

Heaven Made Manifest: An Architectural Solution for *The Spirit of the Liturgy*

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Although little more than a year has elapsed since the *motu proprio Summorum pontificum* came into effect on 14 September 2007, we have only begun to grasp the significance of Benedict XVI's statement that the two forms of the Roman liturgy are "mutually enriching."¹ The immediate effect of the return of the Missal of John XXIII on the *novus ordo* is starting to manifest itself in mixed parishes where both are celebrated. There, the old Mass is newly relevant once again, and the new Mass has at long last received a gravitas long denied it.

One long-term consequence, hitherto largely ignored, will be the architectural ramifications of the Pope's ingenious rapprochement with tradition. Both forms of the Mass are now permitted, and even encouraged; the unbinding of the old Mass means its distinct needs must be considered in church planning, just as much as the prescripts of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) and the other documents associated with the Missal of Paul VI. It is this intersection of tradition and reform that will constitute the architectural embodiment of Joseph Ratzinger's *The Spirit of the Liturgy* and the subsequent program of organic liturgical rehabilitation that has already begun to characterize his pontificate as Benedict XVI. This is no binary choice between amnesiac progressivism or unthinking antiquarianism, but an entry into a living and vibrant tradition of divine worship.

Canonists doubtless will quibble as to the minimal requirements set down for such liturgical grey areas, but if sacred architecture is the handmaid of sacred liturgy, then the former must graciously conform to the needs of the latter. A sanctuary, for example, that follows standards established for the celebration of the Tridentine liturgy will likewise provide a proper environment for the reverent celebration of the ordinary form of the Mass revised after Vatican II. It reconnects the newer form of the Mass with the broader tradition of Catholic worship, without obscuring its positive modern developments. The directionality and detail of the

1 Benedict XVI, Letter (*Epistula*) *Con grande fiducia* accompanying the Apostolic Letter *Summorum pontificum* issued *motu proprio* on the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970 (7 July 2007) *Acta Apostolicae Sedis* [AAS] 99 (2007) 795-99.

Tridentine Mass may well serve to shape or at least guide gestures and movements suggested by the occasionally vague rubrics of the *novus ordo*, while the comparatively recent emphasis on certain forgotten ancient practices, such as the ambo and the freestanding altar, may yet give new vigor to the *usus antiquior*.

This thirst for a return to the grand Catholic artistic tradition has long been in evidence at the grassroots level. The general dissatisfaction of many lay Catholics, young and old alike, with churches described by the term "ugly as sin" has become commonplace.² The desire for beauty and tradition is slowly being recognized as new churches are built across the country. Indeed, since the time this paper was first presented and its publication, Thomas Gordon Smith, patriarch of the Classical Revival, has inaugurated a wing of his massive Benedictine monastery at Clear Creek, the so-called "Oklahoma Escorial." Duncan Stroik, another stalwart of the Classical Revival, has seen the dedication of his *magnum opus*, the rich Roman Baroque interior of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe at La Crosse, Wisconsin; a secondary masterwork, the chapel at Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, California, is nearly complete.³

The point of this article has little to do with arches and columns. Rather, it has to do with something that these two great men understand, but that few of their erstwhile imitators comprehend. Many extensive new commissions, even in supposedly conservative contexts, have been given instead to mainstream architects inexperienced in traditional design, with cartoonish, caricatured results. Unfamiliarity with classicism is partially at fault, but beneath this lies a deeper confusion afflicting both architect and priest. Many in both fields are unaware of the liturgical principles that come before ornament, and which even transcend style. This body of customs, refined over a span of centuries, must inform how we shape sacred space. Without it, our embrace of the past becomes a mere magpie eclecticism, borrowing cast-off antique altars and spires while violating the inner unity that defines them as part of a greater artistic, liturgical, and architectural whole. A restoration of the sacred to church architecture requires more than simply veneering a modern church design with a few incompetently-copied Doric pilasters or replacing a featherweight altar table with an underpowered marble block embellished by a few Gothic arches stuck onto its front. It is not enough to build something superficially "churchy."

2 See, for instance, Michael Rose, *Ugly As Sin: How They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Spaces and Meeting Places and How We Can Change them Back Again* (Manchester NH: Sophia, 2001).

3 On these ecclesiastical structures, see Thomas Gordon Smith, "A New Monastery: *Ora et Labora* Represented in Building," *Adoremus Bulletin* 14.6 (September 2008) 7; Noah Waldman, "Beauty as Expanded Reason: The Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe," *Adoremus Bulletin* 14.6 (September 2008) 5-6; and private correspondence with architect Duncan Stroik.

The liturgical oeuvre of Joseph Ratzinger reminds us that in the Mass we touch heaven. The Mass, however, does not take place in a vacuum. What will the church building that incarnates the principles of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* look like? How do we manifest heaven in the practical details of wood and stone? Although we may have a deeply imbued sense of how a church is supposed to look, many of us lack any systematic understanding of the theology underlying the *ars celebrandi*, the dynamics involved in the liturgical texts and directives. This ignorance applies not only to the celebration of Mass in the extraordinary form, but, even after forty years, to the ritual unfolding of the Mass celebrated according to the *novus ordo*.

With many parishes and cathedrals considering both renovations and re-novations, this issue can no longer be ignored. Indeed, incautious renovations undertaken in recent decades, in the name of a certain interpretation of the ordinary form of the Mass, frequently inconvenience the celebration of its extraordinary form. We must now erect sanctuaries that serve equally the needs of the *novus ordo* and the Tridentine Mass, and that bring to both the same spirit of life, beauty, tradition, and reverence. Even where only one form is common, the other ought not to be architecturally impeded or, worse, excluded altogether.

ORIENTATION AND THE SHAPE OF THE CHURCH

Joseph Ratzinger only occasionally touches on matters architectural in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. These references, although few, remain illuminating. The shape of the church building has its roots in the two parts of the ancient Mass: the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. We experience, first, a dialogue between priest and people at the ambo that is then internalized as both together turn as one towards the altar: “*Conversi ad Dominum!*” Turn towards the Lord!⁴ This vivid expression implies a hierarchy of architectural space represented by a processional movement forward and upward to the altar, with the ambo serving as a secondary, subordinate focus.⁵ At the heart of this procession is the concept of orientation, of prayer turned towards the east, and the sunrise (*oriens*) as a cosmic symbol of Christ’s final return in glory.

Pope Benedict explains that “praying towards the east means going to meet the risen Christ.”⁶ Flawed archaeology and romanticized pseudo-primitivism have nearly destroyed our ability to grasp this ancient idea. Long before Vatican II, this ancient symbol, recognized by the early Christians, had lost its place in the Catholic imagination. Not surprisingly, then, it was abandoned hastily in the late 1960s. It remains, however, a

custom of almost unimaginable antiquity. Turning to the east at prayer was normative as early as the second century. Architectural pragmatism eventually turned “liturgical east” into a universal sacred direction distinct from geographic east.⁷ The ideal of priest and people together facing God constitutes the real reason why the priest celebrated Mass for centuries, in the view of the uninstructed, “with his back to the people.” Rather than a gesture of clerical obscurantism, orientation in worship represents our openness to the golden rays of the second coming of Christ. It underscores, moreover, a real solidarity between priest and people, shepherd and flock.

THE CHURCH BUILDING

Orientation, though, also implies hierarchy. The church building must be distinct from the parish hall, offices, or school. Visitors to many European villages are often moved by the sight of a great nave rising protectively over a cluster of low outbuildings. In many new designs, however, church and parish offices are jumbled together into one amorphous mass of gathering spaces, children’s theaters, youth cafés, and, worse, with little distinction given to the sole reason for the existence of such a complex, namely, the church proper. This edifice of worship is not a mere auditorium grafted onto a confusing muddle of parochial functions.

Without compositional hierarchy, there can be little successful architecture, and even less art. Within the church building, this hierarchy is manifested through our procession through a series of distinct spaces. These direct us, through color, form, space, and line towards the *oriens*, the spiritual east represented by the altar and the crucifix.

Before entering the church proper, we experience a moment of preparation as we pass from the earthly world with all its mundane concerns and distractions into the world of the sacred liturgy. This may take the form of a cloistered atrium or perhaps a parish plaza; in most cases, a simple narthex or a vestibule will do.⁸ As we moved from narthex to nave, in an ideal world we would see the sanctuary far beyond us, raised on steps and lit by the glowing amber light of the east window. The nave stretches out towards us, filled with a blue high-ceilinged gloom. Before us soars a lofty freestanding altar canopied in a burst of polychromy and gilding. We have entered a world filled with both the immanence and the transcendence of God.

How often do we experience, or even enter, a modern-style church in this way? The narthex may blur with the parish hall, lined as it is with bathroom doors and pamphlet racks. The entrance may serve also as a

4 Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco CA: Ignatius, 2000) 72.

5 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 72.

6 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 68.

