Our church building: Does our church building — the house of the Church — reflect what the people of God are and should be today? Is it simple and sincere, a sign of faith and loving service? Is it a concrete sign that we are believers in a humble Jesus, who came to serve and to save? Does it reflect the beauty and order that God put into his creation? Does it bring people closer to God in Christ? Is it a sign of Christ's welcome to all?

* * *

Helpful reading: These books will help us to appreciate the Church more fully:


The Church as Reflecting Community: models of adult religious learning, by Loretta Girzaitis (1977, Twenty-Third Publications, PO Box 180, West Mystic, CT 06388): reviewed in Bulletin 64, page 186.


See also This is the Church and Initiation into the people of faith, in Bulletin 73, pages 51-57.

* * *

Lord Jesus Christ, our brother and our savior, we praise you for your glory.
We thank you for calling us to be your Church, and for sending us your Spirit to guide us in our prayer and worship to the Father.

Look on us with love as we gather here to praise you. Teach us to recognize your presence among us, and help us to work, suffer, and pray with you. Let our church be a sign of our faith and devotion, a declaration of our willingness to serve you in others.

We praise you, Lord Jesus, and ask you to bless us, for we are your beloved people, one in the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen!
The church buildings that we know today stand in a long line of history. As we come to know our past more fully, we begin to understand the present a little better. This article takes a brief glimpse at our history.

Background to Christianity

Sacred space: Many ancient civilizations had places set aside or dedicated to their gods. These sacred areas or temples give us insights into the religious beliefs of these groups and of ourselves today.

- Prehistoric tribes: From prehistoric times, we find evidence of underground caverns and excavations which early peoples decorated and set aside as special places. Burial places are sacred. Fecundity figurines and cave paintings show evidence of human ability to observe nature and portray its wonders.\(^1\) Temples and places of worship, built as an important part of towns and holy places, are part of the heritage of Western civilization.

- Egyptian temples: The Egyptian world was represented in 3,000 years of architecture by two lines or axes: south-north for the life-giving Nile, and east-west for the sun. The most important buildings in their architecture are tombs and mortuary chapels.

  Egyptian temples consist of an inner sanctuary or oasis, where the god lives and appears to his court; a roofed hall with forest-like columns (hypostyle) leading to the sanctuary; and an outer courtyard with columns.

  Their architecture combines an enclosed sanctuary, a great mass of stone, the relationship of the vertical and the horizontal, and a path or axis.

- Greek temples: By the seventh century BC, Doric temples were evolving. Greek temples place emphasis on beauty and order. They are designed for a specific purpose, and are in harmony with the landscape. The outside colonnade is of importance. Within is a *cella* with the god's statue. Sculpted friezes are still seen in some temples that remain.

  The art and architecture of the Greeks had a strong influence on the Romans, who conquered them, and on the rest of the Western world.

- Roman buildings: When a building was being planned, an augur divided the space along a north-south axis (the axis of the world), and a line from east to west (the path of the sun): thus Roman cities and their buildings were in harmony with nature and the gods. Individual buildings were integrated into their setting within the city.

  The Romans developed a new interest in interior space. Their temples contained a porch and an interior *cella* or shrine. The front of the building was strong in its features, and dominated those who assembled in front of it; the sides and back were less important. Many Roman temples — including the circular Pantheon and the temple of Juno Moneta — still stand in Rome today.

  The Roman basilica was a long rectangular building, facing the forum. It had side aisles and a taller nave to enlarge the impact of the interior and to provide daylight within. Basilicas were municipal buildings, used for public assemblies and for courts. The basilica form — rather than that of pagan temples — strongly influenced the shape of later Christian churches.

---

• *The Jewish temple at Jerusalem:* There were three temples: the temple of Solomon, built in the tenth century BC and destroyed in 587; the temple of Zerubbabel (completed in 515); and the temple of Herod (a complete reconstruction, lasting over a period of 46 years — see Jn. 2: 20 — beginning in 19 BC, and destroyed by Titus in 70 AD).2

In Herod’s temple, the one known to Jesus, there were several areas, at varying distances from the center of holiness: the outer courts, which Gentiles could enter; the women’s court, which contained the alms boxes (see Lk. 21: 1-4); the court of the Israelites, for men; the court of the priests; the sanctuary or holy place; the holy of holies. Prayers and sacrifices took place in the temple each day.

For the Jewish people, the temple was the house of their God (see Psalms 122, 134, 135), where the *shekinah* (the glory of God) remained as a sign of his presence (1 Kings 8: 9-13, 27-30; 2 Chron. 5: 11-14). The temple was called a house of prayer for all nations (Is. 56: 7; Mt. 21: 13). After the temple was destroyed by the Romans, the Old Testament system of sacrifices ceased, and synagogues continued as their places of instruction and worship. Today the mosque of Omar occupies the site of the temple of Jerusalem.

• *Synagogues* were in existence for some centuries before Christ, both in Palestine and in many pagan areas where Jewish people had settled. The word *synagogue* was first used for the community, the people assembled by God. Soon the name was transferred from the people to the place of assembly.

Synagogues were and are meeting places for instruction, reading of the law and prophets, and prayer. After Titus destroyed Jerusalem and its temple in the year 70, synagogues around the world helped Jewish people to preserve their faith and heritage. To this day, synagogues continue to fulfill this all-important role.

A synagogue is a hall or place of assembly. It contains no altar: altar and sacrifice were reserved to the one temple in Jerusalem. A special cabinet — in memory of the ark of the covenant — holds the scrolls of the law and the prophets (see Lk. 4: 17, 20). The building was usually oriented toward Jerusalem, the city of the temple (see Dan. 6: 10-11).

A group of laymen presided over the synagogue. The New Testament describes them as “leading men” (NAB), “rulers” (RSV), “presidents” (JB), or “officials” (JB). In the synagogues there were no priests. Any man who was a member of the congregation, or a visitor, could be asked to lead the prayers, read the scriptures, or explain them. (See Lk. 4: 14-28; Acts 13: 14-43.) If a priest were present, he would pronounce the final blessing. During the week, scribes taught the meaning of the scriptures to young people.

A synagogue of the first half of the third century has been excavated in Dura Europos, in modern Syria. Two-dimensional wall paintings portray Old Testament subjects such as Abraham and the vision of the dry bones (see footnote 5 on page 105).

**Early Christians**

*New Testament:* In the Acts of the Apostles, we read of the breaking of bread in homes (Acts 2: 46). A gathering in an upper room on the first day of the week is described in Acts 20: 7-12. The *Church which meets in the house of a particular person* is mentioned in Rom. 16: 3-5; 1 Cor. 16: 19; Col. 4: 15; and Philemon 3.

For the first years of Christianity, the Christians in Jerusalem continued to go to the temple for worship (see Acts 2: 46; 3: 1; 21: 26-27). Paul and the other apostles also went to the synagogues (see Acts 13: 5; 13: 14-15; 19: 8). Only later were believers in Jesus expelled from the synagogue (see Jn. 9: 22, 34-35).

The New Testament teaching emphasizes that we are a holy and priestly people (Eph. 1: 4-6; 1 Pet. 2: 9-10). We are temples (1 Cor. 3: 16-17; 6: 19-20), and God lives in us, his temples (2 Cor. 6: 16). We are God's building (1 Cor. 3: 9). We are living stones in God's temple (1 Pet. 2: 5). We offer spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus (1 Pet. 2: 6), and our lives are to be living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12: 1): see the Constitution on the Church, no. 6.

The vision of the new Jerusalem points out that there is no temple, for God himself and the Lamb are its temple (Rev. 21: 22). Jesus referred to his body as the temple (Jn. 2: 19-22).

These passages were written in a context of temples. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70. The presence of many pagan temples in the Roman empire of the first century was a source of pressure on the Christians (see Acts 15: 20, 29; 19: 23-40; 1 Cor. 8: 1-13).

"We do not have shrines and altars!" With this sort of scriptural background and pagan milieu, it is easy to understand why the Christians continued to show the highly spiritual nature of their life and worship. They emphasized how much Christian worship differed from that of the pagans.

- **Minucius Felix:** Writing to educated pagans around the year 200, he points out that Christians have no shrines and altars. They are not trying to hide their God, but ask: Who can make an image of him, when he has made us in his image? Who can build a temple or shrine for God, the maker of the world? We should be dedicating our hearts and minds, rather than buildings, to our God. 3

- **Origen:** Answering the pagan charge around 248 that Christians avoided building altars, statues, and temples, Origen of Alexandria pointed out that each Christian is a temple; each believer's heart is an altar where the pure incense of prayer is offered. We honor the Son of God, who is the image of the invisible God (Jn. 1: 18; Col. 1: 15), by conforming ourselves to Christ's image as we seek to grow in virtue.

Christians find it repugnant, notes Origen, to build inanimate temples to the living God: our bodies are the living temple of God, just as Jesus' body was the most excellent temple. We avoid building temples, statues, and altars because Jesus teaches us how to give true reverence to God. Jesus alone is our way of giving honor to God, for the Lord Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. 4

- **As early as 211-212,** Tertullian in North Africa speaks of the church as the house of God.

An early example of a Christian house church was uncovered in the 1930s in excavations at Dura Europos in modern Syria. 5

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 the 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 by a canopy. The walls of the baptistry were decorated with frescoes of events from the Old and New Testaments.


A diagram and description of this church are given in The Study of Liturgy, pages 474 and 481; illustrations of the art and a plan of the church are contained in The Origins of Christian Art, pages 26-31; see also Art in the Early Church: on the church and its baptistry (pages 16, 44, 89, 91-92; and plates 36 and 42); and on the synagogue (pages 15-16, 43-44, 180; and plate 35). [Full references to these books are given on page 108.]
Persecutions: Speaking of the period between 250 and 300, Eusebius tells how Christians began building spacious churches to replace old buildings. These were owned by corporations or local associations of Christians. When persecution was renewed, the authorities levelled churches, burnt the scriptures, removed the communion vessels, and tortured or killed believers.6 Around 305, the Council of Elvira in southern Spain passed a canon forbidding pictures on the walls of the church.7

Catacombs: Popular fiction used to picture the catacombs as the places where the Christians could gather for worship during times of persecution. Today, further studies have shown that this image is not true: the catacombs were not used as churches by the early Christians.8

Now We Can Have Basilicas!

Constantine: In 313, Constantine granted religious freedom to Christians and all others, and restored the places of assembly confiscated by law during recent persecutions. Until his death in 337, Constantine was the champion of the Church. He gave bishops the rank and dignities of civil officials, and made Sunday a civil day of rest. He promoted the building of major churches in Rome, Jerusalem, Bethlehem, and in Constantinople, where he established his new capital in 330. St. John Lateran, the pope's cathedral church, was built between 313 and 320, and the first St. Peter's was raised over the tomb of the apostle from 324 to 330.

The euphoria that rocked the Christian people after waves of persecution by the government and its officials may be compared to that of the Israelite people described in Ps. 126. Eusebius describes how new places of worship were built in the cities, and dedicated with majestic ceremonies.9

Basilica: The model for the new churches was not the pagan temple but rather the civic basilica or place of assembly. The basilica is a rectangular building: the interior is like a path or street leading to the apse where the bishop sits as father of the gathered family. (In the secular basilica, this was the place of the magistrate.) Light comes from the clerestory, windows along the top of the walls. The assembled people stood, since seats were not provided for them.

The influence of the basilica has remained in the Western Church until the present. With the building of larger churches, the liturgy developed from small-group celebrations to large assemblies: vesture, music, and ceremonial were affected; incense and torches — civil signs of honor — entered the liturgical rites. The new churches in Jerusalem led to the development of elaborate Holy Week ceremonies and the expansion of the liturgical calendar by historical commemorations: see Bulletin 47 for the development of the liturgical year in the fourth century.10

7 A New Eusebius: Documents illustrative of the history of the Church to AD 337, edited by J. Stevenson (1957, SPCK, Marylebone Road, London NW1 4DU): canon 37, page 308.
9 The History of the Church, by Eusebius: Book X, 4: 3, page 383. This passage is quoted in Bulletin 58, page 85.
Reminder: St. John Chrysostom reminds us that the church building does not sanctify the people who enter; rather, the people who come in make the church holy.11

Medieval Developments

The middle ages (roughly 500-1500) saw the development of great styles of church building: Byzantine, Romanesque, Norman, Gothic, and Renaissance. While the buildings were magnificent in scope and as expressions of the community's faith, they also enshrined and crystallized certain tendencies and weaknesses in liturgical practice.

