

# Built of Living Stones - (1)

by Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski

- an article from *Word on Worship*, Volume 20, Number 2  
- reprinted with the permission of The Worship Office, Archdiocese of Newark  
**This article will be published as a series over the next two months.**

I am currently stationed at *Our Lady of Czestochowa Church* in the *Paulus Hook* section of Jersey City, New Jersey. This historic section of Jersey City, near the Hudson River, dates back to 1630. The brownstones that make up most of the private housing in this area are well over 100 years old. The rectory for instance, a four-story brownstone, was built well before the Civil War.

If you examine the buildings that have not been renovated, you can see that the apartments are generally small, the bathrooms appear to be an afterthought, there is little closet space, and there is no driveway or garage. These 1850 buildings were constructed to provide for life as it was at the time. People were poor, they worked six days per week from dawn to dusk, they had few possessions, and little time was spent inside the home.

Today, this part of Jersey City has more construction taking place within it than any other part of New Jersey. In fact there are four major apartment complexes under construction within three blocks of the church. The design of these new apartments is very different from that of the old brownstone apartments.

The new apartments generally have more than one bedroom and more than one bathroom. The bedrooms are spacious and the bathrooms are large and often contain a sauna or a Jacuzzi. The kitchens have the latest appliances, such as a Viking range and refrigerator. A washer and dryer are usually located in a nearby closet. Of course, the apartments are wired for access to the Internet and cable TV, and frequently they have stereo speakers installed in the ceiling of each room. Thankfully, for this congested area of the city, each apartment has a reserved parking space for the use of its tenants.

**The church buildings being constructed today, or renovated today, don't look the same as those built years ago. They are different in design, and that is not surprising since we do not worship today the same way we did 100 years ago, or even 35 years ago.**

The apartments being built today are different from those built in 1850, and that's to be expected since life today is lived very differently than it was then. In addition, building codes are different. These codes require certain types of electrical service, they demand smoke alarms in different areas, they require toilet to use only a limited amount of water, they demand the bedrooms have windows and that these windows be of a certain minimum size, etc.

What is true for the apartments in my area is also true for our church buildings. The church buildings being constructed today, or renovated today, don't look the same as those built years ago. They are different in design, and that is not surprising since we do not worship today the same way we did 100 years ago, or even 35 years ago. The liturgy is different. Building codes are different, and not just the building codes set by civil authorities, but more importantly the building codes established by the Catholic Church for its holy places that serve the worship of God.



The Church's building code is set forth in different places in various liturgical documents such as the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, etc. However, there is a recent document, promulgated by the bishops of the United States in November 2000, which brings together much of the relevant documentation dealing with the building and renovation of churches. This document is entitled *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship*. It "builds on and replaces" *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, which was published by the *Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy* in 1978.

This new document might be described as the latest codification of relevant material dealing with the construction and renovation of worship spaces. This article will offer a summary of *Built of Living Stones*, is not meant to be a substitute for reading the actual document. However, in this age of increasing information and seemingly ever-decreasing time, much published material remains unread. It is our hope that perhaps this overview will encourage readers to look at the actual document, or it will, at least, provide them with the basic information contained in this document from the American bishops. *Built of Living Stones* begins with a preface and then continues for four chapters. This article will summarize and comment on each section separately.

- to be continued

Next week: *The Preface* of the Document: **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (2)

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- an article from *Word on Worship*, Volume 20, Number 2  
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**This article is being published as a series over the next two months.**  
**This is the second article in the series.**

## Preface

**The Preface** explains that this document has been published "to assist the faithful involved in the building or renovation of churches, chapels, and oratories in the Latin Church in the United States. In addition, the document is intended for use by architects, liturgical consultants and artists, contractors, and other professionals engaged in the design and/or construction of these places of worship." (3) (All references, unless otherwise noted, are to *Built of Living Stones*.)



The guidelines and suggestions given in *Built of Living Stones*, though "not exhaustive," bring together in one place the relevant sections of more than 25 Church documents, which have an impact on the construction or renovation of churches.