7 Uwe Michael Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005) 39-43, 95-96.

8 Stephen Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998) 138.

gigantic baptistery, the main doors of the church opening invasively upon so personal a ritual. Beyond the second set of doors, neophytes, veteran worshippers, and visitors alike find a low, boxy space with raked pews, its undersized table-altar stranded in a broad, shallow sanctuary. Even to the casual observer, the venue appears as an unseemly hybrid of cost-cutting measures, trendy experiments, and a handful of awkward, if well-intentioned, nods to tradition.

While western architecture has varied the dimensions of church naves over time, the central volume of a church is seldom wider than its height. Nevertheless, if a parish has been forced to adopt a low roofline, a number of simple solutions may yet present themselves. Careful ornamentation, symbolism, and a strategic sprinkling of rich materials could considerably improve a church's appearance. So would a re-ordering of the sanctuary along the lines discussed below. With money for rich ornamentation scarce at present, even the simplest hierarchical arrangement of a church's space will reveal its sacred character. Some effort of course must be made.

THE SANCTUARY

The sanctuary is the place where stands the altar, which at once, in Benedict's words, "looks to the *Oriens*, and forms part of it." In the church, the sanctuary constitutes "the place," most of all, "where heaven is opened up."⁹ Drawing on the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM), the liturgico-theological writings of Joseph Ratzinger as well as his legislation as Pope Benedict XVI, and the age-old customs associated with the extraordinary form, we may conclude that the ideal sanctuary should be high enough to be seen easily from the nave, and marked off by an altar rail. The GIRM directs that the sanctuary be clearly demarcated from the body of the church, either by a change of elevation or some other specific elements of design.¹⁰ Even though its liturgical use is optional in the ordinary form, there is no better way to indicate the sanctuary's sacred character than its altar rail, which certainly fulfills the GIRM's specification of a "particular structure" (GIRM 258).

The "open plan," a comparative novelty in art and history, possesses no vocabulary to express sacred hierarchy. All places consequently become equally "special," and hence nothing is special.¹¹ The sanctuary should not simply be an open platform with the altar stranded in its midst.

In his discussion of the sanctuary, Ratzinger focuses in particular on the ambo and the altar. These items conflate the altar of the Jewish temple and the Torah shrine of the synagogue into a unity that nonetheless contains a proper processional hierarchy.¹² In the early Syrian Church, Ratzinger notes, the ambo, the "throne of the Gospel," and the bishop's chair were raised on a platform, or bema, that occupied much of the nave, a practice inherited from Jewish synagogue worship: "[T]he liturgy of the Word takes place in the center of the building," at the bema, while the liturgy of the Eucharist takes place at the apse, where all look to the east as the culmination of divine worship.¹³ In the modern western liturgy, this is equivalent to the transition from the Liturgy of the Word at the ambo and the chair, to the Liturgy of the Eucharist celebrated at the altar.

THE AMBO

Today, the altar and the ambo often end up in competition with each other because we do not understand fully their purpose and relative dignity. When the ambo was reintroduced in 1964, the Church had virtually forgotten about it for nearly seven hundred years.¹⁴ The ambo may be considered to be one of those "other elements," mentioned by *Sacrosanctum concilium*, "that have suffered injury through accident of history," that "now, as may seem useful or necessary, [are] to be restored to the vigor they had in the tradition of the Fathers."¹⁵ The return of the ambo is a positive development, but the curious shape it has subsequently taken is not. After the implementation of changes in the late 1960s and 1970s, churches ended up eventually installing an object that may have vaguely resembled an ambo, but was distinctly *not* an ambo. Some churches simply used their old pulpit, or cut it down to the size of a glorified music-stand. Others simply adopted an actual portable lectern. An ambo, however, must be fixed and permanent, not movable, and should be quite sizable (GIRM 209). The lectern, for its part, is too impermanent, whereas the pulpit, intended for preaching, was never intended for the proclamation of readings. The ambo, during the Church's first thousand years, was both lofty and quite large. With the rise of the preaching orders in the high Middle Ages and later, the ambo was eclipsed by the pulpit, and simply fell out of use.

¹² Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 70-71.

¹³ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 72.

¹⁴ Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord*, 120 and also J. B. O'Connell, *Church Building and Furnishing: The Church's Way* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1955) 79. The use of the ambo persisted in a few select places, such as Milan, seat of the Ambrosian rite, and the dioceses of Spain.

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum concilium*, 50, *Documents on the Liturgy, 1963-1979* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1983) [DOL] 1, no. 50, p. 14.

⁹ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 70-71.

¹⁰ See Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, trans. International Committee on English in the Liturgy, Liturgy Documentary Series 2 (Washington DC: USCCB, 2003) 258.

¹¹ Moyra Doorly, *No Place for God: The Denial of the Transcendent in Modern Church Architecture* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007) 38.

Despite its virtual obsolescence, the ambo found a mention in St Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones*¹⁶ and likewise in the post-Tridentine *Ceremoniale episcoporum*. Citing these rubrics and the more ancient custom, there was a small revival of the practice of chanting the readings from the ambo in the decades leading up to the Second Vatican Council. This may be one instance where the normative practices of the ordinary form might significantly enrich an attenuated aspect of the extraordinary form. Such decisions may profitably be undertaken with great sensitivity for the concerns of the local faithful attached to the Tridentine liturgy. There is no reason, however, to dismiss a properly-designed ambo as "untraditional." In the extraordinary form, it is permitted to chant the Epistle and the Gospel from the ambo at all solemn non-requiem Masses. This may be considered as a laudable embellishment.¹⁷

In the ordinary form, the ambo is used even more frequently. The GIRM states, "the dignity of the Word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the Word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word [...]" It is permitted for the readings, the Easter Proclamation or Exultet, the homily, and the Prayer of the Faithful or Intercessions (GIRM 309). In both forms, the ambo should be large enough to accommodate the priest, the two candle-bearers, and another server bearing incense. It should be sufficiently high for the ministers to be "clearly seen and heard by the faithful" (GIRM 309). In other circumstances, where a particularly historic and beautiful pulpit serves as an ambo, prudence suggests the practice be continued. In other situations, where a small lectern is used and the high pulpit is preserved merely as a historic artifact, it would be laudable to return the pulpit to its original use exclusively as a preaching platform.

In the extraordinary form, the number of ambones depends on the size of the church. If there is only one ambo, it is placed on the liturgical north or "Gospel" side, where liturgical east is taken to be the direction of the altar. The north, once the home of marauding barbarians, is the direction of chaos, which must be overcome by the missionary proclamation of the Gospel. If there is sufficient space, a second, smaller ambo is placed on the liturgical south side of the sanctuary.¹⁸

The GIRM implies the use of only one ambo in the singular, thereby emphasizing the unity of Scripture. The liturgical architect Schloeder, however, informs us that "the notion of a hierarchy of readings is also an ancient and important consideration." Schloeder therefore suggests a

multiplicity of ambones as one possibility in the ordinary form. Particular honor has always been paid to the Gospel as the culmination of the Liturgy of the Word.¹⁹ It ought to be abundantly clear, then, that a separate lectern should be provided for music and announcements: "The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it" (GIRM 309). The use of lay readers for readings from the Old and New Testaments, except for the Gospel, suggests reserving the Gospel ambo to clergy alone.

In both forms, the principal ambo should stand on the north side of the church, be lofty and beautiful, be large enough to accommodate the required number of sacred ministers, and not appear grander than the altar. When it comes to altars and ambones, we need not be timid regarding height. Most modern notions of liturgical egalitarianism are self-defeating. Our view of a low, unimpressive altar, for instance, may well be blocked by the heads of our fellow worshippers in the pew in front of us. Microphones, moreover, scarcely rival the dramatic impact of the Gospel chanted from on high.

The ambo will probably be placed within the sanctuary, but this is not an absolute requirement. Many early ambones were set well down the nave of the church, with the reader facing liturgical south, rather than towards the people (liturgical west), as is the more common arrangement today. This emphasizes the subordination of the ambo to the altar, and recalls the spatial transition from the Word to the Eucharist that Ratzinger, in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, finds so evocative.²⁰ Such an arrangement, furthermore, would also permit a Gospel procession that actually appears to go somewhere. This, however, poses a number of difficulties for simpler celebrations of the Mass.

At the very least, the modern use of the ambo raises a host of liturgical questions that have yet to be fully explored. It is noteworthy that a single, large portable ambo was placed a slight way down the nave at the papal Mass celebrated at Vatican on 8 October 2008, apparently for the first time. The reader faced inward across the nave, in the ancient fashion, rather than directly towards the people.²¹ The ambo was located on the liturgical south side near Arnolfo di Cambio's bronze statue of St. Peter enthroned. This reverses the usual arrangement, but such a practice is observed sometimes in ancient basilicas.²²

¹⁹ Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion*, 94.

