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Pastor, St. Anthony Catholic Church, Kansas City, Missouri
Author, *Let Us Pray: A Guide to the Rubrics of Sunday Mass*

“This latest edition of a useful reference work will be a welcome addition to any clergy member’s bookshelf. The useful information it contains could also satisfy the questions of laypersons, who have always wondered ‘why we do that’ or simply wanted an authoritative refresher on the meaning of rituals, vestments, and clothing the sacred environment.”

—Victor H. Matthews, Dean
College of Humanities and Public Affairs
Missouri State University

The Liturgical Environment

What the Documents Say

Third Edition

Mark G. Boyer



LITURGICAL PRESS
Collegeville, Minnesota

www.litpress.org

Cover design by Stefan Killen Design. Cover photo © W. P. Wittman Limited.

Excerpts from the English translation of *The Roman Missal, Third Edition* © 2010, International Commission on English in the Liturgy Corporation (ICEL); excerpts from the English translation of *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* © 2007, ICEL; the English translation of *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* © 1989, ICEL. All rights reserved.

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1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Boyer, Mark G.

The liturgical environment : what the documents say / Mark G. Boyer. —
Third Edition.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 978-0-8146-4857-5 — ISBN 978-0-8146-4882-7 (ebook)

1. Catholic church buildings. 2. Catholic Church—Liturgy. 3. Catholic Church—Liturgical objects. 4. Church buildings (Canon law) I. Title.

BX1970.3.B69 2015

46'.9582—dc23

2014033120

Dedicated to
Chris Haik,
a lifetime decorator of the liturgical environment
using the documents of
the Roman Catholic Church



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Abbreviations

BB	<i>Book of Blessings</i>
BCLN	Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy (Divine Worship) Newsletter
BLS	<i>Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship</i>
CB	<i>Ceremonial of Bishops</i>
CCC	<i>Catechism of the Catholic Church</i>
CCL	<i>New Commentary on the Code of Canon Law</i>
CIGI	Christian Initiation, General Introduction
CSL	The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy
DCA	<i>Dedication of a Church and an Altar</i>
DCC	Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
DCCBS	Decree on Concelebration and Communion under Both Species
DMLP	Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests
DPPL	<i>Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy</i>
EACW	<i>Environment and Art in Catholic Worship</i>
GILH	<i>General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours</i>
GIRM	<i>The General Instruction of the Roman Missal</i>
HCWEM	<i>Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist Outside Mass</i>
IOML	Instruction on Music in the Liturgy
IWEM	Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery
LM	<i>Lectionary for Mass: Second Typical Edition</i> , Introduction

MCW	<i>Music in Catholic Worship</i>
NDRHC	<i>Norms for the Distribution and Reception of Holy Communion under Both Kinds in the Dioceses of the United States of America</i>
OCF	<i>Order of Christian Funerals</i>
PCPF	Preparing and Celebrating the Paschal Feasts
PCS	<i>Pastoral Care of the Sick: Rites of Anointing and Viaticum</i>
RBC	<i>Rite of Baptism for Children</i>
RCIA	<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>
RHO	The Reception of the Holy Oils Blessed at the Chrism Mass
RM	<i>The Roman Missal</i>
RMar	<i>Rite of Marriage</i>
RM:CM	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : The Chrism Mass
RM:EVHN	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night
RM:FPL	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : Friday of the Passion of the Lord
RM:FSL	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : Fifth Sunday of Lent
RM:HS	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : Holy Saturday
RM:SPT	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : The Sacred Paschal Triduum
RM:TLS	<i>The Roman Missal</i> : Thursday of the Lord's Supper
RP	<i>Rite of Penance</i>
RP:RBOCC	<i>The Roman Pontifical</i> : Rites of the Blessing of Oils and Consecrating the Chrism
RP:ROBPD	<i>The Roman Pontifical</i> : Rites of Ordination of a Bishop, of Priests, and of Deacons
RS	<i>Redemptionis Sacramentum</i> (Instruction on the Eucharist)
SCAP	<i>Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest</i>
SL	<i>Sing to the Lord: Music in Divine Worship</i>
UNLYC	<i>Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar</i>

Introduction

On December 4, 1963, the bishops of the Second Vatican Council issued the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*). The emphasis of that document is on full public worship in which is engaged the body of Christ, which consists of Christ, the head, and all the baptized members. CSL declares that in the restoration and promotion of the liturgy the full and active participation by all the people is the aim to be considered before anything else.¹

The council fathers state that the church earnestly desires that all members of the assembly should be led to that full, conscious, and active participation in liturgical celebrations, which is demanded by the very nature of the liturgy, and to which the Christian people, “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people,”² have a right and obligation by reason of their baptism.³

In order to accomplish participation in the liturgy, the council fathers decreed that the texts and the rites should be revised so that they express as clearly as possible the things they signify so that the people should be able to understand them and take part in them fully, actively, and as a community.⁴ To facilitate the active participation of the people, the council fathers proposed that acclamations, responses, psalms, antiphons, hymns, actions, gestures, bodily attitudes, and silence be

¹ CSL 14.

² 1 Peter 2:9.

³ CSL 14.

⁴ CSL 21.

employed in the liturgy.⁵ In one of the most famous lines from CSL, the fathers state that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows.”⁶

That call for active participation by everyone in the liturgy is the norm that is applied throughout CSL. In particular, the norm of active participation is applied to the building of new churches⁷ and in the renovation of old ones. CSL declares that the principal manifestation of the church consists in the full, active participation of all God’s holy people in the same liturgical celebration, especially in the same Eucharist, in one prayer, at one altar, at which the bishop presides, surrounded by his college of priests and by his ministers.⁸ *Built of Living Stones*, the US bishops’ document on art, architecture, and worship, issued in 2000, further emphasizes this point. It states that both full and active participation will be greatly affected by the architectural expression of faith for a particular community.⁹

The various documents that were issued in the wake of Vatican II attempted to incarnate the principal of active participation in liturgy by providing guidelines both for building new churches and renovating older ones. Church is a liturgical space where the assembly gathers to perform, to actively enact, liturgy. Through such live performance, people enter into God’s presence and God reveals the Divine Presence to people.¹⁰

In *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, the 2004 Instruction on the Eucharist issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, another dimension of active participation was emphasized. That document is interested in ways to foster the recollection of participants in liturgical celebration.¹¹ It attempts to get at an interiority or spirituality that is an important part of active participation, insisting that not everyone must have something concrete to do beyond the usual

⁵ CSL 30.

⁶ CSL 10.

⁷ CSL 124.

⁸ CSL 41.

⁹ BLS 190.

¹⁰ CSL 7.

¹¹ RS 39.

actions and gestures of the assembly.¹² RS refers to this as a superficial notion that robs the assembly of a sense of deep wonder before the greatness of the mystery of faith that is the Eucharist.¹³ RS recommends ways for encouraging, promoting, and nourishing the interior understanding of liturgical participation: celebrations of the Liturgy of the Hours, sacramentals, and exercises of Christian popular piety.¹⁴

In 1990, less than thirty years after Vatican II, I wrote *The Liturgical Environment: What the Documents Say*, using the most up-to-date documents at that time. In 2004, fourteen years later, I prepared a second edition of the book in order to incorporate changes that had been made in church documents since the first edition had been written. Now, over fifty years have passed since CSL was issued and many more documents, some replacing previous ones, have been printed. As it was in the first and second editions of this book, the concern remains the theology of environment and the praxis, or practice, flowing from it, which should exemplify the principle of active participation, whose exterior manifestation arises from an interior understanding or disposition. Using the newest documents as a guide, we will explore the latest guidelines for the liturgical environment and how they foster the active participation of the people in liturgy. *Music in Catholic Worship* states that good liturgical celebrations foster and nourish faith, but poor celebrations may weaken or destroy it.¹⁵ The environment in which liturgy takes place can foster either good celebration or poor celebration.