**The Preface** explains that the guidelines contained in *Built of Living Stones* comes from underlying Church documents. "Where the document quotes or reiterates norms from liturgical books and the Code of Canon Law, those prescriptions are binding on local communities and dioceses. (10) The 211 footnotes found in *Built of Living Stones* emphasize that this document rests on other authoritative statements.

The preface wisely points out that those involved in designing new churches or renovating already existing buildings need knowledge that goes beyond brick and mortar. They need to understand the liturgy of the Church. They need to appreciate the space required for the proper and full celebration of that liturgy. And they need to recognize that the physical arrangement of a church can help people worship God or hinder that worship.

...to be continued

Next week: *Chapter One: The Living Church* from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (3)

by Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski

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**This is the third article in the series.**

## Chapter One: The Living Church

This chapter begins by speaking of the dual meaning of the word *church*. The *Church* (upper case) is *the living temple*, it is the people of God called together by Christ to give praise and worship to the Father. The church (lower case) is also the place where the holy people of God come together, and the place that serves as the house of God on earth.

The church building is, therefore, always more than a gathering place. *Christians build churches to shelter the liturgical assembly that praises God and celebrates the sacraments through which the Church is sanctified.* (20) The church building also makes the Church visible in a particular place and time, and it also serves as a reminder of the presence of God among His people. The church building and the liturgical gatherings of the Church both proclaim the presence of God.

While there is no one set architectural design for a church, **Built of Living Stones** puts forth five basic principles that must be kept in mind when designing or renovating a church building. These principles are:

1. The church building is built in harmony with church laws and serves the needs of the liturgy. (28) The building that houses the Church should be a place of beauty, worthy of the sacred mysteries which take place within its walls, it should be built in *conformity with the laws of the Church*.
2. *The church building fosters participation in the liturgy.* (31) The design of the building should promote and facilitate the liturgical participation of the Christian community. Good designs allow all present to fully participate in the celebration of the liturgy. Bad designs hinder such participation.
3. *The design of the church building reflects the various roles of all the participants.* (32) While all the members of the assembly are called to full and active participation, some members of the assembly have special ministries in the celebration. The design of the church building should allow those with special ministries (for example, priests, deacons, readers, altar servers, music ministers, etc.) to graciously serve the needs of the gathered assembly *in a space that fully accommodates the ritual action called for by that ministry*.
4. *The church building respects the culture of every time and place.* (38) The church building should reflect the culture, place and time of those who gather within its walls. *The Church is not wedded to a single architectural or artistic form; it seeks to engage the genius of every time and place, to craft the finest praise of God from what is available.* (40) Just as the Son of God took on flesh in a particular time, place and culture, so does the Church. The building where this Church gathers should be reflective of its own particular time, place and culture. The Church of the present day United States is not the Church of 17<sup>th</sup> Century Europe, so it would be logical to conclude that the places where the Church of today gathers would not look the same as those places constructed to serve another time, place, and culture.
5. *The church building should be beautiful.* (44) The interior and exterior of the building should raise the minds of the faithful to the One who is beauty itself. Of the five principles this one is perhaps the most problematic since what is beautiful cannot be judged by standards acceptable to all. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

- to be continued

Next week: Chapter Two: *The Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated There*  
from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (4)

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**This is the fourth article in the series.**

## Chapter Two: The Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated There

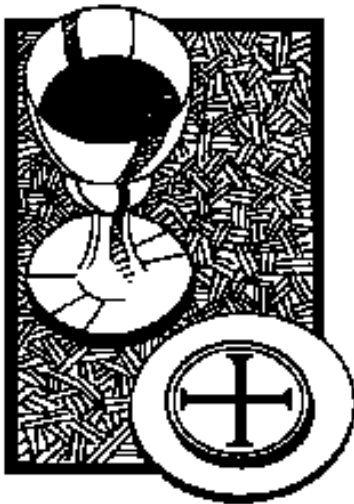
Since the primary purpose of the church building is to house the Church when it gathers for the celebration of the liturgy, the design of the building should foster the "full, dignified, and graceful celebration" of the *Sunday Eucharist, the Easter Vigil, the celebration of the other sacraments*, and also *the Liturgy of the Hours*. The building should also be suited for *prayer before the Blessed Sacrament* and for *various popular devotions* that are in harmony with the liturgy.