²⁰ Borromeo suggests that, for the sake of better visibility, the ambo or pulpit should stand in the nave. (Voelker, "Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones*," 295.)

²¹ The Mass was covered in the Vatican press: "Pio XII difese la pace e preparò il Concilio Vaticano II," *L'Osservatore Romano* CXLVIII 237 (10 October 2008) 1. Other images showing the ambo in context are available from Fotografia Felici, the official photographers to the Holy See, at their website <www.fotografiafelici.com>.

²² Anson links such a reversal to the *versus populum* altar in the ancient basilican arrangement (although at San Clemente in Rome, at least, this is not the case.) See Peter F. Anson, *Churches: Their Plan and Furnishing*, rev. and ed. by

¹⁶ Evelyn Carole Voelker, "Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis ecclesiae*, 1577: A Translation with Commentary and Analysis" (Ph.D. dissertation, Syracuse University, 1977) 293-95.

¹⁷ O'Connell, *Church Building*, 79.

¹⁸ Voelker, "Charles Borromeo's *Instructiones*," 294.

THE PRESIDER'S CHAIR AND ITS EQUIVALENTS

While perhaps better understood than the ambo, the priest's chair is seldom placed in the correct hierarchical relation to either the altar or the ambo. The introduction of the presider's chair, like the ambo, represents a positive liturgical development, and not altogether unprecedented, being reminiscent after all of a Pontifical Mass in the *usus antiquior*. This indeed may have been the model that the Liturgical Movement had in mind before Vatican II.²³ Nevertheless, nothing in either the rubrics or the tradition demands that the chair be placed at a random angle to one side of the sanctuary. The resultant arrangement resembles the set of a televised talk-show, and submits the priest to the relentless scrutiny of the congregation throughout the whole Mass, even when he is merely listening or praying silently. This awkward situation is further exaggerated when the chair faces the congregants head-on.

The chair, or its equivalent the sedilia, is customarily placed opposite the ambo, on the liturgical south side of the sanctuary. The extraordinary form of the Roman-rite Mass requires a bench or sedilia, whereas the GIRM calls for a chair (310). A medieval practice, permitted by custom in the extraordinary form, is the use of the sedilia, an arched triple seat built into the wall intended for priest, deacon, and subdeacon.²⁴ This satisfies the requirements of both forms, and enriches both equally. It replaces the bench with something grander, and also substitutes a more traditional furnishing for the ubiquitous throne-like chairs of past years, clearly reprobated by the GIRM (310).

Interpreting this directive in the light of tradition and the original aims of the Liturgical Movement would suggest that the chair be placed with its back flat against the north wall in the manner of the bishop's throne or the Tridentine sedilia. This arrangement has been used by Pope Benedict XVI at least twice and is the custom in such liturgically advanced *novus ordo* parishes as the London Oratory, England, St. Agnes in St. Paul, Minnesota,

Thomas F. Crofts-Fraser and H.A. Reinhold (Milwaukee: Bruce, 1948) 12. Placing the Gospel ambo on the liturgical north side of the sanctuary is, in the author's experience, one of the few archi-liturgical remnants to survive the 1960s. It would be better, then, to preserve this arrangement, even where Mass "facing the people" remains the norm.

23 Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and their Relation to the Twentieth-Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council* (Farnborough: St. Michael's Abbey, 2004) 174.

24 O'Connell maintains that the sedilia is permissible in the extraordinary form through custom; See O'Connell, *Church Building*, 68. It would appear similar enough to the celebrant's chair to suffice for the *novus ordo*.

or the Church of Our Saviour, Manhattan.²⁵ Another custom worth revisiting is the practice of draping the bench and its equivalents with a rich cloth matching the liturgical color of the day.²⁶

THE ALTAR: PLACEMENT

It has been many centuries since Church law required the apse of a church to be pointed towards geographical east, and it has been forty years since most priests faced even its liturgical equivalent during Mass. This essential concept had lost its place in the liturgical imagination centuries before the cultural experimentation that preceded and then dominated the 1960s. Such an impoverished understanding of immemorial liturgical praxis helps us to understand why this mystical and deeply symbolic ancient practice was abandoned so quickly and so universally by the western Church.²⁷ Joseph Ratzinger's subsequent emphasis, in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, on the cosmic symbolism of oriented worship, as well as the publication of Uwe Michael Lang's scholarly examination of liturgical orientation, *Turning Towards the Lord*, has done much to reawaken this all-but-forgotten idea at the heart of liturgy. Without it, the traditional plan of the church building is unintelligible.

It is not always pastorally prudent or even physically possible to offer every Mass facing liturgical east. Although presupposed by the rubrics contained in the liturgical books of both the ordinary and extraordinary forms, the actual practice remains controversial. Even when a congregation is not spiritually prepared to return to physically-oriented worship, architecture and furnishings may create an overarching sense of movement towards the heavenly, sunlit east.²⁸ It will be crucial in newer churches that the altar be laid out so as to make equally possible worship *ad orientem* on the one hand, and *versus populum* on the other. This is essential even in churches where Mass is not celebrated according to the *usus antiquior*, because Mass in the ordinary form may nevertheless be said *ad orientem* as well. In fairness to all who desire to worship according to the express mind of the Church, there should be sufficient space in the sanctuary to celebrate a solemn Mass in either the ordinary or extraordinary form.

25 The throne used by Pope Benedict XVI has been located in an analogous position most recently during the papal Mass of 9 October 2008, already mentioned earlier. It was placed on the liturgical north side, back to the wall, opposite the bronze statue of St. Peter cast by Arnolfo di Cambio. This is so because the cathedra is often placed on the north side, but the basic arrangement is similar to the ideal position of the presider's chair. See footnote 21 above.

26 O'Connell, *Church Building*, 68.

27 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 78.

28 Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord*, 25.

Such a commingling of praxes cuts both ways. The canopied freestanding altar is in accord with tradition, and indeed is presupposed by the Tridentine rubrics, even if honored more in the breach than the observance.²⁹ Even though there is a liturgical and an architectural case to be made for the ubiquitous wall-altars and massive retables of the medieval and Baroque periods, a discussion of the essential qualities of a truly traditional freestanding altar, covered by a baldachin, ciborium, or tester would be of greater pastoral utility to the Catholic mainstream. Ratzinger moreover suggests in *The Spirit of the Liturgy* that the recent movement of the altar to a position closer to the people is in itself positive.³⁰ There should nonetheless be sufficient room for torchbearers and other attendants to kneel in front of the altar as presupposed by the rubrics of both forms of the Solemn Mass.³¹

Most altars of sacrifice today are too short and shallow. Although some of the earliest altars were indeed quite small, the long altar is a more useful development, not only in terms of celebrating Mass in the extraordinary form, but also to hold the many ciboria and chalices required even at a usual Sunday Mass, in order to fulfill the council's desire that the people receive Hosts consecrated at the same Mass they are attending.³² The altar should be raised on an odd number of steps, broad enough for the priest to celebrate Mass facing either direction and to circle the altar at times of incensation.³³ It must be both sufficiently sizable and raised to serve as the supreme focal point for the church. Prayerful humanity naturally focuses on the vertical. As the semiotician Umberto Eco once quipped, "Did you ever hear of an archaic cult of the sacred banister?"³⁴

THE ALTAR: CANOPIES

In addition to steps, the best way to emphasize the altar's transcendent dimension is to raise a canopy over it. It may be the single most important

element that can be added to a modern church.³⁵ The most ancient form of canopy is the ciborium or civory, a four-columned canopy of wood, metal or stone, crowned with an ornamental roof or cupola. It is sometimes called, though less accurately, a baldachino or baldachin.³⁶ *The Spirit of the Liturgy* calls the canopy a manifestation of the sacred tent of Sinai, because both were embellished with hanging draperies.³⁷

There is nothing primitively "pure" about a bare altar. Ciboria were known as early as the fourth century. The Emperor Constantine himself is said to have donated a magnificent silver ciborium weighing 8,025 lbs. to the Lateran basilica.³⁸ It is virtually impossible to think of the altar of late Roman antiquity without its civory.³⁹ According to the renowned Benedictine liturgist Cardinal Ildefonso Schuster, "In the minds of the early Christians the Altar could never be without the halo of its sacred nature that is, the Ciborium or Baldachin in marble or in silver. The Altar in its entirety constituted the true Tabernacle of the Most High, who assuredly could not dwell *sub diva* without a special roof of His own...."⁴⁰

A medieval, and occasionally Baroque, abbreviation of the civory is the tester, a square or oblong hanging canopy suspended from the vault and large enough in size to cover both the altar and the altar-steps. This feature would be particularly suitable in parishes with neither the resources nor the space for a full-fledged ciborium.⁴¹

The work of the distinguished twentieth-century liturgical architect Sir Ninian Comper illustrates how to draw intelligently on precedent regarding canopies. For Comper, the ideal sanctuary is raised, enclosed by an altar rail or even a light, full-height screen, but with the altar still close to the assembled congregation.⁴² Comper's notion of liturgy was intimate, but hierarchical and mysterious. This intersection of atmospheres he regarded as most exemplified in the ciborium. Many of his canopies are crowned

29 Adrian Fortescue et al., *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described* (Farnborough: St. Michael's Abbey, 2003) 148. At one time, canopies were required over all altars in a church, but the rubrics in force in 1962 presuppose that there should be a canopy above the church's high altar, and over any altar where the Sacrament is reserved. See Geoffrey Webb, *The Liturgical Altar* (Westminster MD: Newman, 1949) 77.