This third edition of the book has been further refined to serve as an adult education or learning tool. Today, many Catholics, among them regular churchgoers, don't know or understand the church's guidelines and regulations concerning the building of new churches and the renovation of older ones. Not only can this book be used by building and renovation committees, but it will serve as a handy reference for sacristans, designers, decorators, renovators, all liturgical ministers—including bishops, priests, and deacons—and can be employed easily in other study and discussion groups within a parish.

The fifteen chapters that follow are each divided into four sections. The first section presents the documents used in the study for the

¹² RS 40.

¹³ RS 40.

¹⁴ RS 41.

¹⁵ MCW 6.

particular object (altar, ambo, etc.) under consideration along with each object's role in promoting active liturgical participation. The second section of each chapter details the latest theology found in church documents. The praxis, or practice, which flows from the theology presented in the second section, is then considered in the third section of each chapter. The praxis should be an incarnation of the theology, which is itself founded on the active participation of all in liturgical celebrations. The fourth section of each chapter presents questions for reflection and discussion. They are designed to help the reader plumb the depths of theology, evaluate the practice now experienced in a liturgical space, and put into place a plan for conversion or change to implement the theology and practice even better.

When appropriate, I bring into the theological discussion those unique pieces of liturgical literature known as euchological texts. A euchological text is a long prayer containing all or most of the following parts: thanksgiving to God for the work of salvation or some aspect of it; an acclamation made by the assembly; an epiclesis or imploration of the Holy Spirit to consecrate the elements of bread, wine, water, oil, church building, altar, and so forth; an institution narrative and consecration in which words and actions attributed to Jesus or God are said and done; an anamnesis or remembering of specific events from Jesus' life, such as his baptism, passion, and resurrection; an offering of the church to God through Christ in the Holy Spirit; intercessions or petitions for all the living and the dead; and a final doxology of praise of God to which the assembly responds with "Amen."

The best models of euchological texts are eucharistic prayers, but the prayer of dedication of a new or renovated church, the prayer of dedication for a new altar, and the prayer of blessing over the water to be used for baptisms are but a few examples of many other euchological texts illustrating that what we pray is what we believe theologically.

Documentation

Footnotes use the abbreviations presented earlier in this book. Usually, the footnote does not indicate a direct quotation, but, rather, a reference to a specific document or liturgical rite with its paragraph number for the reader's consultation. A direct quotation is indicated with double quotation marks. Some ecclesial documents are subdivided into chapters in which paragraph numbers start over again in each chapter.

Like the notation used for biblical books—the first number representing the chapter and the second the verse or verses separated by a colon—so does DCA 2:4 indicate that the reference is to the source, *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, chapter 2, paragraph 4. Should there be a numbered or lettered subsection of paragraph 4, the footnote indicates it with a period after the paragraph number, followed by the subsection number or letter (e.g., DCA 2:4.2 or DCA 2:4.c). In order to facilitate the ease of the reader in locating a source in a footnote, the abbreviation for the title of the document is always used instead of *ibid*. Also, the footnotes for all biblical quotations contain the full name of the book in the Bible from which they come.

A bibliography is given at the end of the book. Except for liturgical rites and Second Vatican Council documents, most of the other liturgical documents referenced in this book can be found in these volumes: *The Liturgy Documents, Volume One: Essential Documents for Parish Worship* (5th ed.), *The Liturgy Documents, Volume Two: Essential Documents for Parish Sacramental Rites and Other Liturgies* (2nd ed.), *The Liturgy Documents, Volume Three: Foundational Documents on the Origins and Implementation of Sacrosanctum Concilium*, and *The Liturgy Documents, Volume Four: Supplemental Documents for Parish Worship, Devotions, Formation and Catechesis* (Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2012, 2013). The bibliography lists the sources for liturgical rites and Vatican II documents.

It is my hope that this book will further the education of all persons involved in planning, building, renovating, designing, decorating, and worshipping in sacred environments.

Mark G. Boyer
Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
May 31, 2014

CHAPTER 1

The Gathering Space of the Community

Ecclesial Documents

The norm of the active participation of the assembly in liturgical celebration is found in three ecclesial documents that deal with the building of a new church: (1) the rite of the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, (2) *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, and (3) *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*.

The rite of the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* places great emphasis on the participation of the people from the first instance, stating that a day should be chosen for breaking ground for a new church that will facilitate the attendance and participation of the people.¹ On ground-breaking day the people should be instructed about the rite and they should be asked to support the building project generously. To facilitate participation, speaking equipment should be used to enable the assembly to hear clearly the readings, prayer, and instructions.² Once the building is finished, it is to be dedicated but not until the people are instructed about the importance of the celebration, the rite of dedication itself, the various parts of the new church and their use, and the chief liturgical signs employed in it. Only through such edu-

¹ DCA 1:2.

² DCA 1:4, 7.

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cation can the people take an active, intelligent, and devout part in the dedication ceremony.³

The third edition of *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states that not only should new churches be built suitably for the liturgy, but they should ensure the active participation of the people.⁴ GIRM argues that a church building should convey the image of the assembly as a coherent and hierarchical structure and facilitates the function and active participation of all ministers—bishops, priests, deacons, choir, and people.⁵

Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship, issued by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2000 to replace the 1978 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, begins with the caution that the church building can either help or hinder worship.⁶ Then, BLS declares that the purpose of the church building is to foster participation in the liturgy.⁷ It explains that because liturgical actions are communal celebrations, they are enacted in the presence of and with the internal and external active participation of the people. Therefore, when people make decisions about the design of a new church or the renovation of an old one, they should consider how their choices will affect the ability of the people to participate fully.⁸

Echoing GIRM, BLS also emphasizes that the design of the church reflects the various roles and functions of all the people. While all the baptized participate in worship, not all of them have the same roles.⁹ The people should be fully involved in worship led by a bishop or priest, deacon, lectors, acolytes, readers, altar servers, eucharistic ministers, cantor, musicians, sacristans, and so on.¹⁰ The physical church building should reflect not only the unity of the assembly and its ministers and foster its active participation, but also provide the space for each person to exercise his or her ministry.¹¹

³ DCA 2:20.

⁴ GIRM 288.

⁵ GIRM 294.

⁶ EACW 5.

⁷ BLS 31.

⁸ BLS 31.

⁹ BLS 32.

¹⁰ BLS 33, 36.

¹¹ BLS 37.

Areas of Participation

With the general norm of active participation firmly established by those documents, each section of the church and the individual appointments found in each section necessary for celebration are discussed. GIRM divides the church into two areas: (1) the sanctuary, where is located the altar, the ambo, the chair for the priest, and chairs for the deacon and other assistant ministers¹² and (2) places for the people, including the choir and musical instruments; a place to reserve the Blessed Sacrament; and places for the display of sacred images for veneration.¹³ BLS divides the church into six areas: (1) for the congregation,¹⁴ (2) the sanctuary,¹⁵ (3) the baptistery,¹⁶ (4) a place to reserve the Blessed Sacrament,¹⁷ (5) a place for the pastoral musicians,¹⁸ and (6) the gathering space.¹⁹ BLS cautions that the church does not consist of unrelated areas, but each section contributes to the unity of the space²⁰ that houses the assembly of the baptized when it gathers for liturgy.²¹ The body of Christ requires some order when its members gather for liturgical celebration. The church building should be designed and constructed to express that order.

In subsequent chapters this book first looks at the sanctuary area of participation, the place where is found the altar-table for the sacrificial banquet, the ambo for the proclamation of the Scriptures, and the priest celebrant's chair and any other chairs needed for the deacon and assistant ministers. The sanctuary is to be marked off by elevation and/or design. The sanctuary's furnishings—especially the altar, ambo, and priest celebrant's chair—should exude a sense of unity not only there but with the rest of the church.²² Following those chapters, this book will examine the other areas of participation in terms of their importance to the action of the entire assembly of the baptized—both the faithful and the ministers.