In order to accommodate the needs of the liturgy, those involved with the building of a new church or renovation of an existing one, must be familiar with the rites of the Church and their spatial requirements. In other words, those designing a church must know how the building will be used. Form follows function.

**Chapter Two** then proceeds to review the various liturgies that are celebrated in a typical church building and the requirement that such liturgies make upon the building.

## The Eucharist

The celebration of the Eucharist is the center of Christian life. This being the case, the celebration of the Eucharist, above all the Sunday Eucharist, is the starting point for church design. The building must foster the full and active participation of the faithful as they gather on the Lord's Day to hear his word and share his life.



When we gather as Church, we gather as a unified community of faith. We share one faith, one Lord, one baptism; therefore, the church building must proclaim our unity in the Lord. While there is a hierarchical arrangement of the liturgy and a variety of ministries, the building must proclaim the unity of all the faithful. The design of a church building must not suggest that the members of the assembly are part of an audience gathered before a stage, or sanctuary, to watch something happen. In the liturgy everyone has a part to play. Liturgy has no passive spectators. "The community worships as a single body united in faith." (52)

*The sanctuary area* of the church building contains the altar, pulpit, and the chair of the priest celebrant. It must be large enough to accommodate the needs of the liturgy and also be spatially related to the rest of the building. It is a challenge to convey the special character of the sanctuary, yet at the same time to show how that space is organically related to the area for the assembly.

*The altar* is the "natural focal point of the sanctuary and is to be freestanding to allow the priest to walk around it easily and mass to be celebrated facing the people." (57) It should be in proportion to the rest of the building, be designed for the use of the priest celebrant and deacon, and be "centrally located in the sanctuary and the center of attention of the church." (58)

The design and material of the *ambo or pulpit* should harmonize with the altar design in order to show the connection between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The ambo should be free standing with ample space around it to accommodate a procession of ministers with the Book of the Gospels. Both the ambo and the altar should be designed in such a way that they may be approached and used by those with physical disabilities.

*The chair* for the priest celebrant should indicate his presiding function, yet show his relationship to the rest of the assembly. The placement of the chair should allow the presider to be seen by all in the assembly.

- to be continued

Next week: from Chapter Two:

*The Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated There*  
**The Baptistry and The Reservation of the Eucharist**  
from **Built of Living Stones**

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**This is the fifth article in the series.**

Chapter Two - continued...

## The Baptistry

A prominent place is required for the celebration of Baptism. The location and the design of the font should permit the full celebration of this first sacrament of initiation. Built of Living Stones proposes the following criteria that should be considered in the design of the font.

There should be one font that will permit the baptism of both infants and adults - one font, one altar, one holy people. This font should be large enough to provide ample water for the baptism of both adults and infants and allow for baptism either by immersion in the water or by infusing (pouring). Private places should be provided near the font to allow the newly baptized to be clothed in their white garments.

The location of the baptistry should indicate the relationship of baptism to the other sacraments, and should permit the assembly to participate in its celebration. "Placing the baptismal font in an area near the entrance or gathering space where the members pass regularly and setting it on an axis with the altar can symbolize the relationship between the various sacraments as well as the importance of the Eucharist."



## The Reservation of the Eucharist

The place for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is an important factor that must be considering when designing a new church building or renovating the existing worship space. The Code of Canon Law provides some specific direction concerning the reservation of the Eucharist. The law of the Church directs that the Eucharist be reserved in an area of the church building that is "distinguished, conspicuous, beautifully decorated, and suitable for private prayer." There should be only one tabernacle, which is to be solid, immovable, opaque and locked. This tabernacle may be placed on a fixed pillar or stand, or attached and embedded in a wall. (72, and Code of Canon Law, 938)

The tabernacle may be situated in one of two places. It may be placed in a chapel separate from the sanctuary and main body of the church building, or it may be placed in the sanctuary. The choice is left to the decision of the diocesan bishop.

