

The Sacred Liturgy: A study of the teachings of Vatican II through today

Session Four:

Liturgical architecture

What distinguishes a Church from other buildings and why is it important?

Liturgical Documents since Vatican II

Sacrosanctum Concilium

- An Apostolic Constitution on the Liturgy promulgated by Bl. Paul VI on December 4, 1963.

General Instruction of the Roman Missal

- Second typical edition, issued in 1975.
- Third typical edition, revised in 2003.

Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

- A document of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy issued in 1978.

Built of Living Stones

- The Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy issued a revised document in 2000.

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

Chapter 7 of Sacrosanctum Concilium describes the ornamentation of churches and chapels

- The fine arts are considered among the noblest activities of man's genius, especially true of sacred art. These arts, by their very nature, are oriented toward the infinite beauty of God and achieve their purpose the more that they turn our minds devoutly toward God.
- The Church has always sought out art that is truly worthy, becoming, and beautiful for divine worship. She encourages works that are fitting for sacred use because of their faith and piety.
- Over time, the Church has used a variety of materials, styles, and ornamentation that are worthy and beautiful (SC, 122).

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

- The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; she has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples.
- Thus, she has brought into being a treasury of art which must be very carefully preserved.
- The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with due reverence and honor (SC, 123).

Review

Sacred Music

- Sacred music is to be considered the more holy when:
 - It is more closely connected with the liturgical action
 - It adds delight to prayer,
 - It fosters unity of minds, and
 - It confers greater solemnity upon the sacred rites.
- The Church approves of all forms of true art having the needed qualities, and admits them into divine worship (SC, 112).

Review

Sacred Music

- The treasure of sacred music is to be preserved and fostered with great care, including Gregorian chant
 - But other kinds of sacred music are by no means excluded, so long as they accord with the spirit of the liturgical action (SC, 116).
- Choirs must be diligently promoted.
 - But the faithful should be able to actively participate in song (SC, 114).
- The pipe organ is to be held in high esteem, as the traditional instrument which adds splendor to the Church's ceremonies.
 - But other instruments also may be admitted for use in divine worship, provided that the instruments are suitable and dignified (SC, 120).

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

- The Church should encourage noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display.
- Artistic works should be removed when they are repugnant to faith, morals, and Christian piety, and which offend true religious sense by lack of artistic worth, mediocrity and pretense.
- When churches are to be built, they should be suitable for worship and the active participation of the faithful (SC, 124).

Sacrosanctum Concilium

Sacred Art and Sacred Furnishings

- The use of sacred images for veneration by the faithful is to be maintained.
 - Nevertheless their number should be moderate and their relative positions should reflect right order. For otherwise they may create confusion among the Christian people and foster doubtful devotion (SC, 125).
- Along with the revision of the liturgical books, there is to be an early revision of the statutes that govern the material things used in sacred worship.
 - Among these are the nobility, placing, and safety of the Eucharistic Tabernacle (SC, 128).

Placement of the Tabernacle

1975 General Instruction

General Instruction of the Roman Missal, second typical edition, 1975.

- Every encouragement should be given to the practice of Eucharistic reservation in a chapel suited to the faithful's private adoration and prayer. If this is impossible because of the structure of the church, the sacrament should be reserved at an altar or elsewhere in keeping with local custom, and in a part of the church that is worthy and properly adorned (1975 GIRM, 276).
 - First option: in a separate chapel
 - Second option: in the church

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

In 1978, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy issued a document: Environment and Art in Catholic Worship.

- “The *celebration* of the Eucharist is the focus of the normal Sunday assembly. As such, the major space of a church is designed for this *action*.”
- “Beyond the celebration of the Eucharist, the Church has had a most ancient tradition of reserving the Eucharistic bread.”
- “The purpose of this reservation is to bring communion to the sick and to be the object of private devotion (EACW, 78).”

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

- “Most appropriately, this reservation should be designated in a space designed for individual devotion.
- “A room or chapel specifically designed and separate from the major space is important so that no confusion can take place between the celebration of the Eucharist and reservation.
- “Active and static aspects of the same reality cannot claim the same human attention at the same time.
- “Having the Eucharist reserved in a place apart does not mean it has been relegated to a secondary place of no importance. Rather, a space carefully designed and appointed can give proper attention to the reserved sacrament” (EACW, 78).

Placement of the Tabernacle

1975 and 1978 documents

	1975 General Instruction	1978 Environment and Art
First Option	in a separate chapel suited to the faithful's private adoration and prayer	In a room or chapel specifically designed and separate from the major space
Second Option	at an altar or elsewhere in the church that is worthy and properly adorned	<i>(no second option is given)</i>

Placement of the Tabernacle

Fundamental Principles

- In order to understand these documents, it is helpful to consider why something is prescribed.
- If everything in the Liturgy is done for a reason, then we can identify the principles that motivate a prescription.
- In particular, the footnotes can be examined for clues.