30 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 81.

31 See, for instance, Peter J. Elliot, *Ceremonies of the Modern Roman Rite: A Manual for Clergy and All Involved in Liturgical Ministries* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995) par. 401.

32 See Second Vatican Council, *Sacrosanctum concilium* 55.

33 O'Connell, *Church Building*, 62.

34 Umberto Eco, *Foucault's Pendulum* (New York: Harvest, 2007) 352.

35 See Edmund Bishop, "On the History of the Christian Altar," *Liturgica historia: Papers on the Liturgy and Religious Life of the Western Church* (Oxford, Clarendon, 1918) 23: "... it must be admitted that a mere square table, be it raised on many steps or on few, is not in itself a dignified object; the 'ciborium' therefore satisfied the eye and fell in with the sense of the fitness of things in the minds of the common Christian worshipper in the fourth century and onwards...."

36 Ninian Comper, quoted in Anthony Symondson, SJ, and Stephen Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper: An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Reading: Spire, 2006) 238.

37 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 85.

38 Cyril E. Pocknee, *The Christian Altar in History and Today* (London: Mobray, 1963) 55, citing L. Duchense, *Le Liber Pontificalis* I (Paris, Thorin 1886) 172; Webb, *Liturgical Altar*, 80.

39 Edmund Bishop, "Christian Altar," 22-23.

40 Quoted in Anson, *Churches*, 102.

41 Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion*, 74; Anson, *Churches*, 78.

42 See Symondson and Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper*, 110-11; 165-70.

with heroic images of the risen Lord, set against the glowing backdrop of a stained-glass east window that fills the entire east wall. Such a vast window also helps further underline the traditional solar iconography inherent in eastward orientation.⁴³ Opening up the altar-wall creates a sense of entry into heaven and restores a sense of dynamism to the eastward position. A similar result might also be achieved by studying the great altarpieces of the Baroque, which were often conceived, as *The Spirit of the Liturgy* notes, in similar rhetorical terms.⁴⁴

THE PROBLEM OF THE ALTAR AND THE TABERNACLE

It is nearly impossible at present to discuss the altar without raising also the thorny question of the ideal location of the tabernacle. Whereas the altar is the most important liturgical item in the church, the tabernacle, in itself unimportant in terms of ritual, nonetheless serves as the earthly home of God Incarnate. In the decades leading up to Vatican II, many liturgical scholars became preoccupied with the notion that the tabernacle had come unduly to dominate the altar on which it sat.⁴⁵ Although certainly a legitimate concern, it could have been resolved by a more careful approach to the design of the altar, including an adherence to the rubrics then in vigor, rather than a rupture of the familiar, organically-developed unity of altar and tabernacle. The traditions to which scholars looked, although sometimes more ancient, nonetheless overlooked, or else altogether discounted, the rich eucharistic spirituality that developed alongside the elaboration of eucharistic doctrine throughout the Middle Ages and with renewed emphasis in the Catholic Reformation.⁴⁶ These scholars argued that by separating the reserved Sacrament from the altar, they would re-awaken an appreciation for the Mass, currently lost under the barnacles of popular devotion. Belief in the Real Presence, so it was assumed, would simply continue unabated in Catholic circles, regardless of the position of the tabernacle in church. While it would seem otiose to blame the separation of the tabernacle from the altar for the current crisis of belief in the Real Presence of the Eucharist, it is safe, nonetheless, to conclude that continual trifling with the placement of the tabernacle exposes the Eucharist at least to some risk of diminished reverence and awe.

Rather than creating two competing devotional *foci*, the placement of the tabernacle on or directly behind the altar of sacrifice allows each to

reinforce the other with their intertwined liturgical and theological importance. It is well to keep in mind that this arrangement worked well for over a thousand years in some places, and was nearly universal for five hundred. Now, however, the current version of the GIRM (315) forbids such an arrangement in the ordinary form.⁴⁷ The ubiquity of Masses celebrated *versus populum* militates against such a solution, unless, as suggested in the 1964 instruction *Inter oecumenici*, a smaller tabernacle is used.⁴⁸ This in turn presents a number of other difficulties.

Furthermore, as with the ambo and altar, some confusion has arisen as to the exact form that a tabernacle ought to take. The modern tabernacle is but one of several methods of reserving the Sacrament. Widespread since Trent, it was only mandated as the sole permissible form in 1863.⁴⁹ A number of virtually defunct forms of reservation such as the Sacrament tower, the wall-safe aumbry, and even the obscure but highly symbolic hanging pyx have been revived in recent years.⁵⁰ The pre-conciliar regulations that excluded such methods of reservation, save by indult or immemorial custom, still remain in force, as the GIRM (317) itself notes: “In no way should all the other things prescribed by law concerning the reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist be forgotten,” and cites as an exemplar a 1938 Instruction by the Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments.

In accord with these instructions, the standard tabernacle should be a large, freestanding container, fixed solidly to its base (whether a plinth or an altar), but never built into it, so it can be fully veiled on all sides.⁵¹ Indeed, the veil, or conopaeum, was never abolished, and in point of fact is more important as a eucharistic symbol than the sanctuary lamp.⁵² While this requirement was widely ignored even before Vatican II, or satisfied only in a rather attenuated form, it nonetheless remains of great importance. The veil links the tabernacle to the tent-like imagery associated with the baldachin. The tabernacle, as we read in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, is “the

47 See also Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharist *Eucharisticum mysterium*, 25 May 1967, no. 55: AAS 59 (1967) 569.

48 Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter oecumenici*, 26 September 1964, 95, DOL 23, no. 387, p. 109.

49 Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion*, 97.

50 One example is the Sacrament tower at the Cathedral of the Madeleine, Salt Lake City (Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion*, 97). Aumbry-like tabernacles are ubiquitous in many places. A hanging pyx was installed recently in the chapel of the Boston chancery at the suggestion of Cardinal Seán O'Malley. Private correspondence with George E. Razoyk, AIA, and The Reverend Robert O'Grady.

51 O'Connell, *Church Building*, 174.

52 It is the primary sign of the eucharistic Presence in, among other official texts, Congregation for Divine Worship, *De sacra Communionem et de cultu mysterii eucharistici extra Missam, prae-notanda generalia*, 21 June 1973, General Introduction, 11, DOL 279, no. 2203, p. 695.

43 See Symondson and Bucknall, *Sir Ninian Comper*, 154, 172, for just a few examples. An interesting theology of the east window is presented by Helen Dietz, “The Eschatological Dimension of Church Architecture,” *Sacred Architecture: The Journal of the Institute of Sacred Architecture* 10 (2005) 12-14.

44 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 130.

45 O'Connell, *Church Building* 137.

46 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy* 89, 91.

tent of God,” the fulfillment of the Ark of the Covenant, and its replacement within the new Christian temple.⁵³

This is not to suggest that alternate forms of reservation might not play some useful role in the future, so long as an indult was acquired. The lofty Sacrament tower gives great prominence to the reserved Eucharist where it cannot be placed on-axis with the altar. Aumbries offer additional security. The hanging pyx, a veiled vessel suspended on a chain from the center of the altar canopy, offers a unique solution for the re-sacralization of a church “in the round.”⁵⁴ With the exception of its suspension, it is similar in typology and symbolism to the fixed tabernacle.⁵⁵ It cuts the Gordian knot of returning the reserved Sacrament to the nexus of the altar while leaving the altar-surface unencumbered. It solves, moreover, the disconcerting problem of the priest offering the Mass with his back to the tabernacle. The hanging pyx, of course, gives rise to its own safety concerns: Church law requires that the tabernacle be immovable, owing to the risk of profanation (GIRM 314). Perhaps the height of its suspension may play an effective role in preserving the pyx from harm.

A better solution would be to fix the tabernacle atop a raised plinth or wall-shrine behind the altar. Such an arrangement conforms to the requirements of the ordinary form, and enjoys the precedent of tradition. The tabernacle, in this case, should be placed close to the altar, at the center of the church’s apse, although not so close as to inhibit circulation. It should be raised slightly higher than the altar to be easily visible as a focus of devotion. If both altar and tabernacle are placed beneath the ciborium, the veiled tabernacle appears as a tent within a tent: a sublime piece of incarnational symbolism. It would be unsuitable, however, were the tabernacle to be canopied while the altar remained uncovered. In situations where both the altar and the tabernacle cannot be placed under the same canopy, the altar should take priority as the liturgical nexus of the church. Other architectural elements, like steps or ornamental surrounds, can be used to emphasize the tabernacle.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 89.