Altar seen as a tomb: Originally a wooden table for the eucharistic meal, the altar came to be a stone tomb for the martyrs whose relics were sealed within. It gradually took on the shape of a tomb.

Fenced off from the people: As the place of the clergy became more holy and segregated, the area around the altar became a “sanctuary,” where ordinary people could not enter.

Silent canon: A parallel development saw the words of the canon or eucharistic prayer taken away from the people's hearing. Prayed in Latin at a time when the vernacular languages of Western Europe were developing, it was no longer intelligible; moreover, priests began to say it silently as being too holy for profane ears. (This continued until the 1960s.)

Disintegration of the rites of Christian initiation: See page 124.

Decreasing participation: As people became less aware of the meaning of their sharing in the priesthood of Christ and in their participation in the liturgy, their active participation fell off. They received communion less frequently, until the Fourth Lateran Council had to legislate annual Easter communion in 1215. The chalice was no longer given to the laity, and all received on the tongue. Leavened bread brought by the people was replaced by unleavened wafers made by special persons. Preaching during the liturgy gradually fell into disuse. Fewer scripture readings were proclaimed, and then in Latin. The prayer of the faithful dropped out early.12 Elaborate allegories were developed to “explain” what was happening during the rites.

People at a distance: Particularly in the Gothic and Norman churches, the altar and sanctuary became more and more distant from the people. What went on in the sanctuary seemed to have little to do with the people; indeed, rood screens were built which obscured their vision or even prevented them from seeing what was happening in the sanctuary.

Tabernacles moved onto the altar: As people lost sight of their own role in the liturgy, their focus of attention was placed on the eucharistic presence of Jesus, both in the reserved sacrament and during the Mass. Elevations were introduced into the Mass in the thirteenth century (see Bulletin 54, page 165). Gradually, the Mass moved from a eucharistic meal honoring the Father to a means of confecting the real presence and honoring Christ.

Occasional reactions against elaborate churches: From time to time, people have reacted against elaborate church buildings:

- St. John Chrysostom (c. 349-407) reminds us not to neglect the naked and cold Christ outside by providing silk garments for the church.13 Our brothers and sisters should be clothed before we adorn the church, for our fellow Christians are the most precious temples (see Mt. 25: 31-46).

- Iconoclasm: In 726, the emperor in Constantinople placed a ban on images of God, Christ, angels, and saints, and on veneration of images. Only symbols — such as a cross — were permitted. Many works of art were destroyed or covered over, and replaced by non-

12 Compare the reforms of the Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy, nos. 50-56. See also Bulletin 55, pages 247-249.
13 See Homily 50 on Matthew, 3-4 (PG, 58: 508f.).
representational art. The tendency to iconoclasm came from the Eastern part of the empire, and was related to some extent to the Old Testament prohibition of graven images, lest they lead to idolatry (see Deut. 5: 8-10). A similar prohibition existed in Islam, which dates from 622.

In 787, the Empress Irene assembled the Second Council of Nicaea (the seventh ecumenical Council): the orthodoxy of making and venerating images was upheld. Another but lesser wave of iconoclasm returned from 815 to 843. After it ended, Byzantine art went back to its classic tradition and became stronger.

- **St. Bernard of Clairvaux** (1090-1153) was also strong in his criticism:

  The Church clothes her stones with gold
  and leaves her sons naked;
  the rich man's eye is fed at the expense of the poor;
  the curious find delight,
  the needy find no relief.

### Modern Developments

The Second Vatican Council began to return the Church to its earlier theology, which is closer to that of the scriptures and of the first Christian centuries.

These developments include a return to the theology of the Church as the people of God; to participation in the liturgy by all the baptized in virtue of their baptismal sharing in the priesthood of Christ (Liturgy constitution, no. 14); to a realization that all are celebrating the liturgy; to a better understanding of ministries in the liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 28). Gradually further insights have developed: people — and not things — are holy; the altar is placed in the midst of the whole community, and is not removed from it.

As the meaning of *Church* and *church* develops more clearly (see pages 100-102, above), the possibility of multi-purpose churches is being recognized.

The **Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar**: In 1977, the Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship issued the most up-to-date expression of Catholic theology on the meaning of churches (1978, CCCB, Ottawa).

Helpful reading:


14 "Iconoclast" comes from the Greek words: *eikon*, image, and *klastes*, breaker.

15 Quoted from "Abbeys of Europe," by Ian Richards, in *Great Buildings of the World* (1968, Hamlyn, Feltham, Mdx.): see page 88. [We could ask ourselves if this is true of us as we enter our own community's place of worship.]

16 This is clearly described in *Toward a Renewal of Sacramental Theology*, by Raymond Vaillancourt (1979, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321): see review in Bulletin 71, page 238.
TODAY'S CHURCH — AND TODAY'S CHURCHES

What should we be as God's Church? As we grow in our faith-filled understanding about what the Church should be today, we have to ask ourselves: What does God want us to be in this modern world?

But indeed we exist solely for this, to be the place He has chosen for His presence, His manifestation in the world, His epiphany.¹

We are to be the light of the world, a sacrament or sign of unity and of Christ's presence in the world. We are to be the salt of the earth. We are to live our faith in love as followers of Jesus, imitating him by serving others in love.

By our actions, what do we proclaim that we are? As individuals and as a believing community, what are we saying? Does the world see our efforts to accept Christ’s values for today, and to live in love and service? By our lives, are we missionaries who bring others to the Lord Jesus?

* * *

What should our church buildings say about us? In their simplicity, they should show our dedication to the things of God. In their beauty, they should proclaim his greatness. In their attitude of welcome, they should make all people of good will feel at home.

In their prayerful atmosphere, they should be a house of prayer. In their cleanliness, they should reflect our respect for God. In their dedication to God's worship (rather than to merchandising), they should be external images of his people, who are temples of the Spirit. In their arrangement of space, they should proclaim that we are a priestly people.

What do our church buildings actually say about us? Do they say that the people are silent spectators? Do the narrow aisles deny all a place in real processions? Does a proliferation of distractions take away from the altar, book, and font — the main focuses of our worship? Do litter and dirt reveal our attitudes? What do inadequate lighting and a poor sound system say about the privilege and duty of all to participate? What do our liturgical books, vestments, quality of bread and wine, and style of vessels say about our worship? Are banners worthy expressions of our faith, or cheap fads? Do we have uplifting art, or cheap reproductions? What about our music?

* * *

Whatever the answer to these questions, there is one more question we need to ask: How can we start now to move closer to the ideals presented by our Christian faith?

* * *


BUILDING FOR CELEBRATION

FAITH, FUNCTION, AND BEAUTY

When a Christian community plans for its place of worship, it has to take into consideration a number of important circumstances.

**Faith:** For Christians, faith is not a list of propositions that we accept; rather, faith is our loving acceptance of Jesus as our Lord. The Holy Spirit leads us to proclaim that *Jesus is Lord* (Rom. 10: 9, 1 Cor. 12: 3). This is our act of faith.

Our church building is an *image of the Church*, which is the people of God and God's own building. We are the living stones with which God builds his temple, so that we may offer him spiritual sacrifices through Jesus our Lord. (See 1 Cor. 3: 9, 17; 1 Pet. 2: 5; Rom. 12: 1; Heb. 13: 15-16.)

A church building must express the nature of the Church: it is a servant community, dedicated to God's glory, and open to his will in the signs of the times. Each believing community should show its faith by its love and concern for other people, and by its willingness to work for the salvation of the world.

In its structure, the church building should help the community to celebrate better public worship. Its design should proclaim that the whole community, and not just those in the sanctuary, is celebrating the liturgy (see pages 112-113). The proportions of the altar, lectern, and chair should not overwhelm the people. The font should proclaim our belief in Christian initiation as the beginning of our life in Christ.

**Function:** The form of the building and its contents must help the gathered community to worship *as a community*, and not merely to be an audience. The design must allow for flexibility in large and small gatherings, for the free flow of processions of all the people (at communion, and on Passion Sunday, for example), as well as the ministers.

The seating must be flexible, assisting the people to be a community, rather than forcing them into a rigid audience pattern. The font must be a real bath by immersion for adults. There should be no clutter of unnecessary furniture, no litter left around the seats or altar or sacristy.

Everything about the church should say that this is a place where God's people come together to take part in the liturgical rites of their community worship by listening to his word, by praising him, and by praying for others.

**Art:** The Church promotes good works of art in every medium (Constitution on the liturgy, nos. 122-129). Images, vestments, vessels, and furnishings should be "truly worthy and beautiful" (GI, no. 253; see also nos. 254, 257, 279).

Beauty flows from taste, good craftsmanship, and integrity of materials and design. A lectern carefully carved by a skilled artist surpasses one which is mass-produced in a furniture factory. We need to let the beauty of God's creation — of wood, stone, natural light, flowing water, and living plants — and of human handiwork shine out.
"Dime-store art" is shabby, cheap, repetitive, and usually indicative of a lack of taste in those who purchase it. Poor art says little good about our faith life, and tends to weaken it. Good art challenges our spirits to leap out in faith toward God. (See Constitution on the liturgy, nos. 122-129; G1, nos. 254, 279, 287, 312.)

* * *

If our faith is strong, we will want to express it in our church building. If we express it well, by beauty in celebration, in spoken word, in song, in gesture, in vesture, and in art, we will grow in our life with Christ, and give greater glory with him to God our Father.

Helpful reading:


The Buildings of Canada: A Guide to Pre-20th-Century Styles in Houses, Churches and other Structures, by Barbara A. Humphreys and Meredith Sykes (Parks Canada, Ottawa). This is a reprint from Explore Canada, and is available from the Ministry of the Environment, La Terrasse de la Chaudière, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0H4. The catalogue number is RR 0162-000-EE-A2. It is also available in French: L'architecture du Canada, RR 0162-000-FF-A.


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A PRAYER TO THE TRINITY

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
we praise you and give you glory:  
we bless you for calling us to be your holy people.

Remain in our hearts,  
and guide us in our love and service.  
Help us to let our light shine before others  
and lead them to the way of faith.

Holy Trinity of love,  
we praise you now and for ever. Amen!
PLACE OF THE COMMUNITY

When we look at a church which is already in use, or when we design or study the plans of a future church, we should be asking ourselves this question: *Does it help everyone present to be united as one body and to worship as a unified assembly?*

**We do not build temples!** A Christian church is not the home or dwelling of our God: he is everywhere (see Acts 7: 48-50). A church is not primarily a place for the reservation of the eucharist outside Mass (see pages 135-136). It is the *house of the Church*, of the people of God. It is an image in concrete, brick, stone, or wood, of the living Church, the people of God and the mystical body of Christ — and we ourselves are images of the true temple, Jesus Christ. Our church is a place of assembly where the living temples of the Spirit — the sons and daughters of the Father, the sisters and brothers of the Lord Jesus — assemble at the invitation of our Father. The whole community is holy because it is the consecrated people of God (see 1 Pet. 2: 9-10).

It is when we gather for eucharist on the Lord's day that the Church is made most visible (Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42; G1, nos. 74-75).

Our Lord Jesus Christ is present in our assembly when we gather in his name (Mt. 18: 19-20). He is present in his word, in his ministers, in the sacraments, and in the eucharistic species (see Liturgy constitution, no. 7).

We do not build temples for our God, because he has already made us his temples. Our churches are places of assembly for his beloved Church, his priestly people.

**Everyone is a celebrant:** In 1975, the second edition of the *Missale Romanum* was issued, with some significant changes made in the General Instruction. Where the previous edition had the word "celebrant" for the priest, the new edition uses *presiding priest* and *celebrating priest*. As we begin to digest the implications of the ecclesiology (theology of the Church) in the documents of the Second Vatican Council, we recognize changes that are needed both in the ritual and in the form of our assemblies. (See *This is the Church*, in Bulletin 73, pages 51-52.)

Now we say that the community celebrates the liturgy. The priest, as a minister to the community, presides over the celebration, and celebrates with them. It is no longer accurate to use "celebrant" to mean the one who presides over any liturgy.

**Place of the community:** A Christian church is a place where the whole believing community, the *laos* or people of God, is invited by the Father to assemble (see Bulletin 48, pages 93-96). It is the place where the whole community — people, ministers, and priests — comes together for several important works:

- **We listen to his word:** Everyone in the assembly listens to the word of God as it is proclaimed for our spiritual nourishment.

- **We sing his praises:** As a community, we praise God in song, word, and action. Acting as the high priests of creation, we voice the mute praises of the universe, and offer glory to our Father through Jesus Christ.