¹² GIRM 295.

¹³ GIRM 311, 312, 314, 318.

¹⁴ BLS 51–53, 85–87.

¹⁵ BLS 54–55.

¹⁶ BLS 66–69.

¹⁷ BLS 70–80.

¹⁸ BLS 88–90.

¹⁹ BLS 95–97.

²⁰ BLS 53.

²¹ BLS 46.

²² GIRM 295; BLS 54–55.

While the *Ceremonial of Bishops* says that a gathering space for people should be available near the cathedral church,²³ only BLS mentions the importance of the gathering space or narthex, which serves as a threshold between the outside world and the assembly's space in the parish church. The gathering space serves as both entrance and exit to the church. It facilitates the formation of the entrance procession. In the gathering space the Rite of Becoming a Catechumen is celebrated, parents and godparents are welcomed with a baby to be baptized, and those who have died are welcomed for the last time for funeral rites. In addition, the gathering space often serves as access to vesting rooms, bathrooms, storage rooms, choir rehearsal rooms, ushers' rooms, a cry room or babysitting room, and more.²⁴ CB says that the gathering space can consist of another church, a hall, a square, or a cloister where candles, palms, and fire can be blessed and from which processions can be formed.²⁵ In other words, before people actively engage in liturgical celebration, they first participate in greeting and welcoming each other and taking care of basic human needs before the liturgy begins.

Our consideration here is the theology of the ecclesial structure found in the documents and the praxis that should flow from it. Therefore, after exploring the theology of the church as presented by the Second Vatican Council, the praxis, which either fosters or impedes active participation, will be examined.

Theology of the "Church"

When beginning to outline a theology of the building referred to as "church," the physical structure is usually the starting point. However, BLS begins with the assembly of the baptized. It says that the church is a house for the community when it gathers for liturgical celebration.²⁶ As such, the physical church is like a skin sheltering the body of Christ, the incarnation of Christ, the visible body of Christ on earth.²⁷ The church building should be an incarnation of the spirit of the building or renovation committee, of the spirit of the people of a parish, of the spirit of the larger

²³ CB 54.

²⁴ BLS 95–96.

²⁵ CB 54.

²⁶ BLS 46.

²⁷ DCA 2:75.

community in which the church will be located, of the spirit of the diocese to which the parish belongs, and of the spirit of the universal church.

The church has often been called the *domus ecclesiae* or house of the church, indicating that the building is the place where the church, the people, gather to enact liturgy.²⁸ BLS emphasizes that the church is a holy people whose members give thanks to God.²⁹

Throughout the rite for the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, the people are referred to as “the temple.”³⁰ DCA’s “Dedication of a Church” emphasizes that the people, through the unity of the Trinity, are the church, the temple of God built of living stones.³¹

However, BLS also says that the church building is a house of God.³² So, besides being the *domus ecclesiae* or house of the church, the building is also the *domus Dei*, the house of God. As such it must be expressive of God’s presence. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* helps to clarify this when it says that a visible church is not simply a gathering place, but it both signifies and makes visible the church living in a particular place, the dwelling of God with people reconciled and united in Christ.³³

The rite for the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* says that “church” identifies the building in which members of the community gather to listen to the Scriptures, to pray together, to celebrate sacraments, and to participate in Eucharist.³⁴ But the physical structure of the church is also a sign of the living church formed by the people and reflects the community of the baptized.³⁵ BLS brings these two ideas together, stating that every church building is both a gathering place for the assembly and a place of encounter with God.³⁶

The unity of these two ideas is also achieved when a new church is dedicated. After blessing water, the bishop passes through the church sprinkling the people and walls and the altar with water.³⁷ This obvious baptismal rite makes the physical walls and the people and the altar

²⁸ BLS 16.

²⁹ BLS 33.

³⁰ DCA 1:13, 17, 30; DCA 2:84; DCA 3:39.

³¹ DCA 2:1.

³² BLS 16.

³³ CCC 1180.

³⁴ DCA 2:1.

³⁵ BLS 16; DCA 1:1.

³⁶ BLS 17.

³⁷ DCA 2:49.

(Christ) one so that the people are the church and the church is the people, a temple, in which/whom God dwells.

Likewise, after the prayer of dedication the bishop anoints the altar with chrism oil. Then, he (or the priests he has designated) anoints the walls of the church (signifying both the building and people) in four (representing the cardinal points of direction) or twelve (representing the twelve apostles and twelve tribes of Israel) places.³⁸ Just like people are anointed with chrism oil after baptism (and during confirmation), so are the walls of the church anointed after their baptism. To further enhance the idea that every church building is a gathering place for the assembly and simultaneously a place of encounter with God's presence, the altar (Christ), the people, and the walls are incensed.³⁹ The whole space is saturated with a cloud of smoke, both indicating that the people form a living temple and signifying the Divine Presence.⁴⁰

DCA's "Dedication of a Church" reminds us that the physical church building is a sign of the pilgrim nature of the people (church) and reflects the church dwelling in heaven. As people journey through life, they are nourished by the sacraments and find security in the church until they reach their heavenly home, the dwelling of God in all the Holy One's fullness.⁴¹

A theology of the structure named "church," then, begins with the people who form the church and their need to have a space in which they can engage in liturgical celebration. In other words, the physical building houses the furniture and all the other objects needed—such as vestments, oil, bread, and wine—for sacramental and other celebrations. The theology does not begin with the building and then attempt to fit the people into it; the theology begins with the people and their liturgical activity and designs a building around them.

Rite of Dedication

The theology of the structure named "church" is best exemplified in the entrance rite of the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*. Each of the three forms of the entrance rite illustrates the theology of "church."

³⁸ DCA 2:63–65.

³⁹ DCA 2:67.

⁴⁰ DCA 2:16.c.

⁴¹ DCA 2:2, 75, 77.

The first form of the entrance consists of a procession from a nearby church, or other place where all assemble, to the church to be dedicated.⁴² The assembly gathered in a nearby church illustrates the understanding that one community of faith emerges from another one. The procession to the church to be dedicated focuses on the pilgrim aspect of the church. Upon reaching the door of the new church, the procession stops and those who have been involved in the building of the church hand it over to the bishop, the head of the diocesan church, by presenting a key or the architectural plans or something else illustrative of the building of the church. The pastor opens the doors so that the church, the people on pilgrimage, can take possession of it, dedicate it, and celebrate within it.

In the second form, the solemn entrance, the people gather at the locked doors of the church. In the third form, the people gather in the new church. In either the second or the third form of the entrance, all takes place as outlined above.

The doors of the church have both physical and significant dimensions. First, physically they serve to make the building secure from the weather and any other dangers. Their appearance in terms of size and weight add to the dignity of the building and accommodate the cross and any other items used in a procession that forms outside the church.⁴³ Second, the doors are a sign of Christ welcoming all who wish to come in and find a safe and secure place.⁴⁴ Indeed, the *Book of Blessings*, echoing John's gospel, states that Christ is the door through which people enter, go out and come in, and find safety.⁴⁵ When new doors are installed on a church and blessed, the inner significance of the church, to which the doors provide entrance, can be called to the attention of the assembly.⁴⁶ When a church is dedicated, the doors are symbolically unlocked and all enter into the church to perform the rites of dedication. When doors are blessed, the entire rite of prayer, Scripture text, universal prayer, and blessing take place outside before the new doors.⁴⁷

⁴² DCA 2:11.

⁴³ BLS 97.

⁴⁴ BLS 97.

⁴⁵ BB 1229.

⁴⁶ BB 1217.

⁴⁷ BB 1219–32.

Praxis of the “Church”

From this understanding of the theology of the building structure named “church,” there flows a definite practice. In other words, the theological background is given as a reason for the praxis that follows.