⁵⁴ Several were in use in France after 1863, one reintroduced at Solesmes (see Symondson, *Sir Ninian Comper* 242), and one currently is in use at Quarr. See Aidan Nichols, “Archi-Liturgical Culture Wars,” *New Blackfriars* (September 2008) 538. Another, possibly empty, is found at the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, Manhattan. Site visit by author, 4 October 2008. Sacrament towers and aumbries also persisted after 1863 in a few scattered places in France, Austria, Spain, and elsewhere. Anson, *Church Building*, 89.

⁵⁵ See Comper, “On the Atmosphere of a Church,” Symondson and Bucknall, *Ninian Comper*, 242.

⁵⁶ Placing the tabernacle within an aedicule or niche in the apse may be the best arrangement as it echoes the pre-conciliar requirement that the eucharistic altar be canopied. See Webb, *Liturgical Altar*, 79. The large baldachin of an altar of

Many older churches have adopted a somewhat different arrangement. They turn the old high altar with its grand reredos into a tabernacle shrine or “altar of repose,” with a blocky, freestanding stone or wood altar placed at the lower level of the sanctuary. This arrangement is sometimes unthinkingly imitated in newer churches under the mistaken assumption that it is somehow “traditional.” It destroys the unity of altar and tabernacle that made an old-fashioned reredos such a successful work of symbolism. Ironically, it results in the setting of the tabernacle overshadowing the altar while reducing the Blessed Sacrament to liturgical stage-scenery.

AVOIDING THE PSEUDO-TRADITIONAL SANCTUARY

Such an ensemble is actually the preservation of an historical accident. Much of our confusion results from the way in which the freestanding altar was introduced after Vatican II. In many older churches, the reredos, with its attached wall-altar and crucifix, was the architectural focus of the whole structure. Like the ciborium, it served to mark the altar and project it upward in space. After the council, however, often a small wooden table was placed in front of the altarpiece, despite the discrepancy in scale. Elsewhere, in flagrant contravention of Vatican directives, the old reredos was obliterated.⁵⁷ Tabernacle, reredos, and altar now no longer work in concert as a unified whole, but have been turned into an illogical “sense-ruin” that conveys not a vibrant, continuous liturgical tradition, but instead institutionalizes a sense of historical rupture.⁵⁸

In a growing number of places, interestingly, the old high altars are now being used even for the ordinary form of the Mass. Such a practice is wholly licit, and faithful to current legislation. A 1993 analysis of the relevant passages in the GIRM, issued as an editorial in *Notitiae* by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, makes clear that the ideal of having only one principal altar in a church is more important than the practice of celebrating Mass facing the people.⁵⁹ Another clarification, issued in September 2000 and signed by the prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Jorge Arturo Medina Estévez, also indicated that the apparent requirement of the GIRM that new altars be constructed away from the wall constituted “a suggestion,” rather than an obligation.⁶⁰

reservation, however, was intended to cover altar, tabernacle, and priest. As such a shrine does not possess an altar, something small but sufficient to cover the tabernacle while remaining visually subordinate to the high altar baldachin, might be more suited to current circumstances.

⁵⁷ Sacred Congregation for the Clergy, Circular Letter *De cura patrimonii historico-artistici Ecclesiae, ad praesides contiarum episcopatum (opera artis)*, 11 April 1971, AAS 63 (1971) 315-317.

⁵⁸ Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord*, 124.

⁵⁹ Cited in Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord*, 124.

⁶⁰ Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord*, 26.

In newer churches, we ought not to imitate blindly the post-conciliar “ad hoc” ensemble whereby a smaller altar is erected a few steps away from a much more impressive high altar with reredos, even if we randomly festoon the furnishings and interior with some vaguely traditional detailing. Not only does this give the curious impression of two altars in one sanctuary; it also creates an artificial dichotomy between the reserved Sacrament and the action of the Mass. This is also why the habit in some places of dividing the tabernacle from the altar by a screen poses a number of problems. The tabernacle shrine should be dignified, and can itself even have a reredos, but it should not look too much like a dummy high altar. This can be resolved by raising the altar of sacrifice to approximately the same level as the tabernacle base, suspending a tester over the altar, and implementing similar architectural details.

In general, both parsimony and excess should be avoided, with custom as a guide. A number of much smaller, subtler changes can help to create a truly liturgical interior where a full-fledged rehabilitation is impossible. Uncanopied altars can still be lengthened and raised upon steps. One detail that would give considerable dignity to both altar and tabernacle alike is the old practice of suspending an odd number of lamps, usually three, five, or seven, before the high altar of a “greater church,” which, given their large size, includes many modern parish churches.⁶¹ Current legislation reduces this requirement to a single light, but there is no reason why a row of several lamps hanging before the altar could not further serve to highlight the sacredness of the sanctuary, an adaptation easily undertaken with only a modicum of effort.⁶²

THE “BENEDICTINE” ALTAR ARRANGEMENT: FIVE MINUTES TO A MORE LITURGICAL ALTAR

One even simpler change proposed by Joseph Ratzinger, and implemented at the Basilica of St Peter and elsewhere since he has ascended to the papacy, consists of standing a large crucifix upright on the altar between priest and people.⁶³ This crucifix is flanked by six tall, upright candles, ubiquitous on the high altar during the celebration of Mass according to the

extraordinary form, and permitted also in the ordinary form. The crucifix is the most significant element of this arrangement, but the candles also serve to extend the altar visually upward. Placing the six candles (seven whenever a bishop functions as the principal celebrant) across the front of the altar may be a good first step towards the imposition of the central cross.

This constellation of crucifix and candlesticks, although essentially derived from traditional Roman practice, is now sometimes called the “Benedictine” arrangement in honor of Pope Benedict XVI, who has revived the practice in the papal chapel and at other papal venues. When the author presented an earlier version of this paper in September 2007, he and like-minded colleagues already had been promoting this altar arrangement for some time. It was inspiring, consequently, to see it implemented in November 2007 at the first liturgy organized by the Pope’s current master of ceremonies, Guido Marini. A central crucifix and flanking candles have been utilized at virtually every papal Mass since then.⁶⁴ Guido Marini’s own evident appropriation of the pope’s ideas regarding the sacred liturgy has shaped the restoration of traditional elements to modern papal ceremonial.⁶⁵ Well before his accession to the See of St Peter in 2005, Joseph Ratzinger had expressed his views on this subject:

Moving the altar cross to the side to give an uninterrupted view of the priest is something I regard as one of the truly absurd phenomena of recent decades. Is the cross disruptive during Mass? Is the priest more important than the Lord? This mistake must be corrected as quickly as possible; it can be done without further rebuilding. The Lord is the point of reference. He is the rising sun of history.⁶⁶

Contemporary liturgical fashion discourages the placement of candlesticks and cross on the altar. Yet the altar appears almost naked without them.⁶⁷ This simple change, even more than canopies and ambones, works wonders by restoring the crucified Lord to the heart of the Mass. While not screening off the priest completely, in the fashion of an eastern iconostasis, the arrangement nonetheless frees him from the need to personalize his prayers, and redirects his focus, and that of the

61 At least five lamps were required to burn before the reserved Sacrament, and three before the high altar if the tabernacle was elsewhere in the church. O’Connell, *Church Building*, 231.

62 GIRM 316 mentions a single light, which would imply that the requirement extended only to the ordinary form, but it appears also in the current *Code of Canon Law* (940), which would logically apply to both forms of the liturgy. There is nothing, however, that forbids the former practice. See Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland in association with the Canadian Canon Law Society, *The Canon Law Letter and Spirit: A Practical Guide to the Code of Canon Law* (Collegeville MN: Liturgical Press, 1995) can. 940, p. 515.

63 See Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 83.

64 Seven candles are permitted in both forms for a bishop in his diocese, and the pope at all times. Six are the norm for High Mass in the extraordinary form, and are allowed also in the ordinary form. O’Connell, *Church Building*, 211; GIRM 117. Additional candles may be placed elsewhere in the sanctuary.

65 Gianluca Biccini, “Il pallio papale tra continuità e sviluppo,” *L’Osservatore Romano* CXLVIII 98 44.838 (26 June 2008) 8.

66 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 84.

67 Contrary to a widespread popular misapprehension, the GIRM (307-308) permits cross and candles on the altar, in continuity with organically-developed tradition. It is the first option mentioned.

congregation, on Christ.⁶⁸ Such a gesture is a first step to grander visions of architectural renewal. It is remarkable what attention to such small details can achieve.

