Built of Living Stones: Guidelines for Catholic Church Building and Renovation Projects

Catholic Teachings by the Deacons
Deacon David Ochoa
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Opening Prayer

Hail Mary
Agenda

• The Importance of a Church Building or Renovation Project
• Theological reflection on Liturgical Art and Architecture
• Liturgical Principles Guide Building or Renovating Churches
• Elements of the Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated
• How Art Assists the Church at Prayer
• Conclusion
Sources

• Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy Sancrosanctum Conclium (Vatican II)
• Built of Living Stones USCCB Guidelines for Art, Architecture and Worship (2000)
• Dogmatic Constitution on the Church Lumen Gentium (Vatican II)
• General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM)
• Rite of Dedication of Church and an Altar
The Importance of a Church Building or Renovation Project

• One of the most significant and formative experiences in the life of a parish community is the process of building or renovating a church.

• To be able to make specific recommendations about building and renovation projects, parish members need to understand:
  • the nature of the liturgy,
  • the space it requires, and
  • the ways in which the physical building can help or hinder worship.

• The assistance of church documents and teachings and of consultants and facilitators is beneficial in the processes of learning and making decisions.
Theological Reflection: Liturgical Art and Architecture

- The world was created for the sake of the Church.“ (CCC 760)
- The church building is both the house of God on earth (domus Dei) and a house fit for the prayers of the saints (domus ecclesiae)
- Churches, therefore, must be places "suited to sacred celebrations," "dignified," and beautiful
- The liturgy is the perfect expression of the Church, "the summit toward which [all the Church’s] activity is directed" and the source of all her power (SC 10).
Liturgical Principles Guide Building or Renovating Churches

- The church building is designed in harmony with church laws and serves the needs of the liturgy.
- The church building fosters participation in the liturgy.
- The design of the church building reflects the various roles of the participants.
- The church building respects the culture of every time and place.
- The church building should be beautiful.
Elements of the Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated

• The liturgical actions of the Church provide the guidelines for the building of a church

• There must be space for the variety of the community's prayer, which extends from the primary worship of the Eucharist to popular devotions

• The complex balance of all these factors and of the people who participate in them is the most important dimension of a building or renovation project for a parish community
Specific Elements

- The Eucharist
- Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum
- The Congregation Area
- The Sanctuary Area
- The Altar
- The Ambo
- The Chair for the Priest Celebrant
- The Baptistry
- The Reservation of the Eucharist
- Accommodating Liturgical Postures of the Congregation
- The Cross
- The Narthex
- Area Surrounding the Church Building
- The Church Building and Popular Devotions
The Eucharist

The celebration of the Sunday Eucharist is the appropriate starting point for understanding the demands of space, sound, and visibility made upon a church building.
Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum

The Paschal Triduum is the heart of the liturgical year – the rites of the Triduum should be reviewed to ensure that planning will provide space for the key elements of the Triduum.
The Congregation's Area (Nave)

Must accommodate a variety of ritual actions: processions during the Eucharist, the singing of the prayers, movement during baptismal rites, the sprinkling of the congregation with blessed water, the rites during the wedding and funeral liturgies, and personal devotion.
The Sanctuary Area

The space where the altar and the ambo stand, and where the priest, deacon and other ministers exercise their offices. The special character of the sanctuary is emphasized and enhanced by its elevation, and the distinctiveness of its design and furnishings.
The Altar

Should be fixed (with the base affixed to the floor), and with a table, or mensa, made of natural stone, since it represents Christ Jesus, the Living Stone
The design of altar and ambo should bear a harmonious and close relationship to one another in order to emphasize the close relationship between word and Eucharist.

The Ambo
The Chair for the Priest Celebrant

The chair reflects the dignity of the one who leads the community in the person of Christ, but is never intended to be remote or grandiose, and is distinguished from the seating for other ministers by its design and placement.
The Baptistry

The rites of baptism, the first of the sacraments of initiation, require a prominent place for celebration.
The Reservation of the Eucharist

The Code of Canon Law directs that the Eucharist be reserved "in a part of the church that is prominent, conspicuous, beautifully decorated and suitable for prayer."
Accommodating the Liturgical Postures of the Congregation

Since the liturgy requires various postures and movements, the space and furniture for the congregation should accommodate them well.
The Crucifix

There should be a crucifix "positioned either on the altar or near it, and clearly visible to the people gathered there." The crucifix may be suspended over the altar or affixed to the sanctuary wall.
The Narthex

The narthex is a place of welcome—a threshold space between the congregation's space and the outside environment.
When constructed and maintained well, the outside of a church can proclaim the Gospel to the city or town in which it is located.
Popular Devotions

Popular devotions "express and nourish the spirit of prayer" and are to be encouraged when they are in conformity with the norms of the Church and are derived from and lead to the liturgy
How Art Assists the Church at Prayer

- Art in a church is not:
  - Simply something pretty
  - Artistic masterpieces

- Quality Art
  - Draws the beholder to the God the Creator
  - Unique
  - Pieces preferred above mass-produced

- Appropriateness
  - Must bear the weight of mystery, awe, reverence, and wonder that the liturgical action expresses
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