Three General Designs

From the days of house churches, homes in which met the first followers of Jesus of Nazareth, to our own day and time, several general floor plans have emerged as practical designs for a church. One of the earliest, adopted from the Roman courts of law, is the basilica. Usually square or slightly rectangular, the basilica provided an outer cover or skin for the assembly. Originally, basilicas provided no seating; people stood. They could move closer to the areas of activity so they could hear. They could adjust their place so they could see. This type of fluidity enabled participation because people could see and hear each other.

Gradually, the basilica emerged into cruciform floor plan. The top end of the cross housed the sanctuary. The arms contained shrines and altars, and the bottom or long end of the cross contained pews or chairs for the people. While there might be a door in one of the arms, the entrance was usually at the long end of the cross. Pews were arranged so that they resembled the two columns of text found on pages printed after the invention of moveable type. The members of the assembly watched the action in the sanctuary, the top of the cross, where the minister, representing Christ the head of the church, enacted the liturgy for the people. Members of the assembly saw only the backs of the heads of the persons sitting in the pews in front of them. Thus, participation was at a minimum. The focus was on the altar, specifically the tabernacle, in the front. The huge Gothic cathedrals of Europe and the United States are cruciform in shape and limit participation not only with pews or chairs lined up in rows, but with pillars that block the line of sight and the long distance from the back row of pews to the sanctuary. The closest one could get to the sanctuary was the rail that separated it from the rest of the church.

The post-Vatican II design resembles a theater. Churches were built in squares, semicircles, hexagons, or octagons. The sanctuary was placed in a corner of the square or against the wall of a semicircle, hexagon, or octagon. Pews or chairs were arranged so that people were arranged

on three sides around the sanctuary. Even though worshipers could see each other and move around them, and found themselves closer to the action, they still faced a single platform sanctuary, reminiscent of a stage, backed up against a wall. The focal point was essentially unchanged from a pre-Vatican II building. Furthermore, a stage, like that found in movie theaters, performing arts centers, and live-performance theaters, does not foster participation; people come to watch, to be entertained, to be passive. Even when performers leave the stage and mingle with audience members in order to foster active participation, once the performer returns to stage and the house lights go down, people become quiet and resume their roles as observers.

A floor plan of architecture that is more participatory is that of the stadium, which is circular or elliptical. People are arranged all around the center of action. No one faces a wall. All are in full view of each other and interact with each other. Outside the Vatican, many papal Masses are celebrated in stadiums because they not only provide room for many people, but they foster the active participation of the people. The stadium model is nothing other than the living room model on a bigger scale (house churches revisited). In most people's living rooms, furniture is arranged in a circle or an ellipse so that people can see and hear each other, enjoy mobility, and participate in whatever is taking place in the room. About the only place in sacred architecture where the stadium model has been employed is in monastery churches or chapels, where what is often referred to as antiphonal seating has survived. Monks sit together on opposite sides with usually a presider's chair at one end and an ambo or reading stand at the other. One side listens to the other recite a strophe of a psalm, then the other side listens as the next strophe is recited from the opposite choir. All are led by the presider, and all focus attention on the reader's lesson. Not only can the monks hear each other, but they see each other. The space in between the two choirs is usually stark or minimally decorated, because anything in between would hinder active participation.

Titular Saint

Every church must have a titular saint, a title or a name. Churches can be named after the Trinity or a title of Jesus accepted in the liturgy, such as Presentation of the Lord or Resurrection. Churches can also be named after the Holy Spirit or the Blessed Virgin Mary or one of her

many titles, such as Queen of Peace or Queen of All Saints. The names of angels or saints are also appropriate titles for churches.

While some churches' titulars already rank as solemnities in the General Roman Calendar, others rank as feasts, memorials, and optional memorials. For example, parishes named Immaculate Conception, Annunciation, and St. Joseph already have a feast day that is ranked as a solemnity. However, according to the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*, the title of a particular church is a solemnity in that church⁴⁸ and it outranks the feasts of the Lord in the General Calendar and the Sundays in Ordinary Time.⁴⁹

What that means is that the Memorial of St. Francis of Assisi on October 4 becomes a solemnity in parishes named St. Francis of Assisi. On the Optional Memorial of St. Wenceslaus, September 28, any parish named St. Wenceslaus marks the day as a solemnity. If the parish is named Transfiguration, the rank of the day is changed from feast to solemnity in those parishes.

According to the UNLYC, solemnities are counted as the principal days in the calendar and their observance begins with Evening Prayer I of the preceding day. Some also have their own vigil Mass for use when Mass is celebrated in the evening of the preceding day.⁵⁰

A little known fact is that the parish feast day can be moved to a Sunday in Ordinary Time. For the pastoral advantage of the people, it is permissible to observe on the Sundays in Ordinary Time those celebrations that fall during the week and have special appeal to the devotion of the faithful, provided the celebrations take precedence over these Sundays in the Table of Liturgical Days. The Mass for such celebrations may be used at all the Masses at which a congregation is present.⁵¹ In other words, the parish titular is celebrated as a solemnity, and that solemnity takes precedence over the Sunday in Ordinary Time to which it can be moved.

A parish solemnity cannot be marked during the Easter Triduum, on the Sundays of Advent, Lent, and Easter, Ash Wednesday, the weekdays of Holy Week, and the days within the octave of Easter. Neither can it replace solemnities of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, saints listed

⁴⁸ UNLYC 59.4.

⁴⁹ UNLYC 59.5–6.

⁵⁰ UNLYC 11.

⁵¹ UNLYC 58.

in the General Calendar, nor All Souls—all of which take precedence over it.⁵² Likewise, a parish solemnity cannot be celebrated on a Sunday during the Christmas season because every Sunday is already designated.

For example, if the titular of a church is St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (January 4), that memorial, which is raised to the rank of a solemnity in churches dedicated to St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, cannot be moved to a Sunday because it is celebrated during the Christmas season. Likewise, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (December 12) can never be celebrated on a Sunday during Advent, even though in churches named Our Lady of Guadalupe the feast is raised to a solemnity on a weekday. The moving of a parish feast day to a Sunday is only permitted during Ordinary Time.

Most people are familiar with the interruption of the Sundays in Ordinary Time by the feast of the Presentation of the Lord (Feb. 2), the solemnity of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (June 24), the solemnity of Saints Peter and Paul (June 29), the feast of the Transfiguration of the Lord (Aug. 6), the solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary (Aug. 15), the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept. 14), the solemnity of All Saints (Nov. 1), the Commemoration of All the Faithful Departed (All Souls' Day) (Nov. 2), and the feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica (Nov. 9).

The titular of a parish, raised to the rank of a solemnity, like solemnities and feasts of the Lord, takes precedence over a Sunday in Ordinary Time when it falls on the designated Sunday or when it is moved from a weekday to a particular Sunday, which is permitted as indicated above.

The Mass texts for a titular are found in *The Roman Missal*, in the Proper of Saints and/or in the Commons, where there are sometimes several options available for the three orations (collect, prayer over the offerings, and prayer after communion). Sometimes, the Proper of Saints only gives a collect, and other orations need to be chosen from the Commons. At other times, all three orations need to be chosen from the Commons.

The *Lectionary for Mass*, likewise, provides the Scripture texts in the Proper of Saints. Since for most feasts, memorials, and optional memorials the Lectionary provides only one or two readings for weekday purposes, when the day is celebrated as a solemnity on a Sunday,

⁵² UNLYC 59.1–3.

another biblical text—either an Old Testament text or a New Testament text—will need to be chosen from the Commons.

An Old Testament or New Testament text that needs to be added will depend on what is already given in the Lectionary. For example, if St. Agnes Parish is celebrating the solemnity of St. Agnes on a Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Lectionary gives a reading from the New Testament, a responsorial psalm, an Alleluia verse, and a gospel. An Old Testament passage from the Commons will need to be chosen; it will become the first reading.