The people of God increasingly seek to recover their ancient heritage. Tradition, however, is not a mere collection of associative “ecclesiastical” emotions, but a systematic, living, and organic body of custom and history. Benedict has worked tirelessly, in his various capacities as a theologian, as the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, and most recently as supreme Shepherd of the universal Church, to unveil and explain to his flock these forgotten foundations of faith. Such details can become a distraction, even ends in themselves, if they are misunderstood. But the sum of received liturgical tradition, built up over a span of two millennia, is like a great mosaic: pull out one tessera, however small and seemingly unimportant, and the larger picture suffers. Place a humble brass cross on an altar, and be confronted with the central Fact of history. Remove such an apparently inconsequential object, and in the process unwittingly dethrone the Son of Man. The crucifixion is just a symbol, but symbols still have meaning, especially in this age so starved of symbol, sign, and iconography. Only by understanding how such details work together can our art come to manifest heaven. In this lies the architectural solution to the spirit of the liturgy.

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⁶⁸ Placing a crucifix on the altar need not mean removing a larger sanctuary crucifix. Many older altars include both a small cross for priestly devotion, and a larger crucifixion scene for the congregation. The GIRM’s now somewhat relaxed regulations concerning the duplication of images do not apply to those of Christ or the Blessed Virgin (318).

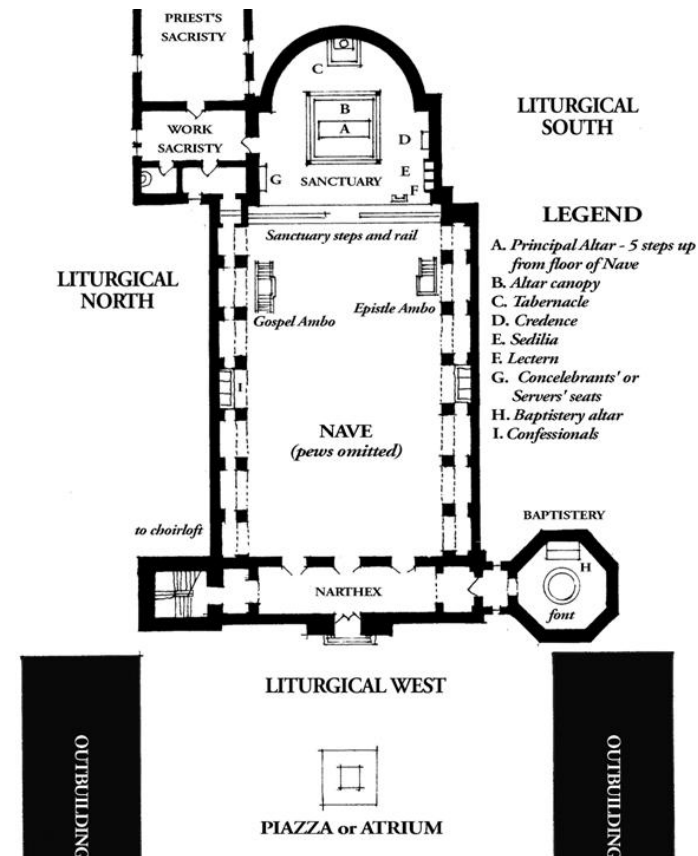


Figure 1. A plan of a small church designed according to the principles advocated in this article. A cruciform plan would be also be appropriate, if more costly. Most modern parish plants will require a longer nave and broader aisles, as well as larger outbuildings, but the basic principles of hierarchy and procession, as well as the relative arrangement of the sanctuary furnishings, are equally applicable. *Illustration by author.*

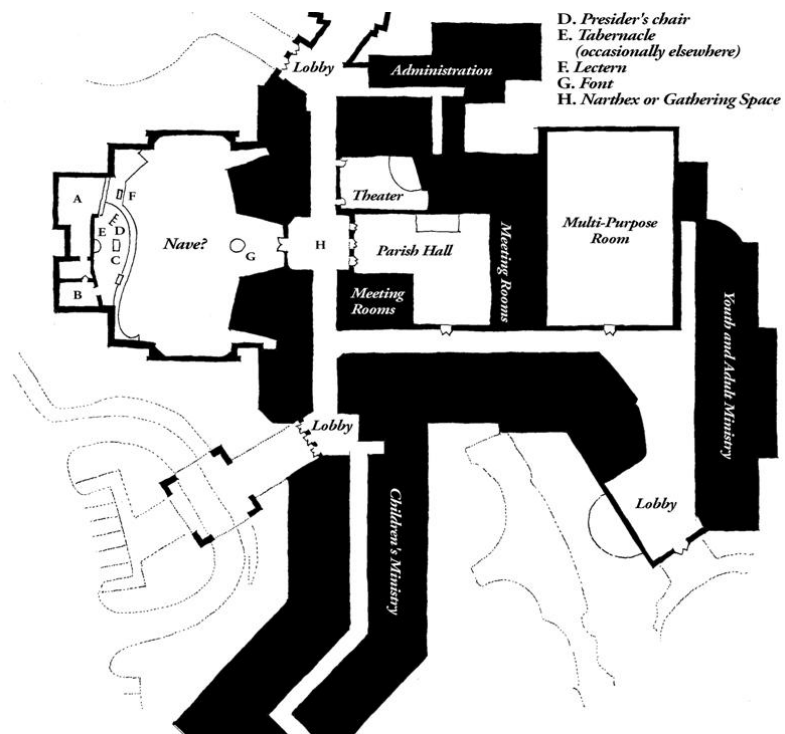


Figure 2. A diagrammatic plan of a modern “pseudo-traditional” church. Note the lack of hierarchy and processional movement, the confused spatial planning, and the placement of sacred, administrative, and social functions under one roof. *Illustration by author, based on a proposed parish in Auburn, Alabama.*



Figure 3. A parish church should appear more visually significant than support buildings such as the parish hall. *Illustration by author.*



Figure 4. Many contemporary parish designs, while superficially borrowing “traditional” elements such as pointed arches, lack the spiritual verticality and orientation stressed in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. *Illustration by author, based on a proposed parish in Auburn, Alabama.*

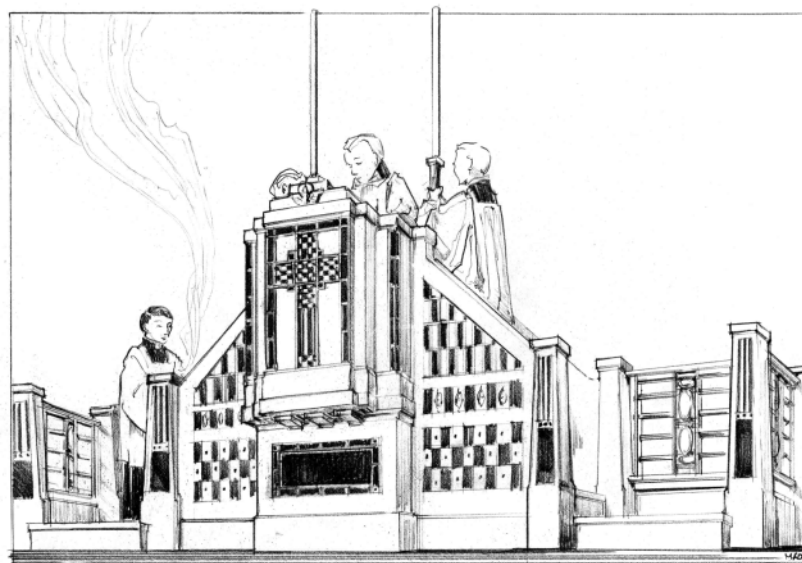


Figure 5. The ambo should have a solidity and dignity appropriate to the visual focus of the Liturgy of the Word, as well as sufficient space for the ceremonial of a solemn liturgy. It is not interchangeable with a lectern or pulpit. *Illustration by author.*