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1 See *Notitiae*, nos. 111-112 (November-December 1975, Vatican City): page 298, no. 1; page 299, no. 42.
• **We pray for one another:** God has chosen us to be his people of prayer. We pray for ourselves, for one another, for the Church, and for the salvation of the whole world.

• **We interact with one another:** We are not merely individuals who happen to be in the same building: we are God's holy Church, gathered around the Lord's table for a family banquet.

• **We move in procession:** During our celebration, the ministers come and go in procession. Another procession marks the gospel proclamation. Some or all members of the community bring gifts to the altar. At communion time, we move to the altar to receive the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

**An important resource:** In 1978, the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy in the United States published *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship.* This study document gives many insights into worship, the people of God who carry out liturgical actions, the arts, gestures, and furnishings. It is invaluable to anyone interested in liturgy and church design. In this Bulletin, references to the document are given as EACW and a paragraph number.

**Seating:** In the early centuries, it was usual for the bishop and his presbyter to have fixed seats, while everyone else stood, even for the homily. Augustine mentions that some churches beyond the sea (Europe) provide seats for the people too. Even today in Europe we find large churches without pews or seats, other than some benches along the walls for the aged, feeble, and infirm. Many old European churches have no fixed seating, but only individual chair-kneelers made of wicker.

• **Pews** became a part of the furnishings in some Catholic churches in the fifteenth century (see *Standing and kneeling*, in Bulletin 65, pages 247-249), and are considered "normal" in most churches in North America today. But since the liturgical renewal began to move forward in the 1960s, liturgists have become more uncomfortable with pews, and feel that people are sometimes prisoners of their pews. Pews can reinforce the idea that the church is a sacred theater, with a dominant stage where the action is taking place, while the people are an audience of passive spectators, looking at the backs of other people. Narrow aisles impede the free flow of people and ministers in processions. On weekdays, a small congregation can be splintered into separate individuals sitting as far apart as possible. With fixed pews, any flexibility in seating arrangements is almost beyond reach.

• **Kneelers:** The early Church stood on Sundays to proclaim its belief in the risen Lord, and knelt to make intercessions on weekdays. Do kneelers and pews inhibit our community worship?

• **Seeing others' faces:** It is desirable to have people seated in such a way that they can face others and see their faces during the liturgy. (See EACW, nos. 11, 58.)

• **Flexible seating:** Today the idea of individual seats is growing in popularity. Comfortable, sturdy, and reasonably portable, they can be moved about to meet the varying sizes and needs of different congregations and celebrations. Wider aisles can

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A reader based on the talks and presentations at a symposium on EACW, held in Milwaukee in June 1979, is being published, and will be reviewed in the Bulletin when received.
be left on Sundays for freer movement of processions, especially the communion
procession; the choir can be placed in the position which is best both for acoustics
and for leadership of the community singing. On weekdays, relatively few chairs can
be set out, and placed closer to the altar. For smaller assemblies, such as morning
and evening prayer, weddings, and funerals, suitable arrangements of the seats will
promote a better celebration by the community (see pages 137-138). When a cele­
bration requires different spaces for its actions and rites, there can be several clusters
of seating: see the description of flexible seating arrangements for the baptism of
children, in Bulletin 73, pages 78-81 and 85.

With imagination and experience, the community can provide ways of seating
people that will help the built-in dynamics of each liturgical rite to have a more
powerful impact on the celebration and life of members of the community.

○ Safety: Civic regulations often govern seating in public places of assembly,
which includes churches. Many portable seats have means of linking them together
so that they cannot be easily upset in case of a panic rush to get out in an emergency.
Building codes in effect in each locality should be checked before moving into flex­
ible seating.

○ Learning by doing: Parishes and communities using temporary accommo­
dations may experiment with different arrangements of the seating. If a community
in a church with pews wants to begin to move toward more flexible seating, it may
bring in a few seats at a time, gradually moving pews out as the community becomes
more comfortable with the idea of flexible seating. Some people suggest that a ratio
of 70% flexible seating and 30% fixed is desirable; others say that all seats should be
movable. The answer will depend more on local imagination and good celebration
rather than in numbers.

Welcoming the people of God: When God's people assemble for eucharist on
the Lord’s day, we have the most evident sign of the Church’s presence on earth
(Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42; GI, nos. 74-75). Christ's presence among us is
shown forth to the world. Are we recognizing him in our midst when we gather for
worship?

○ Ministry: Ushers have the ministry of welcoming people as they enter the
church, of leading them to their seats, of directing processions, and of taking the
collection (see GI, no. 68bc). Their spirit of hospitality should reflect the commu­
nity's love for all. Ushers greet members of the congregation as they arrive, and
should help visitors to feel welcome by introducing them to some parishioners. In
these ways, all are helped to become more fully part of the community which is
participating in the liturgy. (See EACW, no. 11.)

○ Place: A large, comfortable, and well-lighted porch or foyer at the entrance
of the church provides a good area for people to meet before and after liturgical cele­
brations. This area may also serve as a place of transition between the street and the
church, especially in the depths of winter; and as the place for welcoming people in
the celebration of baptisms, weddings, and funerals. It may be related to the baptis­
mal area: see page 126, below. (See also EACW, nos. 11, 54.)

○ Access for all: Every member of the community should be able to enter this
welcoming area without having to face physical obstacles: see page 121.
• **Buying and selling in the temple?** What are our current practices? What are these saying about us, our attitudes, and our church? What steps can we take to start becoming better?

**Area around the lectern and altar:** Up until now, the space around the lectern and the altar has been called the “sanctuary,” a word which means a particularly holy place as well as the area around the altar. The term is still used in GI, no. 258 (in Latin, *presbyterium*).

But now that we are turning away from a “we-they” or “sacred-profane” concept, and moving back to the church as one space, we have to rearrange our ideas about the meaning of the area around the lectern and altar, and about the ministers who serve in this space. We also need to look for a name that better reflects this changed meaning: it is no longer the *presbyterium*, the place reserved for the clergy.

• **Part of the one space:** This area is not a stage, nor is it remote from the people. It is to be seen first of all as part of the one community space. The ministers who carry out their functions at the lectern or altar are members of the community, but with special ministries of service to the whole community. Where possible, the seats in this space could be similar in design and material to the flexible seating used by the people.

• **Clearly defined:** This area holds the lectern, which is the focal point for the liturgy of the word, and the altar, which is the center for the liturgy of the eucharist. For this reason, this area is to be a distinct space, clearly recognizable and visible to all.

It may be raised to provide better visibility, but should not be too high. Or it may be set off by “distinctive structure and decor” (GI, no. 258). This could mean special lighting, especially by natural light; a different color of carpet or floor covering; or perhaps a canopy or baldachin (see page 132).

Fences, walls, rails, or barricades — even symbolic — are not desirable.

• **Extending the space:** On occasion it may be desirable to extend this area (for example, at an ordination: see page 137):

— Where this area is on the same level as the rest of the church, additional carpet, matching that around the lectern and altar, may be placed over the regular covering.

— If the area is a step or two higher than the rest of the church, it may be extended by adding portable platforms with matching carpet or floor covering.

**Places for our ministers:** The area around the lectern and altar should provide ample space for all the ministers to carry out their respective services to the whole community:

• **Ministers of music:**

— Cantor: The cantor directs and encourages the people to sing, and leads them in their song (GI, no. 64). The responsorial psalm is sung by the cantor at the lectern or in another suitable place (GI, nos. 36, 67). It might be better for the cantor to have a separate microphone and not work from the lectern: see the discussion on
The cantor may sit with the other musicians or in a more convenient place near his or her microphone.

— Choir: The choir is part of the assembly. It sings its own parts, and encourages the people to sing (GI, no. 63). Its normal place is within the community, and not in a distant loft.

— Other musicians: The organist and other musicians are also part of the community. They may be seated with the choir, and help the people to participate in the singing (GI, no. 63).

• Readers: Two readers are called for in a Sunday celebration (GI, no. 71). They take part in the processions at the beginning and end of the Mass, and one of them carries the lectionary, unless a deacon carries the gospel book in the procession.

During the liturgy of the word, they sit near the lectern. When reading, they stand at it, and proclaim God's word from the lectionary. If there is no cantor, the one who reads the first reading may read the psalm, with the people repeating the refrain after each stanza; it is more desirable, however, to have the cantor sing the psalm from his or her own place (see page 131).

When the liturgy of the word ends with the general intercessions, it would seem better to let the readers return to their families in the assembly. When there is no deacon to carry the book of God's word, one of the readers may go to the lectern at the end of Mass, and carry the lectionary in the final procession.

It is better to let other persons fulfill other ministries, instead of keeping the readers near the altar to do them (see Liturgy constitution, no. 28).

• Commentators: This "special ministry" (heading before GI, nos. 65-73) is described in GI, no. 68a: the commentator (the same word is used in the Latin original) explains things to the people, gives them directions, introduces the particular celebration, and is supposed to help the assembly to understand the celebration better. The commentator's remarks are prepared carefully, and are to be brief and clear. The place of the commentator is also described: outside the sanctuary, where the people can see him or her; the commentator is not to use the lectern from which the scriptures are proclaimed (see also GI, no. 272).

During the 1950s and 1960s, the role of the commentator developed as a useful way of helping the people to understand what a Latin liturgy in transition was trying to accomplish. This was a useful crutch when the rites could not speak for themselves. Books soon evolved to guide the commentators.¹

The description of the commentator in GI, no. 68a seems to be based on a poor understanding of how the liturgy teaches. Though it would be hard to know from the average Sunday celebration, the liturgy is not primarily words. Liturgy is the action of Christ and his people. By actions, gestures, movements, and music, as well as by words, the Spirit teaches through the liturgy. The renewed rites are intended to be short, simple, and sincere, freed from barnacles: **noble simplicity** is the norm. Brief instructions may be necessary at times, but should be few. (See Liturgy constitution, nos. 33-34, 35: 3.)

¹ See, for example, *The Mass Commentator's Handbook*, by Clifford Howell, SJ (1960, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321). Texts were given for some thirty interventions during each celebration!
The liturgy teaches by signs: the use of real bread and of wine to provide communion in this Mass says much more than a paragraph of "explanation" during the preparation of the gifts; a sincere welcome by the ushers and by other parishioners helps the greeting and the kiss of peace to come alive, which no amount of explanatory speeches can do.

Is there a place for the commentator today, when most liturgies are depending too much on words and not enough on signs and actions? Perhaps the commentator's place is at the typewriter, preparing informative notes for publication in the parish bulletin; or in the museum with the subdeacon and the maniple.

- **Ministers of communion:** Lay ministers of communion are members of the assembly who have been prepared and selected to help distribute communion to their brothers and sisters. They could remain in their places with the assembly until the end of the eucharistic prayer. After the great *Amen*, when the priest pauses before beginning the Lord's prayer, they could move quietly to stand near the altar, but not blocking the view of the people. They receive communion under both forms, and then move to the places where they give communion. It would be fitting for them to remain near the altar until the communion rite ends with the prayer after communion. Then they return to their seats.

- **Presiding priest and deacon:** The priest and deacon remain near the lectern and altar. During the introductory and concluding rites, the priest stands at the chair; during the liturgy of the word, he sits or stands at the chair, or he may go to the lectern for the [gospel and] homily; for the liturgy of the eucharist he stands at the altar. The chair is discussed below.

- **Other servers and assistants:** Those who carry the cross and candle may sit near the lectern and altar.

**Keeping a balance:** As new ministries have been introduced during the past few years, there are two extremes that all are trying to avoid: clericalization of lay ministries, making them a new "class" in the Church; and a divorce between the liturgical side of the ministry and its relationship to their daily life. At the same time, ministers are people who have prepared for their ministry by prayer and study, and who are recognized by the community as they serve in a particular role. The place they occupy in the church during the liturgy should be related to the function they are fulfilling during this celebration.

**Presidential Chair**

In the early centuries, it was the bishop who presided at the eucharist. Priests assisted him in the celebration; priests presided only when the bishop was absent. Even today, the Vatican Council reminds us that the bishop is the chief liturgist of the diocese, and that the priest presides in his name (Liturgy constitution, nos. 41-42; GI, nos. 74-75).

**Cathedra:** In Latin, the bishop's chair is *cathedra*, from which our word cathedral is derived: it is the church where the bishop presides in his chair. (See the review of *The Cathedral: A Reader*, on page 141, below.)

