



RENOVATION AND RENEWAL THE ALTAR

On the altar — the **Table of Christ's Body** — we celebrate the “ritual sacrificial meal that recalls and makes present Christ's life, death, and resurrection”. It is “the center of thanksgiving that the Eucharist accomplishes”. The sense of the Catholic **altar**, as a table, calls to mind the Last Supper as well as the tables around which early Christians celebrated the Eucharist. It is around the altar that we as a faithful community share in Christ's saving meal.

According to Church Law, each church should have **ONE** primary fixed altar, to “signify the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church”. An altar is fixed if it is attached to the floor and cannot be moved. The *mensa*, or table portion of the altar, should be made of stone, since it represents Christ Jesus, the Living Stone. During the renovation a layer of stone has been added to the top of our altar, adding that dimension to its symbolic presence.

Because early Christians often worshipped in secret in catacombs, their altars were situated above the burial sites of fellow Christians. Catholic tradition holds that St. Peter's basilica was built upon the burial site of St. Peter. As time passed, altars were frequently placed above the tombs of saints or relics of saints were placed beneath the altar or within the *mensa* “as a witness to the Church's belief that the Eucharist celebrated on the altar is the source of grace that won sanctity for the saint”. The relics in our altar are **St. Kateri Tekakwitha, St. Therese of Lisieux, St. John Neumann & St. Mother Cabrini**

THE PRESIDER'S CHAIR

At the time of the Lord's birth, the chair or throne was a nearly universal symbol of teaching authority. Philosophers taught their disciples while seated in the chair that belonged to their office. Kings and emperors issued laws and edicts from a special throne. Jesus himself described this practice when he spoke of Judaism's chief teachers in his time: *'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you'*(Matthew 23:1) Their authority was abiding and God-given, even if their behavior disappointed him.

Every church has a **presider's chair**, and that chair is a sign of the parish priest's authority, delegated to him by his bishop, whose own authority comes from Jesus Christ. In ancient times, the bishop preached not from the ambo, but from his chair, where he remained seated. “The chair of the Priest Celebrant must signify his function of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer. Thus, the more suitable place for the chair is facing the people at the head of the sanctuary.” The **presider's chair** signifies an office bestowed by the sacrament of Holy Orders. Thus this chair should be occupied by only ordained clergy — a bishop, priest, or deacon. If laypeople lead a prayer service, they should do so from a chair outside the sanctuary.