If the tabernacle is located in a chapel of reservation, such a chapel should be clearly connected to the church building and "conspicuous to the faithful." (77) This location was clearly the preference in the previous General Instruction of the Roman Missal.

If the tabernacle is placed in the sanctuary, there should be sufficient space between the altar of celebration and the tabernacle. This is necessary so that the placement of the tabernacle "does not draw the attention of the faithful away from the Eucharistic Celebration and its components. (79) If the tabernacle is located directly behind the altar of celebration, then a visual separation should be created by means of lighting, distance, or "some other architectural device." (80)

- to be continued

Next week: from Chapter Two:

*The Church Building an the Sacred Rites Celebrated There*

**Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum and  
Places for the Assembly and Music Ministry  
from Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (6)

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Chapter Two - continued...

## Holy Week and the Paschal Triduum

**The Paschal or Easter Triduum** is the crown of the liturgical year. Those given the responsibility of designing the church building should take into consideration the needs of the liturgies these most sacred days. The following liturgical requirements should be considered.

*Holy Thursday* requires there be a place for the washing of feet, and also a place of reposition of the Blessed Sacrament. It is interesting to note that if there is a separate chapel of reservation, then this chapel serves as the place of reposition. If not, a temporary place outside the main body of the church is to be provided. This would seem to indicate that it is more suitable to regularly reserve the Blessed Sacrament in such a chapel, than in a tabernacle placed in the sanctuary.

*Good Friday* requires an area where the Cross may be placed after its veneration by the members of the assembly.

*The Easter Vigil* requires an area for the blessing of the new fire and the lighting of the paschal Candle, and a place where that candle may remain for the Easter Season. The Vigil also requires a baptistry that can accommodate adults and can provide a place for the newly baptized to change into their white garments.

## Places for the Assembly and Music Ministry

The seating configuration used in a church should allow the people to see what is taking place and also encourage their active participation in the liturgy. The arrangements of benches, pews, or chairs should allow people not only to easily view the altar, ambo, and chair, but also to comfortably stand, sit, kneel, take part in processions, turn toward one another, face the font, etc. The assembly comes to liturgy to participate not merely observe, therefore the seating arrangement should not resemble that of a theatre or auditorium. It is also important to consider where people who use wheelchairs or walkers will be placed. Like other members of the assembly, they too need a place that will permit them to see and participate in the liturgy.



Since music is an integral part of our liturgy, the design of the building must support the sung prayer of the assembly, and also support the ministry of the pastoral musicians who exercise such a key role when the Church gathers for prayer.

Because the roles of the choirs and cantors are exercised within the liturgical community, the space chosen for the musicians should not only allow them to be heard, but also to "clearly express that they are part of the assembly of worshippers." (89) If the choir is located in the sanctuary, sufficient space should be provided those these singers so that they will not crowd the other liturgical ministers nor draw attention away from the liturgical action. Cantors and others who lead the community in song, also need a location that will allow them to be easily seen by the other members of the assembly.

- to be continued

Next week: from Chapter Two:

*The Church Building an the Sacred Rites Celebrated There*

**Other Ritual Furnishings and**

**The Gathering Space and the Exterior Space**

from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (7)

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Chapter Two - continued...

## Other Ritual Furnishings

The Cross is the most important of all the sacred images in the church building. Built of Living Stones mentions that there should be a Cross in the sanctuary with the image of Christ crucified. (91) This same point is made in 308 of the *2000 General Instruction of the Roman Missal*. This crucifix may be suspended over the altar, hung on a wall, or it may be placed on a stand and also serve as the Processional Cross.

The candles used in the liturgy should be placed near the altar in the sanctuary. There may be two, four or six candles used for the celebration of Mass. Such candles should not impede the assembly from viewing the action of the liturgy.