**Chair:** From 1965, the first reforms in the structures of the Mass emphasized two focal points: the liturgy of the word is centered on the lectern, the table of the
word, and the liturgy of the eucharist is centered on the altar (Liturgy constitution, no. 56). The presiding presbyter uses the chair at three parts of the Mass:

- **Introductory rites:** After a brief reverence to the altar (and incensing it), the priest goes to the chair. There he leads the community in the introductory rites, which help to prepare the community to hear the word in faith.

- **Liturgy of the word:** He remains at the chair, a fellow-listener with the community, as God's word is proclaimed. The ideal celebration includes a deacon who proclaims the gospel. Then the priest rises to preach, to share his prayerful reflections on the word of God and the life of the community. He may preach the homily — which is a proclamation of God's word here and now for this believing family — at the chair or at the lectern. It would seem preferable to conclude the liturgy of the word at the chair.

- **Concluding rite:** It is preferable for the priest to preside at this brief rite from the chair.

**Role of the priest at the chair:** He leads the people into prayer; he invites them to listen to the word of God and to reflect on it; in this way he prepares them for the liturgy of the eucharist. At the end of the celebration, he blesses them and sends them out to live the liturgy they have just celebrated.

**Purpose of the chair:** This might be summarized in this way: the chair is the place where the priest remains or where he acts as president during the parts of the Mass when the focus is not on the altar. Keeping the focus away from the altar at these times should serve to increase that focus during the liturgy of the eucharist. (Too much use of the altar, like too much use of the lectern, tends to lessen its importance: when you underline every word on a page, nothing stands out.)

The empty chair has little significance. It is simply a place where the priest may be seen by the community as he leads them in prayer and listens with them to God's word.

**Design of the chair:** The chair is not to be a throne (GI, no. 271). It is the place of the priest who presides over the celebration of his brothers and sisters, and should not be too far away from them. As suggested on page 115, it would be appropriate for the design and material of the chair to match that of the people's seats.

- **A place for the deacon:** The renewed liturgy presumes the presence of a deacon in each parish celebration. [We have not yet faced up to the implications of this in our theology of the Church and in our understanding of the liturgy: see Bulletin 71, page 222.] Even if we don't have a deacon yet, his place at the right of the priest should be there and vacant: a visible reminder of a ministry to be met in our future. Other servers, young or mature, should not take his place, nor should concelebrating priests (see GI, no. 167). Even when the bishop is presiding at the celebration, the deacon's seat should be kept for the deacon; no other priest is to fill this role.

**Helpful reading:**


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The Deacon: Minister of Word and Sacrament: see review on page 141, below.

The changes we need to make in our rites when we consider that the whole community is celebrant are discussed in "A Congregational Order of Worship," by Kenneth Smits, OFM Cap, in Worship, vol. 54, no. 1 (January 1980, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN 56321): pages 55-75.

Other Notes

**Physical needs:** People need certain factors to help them to be comfortable in any assembly. Those who plan and celebrate liturgy each week in the house of the Church need to take these needs into consideration. Among these elements we may list:

- **Ventilation, heating, cooling** according to needs and circumstances.
- **Lighting** according to need and mood.
- **Sound system:** See page 131.
- **Washrooms:** See page 121.

**Simple beauty:** The church building is to reflect the nature of the Church as the pilgrim people of God, and the peace of the Church in heaven. It should have simple dignity and beauty, and avoid costly display (Dedication, page 11, nos. 2-3). Its plan should be contemporary, and reflect the style and culture of the place where it is built (GI, nos. 254, 280, 287; Dedication, page 11, no. 3).

- **Images:** The Catholic tradition of art goes back to the first century of Christianity. Images — paintings, statues, carvings, mosaics, and tapestries — of our Lord, Mary, the angels, and the saints may be placed in our churches. Some care is needed: there should not be too many images, and they must not distract people from participating during the celebration of the liturgy. There should be no more than one image of any particular saint. (See GI, no. 278; Liturgy constitution, nos. 124-125.) Statues and images of saints are no longer to be placed over the altar: it is dedicated to God (Dedication, page 62, no. 10).

Every effort should be made to have good art in our churches. See EACW, nos. 19, 20, 22, 25, 26.

- **Cross:** There should be one cross in the church: see page 134.
- **Furnishings:** Noble simplicity, regional style, authentic art, and traditional and modern materials are encouraged (GI, nos. 287-288, 311-312).
- **Vessels** used to contain the eucharistic species are discussed in GI, nos. 289-296:
  - Materials should be solid, worthy, and valuable: see GI, nos. 290-292, 294.
  - The chalice holds the blood of the Lord. The cup should be non-absorbent (GI, no. 291). Communities sensitive to the mind of the Church are working toward communion from the cup for the whole assembly.
A large dish or paten may be used for communion of the priest and people (GI, 292-293). A plate or basket is normally used to hold bread in our culture. Vessels that look like chalices are less suitable on an altar today.

Artists may use forms that are suited to the local culture (GI, no. 295).

The rite for blessing a chalice and paten are given in Dedication, pages 97-103.

Other vessels, such as those holding wine and water, should be artistic and suitable (GI, nos. 311-312).

Vestments contribute to the appearance of the liturgical celebration, and help to show a variety of ministries (GI, no. 297). Detailed instructions are included in GI, nos. 297-310. It is to be noted that the alb is preferred to the cassock and surplice (see Bulletin 60, page 252-254; no. 73, page 85, note 3).

Vestments should be artistic, worthy in design and material, without a clutter of symbols and signs. (See EACW, nos. 93-95.)

General decor: The Church encourages high standards of art to nourish the faith and piety of the people of God. It encourages art that meets today's needs (GI, no. 254). The decor of a church should be in harmony with the noble simplicity of the renewed liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 34). Authentic materials (not wood painted to look like marble) are to be used. The multiplication of symbols (e.g., stencilled crosses) lessens their effect.

Conclusion: The space and everything in it should always emphasize that the whole assembly is holy and sharing in the liturgical action. The ministers are part of the community and serve all its members. Everything about the church should contribute to better participation and prayer. Everything should express the ecclesiology of today's Church: We are the holy people of God, led by the Spirit and called to share with Jesus in the worship of his Father.

NEXT ISSUE

Do you want to be able to pray the psalms with more feeling and understanding? Do you sometimes feel that you are missing out on the treasures of prayer in the psalms? Do you find it hard to use them as Christian prayers?

Bulletin 75, Praying the Psalms, has one basic purpose: to help you pray the psalms better. It looks at the different kinds of psalms, and at the way they have been used in our past. Most of all, it helps us to see how the Church uses them today, and provides help for us — as individuals and families, and as communities celebrating the liturgy — to pray the psalms well. Many references for further reading are included in this issue.

This issue will be ready for mailing early in September.
ACCESS FOR ALL

In many places the church was built on a hill or height of ground, or was approached by a long flight of steps. While the visual impact is uplifting, what does the location do for the aged, mothers with little ones, people with physical handicaps, or pallbearers bringing a coffin into church?

Areas of concern: People who are blind or deaf or physically handicapped have needs that we must take into consideration in the design or modification of our churches. This article suggests some areas where each parish or community needs to look at its church and other buildings. It is a pastoral responsibility to make sure that all parishioners have free access to liturgical celebrations. Buildings that prevent persons with handicaps from entering are both a sign and a guarantee that they are isolated from this community and its worship.

Entrance: Reserved parking near entrance for persons with handicaps; curb cut for access by wheelchair.

- Ramp: lighted; gradual slope; non-skid surface; kept free of ice and snow; rails on ramp.
- Doors: Easy to open by persons on crutches or in wheelchair; wide enough for access by wheelchair. This should also be true of the room for reconciliation.
- Stairs: Treads not worn; non-skid; clear of ice and snow; rails at side; center rail if steps are wide; lighted.

Seating area: Room for several wheelchairs, not in aisles.

Washrooms: Access for wheelchair; wide doors, not too heavy; light switches within reach of person in wheelchair.

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1981 is the international year of persons with handicaps. Now is the time to make sure that they are not denied access to and participation in the liturgy and other activities in your church and other buildings.

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Helpful reading:


Mainstreaming Handicapped Persons, a study paper prepared by the Art and Architecture Committee of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission (Office of Worship, 100 South Elmwood Ave., Buffalo, NY 14202): see review in Bulletin 70, page 192. This booklet offers practical advice and suggests some resources that are available today.


FONT OF LIFE

The baptistry is the area in which we celebrate baptism, the first of the sacraments of Christian initiation. The font is the bath in which the flowing baptismal waters are blessed, the place where the candidates are buried into the dying of Christ; then the newly baptized come up from the waters into the Christian way of life.

In New Testament times: We are better able to understand the meaning of Christian baptism when we look back at our history:

- **Jesus**: Our Lord began his public ministry by being baptized by John in the Jordan River (Mt. 3: 6). The scene is described in each of the four gospels: Mt. 3: 13-17; Mk. 1: 9-11; Lk. 3: 21-22; Jn. 1: 29-34. The gospels specifically state that Jesus came up from the water (Mt. 3: 16; Mk. 1: 10). Christian art has retained this tradition by showing Jesus standing in the river at the moment of his baptism.

- **The first Pentecost**: After Peter's sermon, some 3,000 people came forward to be baptized into the Christian community (Acts 2: 41). Each day the Lord added to their number (Acts 2: 47; see 6: 7). The New Testament gives no further information on the method of baptism, but we may conclude that the apostles followed John's method, which was also used by the Jews to mark the conversion of proselytes (converts from paganism).

- **Philip on the road to Gaza**: Philip, one of the seven (Acts 2: 5-6), preached the good news of Jesus to an Ethiopian official. When the eunuch asked for baptism, he and Philip went down into the water, and Philip baptized him (Acts 8: 26-39).

- **Paul's baptism** is mentioned in Acts 9: 18, but is not described in any detail.

- **Buried with Christ**: Written about the winter of the year 57-58, the epistle to the Romans lays down a clear picture of Christian baptism (Rom. 6: 1-11): we are baptized into the death of Jesus Christ, and buried with him into death to sin, so that we may be raised with him to new life for the Father.

In the first centuries of Christianity: We may consider three early documents which describe the preparation and celebration of Christian initiation into the period up to about 215 AD.

- **Around the year 100**: A booklet known as the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* or *Didache* describes the baptism of adults at the end of the first century. In sections 1-6, an outline of a Christian way of life is presented, and opposed to the way of death. Section 7 speaks of baptism:

  — Candidates are immersed in "living" (i.e., running) water, in the name of the Trinity (see Mt. 28: 19). When living water is not available, they are immersed in standing water, preferably cold. When it is not practical to immerse the candidates,

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2 See Jn. 7: 37-39, where *living water* refers to the Holy Spirit.

3 It is interesting to note that the *General Instruction on Christian Initiation*, no. 20, allows climatic conditions to reverse this early norm. This instruction is found at the beginning of the *Rite of Baptism for Children*: see Bulletin 29, pages 64-69; *The Rites* (1976, Pueblo Publishing, 1860 Broadway, New York NY 10023): pages 3-11.
they may be sprinkled in the name of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{4}

— Where possible, the candidates should fast a day or two before their baptism; the minister should try to fast also, as well as others who are able to join them.

— Only those who are baptized “in the name of the Lord” are permitted to eat and drink at the eucharistic banquet (no. 9).

• In Rome, around 150: Justin was a layman teaching in Rome. He describes how adults were taught about Jesus and led to faith and repentance for their sins. Then they were given the washing of baptism, which is called illumination. After this they were led into the assembly of believers, allowed to take part in the common prayers (prayer of the faithful) and share in the kiss of peace and in the eucharist for the first time (see Bulletin 55, page 242).

• In Rome, around 215: Hippolytus describes baptism at the [Easter] vigil celebration. After three years of instruction, the catechumens are examined on their way of life, and then are prepared for their initiation. Early Sunday morning, they are led to water flowing from a height or a spring. The candidates strip, and are anointed. They are led into the baptismal waters, where they profess their faith three times and are buried in the water three times. Then they come up from the waters, and are anointed again. They dry and dress, and are brought into the assembly for anointing by the bishop and for the celebration of the eucharist.

• Ritual nudity: The public baths were an important part of the Roman culture. Men and women bathed together until the time of Hadrian (117-138), who segregated the facilities. Nudity was a normal part of life at the baths. In baptism, therefore, it would not seem strange; moreover, the symbolism of stripping off the old and of being buried in the waters was effective. The anointings before and after baptism — also part of the Roman bath procedures — were of the whole body, and not just a minimalistic dab.\textsuperscript{6}

The candidates were baptized in a place or room separate from the rest of the church. Children were baptized first, then the men, and then the women, in separate groups; female deacons looked after the women. After drying and dressing, they were led into the assembly for anointing by the bishop and for the eucharistic celebration, their first Mass.