Likewise, if Our Lady of Lourdes Parish is marking the day as a solemnity on a Sunday in Ordinary Time, the Lectionary provides an Old Testament passage, a responsorial psalm, an Alleluia verse, and a gospel. A New Testament reading will need to be chosen from the Commons; it will become the second reading.

The Introduction to the Lectionary makes clear that the order of Old Testament text, responsorial psalm, New Testament text, and gospel is maintained, just as it is on any given Sunday.⁵³ Furthermore, extensive guidelines are given in the “Introduction for the use of proper readings given for celebrations of the saints.”⁵⁴ Those sections of the Introduction to the Lectionary need to be consulted in the process of choosing biblical texts.

Celebrating the festival of the patron saint of a parish on a Sunday in Ordinary Time adds a degree of solemnity that cannot be had on a weekday. On Sunday, most parishes have musicians, a choir, and the whole complement of liturgical ministers needed for Mass. Add the blessing of holy water and sprinkling of the people with it and/or the use of incense and a solemn celebration of the parish feast day may take place.

More members of a parish are exposed to their parish’s titular on a Sunday. This gives them the opportunity to learn about the titular—through both the bulletin and the homily. Since fewer and fewer people attend weekday Masses, marking the feast of the parish patron on Sunday enables all the members of the local church to celebrate it.

Finally, celebrating the titular of a church on a Sunday helps to strengthen the identity of a parish. In a day and time when more and more people are looking for an identity as members of a particular parish,

⁵³ LM 66.1; 71; 84.2.

⁵⁴ LM 83–84.

making the Sunday special with the Mass of the parish patron and other parish activities—like a meal or a craft fair—can add to that recognition.

When possible, the feast day of a parish's titular should be marked with all the solemnity due to it. Moving it to a Sunday in Ordinary Time enables the people to learn something about their patron and fosters devotion to him or her. With careful planning the celebration of the titular can be one that is recalled throughout the year by the members of a parish and looked forward to annually.

Day and Anniversary of Dedication

Another important day in the life of a parish is the annual celebration of the day the church was dedicated. The Table of Liturgical Days indicates that both the day of dedication and the anniversary of the dedication of the parish church is a solemnity in the parish.⁵⁵ This important proper solemnity may be forgotten, but in practice it should be celebrated. It outranks the feasts of the Lord in the General Roman Calendar.⁵⁶

Posture and Procession

The church building must facilitate various gestures, postures, and processions because these are required by a liturgical celebration.⁵⁷ The space should facilitate sitting for preparation, listening, and silent prayer; standing for the gospel, prayer, and song; and kneeling in adoration and penitence. On some occasions, such as the feast of the Presentation of the Lord and Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord, the congregation gathers in another space and a procession into the church is required. The aisles in the church should facilitate the movement of congregation and ministers into their spaces. Designers of new churches and renovators of older ones should keep in mind liturgical processions. While it is often easier to get people seated before beginning a celebration, such ease should not stop processions from occurring. They are a very important part of liturgical celebrations.

⁵⁵ UNLYC 59.4b.

⁵⁶ UNLYC 59.5.

⁵⁷ GIRM 311.

Gathering Space

Before the various members of the assembly gather inside the structure named “church” for liturgical celebration, they gather in various ways outside it. The gathering space functions as the entrance and exit points of the building. It is a threshold from the outside world to the liturgical world. People welcome and greet each other, engage in conversation, and form processions. The gathering space may provide access to vesting rooms, choir rehearsal rooms, restrooms, a room for parents with small children, ushers’ rooms and their equipment, and storage areas. The gathering space should be large enough to facilitate the primary rites celebrated there, namely, the Rite of Becoming a Catechumen, the welcoming of parents and godparents of a child to be baptized according to the *Rite of Baptism for Children*, and the reception of the body or cremains for a funeral as proscribed in the *Order of Christian Funerals*.⁵⁸

Five Basic Principles

Clutter seems to be a way of life for some people. Wherever something once was used is where it is left and stays—sometimes forever! It’s amazing that people bring flowers to church to place before the statue or icon of the Blessed Virgin Mary or their favorite saint, but they never notice when the flowers are wilted and cluttering the shrine with their dead petals and leaves. Brochures are taken from the pamphlet rack and left in the pews. Even worship aids, located in the book racks behind the pews, are left scattered on the seats.

Even the sanctuary can become cluttered with dead flowers and plants, soiled linens piled on the credence table, a bowl half full of water with sediment rings along the sides where evaporation has occurred left on the credence table, a cruet with wine sediment caked on the bottom, worship aids and notes scattered on the ambo and, even, on the altar. Clutter often goes unnoticed because people get so used to it that they cannot see it anymore.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal offers a series of general principles about the environment for worship. The principles focus on the church or other respectable place that is “worthy of so great a

⁵⁸ BLS 95–96.

mystery” as the celebration of the Eucharist.⁵⁹ While these principles will be presented specifically and in more detail in subsequent chapters of this book, they are reviewed and applied here in a general way to the whole church building.

First Principle: Suitable Liturgical Space

The rite for the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar* emphasizes that the church building should be designed for liturgical celebrations and be dignified and nobly beautiful.⁶⁰ GIRM adds that churches should be worthy and “signs and symbols of heavenly realities”⁶¹ because they represent both “the immanence and transcendence of God,” according to BLS,⁶² a God who chooses to be alive with people yet who cannot be limited to any one space.

The starting point for providing suitable liturgical space is the Sunday Eucharist and the Easter Vigil.⁶³ By analyzing all that is needed for the Sunday Eucharist and the Easter Vigil along with the hierarchical structure and the diversity of ministries, space can be designed that will foster a close and coherent unity that is a sign of the baptismal unity of the whole church.⁶⁴ This means that particular attention must be given to the congregation’s area with the musicians; the sanctuary area with the altar, the ambo, and the chair; the baptismal area with the font and ambry; and the place for the reservation of the Eucharist.⁶⁵ The space must make it clear that the entire congregation worships as one body, as one liturgical assembly.⁶⁶

In other words, a place or liturgical object fits its use or purpose. The GIRM states that the place where the Eucharist is celebrated should be suitable for carrying out the sacred action and for ensuring the active participation of the faithful.⁶⁷ *Redemptionis Sacramentum* (Instruction on the Eucharist) further explains that it is never lawful for a priest to

⁵⁹ GIRM 288.

⁶⁰ DCA 2:3.

⁶¹ GIRM 288.

⁶² BLS 50.

⁶³ BLS 49.

⁶⁴ GIRM 294; BLS 50.

⁶⁵ DCA 2:3; BLS 49.

⁶⁶ BLS 52.

⁶⁷ GIRM 288.

celebrate Mass in a temple or sacred place of any non-Christian religion⁶⁸ because neither of those is suitable for the celebration of the Eucharist.

There are three aspects to the principle of suitability: First, the space—church or other place—must facilitate the action—processing, standing, kneeling—of the liturgy, no matter whether that liturgy be Eucharist, another sacrament, or a funeral.

Second, the space must enable the active participation of the congregation. Active participation requires that people can both see and hear each other. A small chapel facilitates prayer and song for thirty people, whereas a church that seats three hundred does not facilitate prayer and song for thirty people; they get lost in the vastness of the empty space.

Third, the general arrangement of the sacred building must be such that it conveys the image of the gathered assembly and allows the appropriate ordering of all the participants, as well as facilitating each in the proper carrying out of his or her function.⁶⁹ One of the privileges of being a Roman Catholic is belonging to a coherent and hierarchical structure, which finds its expression in the variety of ministries and the variety of actions according to the different parts of the celebration.⁷⁰ RS emphasizes that both Mass and other liturgical celebrations are acts of Christ and of God's people, who are hierarchically constituted so that the sacred ministers and the lay faithful manifestly take part in liturgical celebrations according to their own state in life.⁷¹ The space used for worship either fosters the hierarchical order or obscures it.