The Easter or Paschal Candle is the most important of the candles used in the liturgy. This candle should be a genuine candle, made of wax. The importance of this candle and its wax composition are also emphasized in the Circular Letter of the Congregation for Divine Worship, Concerning the Preparation and Celebration of the Easter Feasts. (82)

## THE GATHERING SPACE AND EXTERIOR SPACE

The gathering space or narthex serves as a place of transition as the faithful move into the worship area of the church building. This place also serves various ritual functions. It is the place where parents and godparents are greeted during the celebration of baptism; it is the place where adults are welcomed who seek to begin their journey to the sacraments of initiation; it is the place where the body of the deceased Christian is received for the celebration of the funeral liturgy. This gathering space also serves as an area for hospitality, and as the place that provides access to other parts of the church building. Those designing the gathering place need to consider its various uses and the needs and size of the community it will serve.

However, even before someone enters the gathering space, that person comes in contact with the exterior of the building and the grounds that surround it. Before a word is said inside the building, the outside of the building is speaking "words". The external environment of the church building, namely, the landscaping, walkways, parking areas, lighting, signage, and look of the exterior need to be taken into consideration when designing or renovating a place of worship. Does the exterior of the building convey a message of welcome, care, and life?

- to be continued

Next week: the conclusion of Chapter Two:

*The Church Building and the Sacred Rites Celebrated There*

**THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING IN OTHER LITURGICAL RITES and  
DECORATIONS AND DEVOTIONS  
from Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (8)

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**This is the eighth article in the series.**

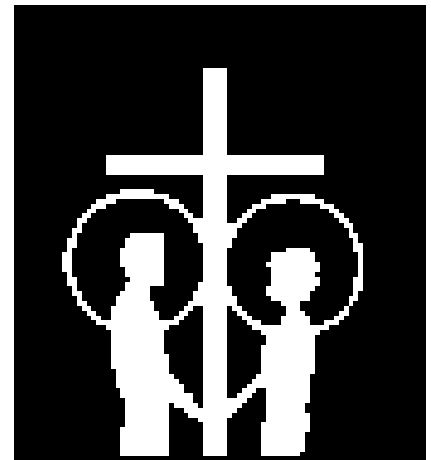
Chapter Two - concluded...

## THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH BUILDING IN OTHER LITURGICAL RITES

While the primary purpose of the church building is to serve as the place for the celebration of the Sunday mass, it will also serve as the place for other liturgical celebrations. "The design of the church must also accommodate the needs of these rites." (100)

Those designing a church need to consider every liturgical function that will take place within its walls. The form the church building takes should be determined by the various functions that will take place within it.

We are not just planning a space for mass, but a place that will accommodate the celebration of *Rites of Christian Initiation, Holy Orders, the Rite of Penance or Reconciliation, the Rite of Marriage, the Communal Anointing of the Sick, Christian Funerals, the Liturgy of the Hours, Sunday Celebrations in the Absence of a Priest*, and, as was mentioned earlier, *the Easter Triduum*. All these liturgies of the church need to be considered by a community of faith as it designs its worship space.



To produce such a design, the pastor, the members of the liturgy committee, the architect, and others involved with the project, should consult various ritual books to determine if the proposed design of the building will promote or impede the liturgies described by those rituals. Designs that do not enhance the full and proper celebration of the rites of the church need to be modified. Again, the form the building takes should be determined by all the functions that will take place within its walls.

The *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar* should also be consulted since its rituals "serve as a foundational resource for those engaged in designing and building churches." (118). The rite describes the various blessings and rituals that accompany the construction or renovation of a sacred place. It should be noted that this rite emphasizes that a newly constructed altar is not to be used for Mass until the diocesan bishop solemnly dedicates it.

## DECORATIONS AND DEVOTIONS

The decorations placed in the church building should be in harmony with the liturgical season. Such decorations should remain in place throughout the entire season and they should enhance not only the sanctuary but other areas of the Church building as well. "The altar should remain clear and free-standing and not walled in by massive floral displays or the Christmas crib, and pathways in the narthex, nave, and sanctuary should remain clear." (124)

The Church building also serves as the place for popular devotions, provided such devotions are in harmony with the liturgy and in keeping with the norms of the Church. *Built of Living Stones* specifically mentions the Stations of the Cross and points out that this devotion requires space for processional movement. Those celebrating this devotion need to be able to move from station to station.

Sacred images of the Blessed Mother, of the patron of the parish, and of saints venerated by current parishioners, are encouraged. However, such images should not be so prominent or so numerous that they draw attention away from the liturgical action.