A font means flowing waters: Ask the average Catholic the meaning of font, and you will get an answer describing a container of water. The English word font comes from the Latin fons, which means a spring or fountain of flowing water.

The early Church related these flowing waters to the waters of life and death described in the scriptures: the Spirit brooding over the waters at creation, the flood

\textsuperscript{4} Current Catholic practice has eliminated sprinkling as an acceptable method of baptism. The 1917-1918 Code of Canon Law, canon 758, which permitted sprinkling, has been modified by the General Instruction on Christian Initiation, no. 22, to permit only immersion (which is considered a better symbol of our sharing in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ) and infusion (pouring). See Bulletin 73, pages 78-79 and 92.


\textsuperscript{6} See Baptismal Anointing, by Leonel L. Mitchell (1978, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 46556): this book was reviewed in Bulletin 64, page 186.
of Noah, the waters of the Red Sea, the broad river in Ezekiel, and the Jordan, which was the entrance to the promised land, and in which Jesus was baptized. Today most of these themes are picked up in the readings and prayers of the Easter vigil, including the blessing of the baptismal waters.\(^7\)

**Christian initiation breaks down:** The ideal picture of initiation began to be compromised in the fourth century. After Constantine gave freedom of worship to Christians, it became fashionable to become one. The large numbers of candidates swamped the catechumenate, and it gradually grew shorter and less intense. By the year 500, only children were being initiated in Rome, since all the adults were Christian; the rites, however, were adult rites, bent to fit infant candidates. [This situation remained until the *Rite of Baptism for Children* was issued in 1969, at the request of the Vatican Council (Liturgy constitution, nos. 67-69.)] Gradually immersion was abandoned for baptism by the more convenient and less symbolic pouring.

The rites of initiation — baptism, confirmation, and eucharist in one celebration — were fragmented further in the middle ages:

1. **Confirmation is separated from baptism and communion;**
2. **Communion is separated from baptism;**
3. **Baptism is celebrated soon after birth;**
4. **Confirmation is further separated from baptism.**

To these may be added a fifth wedge, added in the twentieth century:

5. **Reconciliation is inserted before communion.**

Helpful reading:


**Renewal of Christian Initiation**

**Vatican II** called for a renewal in all aspects of Christian life, so that the people of God would be truly reformed. The renewal in the liturgy was part of this work, and at the same time a means of deepening the life of the Church.

**General Instruction on Christian Initiation:** Issued in 1969, this restored the unity of the sacraments of initiation, and related them to the paschal mystery of Christ and to the continued work of renewal in the believing community. The adult catechumenate was restored in 1972, and the rite for baptizing children in 1969.

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Both rites emphasize the need of faith — in the adult catechumen, and in the parents of the children being baptized. Immersion is shown to be the preferred method of baptism.

- **Helpful reading:**
  
  Bulletin 51: *Christian Initiation*
  Bulletin 64: *Christian Initiation: Into Full Communion*
  Bulletin 73: *Baptizing Children.*

### Designing a Baptistry Today

**Mind of the Church:** We need to approach this question with the mind of the Church: adult baptism is the norm, and immersion is the preferred method of baptizing adults and infants.

**Immersion of adults:** A baptismal font is not a bird-bath, nor a bowl on a pole or table. It is a large tub, filled with water, and deep enough for an adult to be submerged with reasonable ease. The tub stands on the floor rather than below it, so that the minister may touch the candidate and immerse him or her three times (see *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*, no. 261). Steps and a handrail are needed to help the person come up out of the water with both dignity and safety.

- **Some practical notes:** In baptism by immersion, some water is going to be splashed about. Since the anointing with chrism should be generous, there may be oil on the floor too (see Ps. 133: 2). The floor around the font should be of non-skid material so that the candidate or the minister does not slip. The area around the font should be large enough for all the candidates and their godparents. The Easter candle should be placed so that it does not get jostled or knocked over.

- **A symbolic note:** The font could have water flowing into it, from a spout, splashing and making sound. Some living plants around the area could add a sign of life and God’s creation. (See GI, nos. 254 and 282; EACW, nos. 76-77.)

**Immersion of children:** At one end, a shallow pool could be part of the font. Big enough to immerse a child up to a year of age, it would be at a height where the priest or deacon could immerse the child’s body and pour water over the baby’s head. Older children could go down the steps until they are up to their chest, and be immersed there.

**Ritual nudity?** The important aspect of the renewed rites is not nakedness, but baptism by total immersion, signifying our burial with Christ into his death.

- **Adults:** In North America today, we are not used to nudity. As well as recovering the symbolism of immersion, we have also chosen that baptism should be celebrated in the presence of the gathered community (General Instruction on Christian Initiation, no. 25). As a result, “decency and decorum” (Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, no. 220) exclude nudity, and adults baptized by immersion are usually lightly clothed for the rite. This adaptation seems realistic and suited to our culture. [We might remember what is considered as decent at the beach or cottage.]

- **Children:** Practical notes on the immersion of children are given in Bulletin 73, pages 78-79.
Location of the font: Where should the font be placed in today's church?

- **Separate baptistry:** Once they moved inside from the rivers and streams, the Christians of the early centuries built separate baptistries: examples are Dura Europos in the third century (see page 105, above); St. John Lateran in the fourth; and the baptistry of Pisa built between 1153 and 1278. The original reasons for the separate room or building were the fact that the catechumens could not assemble with the others for the eucharist until their baptism, and the ritual nudity in the celebration of baptism. These reasons do not apply today.

- **Near the altar?** In the past decade, some parishes have moved their old font to the front of the church, so that all may see what is going on at baptism. This has had the unhappy result of placing further emphasis on the “sanctuary” as the only place of any importance in the church. The building has reverted to being an auditorium with a stage where the important actions happen.

  An exception is made for the Easter vigil, when the sacramentary suggests that baptism is celebrated in the baptistry, *if this can be seen by the assembled people*; otherwise, it is suggested that a vessel of water would be placed near the altar and lectern.

  Since this idea is contained in the 1970 sacramentary, it is important to bring it up to date with the thinking of the 1972 *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults*: in 1970, the mentality and the practice considered the baptism of children with a minimal amount of water as normal. [Are things much changed today?]

- **Near the entrance:** This position picks up all the right echoes from Christian tradition. It is a sign that we enter the Church through the sacraments of initiation. All who enter the church building go past the baptistry — or in some designs, even walk *through it* to go to their places.

  Suggestions on the creative use of good banners to mark off the baptismal space are given in *A fresh look at banners*, in Bulletin 48, pages 108-113.

- **In the body of the church:** If the font cannot be near the entrance, another acceptable location would be in the body of the church, perhaps on one side, with sufficient space around it for participants and processions.

  **Learning by doing:** The renewed rites of initiation are much more than a change of ceremonies or a moving of furnishings in the church building. They reflect a substantial change of the theology of Christ (Christology), the Church (ecclesiology), and of ourselves (anthropology). A totally new mindset has to be embodied in our rites and in our structures (both organizational and physical).

  As a result, we have to learn slowly, experimenting and evaluating. Some will go too far or too fast, and some will avoid any action because of inertia or fear of error. For a good experience, see Bulletin 51, pages 298-300.

  A positive approach, based on the traditions of the people of God, and a trusting movement forward in the spirit of Vatican II — not fearing to pioneer in

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deep waters (see Bulletin 42, page 25) — will help us to go ahead with the pilgrim Church in this year of the Lord. We all need to learn from the experience of ourselves and others.

Other reminders of our baptismal experience: We tend to minimalize our symbols of baptism because our own baptism — or anyone else's — is a minimal experience. Today we are returning to a fuller understanding and expression of what baptism means for the individual and community: we are recovering what it means to be a community of faith, we are taking baptism more seriously, we are preparing for it with faith, and we are renewing its commitments in the Sunday eucharist and in the Easter vigil.

- **Easter candle and its stand:** Is it a strong statement about our faith in the presence of the risen Lord? Or does it present a feeble, spindly sign?
- **Blessing of water on Sunday:** Every Sunday, as we celebrate the eucharist, we are to renew the covenant that God has made with us (Liturgy constitution, no. 10). Water may be blessed at the beginning of Mass, after the greeting and replacing the penitential rite (see Bulletin 71, page 210).
- **Blessed water at church entrances:** The practice of making the sign of the cross with blessed water as we enter the church is intended to be another reminder of our baptism. The most important font is the baptismal font itself: when placed near the entrance, people can dip their hand into its waters.
- **Containers for blessed water:** As the Church is returning to a more lavish and generous use of symbols, we need to become aware of any traces of minimalism in our thinking or acting. Dinky little pots that can't hold a cup of water, sprinklers that are pencil-sized toys, damp sponges that replace real water: all these undermine our appreciation of the symbolism of water and baptism.

Our concern over the font of life must go far beyond designs and construction: our responsibility as God's Church is to go out and teach others — by our life, our love, our actions — about Jesus and his gospel, and bring them to the fullness of life within the community of faith.

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PLACE OF THE WORD

The proclamation and hearing of God's living word forms an essential part of the Church's eucharistic liturgy; we are nourished at the table of God's word before we are nourished at the table of the Lord. The importance of God's word is shown in three ways: by the careful choice of persons who read, by a special book for proclamation, and by the place reserved for the liturgy of the word.

Readers Chosen with Care

Selected with care: While we are given in baptism the privilege and responsibility of taking part in the liturgy (Liturgy constitution, no. 14), we do not thereby have the right to proclaim the scriptures in the assembly of God's people. Readers are chosen from among the people as ministers to the community. They must be men and women of faith; they need the ability to proclaim God's word well — not just as a technical skill, but as a proclamation in faith. Their lives must back up what they read.

Prepared: Readers have to be formed for their ministry. They need to accept the scriptures as God's own word, and to recognize that God himself is speaking when they read in the church to the assembled believers.

In order to read as well as possible, the readers will prepare their assigned text by prayer and study. They need adequate resources (see Bulletin 71, pages 217-218). Readers show their faith and their reverence for God's word by dressing respectfully, by coming in good time, by their dignified movements and gestures, by proclaiming God's word as well as they can, and — most of all — by living his word in their daily lives.

Living what they proclaim: During their formation, readers are helped to understand that their ministry extends beyond the act of good proclamation. They are to believe what they read, and to proclaim it in their daily living. Frequent and prayerful reading of God's word is important if they are to carry out their ministry to its full extent.

Special readers: It is considered better to have a separate reader for each of the first two readings (GI, no. 71).

The gospel is the most important of the three readings in the Sunday eucharist. It is surrounded by signs of respect: candles, incense, and procession; sometimes a decorated gospel book (evangeliary) is used. To underline the importance of the gospels, the Church insists that a special reader proclaim it: a deacon is the minister for reading the gospel; if no deacon is present, another priest proclaims it; only when no deacon or other priest is available does the presiding priest read the gospel (see GI, no. 34).1

Need of renewal: Readers need to renew their understanding and their fervor each year. Diocesan liturgy commissions and parish committees should promote an annual day of recollection for readers; on other occasions, a day or evening of further training and practice would be helpful in promoting better reading of the word of God.

1 Exceptions are now made in Holy Week: others may proclaim the passion on Sunday and Friday; a competent singer may sing the Easter proclamation of praise during the vigil.
Book of the Word

Respect: Our respect for the holy word is also expressed by the use of a special book for the readings. From the use of a bible with the readings indicated in the margins, the Church soon moved to books which contained the excerpts or pericopes used by the reader. Distinct books could be provided for each minister: including a lectionary for the first reading (usually from the Old Testament), an epistolary for the New Testament reading, and the evangelia for the gospel. These manuscripts — especially the gospels — were often highly decorated as a symbol of our respect and love for the word of God. (See *Lectionaries — then and now*, in Bulletin 50, pages 216-219; no. 62, page 12.)

In our day, the Church has restored the ministry of reader, and provides a book of readings, the lectionary, for this minister. Some communities may also have a gospel book for the third reading.

Strong sign of faith: The book of the word is to be a strong sign of our faith. A large book, well bound, and with clear print, it is carried respectfully in procession at the beginning and end of the Mass, and before the gospel. A deacon lays the gospel book on the altar; a reader places it on the lectern. The readers read from this book, and the entire community, including the presiding priest, listens to the word. The priest preaches from the book, explaining its words as the word of God.

