



## The Role of the Assembly At Liturgy

We are Christians because through the Christian community we have met Jesus Christ, heard his word in invitation, and responded to him in faith. We gather at Mass that we may hear and express our faith again in this assembly and, by expressing it, renew and deepen it.

... We come together to deepen our awareness of, and commitment to, the action of his Spirit in the whole of our lives at every moment. We come together to acknowledge the love of God poured out among us in the work of the Spirit, to stand in awe and praise.

We are celebrating when we involve ourselves meaningfully in the thoughts, words, songs, and gestures of the worshipping

*What Every Catholic Needs to Know About the Mass*

community—when everything we do is wholehearted and authentic for us—when we mean the words and want to do what is done.

People in love make signs of love, not only to express their love but also to deepen it. Love never expressed dies. Christians' love for Christ and for one another and Christians' faith in Christ and in one another must be expressed in the signs and symbols of celebration or they will die (*Music in Catholic Worship* 1–4).

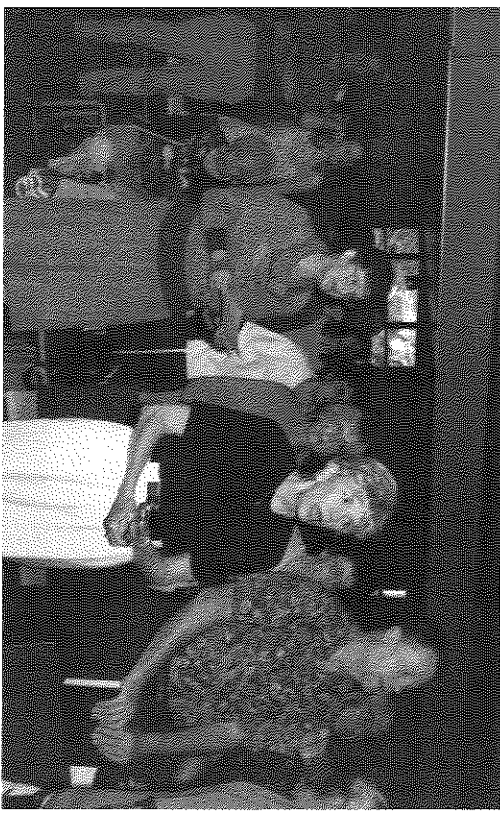
The word *liturgy* comes from the Greek word *leitourgia*. It literally means “the people’s work.” It is a public work done for the service of others. In ancient Greek it originally meant civic duty or the cooperation of all citizens to make society work.

The religious meaning of liturgy is similar. Liturgy is defined as public worship for the service of others. Liturgy is public prayer and ritual; it is communal in nature. There is nothing private about the liturgy.

As Christians we are called to be Christ to others. By our baptism we have a responsibility to allow the light of Jesus to shine in our lives and in the lives of others. We are called by Christ to be of service, and this attitude is required of us at liturgy. In a sense all of us are required to work at liturgy. So many times you will hear people being critical of the priest or the music at Mass, but what about the people who are passive at liturgy, those who do not sing, participate, reach out to others, or who leave early?

Some people say, “I don’t get anything out of it.” It is important to note that this attitude is never taught in Scripture. Where in Scripture does Jesus teach that you should not do something unless you benefit from it? This attitude is also not present in the sacred tradition of the church. Where in tradition is it taught that Jesus did not do something unless he got something out of it?

The specific purpose of the Mass is to serve the community. We come to Mass to be of service, to give praise and worship to God, and to bring others to Christ. We do not come to Mass for ourselves.



*“Our responsibility is to support one another in public worship.”*

Just as in daily living, you have up and down days; so too is that fluctuation present in gathering on Sunday. Our responsibility is to support one another in public worship. On the up days you give; on the down days you receive. As Catholics we do not come to Mass for ourselves, but for others, so that others can experience Jesus through the Word, the Eucharist, and us.

Here is what the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says on this topic:

In the celebration of Mass the faithful are a holy people, a people God has made his own, a royal priesthood: they give thanks to the Father and offer [Jesus] not only through the hands of the priest but also together with him and learn to offer themselves. . . .