Placement of the Tabernacle

References

The 1975 General Instruction cites: Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction, Inter Oecumenici, September 26, 1964

- The Eucharist is to be reserved in a tabernacle,
 - placed in the middle of the main altar or
 - on a minor, but truly worthy altar, or,
 - in accord with lawful custom and in particular cases approved by the local Ordinary, also in another, special, and properly adorned part of the church (par. 95).

Placement of the Tabernacle

References

The 1975 General Instruction cites: Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction, Eucharisticum mysterium, May 25, 1967.

- The place for the Tabernacle should be truly prominent. It ought to be suitable for private prayer so that the faithful may easily and fruitfully, by private devotion also, continue to honor our Lord in this sacrament.
- It is therefore recommended that, as far as possible, the tabernacle be placed in a chapel distinct from the middle or central part of the church, above all in those churches where marriages and funerals take place frequently and in places which are much visited for their artistic or historical treasures (par 53).

Placement of the Tabernacle

References

The 1975 General Instruction cites: Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction, Eucharisticum mysterium, May 25, 1967.

- However, if the Blessed Sacrament is to be reserved in the church:
- The Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a Tabernacle in the middle of the main altar or on a secondary altar, but nevertheless in a truly prominent place.
- Alternatively, according to legitimate customs and in individual cases to be decided by the local Ordinary, it may be placed in some other part of the church which is really worthy and properly equipped (par 54).

Placement of the Tabernacle

References

The 1975 General Instruction cites: Roman Ritual, Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass, 1973:

- The document repeats that the Eucharist should be reserved in a place that is truly preeminent and suitable for private adoration and prayer.
- The document repeats that a separate chapel will more readily allow for this adoration in churches with many marriages, funerals, or visitors (par 9).
- This tabernacle is to be placed in some noble and prominent part of the church that is properly ornamented and suited to prayer (par 10).

Placement of the Tabernacle

Fundamental Principles

From these documents, it is deduced that the Tabernacle should be located in a place that is:

- Worthy
- Noble
- Prominent
- Suitable for prayer
- Properly equipped
- Reverently Ornamented
- In accord with the judgment of the ordinary
- Why is a separate chapel desirable when a church is frequently used for weddings, funerals, or when visitors are frequently present?
- *Presumably because distractions make it difficult to pray.*

Placement of the Tabernacle

1975 General Instruction

Returning to the 1975 General Instruction of the Roman Missal:

- The instruction encouraged the use of a separate chapel in order to facilitate devotion to the Eucharist.
- The instruction retained the possibility of retaining the Tabernacle in the church, and at an altar.

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

Turning to the 1978 document on Environment and Art:

- This document called for a separate chapel to avoid confusion between the celebration of the Eucharist (active element) and the reservation of the Eucharist (static element).
- This document did not address retaining the Tabernacle in the church, since this practice would presumably create a contradiction.
- The implication is that the Tabernacle must be removed because it is a distraction.

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

- In 2000, the USCCB clarified that the 1978 document “Environment and Art in Catholic Worship” was prepared by the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, but was never voted on by the whole conference of Bishops. As such, this document does not have the force of law.
- The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy issued a revised document, “Built of Living Stones,” which was approved by the full body of Bishops in 2000.
- Nevertheless, the 1978 Environment and Art document had a tremendous influence on the Church in the 1970s and 1980s, and was regularly cited as an authority in church renovation.

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

What were the practical effects of removing the Tabernacle from the church?

- Prayer before the Tabernacle was available in the chapel, but most of the faithful lost the experience of prayer before the reserved Eucharist.
- When the faithful entered the church, their attention was not drawn to adoration of the Eucharist.
- Genuflection before the Tabernacle was replaced by a bow toward the altar.

Review

The presence of Christ in the Liturgy

Christ present in the liturgy (SC, 7):

1. Christ is present in the Church assembled at prayer in his name.
2. Christ is present and acts in the person of the ordained minister who celebrates.
3. Christ is present in his word proclaimed in the assembly.
4. Christ is present in the sacraments and, in a preeminent way, in the Sacrifice of the Mass under the Eucharistic Species.

Placement of the Tabernacle

1978 Environment and Art in Catholic Worship

- By deemphasizing the importance of presence of Christ in the Eucharistic Species in the Tabernacle, attention shifted to the presence of Christ in the assembled faithful.
- “Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than this assembly of believers” (EACW, 28).
- “The most powerful experience of the sacred is found in the celebration and the persons celebrating, that is, it is found in the action of the assembly” (EACW, 29).
- “[The liturgical] space acquires a sacredness from the sacred action of the faith community which uses it. The historical problem of the church as a place attaining a dominance over the faith community need not be repeated as long as Christians respect the primacy of the living assembly” (EACW, 41).

Placement of the Tabernacle

2003 General Instruction

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal was revised in 2003 in the third typical edition.