Christ is present: Our reverence for the book is proper, for it is a sign of the presence of Christ among us: he speaks to us in the gospel (GI, nos. 9, 33). The incense, kiss, and the acclamations before and after the gospel are addressed to the Lord Jesus.

Eliminating a tragedy: In the light of our tradition, we see what a tragedy it is, and a travesty of our religion, when someone attempts to "proclaim" the scriptures from a leaflet or from a sheet of paper. Such practices, if present in your community, should be weeded out immediately. The quality of the book as a worthy sign of our faith must always be kept high. (See EACW, nos. 91-92.)

Place of the Word

Only after speaking of well prepared readers and a worthy book of the scriptures can we consider the third element, the place reserved for the proclaiming of God's holy word.

History: Earlier ages used an ambo for the gospel reading, and sometimes a lesser one for the other readings. The bishop preached the homily from his *cathedra* — his chair or throne. Pulpits for preaching were used in parish churches in England in the twelfth century. With the Reformation in the sixteenth century, the liturgy of the word gained greater importance, and the reading desk and pulpit were often emphasized in their structure and position.

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2 A *pericope* is an extract from a book, particularly a passage of scripture which is assigned for reading in a service of worship. Pronounced "pair-ick-o-pee," the word comes through late Latin from the Greek. It is built on two Greek words: *peri*, a preposition or adverb meaning about, around, beyond, round about, and *kope*, meaning a cutting. The *Oxford Dictionary* reports that the first recorded use of this word in English was more than three hundred years ago, in 1658.
Special place: The current Catholic renewal reminds us that God our Father is speaking to us when the readings are read in the assembly; when the gospel is proclaimed, it is Christ himself who is speaking to his brothers and sisters. (See GI, no. 9.)

God's word is so important that a special place — the lectern or place of the word — is reserved for it. The lectern or ambo is fixed; a portable stand is not sufficient. Everyone in the church should be able to see and hear the reader (GI, no. 272).

Who uses the lectern? The lectern is used by those who proclaim the three readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter hymn of praise (Exsultet). The lectern may be used by the priest for the homily, and by the one who reads the intentions in the general intercessions (see GI, no. 272). After making this general rule, the Instruction widens it. Current guidelines for the place of the liturgy of the word may be summarized in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rite</th>
<th>Minister</th>
<th>Book</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>GI</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First reading</td>
<td>reader</td>
<td>lectionary</td>
<td>lectern</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsorial psalm</td>
<td>cantor; reader</td>
<td>lectionary; gradual; CBW II</td>
<td>lectern* or other suitable place</td>
<td>36, 90, 50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second reading</td>
<td>(second) reader</td>
<td>lectionary (epistolary)</td>
<td>lectern</td>
<td>71, 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel acclamation</td>
<td>choir or cantor</td>
<td>lectionary; CBW II</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>deacon; another priest; celebrating priest</td>
<td>lectionary (evangeliary)</td>
<td>lectern</td>
<td>34-35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homily</td>
<td>celebrating priest</td>
<td>(lectionary)</td>
<td>chair or lectern</td>
<td>42, 97</td>
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<tr>
<td>Creed</td>
<td>all</td>
<td>sacramentary</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General intercessions</td>
<td>priest directs</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>chair or lectern</td>
<td>47, 99, 150</td>
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<td></td>
<td>deacon; cantor; reader; other</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>(lectern?)</td>
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* The General Instruction points out that it is "less suitable" for the commentator, cantor, or leader of the choir to stand at the lectern: see GI, nos. 272, 68a.

Moving toward an ideal: A proper understanding of the meaning and importance of God's word in the liturgy will move us toward this ideal: the lectern ought to be reserved for proclaiming the word of God.

- At the lectern: The three readings are proclaimed. The homily, which is also a proclamation of God's word, may be given here or at the chair (see also Posture and preaching, in Bulletin 65, pages 202-206).
• At the chair: The priest presides over the introductory rites and the liturgy of the word.

• Place for the cantor: He or she should be seen by all. The cantor needs a stable stand to hold music; this stand may be portable; if fixed, it should be much less imposing than the lectern for God's word. A microphone and adequate lighting help the cantor to carry out his or her duties.

• Room for improvement: While the reader may read the responsorial psalm from the lectern, it is much more desirable to have the cantor lead it from his or her place. The priest could lead the creed and general intercessions from the chair rather than the lectern. The intentions for the prayer of the faithful are read by another person; this could be done from the cantor's microphone. The commentator seems superfluous today (see pages 116-117, above).

Beauty and dignity: Christian art has recognized the importance of the lectern (ambo) as the place where God's word is proclaimed. The lectern should be made beautifully, carefully, and artistically. It should stand out as more important than any other stand used by cantor or others, and yet should not take away from the simple dignity of the altar table. (See EACW, nos. 74-75.) At times a simple piece of cloth may be draped over the lectern or hang down in front; wordy banners detract from the lectern's importance: see Bulletin 48, pages 108-113.

Some Practical Observations

Visibility: In a stage production, it may be effective to have a voice heard without any speaker being seen by the audience; "voice-over" can be effective on television. In a liturgical celebration, however, it is desirable for the community to see the person who is speaking to them. The presiding priest, deacon, readers, cantor, and others who speak to the community should always be in a place where all may see them as they are speaking. (See EACW, nos. 74-75.) The lectern should be prominent rather than dominant.

Sound system: The system should be unobtrusive, and help the ministers to carry out their role without difficulty; in this way, all will be able to celebrate the liturgy better. Microphones should be on and tested before the people arrive. "Only amateurs blow into mikes or tap them to see if they are alive." (See further notes in Bulletin 71, page 218.)

A cordless microphone for the presiding priest will enable him to be more free in his movements and gestures. Provision should be made for plugging in a microphone in different parts of the church where it may be needed: at the entrance and in the baptistry, for example.

Lighting: Adequate lighting is needed on the book so that the reader may see the text clearly. It could be appropriate to have a spotlight shine on the reader and lectern, but carefully positioned so that it does not make shadows on the book or shine in the reader's eyes.

Enthroning the book of God's word: After the recessional, the deacon or reader may place the lectionary or a bible at the front of the lectern, where people may come to read it. See Bulletin 34, page 135.
TABLE OF THE LORD

After the community has been nourished at the table of the word (see pages 128-131), it is ready to move to deeper union with God at the table of the eucharist.

The eucharistic thanksgiving is offered by the priest at the altar and by the community gathered around it. In today’s liturgy, the Roman Catholic Church sees two main purposes for the altar: it is here that the Lord’s sacrificial death and his rising are made present sacramentally, and it is here that God’s people are nourished at the Lord’s table. (See GI, no. 259.)

Altars in Christian history: There have been several developments in the history of altars:

• **Old Testament:** In the early days, a person simply set up some stones as an altar: see Abraham’s preparations to sacrifice Isaac (Gen. 22: 7-10), and Jacob’s sacrifice (Gen. 28: 18). After the temple was built in Jerusalem, sacrifices were to be offered only at its altars. Sacrifices included burnt offerings of animals, incense, flour, and oil, and a libation of wine (Exod. 29: 28-46; 30: 1-10).

• **Pagan sacrifices** were also made on altars. The victim was given to the gods, and the worshippers often shared in the communion banquet. Paul speaks of food offered to idols in 1 Cor. 8: 1-13.

• **Early Christians:** The table used at the last supper would most likely be an ordinary wooden dining table of the time. In the house churches of the first two centuries, a simple wooden table was brought in for the liturgy of the eucharist. When larger and more permanent churches were built in the third century, with a place for the altar, it is likely that it came to be fixed. By this time, the altar was in the shape of a cube.

• **Fourth century:** The use of the basilica form for churches led to permanent altars of stone, following from the earlier practice of setting up a stone altar at the tomb of a martyr. A saint’s body was placed in or under the altar; when a body was not available, they gradually moved to the practice of burying parts or bits of bodies (relics) in the altar. A canopy or baldachin was placed over the altar to make it more prominent.

• **Medieval developments:** As people had less and less participation in the eucharist, the area around the altar and lectern became “the sanctuary,” the center for the clergy’s action. Gradually the altar was lengthened, and cross, candles, and more relics were placed on it. The altar was moved against the wall, and other altars were built in the church. The tabernacle was moved to the main altar.

• **Renewal:** The move to a clean altar of simple design and less imposing size is described below. Since 1965, the focus is on the altar only during the liturgy of the eucharist.

Symbolism of the altar today: The rite of *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* has returned to the best elements in Christian tradition:

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1 *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* — Study Edition (1978, CCCB, 90 Parent Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 7B1): $3.00, plus 10% for postage and handling.
A sign of Christ: St. Ambrose (c. 339-397) said that “the altar is Christ.” It is a symbol of our Lord Jesus, who is the priest, the victim, and the altar of his sacrifice (see Heb. 4: 14; 13: 10; Rev. 5: 6).

Altar of sacrifice: The people of God gather around the altar to share in the sacrifice of the Lord.

Table of the Lord: God’s people come to the altar to be refreshed with the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

Christians are spiritual altars: Returning to the spirituality of the early centuries (see page 105, above), the Rite of Dedication (page 59, no. 2) points out that Jesus is the true altar. We his followers are to be spiritual altars on which we offer the living sacrifice — our own life, lived in holiness and offered to God (see Rom. 12: 1-2; 1 Pet. 2: 5). We are the living stones that Jesus uses to build the altar of his Church (see 1 Pet. 2: 5).

Altar and font: The rite of dedication reminds us of the close relationship between the baptismal font and the altar: we who are made Christians in baptism are nourished at the Lord’s table (dedication of a church, no. 30, page 22; no. 38, page 23). This unity is a reminder of the sacraments of initiation, as in the Rite of Baptism for Children, no. 103; see Bulletin 73, page 87.

Designing an altar today: Details on the altar are given in GI, nos. 260-267. The later document on the Dedication of a Church and an Altar, pages 59-62, has made some further changes:

- One altar: There should be only one altar in the church. Side altars are no longer permitted. (See Dedication, page 61, no. 7, amending GI, no. 267.) On the possibility of an altar in the blessed sacrament chapel, see page 136, below.

- Freestanding: The priest and ministers should be able to walk around the altar, and celebrate Mass facing the community. The altar should not be against a wall, but at the center of attention. (Dedication, page 61, no. 8; GI, no. 262.)

- Preferably fixed: A fixed altar cannot be moved about. It is attached to the floor. (Dedication, page 61, no. 6; GI, nos. 260-262.)

- Made of stone: The altar table should be of natural stone; the bishops' conference may permit other suitable solid material. The pedestal or supports may be made of any solid and suitable material. (Dedication, page 61, no. 9; GI, no. 263.)

- Dedicated: A fixed altar is dedicated to God by the celebration of the eucharist. The rite of dedication includes this celebration. (Dedication, page 62, no. 10; GI, no. 265.)

- Relics of martyrs or saints may be placed beneath a fixed altar (see Rev. 6: 10), but no longer on top of it (Dedication, page 62, no. 11, going beyond GI, no. 266; see also page 93, no. 3.)

Shape of the altar: In the early centuries the altar was a cube, with a top that was square or almost so; it was large enough to hold the gifts being offered. Today

once more, it is being suggested that the altar be square, with room for the bread and wine in their vessels, and the sacramentary; nothing else is placed on it. (See EACW, no. 72.)

Adornment of the altar:

• Cloth: A tablecloth covers the table of the Lord, where the eucharistic banquet is celebrated (GI, no. 268).

• Candles help us to express festivity. They may be on the altar or near it, but must not prevent the people from seeing what is on the altar or what the priest is doing (GI, no. 269). Some liturgists recommend strongly that the candles be near the altar rather than on it.

• Cross: One cross is to be in view of the people. This may be on the altar or near it (GI, no. 270). Again, liturgists recommend that this be the processional cross, carried in the procession at the beginning and end of the celebration, and placed in a stand with the candles during the Mass. A six-inch crosslet hardly meets the requirement that the people be able to see the cross (GI, no. 270).

Other notes: The altar itself is a sign, and does not need additional ornamentation or lettering. It should be treated with respect at all times, during and outside celebrations. It is not a place to lean on, nor should we use it to hold papers, cards, booklets, or hymn books. There should be no litter in our liturgy.

• Credence table: This is a simple table at the side, large enough to hold the things needed for the celebration. It has no symbolic meaning, and should not be fussed over.

• Flags: Have we ever stopped to ask ourselves what flags mean in church? Why do we present more focal points in the overcrowded scene around the lectern and altar? Could we put them in the porch or at the back of the church?