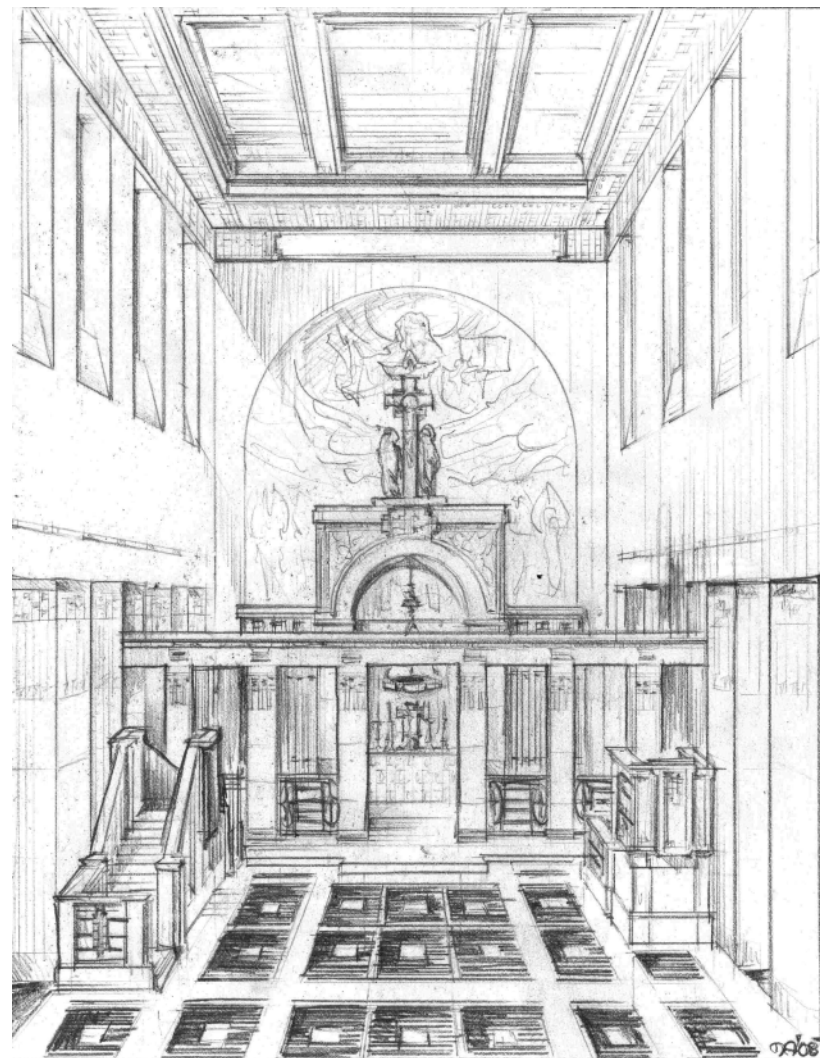


Figure 6. Both ambones may be located outside the sanctuary, if necessary. Note the smaller Epistle ambo on the right. *Illustration by author.*



Figure 7. The medieval sedilia is a suitable model for the modern presider's chair. A simplified form of it could easily be included in new parish churches. Priests' chairs may also be placed with their backs against the wall in a similar arrangement. *Photo by Br Lawrence Lew, OP.*

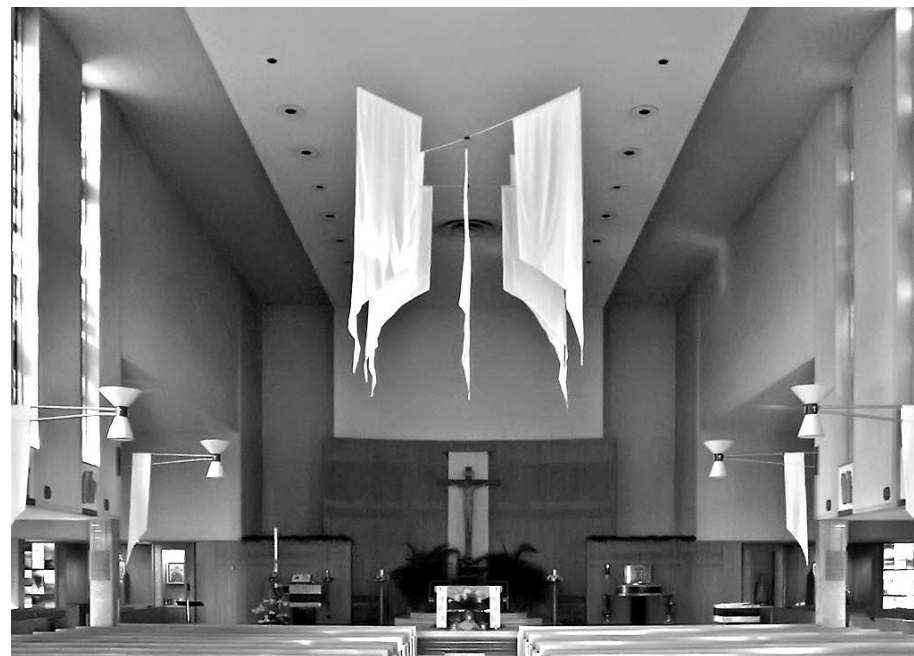


Figure 8. A small and undistinguished altar lost in a rather broad, rather shallow modern sanctuary. *Photo by Mark Scott Abeln.*



Figure 9. The sanctuary should constitute a distinct volume within the church by various architectural elements, such as the rail, columns or chancel arch, and raised on steps. The altar, when freestanding, should be covered with a canopy and designed to appear as the spiritual *oriens* of the building, its cosmic symbolism emphasized by the large east window with the eschatological image of Christ Pantocrator in stained glass. Note also the spacious ambo, accessible via a passage in the nave wall. A lectern is placed to one side for lay readers and non-liturgical announcements.
Illustration by author.

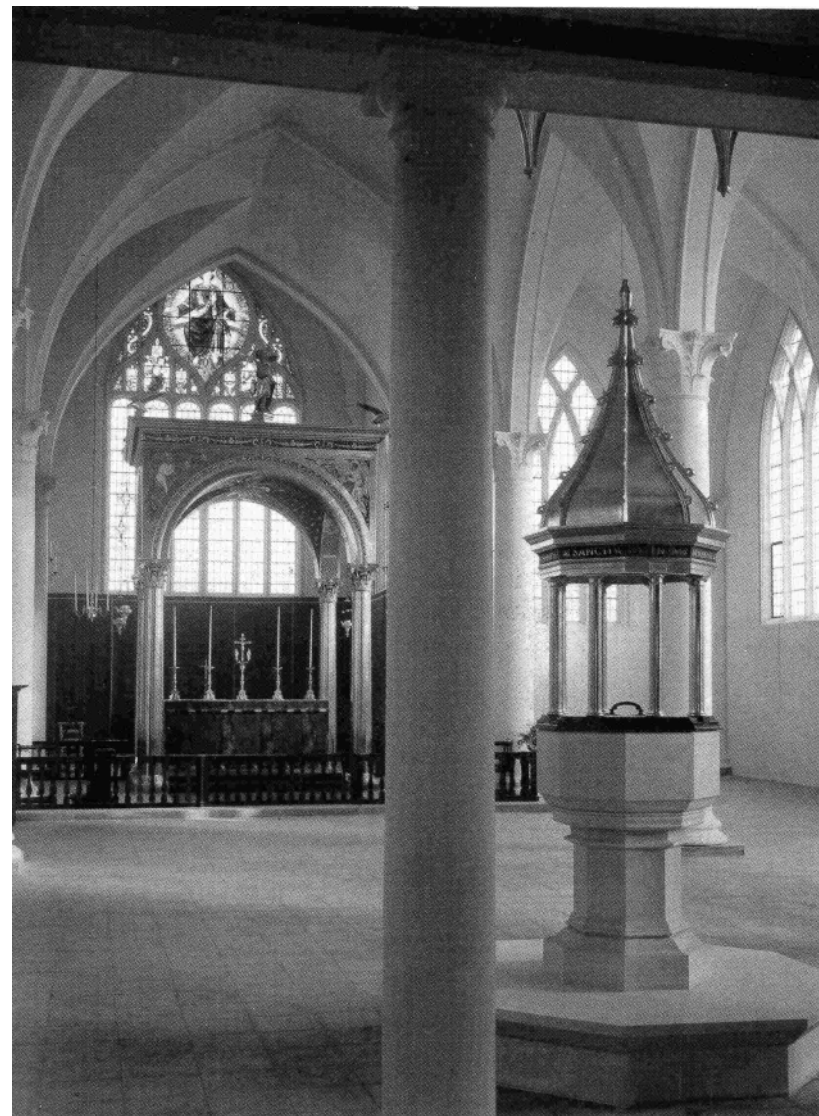


Figure 10. Comper's church at St. Philip, Cosham. The ciborium and altar are placed close to the congregation without loss of mystique or hierarchy, within a simple, intimate but genuinely traditional interior. *Photo courtesy Fr Anthony Symondson, SJ.*