They therefore are to shun any appearance of individualism or division, keeping before their mind that they have the one Father in heaven and therefore are all brothers and sisters to each other. They should become one body, whether by hearing the word of God, or joining in prayers and song, or above all by offering the sacrifice together and sharing together in the Lord's table. There is a beautiful expression of this unity when their faithful maintain uniformity in their actions and in standing, sitting, or kneeling (62).

In their document *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, the Catholic bishops note:

Among the symbols with which liturgy deals, none is more important than this assembly of believers. . . .

The most powerful experience of the sacred is found in the celebration and the persons celebrating; that is, it is found in the action of the assembly: the living words, the living gestures, the living sacrifice, the living meal. This was at the heart of the earliest liturgies. Evidence of this is found in their architectural floor plans which were designed as general gathering spaces,

spaces which allowed the whole assembly to be part of the action.

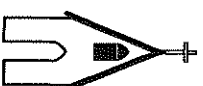
... The entire congregation is an active component. There is no audience, no passive element in the liturgical celebration (28-30).

The goal of the liturgy is the transformation of people's lives to Jesus; it is about the conversion of hearts. The Catholic bishops teach us that good liturgy builds faith, while poor liturgy destroys it (*Music in Catholic Worship* 6). The Catholic Church asks that we make our liturgies life-giving, and each of us plays a vital role in that request through full, active, and conscious participation in the liturgy. We can accomplish this by: (1) making sure we come early or on time for Mass, (2) having a spirit of Christian hospitality by reaching out to others, (3) actively praying and singing during the liturgy, and (4) staying for the entire Mass.

God has gifted all with an ability to dream. Envision for a moment a Catholic community that is alive (see Chapter 6), where people want to be at Mass and to share the Christ within them, where there is a spirit of Christian hospitality and love, where people are actively praying and singing all the songs, and where everyone stays for the entire Mass! It can be done, and it starts with you as a member of the assembly.

The *Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy* notes the importance of music in liturgy and of the assembly's full participation in the liturgy. "The musical tradition of the universal Church is a treasure of inestimable value, greater even than that of any other art." The main reason for this pre-eminence is that, as sacred song closely bound to the text, it forms a necessary or integral part of the solemn liturgy. Liturgical worship is given a more noble form when the divine offices are celebrated solemnly in song with the assistance of sacred ministers and the active participation of the people (112, 113).

## 5



# Environment and Space In Liturgy

The history of liturgy in the Catholic Church has shown that liturgy has taken place in a wide variety of places and settings: for example, a post-Vatican II church structure, a home, on a ship, in a field in the midst of war, in a hospital chapel, on a beach, in a forest, or in a cathedral.

*We Gather in Christ, Our Identity as Assembly*, from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, states:

In the minds of many modern Christians, the Gothic cathedral represents the ideal architectural form for worship. However, the ecclesiology it expresses and the liturgy it makes possible differ greatly from the church's present understanding of itself

and liturgical theology. A study of the plan shows a long, narrow nave (where the people stood), a choir area (where the monks sang the daily office), and at a considerable distance from the people, the sanctuary with the altar. Clearly, this worship space reflects a view of the church that centers on the monastic community and encourages passivity on the part of the laity. The placement of the altar at such a distance from the worshipping assembly made it difficult to see what was happening and also made a profound statement about the ordinary person's worthiness to approach the sacred too closely. Indeed, the members of the worshipping assembly received the Eucharist infrequently. At that point in church history, the liturgy was the concern of the official church—the clergy. For centuries to come, the design and construction of many magnificent ecclesiastical edifices would be impacted by this understanding of the assembly's role as spectators and not active participants in the liturgy (41).

The importance of the liturgical environment is vital to good liturgy. Where we sing and participate from in the liturgy greatly enhances or distracts from the celebration.

When a parish begins the process of building a new church or renovating an existing one, many questions and concerns arise. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* says when churches are built, great care must be taken so that they are suitable for the celebration of liturgical services and for the active participation of the faithful (124).

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* also notes that "benches or chairs for seating of the assembly should be so constructed and arranged that they maximize feelings of community and involvement (*General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 273). The arrangement should facilitate a clear view not only of the one who presides and the multiple focal points of reading, preaching, praying, music and movement during the rite, but also of other members of the congregation" (68).

*Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* expands on that idea, stating:

Styles of benches, pews, or chairs can be found that comfortably accommodate the human form. Kneelers or kneeling cushions should also be provided so that the whole congregation can easily kneel when the liturgy calls for it. Parishes will want to choose a seating arrangement that calls the congregation to active participation and that avoids any semblance of a theater or an arena. It is also important that the seating plan provide spaces for an unimpeded view of the sanctuary by people in wheelchairs or with walkers. Experience indicates that space in the front or at the sides of the church is better than in the rear where a standing congregation obscures the view of those seated in wheelchairs at the back of the church (19).

The primary symbols of the liturgy, the assembly, the altar, the ambo, and the presider's chair should be positioned in a way so they are prominent. Liturgical designers say that no one should be more than sixty feet away from the sanctuary area.

How the community gathers for liturgy is important. The narthex or vestibule of the church or the area just outside the church building serves as the gathering space. Liturgical designers state the gathering space should convey an atmosphere of welcome and hospitality where people can greet and converse. This area should help the people gathering for liturgy know they are entering a sacred space. Added items such as posters, signs, cluttered tables, bulletin boards, and boxes communicate an attitude of indifference, confusion, and chaos.

## *The Baptismal Font*

In the early church, buildings called baptistries were constructed for baptism. The font was big enough for an adult to be immersed

in. The word *baptize* means "to dip"; the word *immersion* means that the person stands or kneels in inches of water, while large amounts of water are poured over him or her. Scholars speculate that these baptismal fonts were not big enough for adults to be submerged in. Submersion means that the entire body goes underwater. As infant baptism became more the custom and norm, the baptismal font was moved into the church and became smaller. With the revision of the rites of baptism (1969, 1972, and 1988) and the restoration of the Easter Vigil (1951), the baptismal font is regaining its important place.

The baptismal font should be located at the entrance of the church. Each time the assembly gathers for liturgy, they can touch the waters and mark themselves with the sign of the cross as a reminder of their own baptism.

Because the rites of initiation of the Church begin with baptism and are completed by the reception of the Eucharist, the baptismal font and its location reflect the Christian's journey through the waters of baptism to the altar. This integral relationship between the baptismal font and the altar can be demonstrated in a variety of ways, such as placing the font and altar on the same architectural axis, using natural or artificial lighting, using the same floor patterns, and using common or similar materials and elements of design.

... For this reason the font should be visible and accessible to all who enter the church building. While the baptistry is proportioned to the building itself and should be able to hold a good number of people, its actual size will be determined by the needs of the local community (*Built of Living Stones* 16).

Baptismal fonts should be constructed so that adult catechumens and infants may be immersed. According to *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, "immersion is the fuller and more appropriate symbolic action in baptism (*Rite of Baptism*

for Children (BC), introduction)" (76). It is in the living waters of baptism that people are reborn in Jesus Christ.

## The Ambo

The ambo is the table of the Word, which is used for the proclamation of the Word of God and the homily. It has also been called a pulpit or lectern. According to *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, the ambo represents "the dignity and uniqueness of the Word of God and of reflection upon that Word" (74). *Built of Living Stones* states of the ambo:

Here the Christian community encounters the living Lord in the word of God and prepares itself for the "breaking of the bread" and the mission to live the word that will be proclaimed. An ample area around the ambo is needed to allow a Gospel procession with a full complement of ministers bearing candles and incense (15).

The word *ambo* has its origin in the Greek verb *anabainein*, which means "to go up." During the Middle Ages a large, elevated platform was called an ambo. The Scriptures were proclaimed from this raised surface.

For hundreds of years the ambo played an obscure role in the liturgy. The focal point of the pre-Vatican II Mass was the altar. The altar had an "epistle side" and a "Gospel side." The Scriptures were not proclaimed from one space, but divided into two places.

The ambo is used for the proclamation of the Scriptures, the responsorial psalm, the homily, and the prayers of the faithful (also called the general intercessions). The ambo is not the place for announcements, talks, or to lead the singing (unless it is the responsorial psalm). It is reserved for God's word only.

Additionally, the ambo "should be beautifully designed, constructed of fine materials, and proportioned carefully and simply

for its function" (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* 74). The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* says:

The dignity of the word of God requires the church to have a place that is suitable for proclamation of the word and is a natural focal point for the people during the liturgy of the word (*Inter Oecumenici* 96). As a rule the lectern or ambo should be stationary, not simply a movable stand. In keeping with the structure of each church, it must be so placed that the ministers may be easily seen and heard by the faithful (272).