REFLECTIONS

A church building should reflect:

—what we believe;
—what we believe we are;
—what we believe we are doing.

What does our church reflect?
The eucharist is seen first of all as an action, a celebration done in Christ's memory and at his 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.

Reservation of the eucharist: In third century Rome, Christians kept the eucharist at home under both forms, and gave themselves communion each day. Gradually the practice grew of reserving the eucharist for the sick and the dying. After a thousand years, this led to the adoration of our Lord present in the reserved sacrament, and the beginning of eucharistic devotions. The tabernacle we knew just before the Second Vatican Council became universal only in the sixteenth century.

A Changed Approach

The celebration of the eucharist and the reception of communion under both forms during the Mass, from elements offered and consecrated in that celebration, remain the primary form of eucharistic devotion. Other forms of devotion must derive from the Mass and lead back to it.

Reservation: There are three reasons for reservation:

- **Viaticum for the dying:** This is “the primary and original reason” for reserving the eucharist after Mass.

- **Communion for the sick and for others** not able to receive communion during Mass.

- **Adoration:** We adore Christ truly present, and join with him in his intercessions for all.

Number of communion breads: We do not reserve great numbers: enough for the dying, the sick, and for others unable to receive during Mass. If we take the average number of people in these categories each week, we can decide how many breads we need for reservation. It makes no liturgical sense to reserve any more.

- **Consecration in each Mass** remains the Church's norm (Liturgy constitution, no. 55). We receive from the gifts offered and consecrated in this Mass. Communion taken from the tabernacle is not correct during the celebration of Mass.

- **Renewal:** This should be done frequently.

Tabernacle: This is to be solid, unbreakable, and locked. It is to be opaque — no glass doors, walls, or windows. (The middle ages liked peekaboo sacrament houses.) There is only one tabernacle in a church.

- **Veil:** A veil covers the tabernacle to show that the eucharist is present. The bishop may permit another suitable method.

- **Light:** A candle or oil lamp burns day and night near the tabernacle, as a sign that we honor our Lord.

- **Key:** The priest responsible for the church or a special minister of communion keeps the key with great care.
Ciborium: The eucharist is kept in a ciborium or other suitable vessel (see page 120, above). When the precious blood is reserved for communion of the sick, a spillproof container is used (see Pastoral Care of the Sick and Rite of Anointing, no. 95).

**Blessed Sacrament Chapel**

The Church *highly recommends* that the eucharist be reserved in a chapel which is apart from the main body of the church. This chapel should be conducive for prayer and adoration by individuals.

When a church is dedicated, there is a rite for inaugurating the chapel by bringing the eucharistic species to it at the end of Mass. (See Dedication, pages 37-38, nos. 79-82.)

**Altar:** The tabernacle in the blessed sacrament chapel may be placed on an altar. In Dedication of a Church and an Altar (page 61, no. 7), it is suggested that this may be used for weekday Masses with small groups of people. Trying to celebrate Mass facing people over a tabernacle is awkward; moreover, the Church expressly wants “no reservation of the sacrament in the tabernacle from the beginning of Mass. The eucharistic presence of Christ is the fruit of the consecration, and should appear to be such” (see Bulletin 69, page 101, no. 6).

Eucharistic devotions include exposition, adoration, benediction, reposition; solemn annual exposition; and processions with the eucharist. When the group of people is too large for the chapel, the celebration may take place in the main church. Parish liturgy committees may want to take a look at the state of eucharistic devotion in their community.

**Open to the people:** The chapel should be open every day for several hours at a time convenient to the people who want to pray there.

**Transitional place of reservation:** As the changes took place in the 1960s and 1970s, many parishes left the tabernacle where it was against the back wall, and placed an altar facing the people. Others moved the tabernacle to the side altar.

**Time to move again:** The Church is now advising us that the most desirable situation is to have a separate chapel. Where this is not possible, a location such as a former side altar is second best. The position behind the altar is not desirable, and confuses the liturgical priorities of the community.

**Helpful reading:**

Sacramentary: GI, nos. 276-277.


Bulletin 69, Eucharistic Devotions.

*Eucharistic Reservation in the Western Church.* by Archdale A. King (1965, Sheed and Ward, New York).


Visits should be restored, in Bulletin 69, page 127; no. 44, page 163.

Further references are given in Bulletin 61, pages 342-344.
BUILDING FOR OTHER CELEBRATIONS

The church building is used for many liturgical celebrations, which have some different requirements and needs:

**Sacraments:** Some of the sacraments are celebrated within the eucharist.

- **Sacraments of initiation, and baptism of children:** See pages 122-127, above.
- **Confirmation:** It is preferred that confirmation be celebrated within the eucharist. Other than the fact that the church tends to be packed with relatives and friends of the candidates, the normal needs of the Sunday assembly are to be met.
- **Eucharistic devotions:** See pages 135-136, above.
- **Penance:** In penance celebrations, the church is the usual place of assembly to hear the word of God and to respond in prayer, song, gesture, silence, and conversion. The sacrament of penance is celebrated with an individual penitent in a reconciliation room, which needs to be designed carefully to permit the penitent the opportunity for face-to-face celebration or for anonymity, at his or her choice. See page 121, above, about access for all.
- **Marriage:** The wedding of two practising Catholics is normally celebrated during the eucharist; when one of the couple is not a Roman Catholic, it is preferred that the celebration take place within a service of the word. Provisions need to be made for welcoming the couple and their families and for processions to and from the place of marriage. Seating is needed for the couple and their principal witnesses, for the musicians, for the other ministers, for the celebrating priest or deacon, and for the people who assemble. (See Bulletin 59.)
- **Orders and ministries:** Installation of people into ministries to the community (including readers, ministers of communion, ushers, musicians) are often celebrated during the eucharist; on some occasions they may take place during a bible celebration. The usual community needs (seating, room for processions) are present.

Ordinations of bishop, priests, or deacons take place during the eucharist, and preferably on Sunday. The rites are contained in *The Roman Pontifical*, vol. I (see review in Bulletin 70, page 190). These celebrations are usually held in the cathedral church (see the review of *The Cathedral*, on page 141, below). Additional space before the altar is needed for the candidates to prostrate during the litany of the saints, and for the gathered priests to stand behind the altar (see page 115 on extending the area around the altar).

- **Anointing of the sick:** A communal celebration of this sacrament may take place during the eucharist or outside it, according to circumstances. Additional space may be needed near the altar for wheelchairs or stretchers. Entrances and aisles should permit easy access (see page 121).

In each parish the oils are to be kept in a locked *ambry*, a cupboard recessed into the wall.

**Funeral liturgies:** The rites by which the believing community marks the death of a Christian and his or her entrance into the paschal mystery of Christ have a definite arrangement, but the order and celebrations vary according to local needs and conditions. The usual order in Canada has three stages, with services in the home or funeral home, in the church, and in the cemetery.

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1. See Bulletin 52, pages 55-59; also *A Place for Reconciliation*, prepared by Richard S. Vosko, Walter Kroner, and Bruce Kunkel (1976, FDLC, 1307 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605); this book was reviewed in Bulletin 59, pages 183-184.

2. In cathedral churches, see *The Cathedral*, page 36; this book is reviewed on page 141, below.
• **Use of the church:** Local circumstances vary widely. In some cases the wake or vigil service(s) may be held in the church; more frequently, these are celebrated in the family home or in a funeral home, and the body is brought to the church for the funeral Mass or service of the word. In some communities, the parish provides a chapel for use by families who cannot afford to use a funeral parlor.

• **Requirements for funeral celebrations:** When the family brings the body to the church, it may be placed in a small chapel or in the main church. It is appropriate to celebrate a service of the word. If only a few people are expected to be present for the funeral Mass or service, this could be celebrated in the chapel; normally, however, the body would be brought to the main church.

There should be room for processions: the position of the casket should not hinder the flow of the people in the communion procession. For the final commendation and farewell, it may be appropriate for the people to form a circle around the presiding priest or deacon, the family, and the casket.

**Morning and evening prayer:** Depending on the number of persons involved, these hours of prayer may be celebrated in various places: near the lectern and altar, in the body of the church, or in the blessed sacrament chapel. Where flexible seating is available, the people may face one another in two groups.

**Bible celebrations and penance celebrations** may be held in the church or blessed sacrament chapel, according to the number of people taking part.

**Eucharistic devotions** may be celebrated in the blessed sacrament chapel or in the main church. A eucharistic procession may be celebrated with the participation of all who are present. (See Bulletin 69, page 109.)

**Ecumenical services** usually take the form of a bible celebration, and may be celebrated in the body of the church.

**Other devotions** are normally celebrated within the framework of a bible service. They are to be in harmony with the liturgy.³

• **Stations of the cross:** As presently used, we leave Christ in the tomb, ignoring his resurrection, which makes no sense of his paschal mystery. Do the stations belong in our church buildings today? [See Bulletin 62, pages 29-30; another view is given in “The State of the Stations,” by Michael Kwatera, in *Liturgy* (vol. 24, no. 6, November-December 1979, The Liturgical Conference, 810 Rhode Island Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20018): see pages 26-28.]

**Multi-purpose buildings:** We are used to using a high school auditorium, a gym, or a dance hall as a place for worship on Sunday. Have we thought of designing a building both for use as a church and for other community purposes?

**Solar heating:** As energy costs rise, churches and other public buildings should consider the idea of solar power as a supplement, at least, to their plant. (A solar-heated church and rectory were built in Cornwall, Prince Edward Island, in 1979.)

**What are we saying by the way our church is arranged? What kind of Church are we? What should our church be saying?**

³ See Constitution on the liturgy, nos. 13, 17. In 1974, Paul VI noted that devotions to Mary should be related to the Trinity, to Christ, and to the Church, and that biblical, liturgical, ecumenical, and anthropological guidelines applied to it too: see *Apostolic Exhortation Marialis Cultus* (1974, CCC, Ottawa): nos. 25-37. These norms apply to all forms of devotion outside the liturgy.
BEFORE WE CHANGE OUR CHURCH

Before we change our church, we have to change our Church. The renewal called for by Vatican II is a change of heart, of attitude, of priorities, of directions. Rearranging of furniture and furnishings comes later.

If a community is planning to build a church or rearrange its present building, it has to help its members to face these realities:

• **Who we are:** We are God's priestly people. What is our mission? What does God want us to do in this place? How can we show our role in the way we design or arrange the main body of the church?

• **What the word of God means:** God speaks to us in his word. How should we show our faith in his word by the way we design and use the lectern, by the books we use, by the way our readers are helped to proclaim God's word to us, and by the way we listen to his word?

• **What baptism means:** It is the beginning of a total conversion. Are we living it? How can we show the meaning and importance of baptism in the way we design and use the baptismery?

• **What we do in the eucharist:** We are all to be active in our celebration, and to live it in our daily lives. How seriously do we take our privilege and responsibility of doing liturgy with Jesus? Do we try to practise the social aspects of his gospel in our community and in our individual living? How can we show this in the way we use our church building?

• **Symbol of the Church:** Our church building is to be a sign and symbol of the Church in heaven and of the Church on earth. Are we letting our spirit of competition or insecurity or pride or other human weaknesses infiltrate or undermine what our faith and liturgy stand for?

We need to grow before we build a new church or rearrange an old one. It takes time for a community to grow in faith, to move in the new directions pointed out by the Holy Spirit in the Second Vatican Council.

• **Prayer:** We need to deepen our prayer life (see Bulletin 66, pages 262-265).

• **Love:** We need to grow in our love for others. Both as individuals and as a community, we should be expressing Christ's love for others in practical, sweaty, down-to-earth ways.

• **Praise:** This is why God made us. Are we dedicated to this, or do we let it become routine?

• **Missionary spirit:** Jesus sent his Church to teach and save the world. What is our community doing?

When we are ready to face these questions, and take some time to do so, we might begin to be ready to deal with the question of a new or redesigned church building that reflects who we are and what we do.


Lord Jesus, we praise you.
Give us hearts of warm flesh, and not of cold stone.
Make us living stones in your eternal temple of praise.

Help us to be your Church,
and let our church reflect your love for us,
and our love for you.

Lord Jesus, we praise you.  Amen!

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FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

_Erected for the glory of God._ We find these words engraved on the cornerstone of many church buildings.