GIRM explains that the faithful should have a place that facilitates their active participation.⁷² Benches or seats may be used for the faithful so they are able to participate in the sacred celebrations visually and spiritually, in the proper manner and so they can easily take up the postures required for the different parts of the celebration.⁷³

Likewise, the choir should be positioned so as to make clearly evident its character as a part of the gathered community of the faithful fulfilling a specific function.⁷⁴ Musical instruments should be placed so

⁶⁸ RS 109.

⁶⁹ GIRM 294.

⁷⁰ GIRM 294.

⁷¹ RS 128.

⁷² GIRM 294.

⁷³ GIRM 311.

⁷⁴ GIRM 312.

they can sustain the singing of both the choir and the congregation and be heard with ease by all if they are played alone.⁷⁵

RS adds an important point about active participation. After acknowledging the fact that the liturgical celebration entails activity, it cautions that it does not follow that everyone must necessarily have something concrete to do beyond the general actions and gestures of the whole assembly. A certain specific liturgical ministry is not required of every person in the assembly.⁷⁶

The principle of suitability also applies to the chair for the priest celebrant. The GIRM makes clear that the chair of the priest celebrant must signify his office of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer.⁷⁷ It is not a throne; it is not a bench; it is not three chairs, grouped like the old *sedilia*, one for the priest and two for altar servers on either side. It is a suitable chair for the priest celebrant. The best place for the chair is in a position facing the people at the head of the sanctuary.⁷⁸ When there is a deacon, his seat should be placed near that of the celebrant.⁷⁹

The principle of suitability is applied by the GIRM to the place for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. It states that “the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent,” readily visible, beautifully decorated, “and suitable for prayer.”⁸⁰ RS explains that the place be suitable for prayer by reason of the quietness of the location, the space available in front of the tabernacle, and also the supply of benches or seats and kneelers.⁸¹

The tabernacle should not be on an altar on which Mass is celebrated.⁸² The diocesan bishop judges whether or not the tabernacle is placed in the sanctuary or in a chapel suitable for private adoration and prayer.⁸³

Suitable should be the vestments worn by the ordained ministers for worship. The purpose of a variety in color of the sacred vestments

⁷⁵ GIRM 313.

⁷⁶ RS 40.

⁷⁷ GIRM 310.

⁷⁸ GIRM 310.

⁷⁹ GIRM 310.

⁸⁰ GIRM 314.

⁸¹ RS 130.

⁸² GIRM 315.

⁸³ GIRM 315.

is “to give more effective expression even outwardly whether to the specific character of the mysteries of faith to be celebrated or to a sense of Christian life’s passage through the course of the liturgical year,” states the GIRM.⁸⁴ According to the RS, vestments indicate the various offices in the celebration of Eucharist.⁸⁵

Any vessels used in liturgy must be made from materials suited to sacred use that do not easily break or deteriorate.⁸⁶ According to the GIRM, this applies to all vessels that hold the hosts, such as the paten, the ciborium, the pyx, the monstrance, and other such things.⁸⁷ Furthermore, chalices and other vessels that are intended to serve as receptacles for the blood of the Lord are to have bowls of non-absorbent material.⁸⁸ Even the form of the vessels must be suited to the intended liturgical use and, thus, clearly distinguish them from those intended for everyday use.⁸⁹

Finally, reemphasizing the principle of suitability, GIRM declares that other furnishings that either are intended for strictly liturgical use or are in any other way admitted into a church should be worthy and suited to their particular purpose.⁹⁰

Second Principle: Simplicity

The second principle, simplicity, refers to the state of being free from ostentation or display. It is applied to the decor of the church and to the place where Eucharist is celebrated. The GIRM describes the church or place as being of noble simplicity rather than ostentation. In other words, less is more. More is clutter, and clutter impedes “the intention of fostering the instruction of the faithful and the dignity of the entire sacred place.”⁹¹ In fact, clutter does instruct the congregation; it tells people that the liturgy they are celebrating is not important. If it were, there would be no clutter. The GIRM states that every effort should

⁸⁴ GIRM 345.

⁸⁵ RS 121.

⁸⁶ GIRM 329.

⁸⁷ GIRM 329.

⁸⁸ GIRM 330.

⁸⁹ GIRM 332.

⁹⁰ GIRM 348.

⁹¹ GIRM 292.

be made to ensure that even as regards objects of lesser importance the canons of art be appropriately taken into account and that noble simplicity come together with elegance.⁹²

Noble simplicity excludes all the stuff that gets put in front of the altar and the ambo. GIRM instructs that both the altar and the ambo should be fixed, that is, attached to the floor⁹³ or stationary.⁹⁴ The altar should be built apart 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.⁹⁵ The ambo must be located in such a way that the ordained ministers and lectors may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful.⁹⁶

Putting flowers and things in front of the altar and the ambo not only impede their approach, psychologically they create a barrier to active participation. No one would place a huge bouquet of flowers on the floor in front of the dining room table because he or she knows that the blossoms would keep members of the family from getting to the table. Unreflectively, those responsible for church decor often do to the altar and ambo what they would never do at home. The altar and ambo should stand in noble simplicity; the plants and flowers usually placed in front of them need to be moved to other places in the worship environment. Decorators must come to realize that everything used in decoration does not need to be placed up front so that everyone can see it.

Simplicity guides the GIRM's instruction that new churches should have a single altar to signify the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the church.⁹⁷ It is to be covered with at least one white cloth.⁹⁸ Furthermore, "only what is required for the celebration of the Mass may be placed on the altar table: namely, from the beginning of the celebration until the proclamation of the Gospel, the *Book of the Gospels*; then from the Presentation of the Gifts until the purification of the vessels, the chalice with the paten, a ciborium, if necessary, and, finally, the corporal, the purificator, the pall, and the Missal."⁹⁹ This directive eliminates gospel

⁹² GIRM 351.

⁹³ GIRM 298.

⁹⁴ GIRM 309.

⁹⁵ GIRM 299.

⁹⁶ GIRM 309.

⁹⁷ GIRM 303.

⁹⁸ GIRM 304.

⁹⁹ GIRM 306.

book stands, hymnals, papers, eyeglasses, and anything else from being placed on the altar. Likewise, it eliminates the permanent placement of a corporal on the altar or the placement of cruets, a finger bowl, and a towel on the altar.

In churches that have an old altar positioned against the wall along with a new one erected for the celebration of the Eucharist, the GIRM states that the old altar should not be decorated in any special way so as not to distract the attention of the faithful from the new altar.¹⁰⁰ This directive eliminates the clutter of old candlesticks with bent candles and multiple pots of flowers and other things that are often seen on old altars. Some old altars remain decorated as if they are being used to celebrate Mass.

Even if the tabernacle is located on the old altar no longer used for celebration,¹⁰¹ BLS states that a sufficient distance should separate the tabernacle and the altar.¹⁰² Furthermore, when the tabernacle is located directly behind the altar, consideration should be given to using distance, lighting, or some other architectural device that separates the tabernacle and reservation area during Mass, but that allows the tabernacle to be fully visible to the entire worship area when the eucharistic liturgy is being celebrated.¹⁰³

The directive concerning the ambo in the GIRM is also guided by the principle of simplicity. It is used for the readings, the responsorial psalm, and the Easter Proclamation.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the universal prayer.¹⁰⁵ However, it is not used for announcements. It is not a place for papers and hymnals and anything else that is not directly associated with the Liturgy of the Word.

Simplicity is also applied to the use of the cross in the worship space. Nowhere does the GIRM state that a huge cross with a corpus on it be displayed in a place of worship. The concept that a Catholic Church contains a cross with a corpus and that a Protestant church contains a cross without a corpus is a fiction. The GIRM recommends that the

¹⁰⁰ GIRM 303.

¹⁰¹ GIRM 315.a.

¹⁰² BLS 80, 251.

¹⁰³ BLS 80, 251.

¹⁰⁴ GIRM 309.