- The placement of the Tabernacle must take account of the structure of each church.
- The Tabernacle should be in a place that is truly noble, prominent, conspicuous, worthily decorated, and suitable for prayer (2003 GIRM, 314).
- It is more appropriate that the Tabernacle not be on the altar where Mass is celebrated (2003 GIRM, 315).

Placement of the Tabernacle

2003 General Instruction

The 2003 General Instruction of the Roman Missal continues:

- The placement of the Tabernacle is subject to the judgment of the Diocesan Bishop.
- The Tabernacle may be placed in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration.
- The Tabernacle may be placed in a chapel suitable for the private adoration, which is organically connected to the church and readily noticeable by the faithful (2003 GIRM, 315).

Placement of the Tabernacle

1975 and 2003 documents

	1975 General Instruction	2003 General Instruction
First Option	in a separate chapel suited to the faithful's private adoration	in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration.
Second Option	at an altar or elsewhere in the church that is worthy and properly adorned	in a chapel suitable for private adoration, connected to the church and readily noticeable by the faithful

Placement of the Tabernacle

Built of Living Stones notes:

- “There has been a shift in directives about the placement of the tabernacle over time. The latest edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (2003) alters the earlier directive (1975), which gave a clear preference for reservation in a separate chapel. [The new instruction] now directs the diocesan bishop to determine the appropriate placement either in the sanctuary ... or in a separate chapel” (BLS, revised in 2007, footnote 99).
- In recent years, some bishops have directed the Tabernacle to be centered in the sanctuary. These include the Dioceses of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Peoria, Madison, and Springfield-in-Illinois.

Characteristics of Sacred Places

- Apart from the placement of the Tabernacle, little has been prescribed about other elements of churches and chapels.
- Sacrosanctum Concilium admits a wide variety of architectural styles.
- So, what then are the principles that should guide the architecture of a church or chapel?

Review

The Liturgy is a participation in Christ

- The liturgy is a participation in the prayer of Christ, addressed to the Father and in the Holy Spirit (CCC, 1073).
- The liturgy is the exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ. It is the public worship performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ (SC, 7).
- In the liturgy the sanctification of mankind is signified by signs perceptible to the senses, and is effected in a way which corresponds with each of these signs (SC, 7).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

Drawing upon previous observations, sacred places should...

- facilitate liturgical action...
- accord with the spirit of the liturgy...
- be suitable for worship and the active participation of the faithful...
- adorn sacred rites with reverence and honor...
- add delight to prayer...
- strive for noble beauty rather than mere sumptuous display...
- be worthy, noble, and reverently ornamented.

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- Churches or other places should be suitable for carrying out the sacred action and for ensuring the active participation of the faithful. Moreover, they should be truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities (2003 GIRM, 288).
- The arrangement of the church should meet the requirements of the sacred actions and should be conducive to the faithful (2003 GIRM 293).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- The Church seeks to preserve works of art handed down from past centuries, and to promote new works of art that are in harmony with each age. Art should be truly excellent, and nourish faith and devotion (2003 GIRM, 289).
- The ornamentation of a church should contribute toward its noble simplicity rather than to ostentation. Elements should foster the instruction of the faithful and the dignity of the entire sacred place (2003 GIRM 292).
- The beauty of the place should foster devotion and express visually the holiness of the mysteries celebrated (2003 GIRM, 294).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- The People of God, gathered for Mass, is coherently and hierarchically ordered. This is expressed in the variety of ministries and the variety of actions in the celebration. The arrangement of the building should facilitate the function of each minister, including the choir.
- These elements express a hierarchical structure, but also foster a coherent unity the entire holy people (2003 GIRM, 294).
- The sanctuary should be appropriately marked off from the body of the church either by its being somewhat elevated or by a particular structure and ornamentation. It should be large enough to allow the Eucharist to be easily celebrated and seen (2003 GIRM, 295).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- It is desirable that in every church there be a fixed altar, since this more clearly and permanently signifies Christ Jesus, the Living Stone (2003 GIRM, 298).
- The altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible. Moreover, the altar should occupy a place where it is truly the center toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns (2003 GIRM, 299).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- The practice of the deposition of relics of Saints under the altar to be dedicated is fittingly retained. However, care should be taken to ensure the authenticity of such relics (2003 GIRM, 302).
- The dignity of the Word of God requires a suitable place for its proclamation. It is appropriate that there be a stationary ambo (2003 GIRM, 309).

Characteristics of Sacred Places

2003 General Instruction

- The earthly Liturgy is a foretaste of the heavenly Liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, toward which the Church journeys as a pilgrim, and where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
- By venerating the memory of the Saints, she hopes one day to have some share and fellowship with them.
- Images of the Lord, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saints, in accordance with most ancient tradition of the Church, should be displayed for veneration by the faithful and should be so arranged so as to lead the faithful toward the mysteries of faith celebrated there (2003 GIRM, 318).