- to be continued

Next week: Chapter Three:  
*The Work of Our Hands:*  
*Art and Artists Assisting Church at Prayer*  
from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (9)

by Rev. Thomas B. Iwanowski

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**This is the ninth article in the series.**

## Chapter Three: The Work of Our Hands: Art and Artists Assisting Church at Prayer

The third chapter of *Built of Living Stones* concerns religious art and the relationship between the artist and the religious community.

Religious art has a specific purpose: it “is meant to bring the divine to the human world, to the level of the senses, then, from the spiritual insight gained through the senses and the stirring of the emotions, to raise the human world to God, to his inexpressible kingdom of mystery, beauty and art.” (142). There are two criteria for determining the suitability of art for a place of worship; namely, quality and appropriateness.

Quality art uses honest and genuine materials that will endure, it shows the handiwork and creative energy of an individual artist, and it invites contemplation that draws the viewer “to the Creator who stands behind the artist sharing his own creative power.” (146). Such art is not Mass-produced, nor is such art simply the reproduction of pieces from another time and culture.

Art has appropriateness when it can convey in some way the “mystery, awe, reverence, and wonder that the liturgical action expresses and by the way it serves and does not interrupt the ritual actions...Art that is used in worship must...lead beyond itself to the invisible God.” (148)

Artists who serve the Christian community must be respectful of the Church, and acquainted with “the traditional iconography and symbolism of Christian art.” (152). Such artists must also have an understanding and reverence for the liturgy” (155) and an appreciation of the sacred place in which their work will be placed. They also need to be able to work cooperatively with the leaders and members of the Christian community they have been called to serve.

This chapter closes with a reminder that art, which is no longer useful or needed, or beyond repair or restoration, needs to be treated with respect and disposed of in a proper manner. It also discussed the importance of properly caring for objects of historic or artistic value, and includes a reminder that the work of artists requires proper remuneration.

- to be continued

Next week: Chapter Four:  
*Building a Church: Practical Considerations*  
from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (10)

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**This is the tenth article in the series.**

## Chapter Four: Building a Church: Practical Considerations

Church buildings are constructed not only to serve the present community, but also to serve the future community of faith that will occupy the worship space. That being the case, those involved with the building or renovation of a Church need to look not only at present needs but also the future needs. This can be done by developing a parish master plan that takes into consideration the vision and mission of the parish; present and future needs, priorities, and resources; the current and projected demographics of the area, etc.

When present and future needs appear to indicate the need for renovating a worship space or constructing a new Church building, then a process begins which should involve a variety of people, not just the pastor and a building committee. "Since no single pastor or parish possesses the totality of expertise or vision required to execute a project of such great scope, the congregation and clergy will need to recognize the areas of their own competence, the role of the diocesan bishop and diocesan personnel, and their limits beyond which the assistance of experts will be required." (177)

*Built of Living Stones* then proceeds to describe all those who should be involved in the project. These include the following:

The diocesan bishop must be involved since according to canon law he has primary responsibility for the liturgy in his diocese and primary responsibility for the places in which this liturgy is celebrated. Usually, the diocesan bishop exercises his responsibility in this area through various offices, commissions, and agencies that provide assistance to parishes not only in liturgical matters, but also in matters of construction, finances, contracts, planning, etc.

"In some dioceses the first step in any building or renovation process is a meeting of the pastor, the architect, and possible the liturgical consultant with the diocesan bishop or his representative to discuss any diocesan parameters."(170)

It goes without saying that "the pastor is vital to the building or renovation of a parish church." (182) He is the one that guides the parish through the various phases of the project, and he is the one who ensures there is open and continuing consultation with the diocesan bishop, with the different committees and professionals involved, and most importantly with the members of the parish.



Besides ensuring communication, the pastor must also provide liturgical education to the members of his parish, and most especially to those involved in the project in some direct way, such as the members of *the Pastoral Council*, *the Finance Council*, *the Building Committee*, etc. such educations should include an appreciation of the liturgy and its primary place in the

life of the church; a basic understanding of the Eucharist and the other sacraments and the partial demands required for their proper celebration; and a consideration of the ways that the design of a worship space can promote or hinder the full participation of the assembly. Such liturgical education can be greatly enhanced by visits to a variety of other church buildings.