¹⁰⁵ GIRM 309.

cross adorned with a figure of Christ crucified¹⁰⁶ be carried in the entrance procession, and serve as the altar cross, in which case it ought to be the only cross used; otherwise it is put away in a dignified place.¹⁰⁷

Outside of liturgical celebrations, the cross should remain near the altar.¹⁰⁸ The multiplication of crosses lessens the importance of the cross, which calls to mind for the faithful the saving passion of the Lord.¹⁰⁹ It should also be noted here that the GIRM is very clear about the cross having an image of Christ crucified on it and not the image of the risen Christ or other images that have crept into worship spaces in the past years.

Third Principle: Genuineness

In a plastic, throwaway society, such as ours, it is easy to neglect genuineness. GIRM emphasizes that the decoration of a church should contribute to its noble simplicity.¹¹⁰ It also states that in the materials used for church furnishings there should be a concern for genuineness.¹¹¹ Genuine means that a thing possesses the apparent qualities of appearance. Wood should look like wood. Stone should look like stone. There is an authenticity to live flowers and plants that silk and plastic cannot begin to grasp. There is a genuineness to wax candles that electric candles or tube candles cannot approach. Fake appointments of any kind imply that the liturgy is fake, too.

The GIRM insists on the genuineness of the bread used for celebrating the Eucharist. It “must be made only from wheat, must be recently made, and, according to the ancient tradition of the Latin Church, must be unleavened.”¹¹² RS adds that it is a grave abuse to introduce other substances, such as fruit or sugar or honey, into the bread for confecting the Eucharist.¹¹³

Furthermore, the meaning of the sign demands that the material for the eucharistic celebration truly have the appearance of food and

¹⁰⁶ GIRM 117.

¹⁰⁷ GIRM 122.

¹⁰⁸ GIRM 308.

¹⁰⁹ GIRM 308.

¹¹⁰ GIRM 325.

¹¹¹ GIRM 292.

¹¹² GIRM 320.

¹¹³ RS 48.

that the priest is able in practice to break it into parts for distribution to at least some of the faithful.¹¹⁴ GIRM even explains the purpose of the action of the fraction or breaking of the bread, namely, to bring out more clearly the importance of the sign of unity of all in the one bread, and of the sign of charity by the fact that the one bread is distributed among all.¹¹⁵ In a culture of individualism, it would seem that always using individual small hosts, which in no way are ruled out,¹¹⁶ adds to the problem instead of fostering the sign of unity.

Likewise, the GIRM emphasizes the genuineness of the wine used for Eucharist. It “must be from the fruit of the vine, . . . natural, and unadulterated, that is, without admixture of extraneous substances.”¹¹⁷ RS adds that it is forbidden to use wine of doubtful authenticity or provenance.¹¹⁸ Likewise, other drinks of any kind do not constitute valid matter according to RS.¹¹⁹

Works of art must nourish faith and devotion, be authentic,¹²⁰ and come together with elegance.¹²¹ While it is much easier to buy silk flowers, BLS emphasizes that genuine living flowers and plants foster a greater appreciation for the gift of life that God has given to the community.¹²² Like human life, real flowers wilt and die. There is a lesson to be learned from what is genuine.

Fakery pervades the culture and needs to be replaced with genuineness. While giving a workshop on environment and art for Advent and Christmas, this author read the directive from the *Book of Blessings* that the Advent Wreath is to be made out of fresh evergreen branches¹²³ and that Christmas trees and poinsettias should be real.¹²⁴ He also commented on how artificial or silk flowers were not appropriate for liturgical use. A participant in the workshop disagreed with him for several reasons, stating that evergreen branches dried and made a mess, that

¹¹⁴ GIRM 321.

¹¹⁵ GIRM 321.

¹¹⁶ GIRM 321.

¹¹⁷ GIRM 322.

¹¹⁸ RS 50.

¹¹⁹ RS 50.

¹²⁰ GIRM 289.

¹²¹ GIRM 351.

¹²² BLS 129.

¹²³ BB 1410.

¹²⁴ BB 1570–71.

trees and poinsettias had to be watered. In response, he told her that on Sunday the priest was going to give plastic chips to everyone instead of bread wafers. She looked at him quizzically, and he asked her what was the matter. She said that plastic chips were fake and contradicted the very idea that the Eucharist was food to nourish people through life. He asked her to repeat what she had just said. And then it dawned on her that anything fake or phony has no place in the liturgical environment.

He went on to draw out the moment of truth, telling her there is so much fakery in liturgy—candle tubes instead of real candles, sanctuary lamps with electric lights instead of real candles, paper napkins instead of purificators, and so on—that how could people now be amazed that a large group of Catholics no longer believe in the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic species. If everything else is fake, the logical conclusion is that the Eucharist is fake, too.

The liturgical environment is too precious to fill it with plastic or silk. It is better to have no plants than to have fake ones. It is better to have no flowers than to use silk ones. Electric candles are not candles; they are imitation. Genuineness is required in the liturgical environment.

Fourth Principles: Audibility and Visibility

Two of the primary requirements that ensure participation by the total assembly are audibility and visibility. In order to foster active participation in any kind of liturgical celebration, members of the assembly must be able to hear the choir, the cantor, the readers, the general intercessor, the deacon, and the priest. Likewise, the choir, the cantor, the readers, the general intercessor, the deacon, and the priest must be able to hear the responses of the faithful.

The GIRM states that the faithful, with the aid of modern technical means, should be able to hear without difficulty¹²⁵ those ministers mentioned above. It also states that microphones needed to amplify the priest's voice should be arranged discreetly,¹²⁶ especially when the priest is at the altar.

In this modern age of technology with wireless microphones and multiple speakers, keeping in mind the acoustical design of a building, it should not be too difficult to insure that everyone can be heard.

¹²⁵ GIRM 311.

¹²⁶ GIRM 306.

Because of modern technology, the use of microphones on stands near the priest celebrant's chair and on the altar can now be eliminated and portable wireless microphones employed.

Audibility entails more than simply hearing what is being said. While modern amplification devices enable one to hear at a great distance, this does not imply that one is actively participating in liturgical action. This is why the assembly also needs to be able to hear itself, especially when it sings. *Music in Catholic Worship* makes it clear that sacred song united to words forms a necessary or integral part of the liturgy. MCW says that music imparts a sense of unity to the congregation and sets the appropriate tone for a particular celebration.¹²⁷

Visibility implies that the assembly can see the ministers at the altar, the ambo, and the chair¹²⁸ and that the ministers can see the members of the assembly and make eye contact with them. No seat should be so far away from the place of liturgical action that the distance and lighting level impede participation in liturgical action.¹²⁹ Visibility also means that members of the assembly can see each other. The church should not be designed like a theater or arena with a stage because those designs imply passivity and impede active participation for all involved. The arrangement of seating must call the congregation to active participation and provide space for those in wheelchairs or with walkers.¹³⁰

Fifth Principle: Dignity

If clutter in places of worship is not eliminated by any of the four principles mentioned above, the principle of dignity certainly will take care of the matter. The GIRM is interested in the dignity of the entire sacred place.¹³¹ In other words, the place of worship is distinct; it is deemed worthy, honored, or esteemed by what takes place there.

Not only is the space dignified, but the liturgical furniture within it contains an inherent dignity. Any materials used for sacred furnishings, according to the GIRM, must be "considered to be noble, . . . durable, and well suited for sacred use."¹³²

¹²⁷ MCW 23.

¹²⁸ BLS 85.

¹²⁹ BLS 87.

¹³⁰ BLS 86.

¹³¹ GIRM 292.

¹³² GIRM 326.