The ambo is the place where the Word of God is proclaimed to the community and reflected upon.

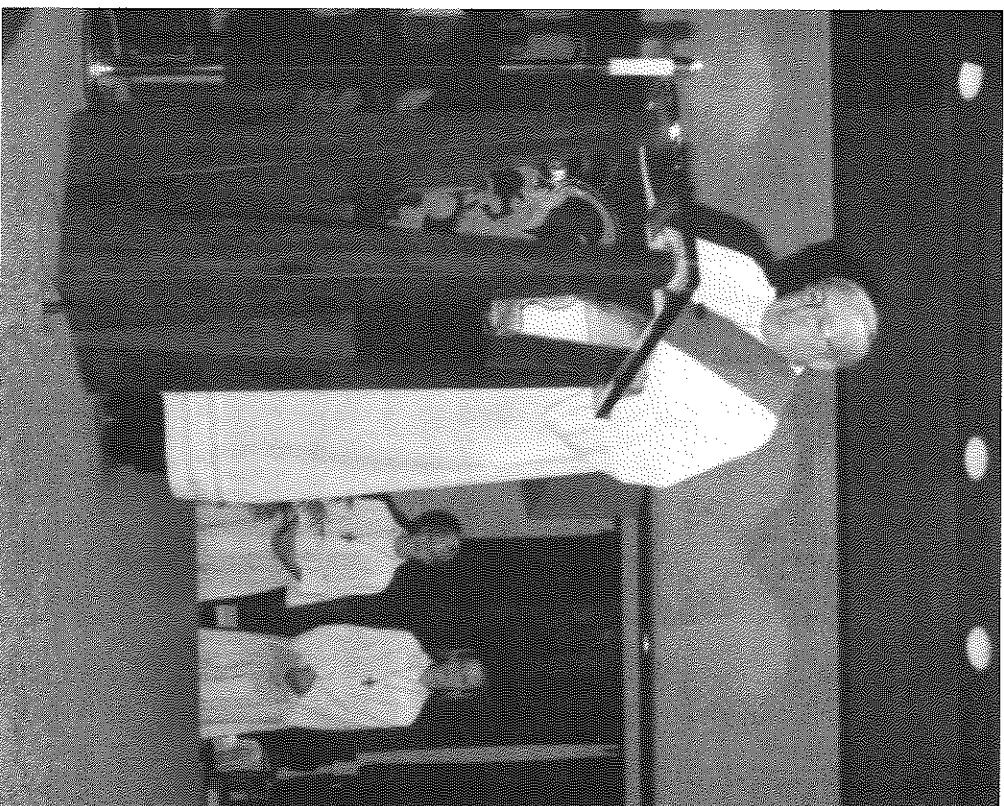
## *The Presider's Chair*

The presider's or presidential chair has its origins in the Latin word *cathedra*. The cathedra was the chair of a high-ranking civic official. The church took the concept of the chair and incorporated it into the liturgy. From his chair the bishop presided over the liturgy. The word *cathedral* comes from the word *cathedra*, which means the house of the bishop's chair.

As church architecture developed, the bishop's chair was placed on a podium. It was like a king's throne. In the fourth century, as parishes began to be created and developed, the presider's chair became much simpler in design and less ornate and florid. Later the presider's chair almost became obsolete since the priest stood at the altar for most of the Mass. Within Vatican II's liturgical reforms, the church worked to recapture the significance of the presider's chair.

According to *Built of Living Stones*, "an appropriate placement of the chair allows the priest celebrant to be visible to all in the congregation. The chair reflects the dignity of the one who leads the community in the person of Christ, but is never intended to be remote or grandiose. The priest celebrant's chair is distinguished

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from the seating for other ministers by its design and placement” (15).

It is from the chair that the presider calls the assembly to prayer, listens to the Word of God, preaches, professes the faith of the church, invites prayers and petitions, announces community activities, and blesses the people as they are sent forth from the liturgy.

## *The Altar*

The history of the altar is a rich one. Through the centuries the shape, design, and placement of the altar has changed.