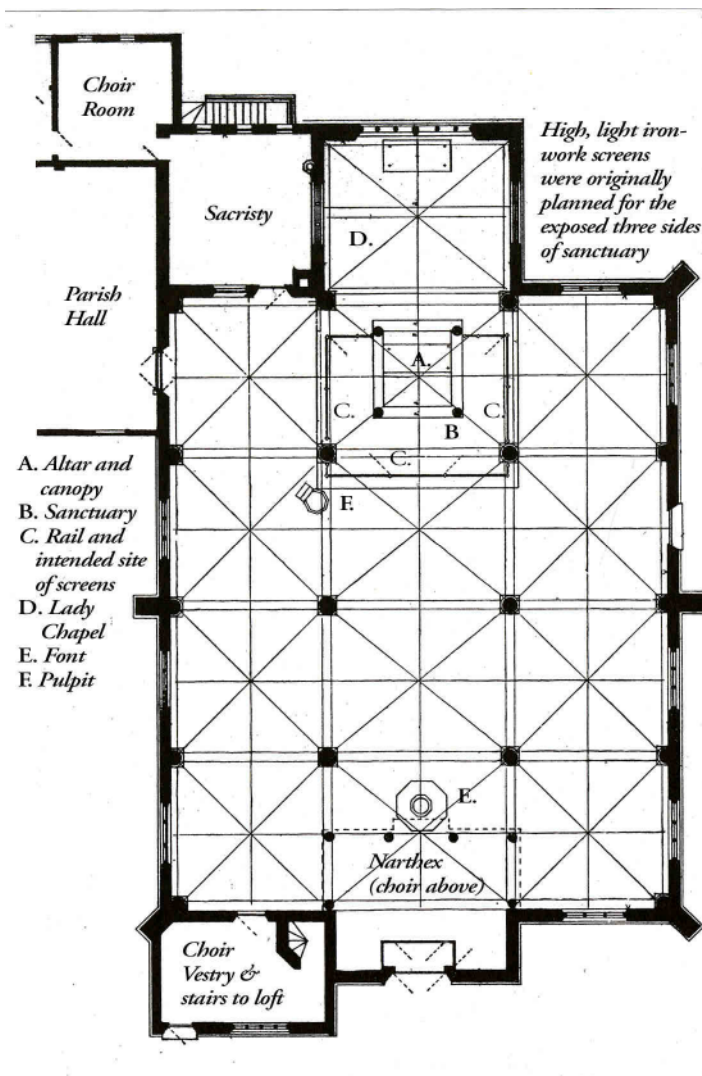


Figure 11. The plan of St. Philip, Cosham. Comper's sanctuary space, while exposed on three sides, nonetheless retains a considerable sense of definition and mystery by its enclosure within the colonnade system of the church. With a few minor alterations, such as a slightly more spacious sanctuary, it could serve as a suitable model for a modern Catholic church. *Plan from Symondson's Sir Ninian Comper, with additional annotations by the author.*

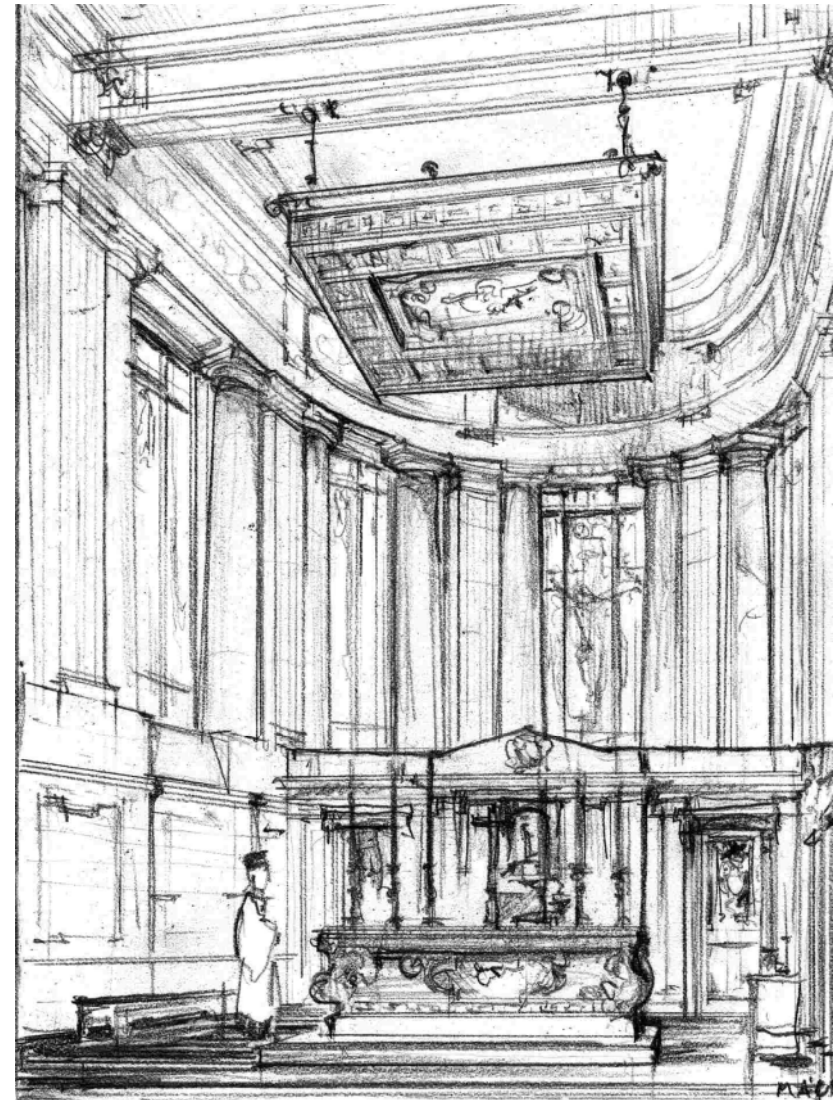


Figure 12. A hanging tester is also an acceptable alternative to a ciborium or baldachin, and could be adapted at fairly little expense for a variety of styles from Gothic to even the most austere open modern interiors. *Illustration by author.*



Figure 13. A tabernacle should be capable of being veiled completely, as the tent of God's presence. *From Peter Anson's Churches: Their Plan and Furnishing.*



Figure 14. Historical accidents, such as renovations that place flimsy or unobtrusive altars in front of vast old altarpieces used for eucharistic reservation, and to the detriment of both, should not be used as models in new "traditional" interiors. Note also the undistinguished pulpit/ambo on the extreme left of the photo. The sanctuary chairs, however, are well-placed. *Photo by Mark Scott Abeln.*

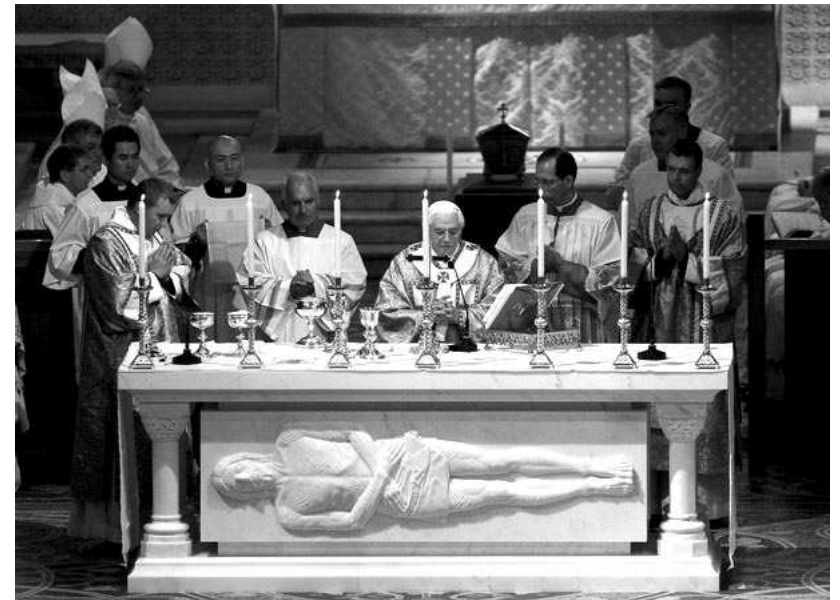


Figure 15. Pope Benedict XVI celebrating Mass at an altar with the traditional crucifix and candles advocated in *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. the crucifix stands behind the seventh candle, in the middle, the use of which is restricted to the Pope and bishops within their own dioceses. *Photo courtesy Michael Sternbeck*

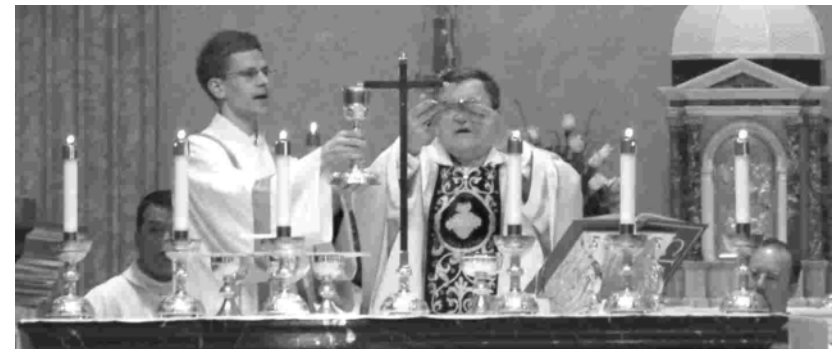


Figure 16. Archbishop Raymond Burke celebrating Mass at an altar with six candles and a central crucifix at the new Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, La Crosse, Wisconsin. This arrangement would be permissible for an ordinary priest as well. *Photo courtesy Duncan Stroik.*