Beyond the bishop, pastor, and parish, the building or renovation of a church will require a staff of professionals, which includes the architect, the liturgical consultant, the contractor, experts in light and acoustical design, etc. "It is crucial that all professionals chosen have the expertise to fulfill the particular tasks needed and that a clear description of their roles and responsibilities be developed and agreed upon before they actually begin work." (196) Such professionals must be fairly compensated for their time and expertise. "The community must be willing to budget and expend resources for appropriate professionals so that the criteria for good liturgical art and sound building practices can be met." (202)

The choice of the architect, who is the primary design agent, is crucial. Built of living stones notes that a church architect must be able to create an environment that facilitates and encourages liturgical participation; that gives visual expression to the spiritual dimension that words can only partially express; and that respects, wherever possible, the Church's architectural and artistic heritage. He or she must also be able to work in a collaborative way, be willing to engage in dialogue with the parish community, and respect the financial resources available for the project.

The architect should work closely with the liturgical consultant, the other key professional who should be engaged by the parish. The liturgical consultant helps the architect and others designing the building to "apply the principles and norms of the liturgical design to the practical and liturgical needs of the parish." (200) Just as no parish would undertake a building project without an architect, so no parish should undertake a renovation or the building of a church without securing the service of a liturgical consultant. Good stewardship demands that appropriate professionals be hired so that proper and wise design decisions be made and thoroughly evaluated before such decisions become stone and steel.

- to be continued

Next week: from Chapter Four:

*SPECIAL CONCERNS, SPECIAL ISSUES IN THE RENOVATION OF CHURCHES AND CONCLUSION*

from **Built of Living Stones**

# Built of Living Stones - (11)

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## Chapter Four:

### SPECIAL CONCERNS

When designing a church building, it is important to consider not only the interior and exterior of the building, but also the entire site. The grounds around the building should be designed with sensitivity to nature and to the neighborhood, and provide transitional areas for persons leaving their every day world to come and celebrate the mysteries of our faith.

The church building should be hospitable to all, even to those with various physical disabilities. The building itself and the sanctuary should be barrier free, and there should be provision made for those with visual or hearing impairments. The goal is always to make the entire church building, as well as the celebration of the liturgy, accessible to all of God's people. (214)

A church building must not only express hospitality, it must also express a firm faith in the future. In other words, the building must be made to last and endure. Therefore, the materials chosen must be able to stand the test of time.

While fine and durable materials will be more costly in the short run, over the long term they are a much better investment. They are longer lasting and usually require less maintenance.

Those designing or renovating a church building also need to remember that hospitality requires that people need to be able to hear and see clearly. Acoustical and lighting professionals need to be involved in the project.

The design of the building should also include spacious sacristies with sufficient storage space for vestments, vessels, decorations, etc. It is rare to find a church building with sufficient "closet space".



### SPECIAL ISSUES IN THE RENOVATION OF CHURCHES

While the construction of a new church building is a challenge, the renovation of an existing structure, especially an historic structure, is an even greater challenge. Such buildings often limit design possibilities, and the artistic and treasure items with them must be handled with care and sensitivity, especially when such items cannot be reconfigured and redesigned to serve the present needs of the liturgy.

## CONCLUSION

The building of a church is different from any other construction project. A church is built not just for the moment but also for the future. A church is built not just for those who gather around the altar today, but also for those not yet born of water and the spirit, who will gather tomorrow. A church is built not only to satisfy the vision of a local community but also to satisfy the vision proposed by the wider Christian community. A church is built not only to create a functional space for liturgy, but also to create a place that will nourish and lift the spirit. A church is built not only to proclaim the presence of the holy, but also to proclaim the faith in the Holy One who took on flesh and dwelt among us. A church is built not only of marble and steel, but also of living stones. This document serves as a guide, as a building code, to assist those who, with faith in God and trust in the future, accept the challenge of building or renovating a place different from any other, a place for the worship of God.