The word *altar* has its origins in two languages. Altar comes from the Latin *altare*, which comes from another Latin word *adolare*, which means “to burn.” The Greeks used the word *thysiastrion* which denotes the table of sacrifice. It was at a table that Jesus presided at the Last Supper and gave us the gift of the Eucharist. The church continues this tradition at the altar. At the altar the church celebrates the paschal mystery: the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

During the first centuries, the early Christian community gathered around a free-standing table for the breaking of the bread. As centuries passed and the church’s understanding of liturgy changed, so did the design and location of the altar. No longer was the altar a free-standing table; it grew in length and in artistic expression. As the Mass became more intricate and detailed, the altar was placed at the rear of the sanctuary area. The priest would celebrate Mass with his back to the people. The altar also became longer because the two Scripture readings were read at each side of the altar. The eucharistic prayer, which included the consecration, took place in the middle of the altar. Eventually the tabernacle was placed on the altar.

With the Second Vatican Council the Catholic Church returned to its roots concerning the altar. The altar was moved from the back

wall of the apse and positioned so the presider would face the assembly. In a sense, it became a free-standing table again. The altar did not need to be elongated because the Scripture readings for liturgy were to be proclaimed at the ambo. The tabernacle was moved off the altar, preferably to a chapel of reservation. This was done because communion should be shared from the liturgy that the assembly was participating in, and not from a previous Mass. The tabernacle’s primary function is reservation of communion for the sick; the secondary function is adoration. The tabernacle is not meant to supply Eucharist for liturgy.

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* states:

The altar, the holy table, should be the most noble, the most beautifully designed and constructed table the community can provide (GI nos. 259–270; Appendix to GI no. 263). It is the common table of the assembly, a symbol of the Lord, at which the presiding minister stands and upon which are placed the bread and wine and their vessels and the book. It is holy and sacred to this assembly’s action and sharing, so it is never used as a table of convenience or as a resting place for papers, notes, cruets, or anything else. It stands free, approachable from every side, capable of being encircled. It is desirable that candles, cross, any flowers or other decoration in the area should not be so close to the altar as to constitute impediments to anyone’s approach or movement around the common table (71).

In terms of design, *Built on Living Stones* states:

Although there is no specified size or shape for an altar, it should be in proportion to the church. The shape and size should reflect the nature of the altar as the place of sacrifice and the table around which Christ gathers the community to nourish them. In considering the dimensions of the altar, parishes will also want to insure that the other major furnishings in the sanctuary are in harmony and proportion to the altar.

The mensa should be large enough to accommodate the priest celebrant, the deacon, and the acolytes who minister there and should be able to hold *The Sacramentary* [*The Roman Missal*] and the vessels with the bread and wine. Impact and focal quality are not only related to placement, size, or shape, but also especially to the quality of the altar's design and worthiness of its construction. The altar should be centrally located in the sanctuary and the center of attention in the church.

During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the altar must be visible from all parts of the church but not so elevated that it causes visual or symbolic division from the liturgical assembly. Methods of elevation can be found that still allow access to the altar by ministers who need wheelchairs or who have other disabilities (14-15).

The altar is a holy and sacred place in the church building; that is why the presider kisses the altar at the beginning and ending of each liturgy. It is at the holy table, the altar, that the assembly is nourished and strengthened with the Bread of Life.

## *The Tabernacle*

The tabernacle contains the bread that has been consecrated at liturgy. The word tabernacle comes from the Latin *tabernaculum* which means "tent." The tabernacle traces its roots to the Jewish meeting tent, which is where the Ark of the Covenant dwelled. In Jewish thinking this embodied the presence of God among the people.

Tabernacles started in the second century when a small amount of the consecrated bread was placed in a pyx and taken to a member of the community who was ill and could not attend liturgy. At first this was the only reason for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament because everything (the Body and Blood of Christ) was consumed, except for what was reserved for the sick.

In the Middle Ages, devotion to the Blessed Sacrament grew mainly because people were sharing in communion less and less. People at this time were adoring the Blessed Sacrament rather than sharing in communion. The primary purpose of the Eucharist is to be consumed and for people to be nourished by the Bread of Life. The custom of a permanent container for reservation of the Blessed Sacrament on the main altar was in place by the sixteenth century.

In addition to reserving communion for the sick and serving for adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the tabernacle also held extra hosts for Mass. At communion the priest could always go to the tabernacle for extra hosts if necessary. The tabernacle was being used to store hosts for Mass.