**Why do we build churches?** Communities of believers have built temples or places of worship for many centuries, long before Christianity began. For Christians, a church is a place where God's people gather in order to hear his word, to be formed in his teachings, and to give him glory. A church is a place of praise and prayer, a place where the community and its members are led closer to salvation. Today, we build churches so that we may celebrate the public worship of God in the liturgy. From birth to death, from baptism to funeral, a Christian celebrates the main stages of his or her life in the church with the believing community. A church building is a sign of our faith and of our attempts to live it as the believing people of God.

**Problems:** Some echo Judas' complaint (see In. 12: 4-8), saying that money should be spent for people rather than buildings; that a simple building is adequate; that art and beauty are superfluous or unnecessary. Others ask more penetrating questions about our priorities. Where is the parish spending most of its energies: in paying for and maintaining a plant, or in developing the prayer life of its people? on entertainment or on ministry? on sports or on spiritual conversion?

**Evaluation:** The real question lying behind the others needs to be asked out loud: _What theology of the Church lies behind our church building?_ We have to ask this question whether our church is an inherited monument from the past, a new building, or a temporary meeting place.

- If everything of importance is in the _sanctuary_, we are basing our architecture on a clerical Church, in which the people are an audience, mere spectators.
- If our parish church is splendid while the parish community does not give an important role to social action in its ministry, the parish has given in to triumphalism.
- If we are unwilling to share our building with other Churches and religious groups, or with the civil community, we are narrow, and are failing to have the mind of the Church.
- What does our annual report reveal? Is it primarily a financial report? Is it mainly concerned with the parish plant? Does it go on to what is really important — to the people and to their spiritual state and pastoral care? What does our annual report say about our ecclesiology?

In each parish of the land, we need to examine our parochial conscience on the messages that our church buildings are preaching, and to see if they are the message of Christ.

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_Lord Jesus,_
_open our hearts to your Spirit,_
_and help us to understand_ what our church buildings are saying to the world today, _and what you want them to say._
BRIEF BOOK REVIEWS

The Cathedral: A Reader, edited by the Center for Pastoral Liturgy of The Catholic University of America, and the Secretariat of the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy (1979, USCC, 1312 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005): paper, 52 pages, illustrations. $3.95.

How many people step back from the bustle to find out what the cathedral means in the life and liturgy of the diocese? In thirteen penetrating articles, originally given in a week of workshops, the authors share their prayerful reflections and studies on the cathedral. Every diocese could benefit from the distribution and study of this book.

Recommended for all bishops; for the diocesan liturgy commission; for the priests, ministers, and liturgy committees serving cathedral parishes; as well as for students of liturgy.

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The Deacon: Minister of Word and Sacrament — Study Text VI (1979, USCC, 1312 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005): paper, 70 pages. $1.95.

The Bishops' Committee on Liturgy continues its fine series of study texts with this one on the deacon. It provides the letter of Paul VI on the diaconate (August 15, 1972), the history of this order, a commentary on the ordination rites, guidelines for the deacon's liturgical ministry, and an outline of liturgical studies for those preparing to become deacons.

The book is clearly written, and provides a good basis for a better understanding of the restored order of deacon in today's Church. It is too bad that poor proofreading mars the text. Recommended for deacons, members of diaconate programs, diocesan liturgical commissions, and liturgy committees in parishes with deacons.

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General Intercessions, by the Bishops' Committee on Liturgy (1979, USCC, 1312 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20005): paper, self-cover, 16 pages. 35¢.

This brief statement helps us to understand the meaning of the general intercessions (prayer of the faithful), and to show how they can be used with greater advantage in all liturgical celebrations. In this way the spontaneous and local quality of prayer, within the context of the universal Church, is encouraged and deepened. The balanced and practical presentation is good.

Recommended for priests, deacons, ministers, religious, teachers, and members of parish liturgy committees and diocesan liturgical commissions.

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A Pastoral Liturgy Bibliography (1979, Notre Dame Center for Pastoral Liturgy, PO Box 81, Notre Dame, IN 46556): paper, 28 pages. $1.50, postpaid.

This convenient booklet lists more than 320 books, texts, articles, series, tapes, and other references in English. They are grouped under 19 general headings. Seven issues of the National Bulletin on Liturgy (nos. 37, 47, 57, 59, 60, 67, and 70) are included in the bibliography. Prepared by the staff of the Center, this bibliography helps students, liturgists, and religious educators to look into the theological and liturgical background of many questions. Recommended.

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In Bulletin 54, page 184, we reviewed the people's edition of this work. The new edition has omitted 292 pages of texts and catechetical instruction, and provides organ accompaniment and SATB arrangements for the choir. Printing and engraving are clear, and the book is well bound. A valuable resource book.

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From Ashes to Easter: Lenten Renewal for the Churches (1979, Center for Pastoral Liturgy of The Catholic University of America, Fourth St. and Michigan Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20064; and The Liturgical Conference, 810 Rhode Island Ave. NE, Washington, DC 20018): paper, x, 118 pages. $9.95.

Lent is the season when the people of God are called to be converted and to believe in the Good News of Jesus (see Mk. 1: 15). This book, a revision and expansion of the 1974 edition, provides a lenten program for parishes. What is important is that the program is based on the liturgies of the season, and flows from the Sunday celebration, rather than imposing an alien program on the liturgy. All three cycles are covered.

The program is ecumenical and open to all Christian Churches, and contains references to the various adaptations of the Roman lectionary. Additional suggestions are included for renewal groups. Materials are provided for duplication as bulletin inserts. Recommended to all parishes, religious communities, and renewal groups.

Supplemental Worship Resources (1979, Abingdon, Nashville, TN; in Canada: G.R. Welch Co., 310 Judson St., Toronto, Ontario M8Z 1J9): This review covers five separate books in this series of resources for renewal in the United Methodist Church in the U.S.A. This Church was founded in 1965 as a union of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, and the Methodist Church. The series of books provides additional and alternative resources for worship in an ecumenical Church. (The prices below are given in U.S. dollars.)

• No. 5: A Service of Christian Marriage, with Introduction, Commentary, and Additional Resources: paper, 64 pages, xvi page insert in two colors. $2.95.

The basic pattern of the rite provides for times of gathering, ministry of the word, marriage rite, thanksgiving, and dismissal with blessing. There are three choices for the thanksgiving: an act of thanksgiving and the Lord’s prayer; an eucharistic service; an agapé meal (love feast).

• No. 6: Seasons of the Gospel: Resources for the Christian Year: paper, 144 pages, $4.95.

“Christianity is a religion which takes time seriously. History is where God is known. Without time, there is no knowledge of God” (page 12). The Church of God on earth celebrates the Lord’s day, daily prayer, a yearly calendar. Recent tendencies of stressing our action more than God’s are rightly criticized (page 28). Appropriate texts, hymns, and visuals are suggested throughout the year (page 44). Special occasions (sacraments and other occasions) are covered on pages 112-114. Substantial indexes are given on pages 115-144.

• No. 7: A Service of Death and Resurrection: The Ministry of the Church at Death: paper, 94 pages, xxiv page insert in two colors. $3.95.

The people of God — not just its ordained ministers — have a duty or ministry to those who are bereaved by the death of a family member or close friend. This book suggests ways in which the believing individual and community may cope with the mystery of death.

Comments on the Church’s ministry at death, a commentary on the funeral service, and additional services are contained in this book, along with a congregational insert.

• No. 8: From Ashes to Fire: Services of Worship for the Seasons of Lent and Easter, with Introduction and Commentary: paper, 256 pages. $7.95.

This book restores the full celebration of Lent, Holy Week, the Easter triduum, and the great fifty days of the Easter season until Pentecost. Particular care has been taken to avoid any anti-Semitic overtones in the Holy Week celebrations. By providing rites, texts, historical background, and practical suggestions, this book will enrich congregations who have not known the traditional liturgies of these seasons. Any Catholic parish liturgy committee would benefit from a study of this book.


This booklet provides patterns and outlines for Sunday worship on communion days and non-communion days; a service of baptism, confirmation, and renewal; Christian marriage; and a service of death and resurrection. The texts are in harmony with the Christian tradition, and are sensitive in their wording.

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While not every word in these books will be acceptable to Roman Catholics, in general the comments, directions, and approaches are in accord with the renewal which is continuing in major Christian Churches today.

Introduction, commentaries, and additional resources in these books help those who want to study and celebrate these rites as well as possible. Recommended as background resources for all who are seriously interested in good liturgy.

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“Trinity Sunday” is the title of a seventeenth century poem by George Herbert. Using its themes as a framework, Bishop Morneau provides eight days of prayer, scripture passages, psalms and reflections. Topics include joy in the mystery of creation, redemption, holiness, sorrow for sin; growth in the Lord, trust in his gifts; companionship with the Lord, and praise of God. Ten principles of prayer open the book.

Recommended to all who wish to deepen their personal prayer life in harmony with the liturgy.

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“What makes injustices so unacceptable in our time is the fact that we now possess the know-how to feed the world and provide basics for all its citizens. What is lacking is the will and the way. What is lacking is compassion” (page ii). Compassion comes from the marriage of mysticism and social justice (page iii).

The author seeks to show how we can improve the world by our efforts in many fields. The reality of today’s needs calls Christians to apply the social message of the gospel in daily life. Sincere liturgy has to flow into our way of life. Recommended.

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From the beginning adult candidates for baptism had to be instructed over a long period of time, and had to show that they lived according to Christian principles before they could be baptized. Fr. Dujarier, a pastor in West Africa, shows how the catechumenate began and was organized in the early Church; how it declined between the fourth and sixth centuries; and how it is being renewed once more in our day. Recommended for diocesan liturgy commissions, parish liturgy committees, clergy, catechists, and for all interested in renewal of the Church’s life.

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The Catholic Church must always live in the present, while being aware of the past and the future. Perhaps this is seen most clearly in the story of Christian initiation. The renewed rite of adult initiation is firmly rooted in the traditions of the early Church, soundly and pastorally practical in today’s disturbed world, and sensibly guiding us to the future and the eschaton.

Fr. Dujarier is both pastor and scholar, and shares his insights with us in this valuable book. Recommended for parish liturgy committees, clergy, catechists, diocesan liturgical commissions, and all who are concerned about renewal in the Church.

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The author, an experienced pastor of a very "Catholic" (pluralistic) inner-city parish, presents his own reflections on that parish's experience of its imaginative and creative implementation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults.

Eminently practical in its presentation of problems and their solutions, it shows the rich adaptability of the Rite, and stresses its call for imaginative creativity. "The key word is process. Using the process built into the Rite has helped me appreciate the spiritual growth moments that are the life of the Church in sacraments" (page 6). Some interesting insights into a renewed ecclesiology, with practical applications, are shared. An excellent study of the content of the catechumenate is included. Highly recommended to all pastoral agents.


The congregation of a church is a human group, and its dynamics are those of any human group. The author shares his skills in group dynamics in clear language. In seven interesting chapters he speaks of the different forces operating in large and small groups; the effects and importance of place; planning by potentialities rather than by problems; concentrating on problems rather than symptoms; positive motivation; and the leadership style of the clergy. He emphasizes recognition of situations rather than manipulation of people. Many practical examples bring his message home in any congregation. Recommended for clergy, seminarians, and parish councils.

It's a Pleasure, O Lord: 1980 Family Song Calendar (1979, Liturgical Arts Center, OR 97036): illustrations, texts, cassette with 13 original songs. 1979 prices: calendar and cassette, $6.95; calendar alone, $4.95.

This calendar sets out to combine seasons, scripture references, family activities, and other celebrations. The cassette provides simple songs that may be sung at different times and occasions. The 1981 edition would be helpful to families who wish to celebrate with the Church.

Praise God in Song: Ecumenical Daily Prayer, compiled and edited by John Allyn Melloh, SM, and William G. Storey (1979, GIA Publications, 7404 South Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638): paper, 328 pages. $6.95 (bulk prices available); spiral binding, $7.95; organ supplement, $12.95.

A good variety of musical settings and styles for morning and evening prayer and for the Sunday vigil (see Bulletin 58, page 120) is given in this book. The music is by David Clarke Isele, Howard Hughes, SM, and Michael Joncas. Additional scripture references for each day of the year and additional psalms are also provided. Recommended as a valuable resource for those who plan community celebrations.


This is a revision of an earlier book, Will Morality Make Sense to Your Child? It is intended for parents and catechists, particularly those preparing children to celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation for the first time. Recommended.


Various influences in our life affect the image we have of ourselves. At the same time, they affect our approach to God, both in personal living and in the liturgy. The author counsels us to accept ourselves, other people, and God, and leads us to praise God for having created us. Recommended.