

# ENVIRONMENT

## General Principles

The sacred buildings for divine worship should be truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities. (288)

For the proper construction, restoration, and arrangement of sacred buildings, all those involved should consult the diocesan commission for the Sacred Liturgy and sacred art. (291)

## Arrangement of the Sanctuary

It is desirable that in every church there be a fixed altar, since this more clearly and permanently signifies Christ Jesus, the Living stone (1 Peter 2:4; Ephesians 2:20) In other places set aside for sacred celebrations, the altar may be movable. (298)

The altar should be built separate from the wall, in such a way that it possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable whenever possible. Moreover, the altar should occupy a place where it is truly the **centre** toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns. (299)

The table of the altar should be of stone. In the dioceses of Canada, however, another natural material which is dignified, solid, and well-crafted may also be used, provided that the altar is structurally immobile. (301)

A movable altar may be constructed of any noble and solid material suited to liturgical use, according to the traditions and usages of the different regions.

In building new churches, it is preferable for a single altar to be erected, one that in the gathering of the faithful will signify the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church.

In already existing churches, however, when the old altar is so positioned that it makes the people's participation difficult but cannot be moved without damage to the artistic value, another fixed altar, skilfully made and properly dedicated, should be erected and the sacred rites celebrated on it alone. In order that the attention of the faithful not be distracted from the new altar, the old altar should not be decorated in any special way. (303)

## **Altar cloth**

There should be at least one white altar cloth. (304)

## **Flowers**

Moderation should be used in the decoration of the altar. In Advent floral decorations should be moderate. During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers except on Laetare Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent) Solemnities and Feasts. (305)

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 Gospels; then from the presentation of the Gifts until the purification of the vessels, the chalice with the patten, a ciborium, if necessary, and, finally, the corporal, the purificator, the pall, and the Missal. (This means no flowers on the altar)

In addition, arranged discretely, there should be whatever may be needed to amplify the Priest's voice.

The candlesticks required for the different liturgical services for reasons of reverence or the festive

character of the celebration (cf. No. 117) should be appropriately placed either on the altar or around it, according to the design of the altar and the sanctuary, so that the whole may be harmonious and the faithful may not be impeded from a clear view of what takes place at the altar or what is placed upon it. (307)

There should be at least two candlesticks in any celebration, or even four or six, especially for a Sunday Mass or a Holyday of Obligation, or if the diocesan Bishop celebrates, then seven candlesticks with lighted candles (117)

Likewise, either on the altar or near it, there is a cross, with the *figure of Christ crucified* upon it, a cross clearly visible to the assembled people. It is desirable that such a cross should remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations, so as to call to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord. (308)

If there is a permanent cross, with corpus, in the sanctuary and a processional cross is carried in the entrance procession, it is placed out of sight.

## **The Ambo**

It is appropriate that generally this place be a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern.

From the ambo only the readings, the Responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (Exultet) are to be proclaimed; likewise it may be used for giving the Homily and for announcing the intentions of the Universal Prayer. (A new term) The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should stand at it. (309) (Here again we see reverence emphasized)

## **The Chair for Priest Celebrants and Other Seats**

The chair of the Priest Celebrant must signify his function of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer. Thus the more suitable place for the chair is facing the people at the head of the sanctuary, unless the design of the building or other features prevent this: as, for example, if on account of too great a distance, communication between the Priest and the congregation would be difficult, or if the tabernacle were to be positioned in the centre behind the altar. In any case, any appearance of a throne is to be avoided. (310)

Likewise, seats should be arranged in the sanctuary for concelebrating Priests as well as for Priests who are present at the celebration in choir dress but without concelebrating.

The seat for the Deacon should be placed near that of the celebrant. For the other ministers seats should be arranged so that they are clearly distinguishable from seats for the clergy and so that the ministers are easily able to carry out the function entrusted to them.

## **Location of Choir**

The choir should be so positioned with respect to the arrangement of each Church that its nature may be clearly evident, namely as part of the assembled community of the faithful undertaking a specific function. The positioning should also help the choir to exercise this function more easily and allow each choir member full sacramental participation in the Mass in a convenient manner. (312)

## **Tabernacle**

The tabernacle should usually be the only one, be irremovable, be made of solid and inviolable material that is not transparent, and be locked in such a way that the danger of

profanation is prevented to the greatest extent possible. (314)

**Location:**

It is more appropriate as a sign that on the altar on which Mass is celebrated there not be a tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved. (315)

Consequently, it is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgement of the Diocesan Bishop: either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, or in a private chapel, connected to the Church, readily noticeable by the Christian faithful.

Near the tabernacle a special lamp fuelled by either oil or wax should shine permanently to indicate the presence of Christ and honour it. (316)

**Sacred Images.**

In sacred buildings images of the Lord, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saints, in accordance with most ancient tradition of the Church, should be displayed for veneration by the faithful and should be arranged so as to lead the faithful toward the mysteries of faith celebrated there. There should be only one image of any given saint.