As mentioned earlier, the primary function of the tabernacle is the reservation of the communion for the sick. Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is important in the life of a Catholic, but it is apart from the liturgy. The church has stated that the assembly should be fed the bread and wine consecrated at the liturgy they are attending not from an earlier liturgy. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* states, "It is most desirable that the faithful should receive the Lord's body from hosts consecrated at the same mass and that, in the instances when it is permitted, they share in the chalice" (56h). The tabernacle serves the sick, while the altar serves the people at liturgy.

The location of the tabernacle has given rise to debates in the church. At times the discussions have become intense because Catholics have strong feelings about the Eucharist.

The document *Holy Communion and the Worship of the Eucharist Outside of Mass* says the reservation and adoration of the Eucharist "will be achieved more easily if the (tabernacle) chapel is separate from the body of the church" (9).

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* states:

The celebration of the eucharist is the focus of the normal Sunday assembly. As such, the major space of a church is designed for this action. Beyond the celebration of the eucha-

rist, the Church has had a most ancient tradition of reserving the eucharistic bread. The purpose of this reservation is to bring communion to the sick and to be the object of private devotion. Most appropriately, this reservation should be designated in a space designed for individual devotion. A room or chapel specifically designed and separate from the major space is important so that no confusion can take place between the celebration of the eucharist and reservation (GI no. 276). Active and static aspects of the same reality cannot claim the same human attention at the same time. Having the eucharist reserved in a place apart does not mean it has been relegated to a secondary place of no importance. Rather, a space carefully designed and appointed can give proper attention to the reserved sacrament (78).

However, according to *Built of Living Stones*, which was approved by the U.S. bishops on November 16, 2000:

There has been a shift in directives about the placement of the tabernacle over time. The latest edition of the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (2000) alters the earlier directive in GIRM, no. 276, which gave a clear preference for reservation in a separate chapel. GIRM, no. 315, now directs the diocesan bishop to determine the appropriate placement either in the sanctuary (including on the old altar which is no longer used for celebration) or in a separate chapel. It may not be reserved on the altar at which the Eucharist is celebrated (footnote 99).

The church has specific criteria for the tabernacle:

The tabernacle, as a receptacle for the reservation of the eucharist, should be solid and unbreakable, dignified and properly ornamented (GI no. 277). It may be placed in a wall niche, on a pillar, eucharistic tower. It should not be placed on an altar for the altar is a place for action not for reservation. There

should be only one tabernacle in a church building. A lamp should burn continuously near it (*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* 80).

Prayer, reflection, and adoration occurs best in a private, contemplative, and quiet space. Churches are full of activity: choir and music rehearsals, the decorating by the art and environment committee, cleaning, wedding rehearsals, and the liturgy. These types of activities do not allow a place for adoration and reflective prayer. A eucharistic chapel separate from the church meets the community's needs for quiet and individual prayer and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. The eucharistic chapel should accommodate different prayer postures, including sitting, standing, kneeling, and prostrating.

More and more parishes today, through renovation or new construction projects in accord with the ancient tradition of the Catholic Church, are providing places of honor for the tabernacle as a sign of reverence, respect, and love for the Eucharist. This is the practice at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome. The tabernacle is not in the main sanctuary, but in a eucharistic chapel created for reservation for the sick and adoration and devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

## *The Ambry*

During Holy Week the bishop of each diocese presides over the Chrism Mass. At this liturgy the three oils that will be used for anointing the catechumens and for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, holy orders, and the anointing of the sick are blessed. After the liturgy, the oils are brought to each parish. The oils for anointing catechumens and anointing the sick are simply blessed olive oil. Chrism, which is used for baptism, confirmation, and holy orders, is a mixture of olive oil and balsam. Chrism is also used in the consecration of churches and altars.

The ambry is where the containers of oil are stored. The word *ambry* comes from the Latin *armarium* which means "cupboard, chest, or safe." At times the holy oils were stored along with the Eucharist. As the tabernacle grew in importance for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, the holy oils were placed in the sacristy, or in a cupboard called an ambry.

The ambry and the display of the oils reminds the community of the sacramental importance of welcoming new members, confirming others in the faith, and caring for the ill.