The GIRM makes clear the dignity of the altar on which the sacrifice of the cross is made present under sacramental signs.¹³³ Because the altar is the table of the Lord to which the people of God are called together to participate in the Mass, as well as the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist,¹³⁴ it is shown reverence through the manner of its decoration,¹³⁵ through moderation in what is placed upon it,¹³⁶ and through maintaining the faithful's clear view of what takes place at the altar.¹³⁷

Likewise, the GIRM not only contains a directive about the dignity of the word of God but states that such dignity requires the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word.¹³⁸ Furthermore, the dignity of the ambo requires that it be stationary and not simply a movable lectern.¹³⁹ Finally, the dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it.¹⁴⁰ Dignity is detracted from the ambo when it is used for announcements or for anything else that should be said or done at the priest celebrant's chair.

The dignity of the priest celebrant is enhanced through the placement of his chair, as are the seats arranged in the sanctuary for concelebrating priests and other ministers that enable them to fulfill the function entrusted to them.¹⁴¹

All the people of God possess a dignity bestowed by their baptism. Thus, the custom of reserving seats for private persons, states the GIRM, is reprehensible¹⁴² because it makes distinctions between members of the body of Christ.

The place of reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is supposed to be in a part of the church that is truly noble¹⁴³ or dignified.

¹³³ GIRM 296.

¹³⁴ GIRM 296.

¹³⁵ GIRM 304–5.

¹³⁶ GIRM 306–7.

¹³⁷ GIRM 307.

¹³⁸ GIRM 309.

¹³⁹ GIRM 309.

¹⁴⁰ GIRM 309.

¹⁴¹ GIRM 310.

¹⁴² GIRM 311.

¹⁴³ GIRM 314.

Besides applying the principle of dignity to sacred furniture, the GIRM applies it to the other items used in worship. For example, candles are required at every liturgical service out of reverence and on account of the festiveness of the celebration.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should be kept alight to indicate the honor due the presence of Christ.¹⁴⁵

To enhance the dignity of the cross the GIRM requires that there be only one in the sanctuary. If there is already an immovable one and another is carried in procession, it is put away in a dignified place.¹⁴⁶ No matter where Eucharist is celebrated, the dignity of the celebration requires that a cross be present.¹⁴⁷

Images of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints possess a dignity that requires they be displayed for veneration by the faithful in sacred buildings. They should be arranged so as to usher the faithful toward the mysteries of faith celebrated there.¹⁴⁸ The dignity of statues and icons and other works of art prohibits the increase of their number. The GIRM states that there should usually be only one image of any given saint.¹⁴⁹

Vestments, the liturgical garments worn by the various ministers of the church—such as chasubles, dalmatics, copes, stoles—possess an inherent dignity, according to the GIRM. It directs that the beauty and nobility of each vestment derive not from abundance of overly lavish ornamentation, but rather from the material that is used and from the design.¹⁵⁰ Both natural fabrics and artificial fabrics that are in keeping with the dignity of the sacred action and the person wearing them may be used to make vestments.¹⁵¹

RS states that the priests may not celebrate Mass or other liturgical rites without sacred vestments. It adds that a stole over the monastic cowl or the common habit of religious or ordinary clothes is not permitted.¹⁵² Not wearing the proper liturgical vestments violates the dignity of the Eucharist and the person or persons celebrating it.

¹⁴⁴ GIRM 307.

¹⁴⁵ GIRM 316.

¹⁴⁶ GIRM 122.

¹⁴⁷ GIRM 297.

¹⁴⁸ GIRM 318.

¹⁴⁹ GIRM 318.

¹⁵⁰ GIRM 344.

¹⁵¹ GIRM 343.

¹⁵² RS 126.

The GIRM requires “that the liturgical books, particularly the *Book of the Gospels* and the Lectionary, which are intended for the proclamation of the Word of God, . . . [are] truly worthy, dignified, and beautiful.”¹⁵³ This eliminates the use of any kind of worship aid at the altar. No one—priest, deacon, lector—should ever lead the assembly in prayer by reading a prayer or proclaiming a Scripture passage from a worship aid because such actions violate the dignity of the word of God.

The GIRM accords a special honor or dignity to the sacred vessels used in worship, especially the chalice and paten, in which the bread and wine are offered and consecrated, and from which they are consumed.¹⁵⁴ It directs that they be made from precious metal.¹⁵⁵ RS further regulates the GIRM’s instruction by forbidding the use of vessels made from glass, earthenware, clay, or other materials that break easily because they are not truly noble and they do not honor the Lord by their use and risk diminishing the doctrine of the real presence of Christ in the eucharistic species in the eyes of the faithful.¹⁵⁶

As we have seen, the principles of suitability, simplicity, genuineness, audibility and visibility, and dignity inform the contents of the GIRM and RS. In particular, they guide those who are charged with maintaining places of worship to eliminate whatever clutters them. As RS makes clear, it is the right of all of Christ’s faithful that the liturgy, and in particular the celebration of Mass, should truly be as the church wishes, according to her stipulations as prescribed in the liturgical books and in the other laws and norms.¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, the Catholic people have the right to have the Mass celebrated for them in an integral manner, according to the entire doctrine of the church’s magisterium.¹⁵⁸ According to RS, it is the Catholic community’s right that the celebration of the Eucharist should be carried out for it in such a manner that it truly stands out as a sacrament of unity, to the exclusions of all blemishes and actions that might engender divisions and factions in the church.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵³ GIRM 349.

¹⁵⁴ GIRM 327.

¹⁵⁵ GIRM 328.

¹⁵⁶ RS 117.

¹⁵⁷ RS 12.

¹⁵⁸ RS 12.

¹⁵⁹ RS 12.

By implementing, as does the GIRM and RS, the five principles explained above, the church can be assured of the correct and worthy celebration of so great a mystery,¹⁶⁰ and the church can be assured of the active participation of all in any liturgical rite.

Conclusion

In general, the reverence shown to the building named “church” flows from the theology of the church as found in the documents of the church. This theology of the church should inform praxis. In other words, the theology of the church should be seen in its incarnate form in the people, who are the church, and in the building, in which they worship. The building, in turn, helps to inform the people theologically. The building facilitates the liturgical celebration in microcosm of the universal church; the parish church is in miniature to what the universal church is in totality.¹⁶¹

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. In what ways does your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church foster active participation? In what ways does it hinder active participation?
2. Does your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church present the various areas as a unity? How? How not?
3. What connotations does the word “church” have for you? Are these connotations of the past or present? What are some connotations that you need to be aware of and develop for yourself?
4. In what ways does your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church function as a skin for the church (people) and her (their) liturgical activity?
5. Which floor plan does your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church best resemble: basilica, cruciform, theater, stadium? Explain.
6. Who is the titular saint of your church or the proposed new church? What do you know about him or her? How is your parish titular

¹⁶⁰ RS 12.

¹⁶¹ GIRM 22–26.

- saint celebrated annually? If the festival day falls during Ordinary Time, is it moved to and celebrated on a Sunday? Why? Why not?
7. Do you know the date of the dedication of your parish church? Is the anniversary of the dedication of your parish church celebrated annually? If so, how is this done? If not, why not?
 8. Is your church or the proposed new church a *domus ecclesiae* or a *domus Dei*? Explain.
 9. Evaluate the application of the principle of suitability to your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church. What do you discover? What needs to be changed?
 10. Evaluate the application of the principle of simplicity to your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church. What do you discover? What needs to be changed?
 11. Evaluate the application of the principle of genuineness to your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church. What do you discover? What needs to be changed?
 12. Evaluate the application of the principles of audibility and visibility to your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church. What do you discover? What needs to be changed?
 13. Evaluate the application of the principle of dignity to your church or the proposed floor plan for your new church. What do you discover? What needs to be changed?
 14. Evaluate your church or the proposed new church in terms of its processional functionality for funerals and weddings and other celebrations, like Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord and the feast of the Presentation of the Lord. What do you discover? What needs to be done?
 15. What type of gathering space does your church or the proposed new one have? Does it serve its function? How?
 16. What is the difference between an architectural design and floor plan of a church that is concerned primarily with dialogue between people and one concerned primarily with dialogue between people and God?