The containers or vessels that hold the chrism should be large to indicate the importance of the oil and the sacraments they represent. The containers may be made of glass, wood, or metal. Each vessel has initials on it. The initials SC (*sacrum chrisma*) indicate the oil used in the sacraments of confirmation and holy orders. The sacrament of baptism uses OC (*oleum catechumenorum*), and OI (*oleum infirmorum*) is dispensed in the anointing of the sick.

## *The Reconciliation Chapel*

Prior to Vatican II, the sacrament of reconciliation took place in a confessional. The confessional was small and dark. It contained a kneeler, as well as a screen or grill that separated the priest and the penitent. The penitent would walk into the confessional, close the door, kneel. In near darkness, he or she would wait for the priest to slide the screen open. Then the penitent would confess his or her sins, receive penance, and then receive absolution. Sometimes it was a daunting and overwhelming experience, especially for children.

Since Vatican II, the church has tried to focus on the unconditional forgiveness of God through the sacrament of reconciliation. The spiritual effects of the sacrament are reconciliation with God and the church community, as well as increased spiritual strength for the Christian journey.

The bishops of the United States have said that churches should have a separate chapel for the sacrament of reconciliation. In the

December 1974 issue of the *Bishops' Committee on Liturgy Newsletter*, they state:

Small chapels or rooms of reconciliation should be provided in which penitents might choose to confess their sins and seek sacramental reconciliation through an informal face to face exchange with the priest.

In his article "The Reconciliation Chapel," Phillip Horrigan states:

In keeping with our understanding of the sacrament of reconciliation as an experience of conversion and reclaiming our baptismal identity, the chapel of reconciliation could be located in relationship to the baptismal font. Since reconciliation returns us to the common table, the eucharistic gathering, it is appropriate for the reconciliation chapel to open into the main worship area.

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* notes:

A room or rooms for the reconciliation of individual penitents may be located near the baptismal area (when that is at the entrance) or in another convenient place (Rite of Penance, nos. 12, 18b; *Bishop's Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter* 1965-1975, p. 450). Furnishings and decoration should be simple and austere, offering the penitent a choice between face-to-face encounter or the anonymity provided by a screen, with nothing superfluous in evidence beyond a simple cross, table and bible. The purpose of this room is primarily for the celebration of the reconciliation liturgy (81).

Due to the seriousness and importance of the sacrament of reconciliation, the Catholic community deserves a space that speaks of confession, contrition, penance, and reconciliation. The chapel

should be a permanent fixture in the church, not something that is set up in an office or classroom. It should be a holy and sacred space for prayer that fosters forgiveness, peace, and reconciliation.

## *Statues, Shrines, and Stained Glass*

Some Catholics are concerned about the lack of statues, images of saints, and stained glass in post-Vatican II church architecture.

Statues of saints and stained glass became prominent in church architecture when the language of the liturgy was not of the people's (in the vernacular) but in Latin. Because people had a difficult time understanding and hearing what was going on during Mass, the faithful began personal prayers and devotions to the saints and the Blessed Virgin Mary. This was done during Mass because the liturgy was not meeting the spiritual needs of the people. The statues and the depictions of the saints were a reminder to the faithful of the Christians who persevered in their faith and followed Christ. In addition to depicting the lives of the saints, stained glass was used to illustrate biblical scenes. Statues and stained glass were meant to deepen the faith of people.

Because the saints and devotions have an important role in the life of a Catholic, they deserve a prominent place in the life of the Catholic community. The *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (GIRM) encourages devotions to the saints but in proper context in relation to the liturgy. In the church what should be central is the altar, the altar, the presider's chair, and the assembly. According to the GIRM, statues should be limited and situated so they do not distract the people's attention from the celebration of the liturgy (278). In pre-Vatican II church architecture, statues, stained glass, and images of saints took up a large amount of space in the worship area.

Today in the narthex and the corners of the church, shrines that are significant or important to the community are being developed. These statues or images of saints can incorporate a healthy devotion

and respect to the saints in proper relation to the liturgy. Some Catholic communities have commissioned stained glass depictions of biblical scenes that are significant to the community. Statues of saints that are important to the community could be placed in the gathering or welcoming space just outside the church building. This symbolizes the communion of saints encircling the Catholic Church of today as the people proceed into the church for liturgy.