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The Role of the Altar and Tabernacle in the Catholic Church Interior in the Light of Post-conciliar Recommendations and Architectural Arrangement of the Church Interior

Rola ołtarza i tabernakulum we wnętrzu kościoła katolickiego w świetle zaleceń posoborowych i architektonicznego projektowania wnętrza kościoła¹

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Abstract: This article defines the role played by the altar and tabernacle in the contemporary architectural sacred interior treated as *domus ecclesiae*, designed for the purpose of serving liturgical functions in compliance with the post-conciliar renewal of Vatican II. The article takes into consideration the issue of celebrating Holy Mass by the celebrant with his back to the tabernacle located centrally behind the post-conciliar altar. With reference to the irreversibility of the liturgical revival, apart from the ordinary form of the Roman Rite, the extraordinary form of the Tridentine Rite, also approved by Vatican II, is taken into account. By defining the presence of the post-conciliar altar brought closer to the zone of the faithful, the meaning of the Code of Canon Law is defined. This paper takes the irreversibility of the liturgical renewal and presents the location of the tabernacle separated from the altar. This applies to the architecture of the nave or the chapel of the church. At the same time, the aesthetic beauty of the liturgical interior furnishings is determined, when all this exists in accordance with the post-conciliar ordinances and serves to build a community of faith.

Keywords: altar, tabernacle, nave, post-conciliar architecture.

Abstrakt: Artykuł definiuje rolę, jaką pełni ołtarz i tabernakulum we współczesnym architektonicznym wnętrzu sakralnym traktowanym jako *domus ecclesiae*, zaprojektowanym dla wypełniania funkcji liturgicznych w zgodzie z odnową posoborową Vaticanum II. Artykuł uwzględnia problem odprawiania Mszy św. przez celebransa odwróconego plecami do tabernakulum umiejscowionego centralnie za ołtarzem posoborowym. Nawiązując do nieodwracalności odnowy liturgicznej, uwzględnia się obok formy zwyczajnej obrządku rzymskiego, istnienie formy nadzwyczajnej (trydenckiej) tego obrządku, również zaakceptowanej przez Vaticanum II. Definiując obecność posoborowego ołtarza przybliżonego do strefy wiernych, definiuje się znaczenie Kodeksu Prawa Kanonicznego. Artykuł uwzględnia nieodwracalność odnowy liturgicznej i prezentuje umiejscowienie oddzielonego od ołtarza tabernakulum. Dotyczy to architektury nawy albo kaplicy kościoła. Jednocześnie określa się znaczenie estetyczne piękna obiektów liturgicznego wyposażenia wnętrza, gdy wszystko to istnieje w zgodzie z zarządzeniami posoborowymi i służy budowaniu wspólnoty wiary.

Słowa kluczowe: ołtarz, tabernakulum, nawa, architektura posoborowa.

¹ Artykuł w języku polskim dostępny jest na stronie:

<https://www.stowarzyszeniefidesetratio.pl/Presentations0/2021-4Bogda2.pdf>

1. Introduction

Almost 55 years have passed since the end of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II). It was inaugurated on 11 October 1962 by Pope John XXIII and closed on 8 December 1965 by Pope Paul VI. The Council began the renewal of the Catholic Church in a spirit of changes updating the church to the 20th century. It refers directly to the presence of the altar in the sacred interior. The altar, being now an object which functions without the tabernacle, becomes the spatial focus attracting the community to the place of Eucharistic transubstantiation. It also accentuates the integration of the congregation with the fundamental area of exposition of the mystery of faith.

Even before Vatican II, active participation of the people in the liturgy was discussed. Another issue that was mentioned was the necessity of formation of the architectural sacred interior starting from the altar. It refers to the architectural interior which embraces the praying community and leads it, in terms of architectural composition, to the altar (Parsch, Kramreiter, 1939, p. 13). The Council itself left the final decision on the liturgical renewal and its architectural consequences to respective post-conciliar decrees. The results of rational post-conciliar transformations (such as the exclusion of historical legislation burdened with hyper-productivity of form over content) were in principle approved in their entirety. They have been nonetheless occasionally criticized by both conservative and progressive currents in the Catholic Church. The above-mentioned results included also a new approach to the organization of life of the Catholic Church and post-conciliar arrangement of the church interior. While the new trends officially do not favour any specific style of art and architecture, some aspects may be directly drawn from the post-conciliar documents.

The designer of sacred architecture should pay a special attention to the definition created by Vatican II with reference to the church building itself, defining it more as 'domus ecclesiae' - the house of the community than the house of God. This constitutes a departure from the concept of monumental architecture of the church building towards an object which is an inhabited and living place (Bandelier, 1999, pp. 125-126). What is important is that the altar and the tabernacle should be designed as two separately arranged liturgical objects of architectural, artistic and obviously ceremonial expression. These objects accompany the celebrant who faces the congregation with the possibility of turning his back towards the place of keeping the Eucharist.

Within a full scope of the research methodology, we must enumerate, in detail, four monographs referring to the implementations of the post-conciliar decisions. These publications are as follows: 'Sacred Architecture and the Movement of Liturgical Renewal' (Architektura sakralna a ruch odnowy liturgicznej, Katowice 1990) by Rev. Jerzy Nyga, 'Post-conciliar Sacred Architecture' (Posoborowa architektura sakralna, Lublin 1979) by Sr. Maria Ewa Rosier-Siedlecka, 'Architecture and Liturgy' (Architecture et liturgie, Paris 1991)

by Louisa Bouyer and 'Simple Questions about the Mass and Liturgy' (*Simple questions sur la messe et la liturgie*, Chambray-lès-Tours, 1999) by Fr. Alain Bandelier. A sensitive area of the synthesis of architecture and liturgy is presented by Fr. Franciszek Małaczyński in the article entitled 'Functions of the Catholic Temple in View of Theology, Liturgy and Tradition' ('Funkcje świątyni katolickiej w świetle teologii, liturgii i tradycji') published in *Biblical and Liturgical Movement* (*Ruch biblijny i liturgiczny* 3:1984). An individual interpretation of the post-conciliar architecture was made by Rev. Prof. Henryk Nadrowski, among other articles, in: 'Creator and Recipient of the Sacred Art of Our Time' ('Twórca i odbiorca sztuki sakralnej naszych czasów') published in *Studia Theologica Varsoviensa* (25:1987) as well as 'Sacred Art. Chances and Threats' ('Sztuki sakralnej szanse i zagrożenia') published in *Theology and Man* (*Teologia i Człowiek*, 6:2005). Viktoriya Semenovaw, in her article 'Liturgical Reform is Irreversible. A Voice in the Matter of the Tendencies of Return to Pre-conciliar – Tridentine Liturgy' ('Reforma liturgiczna jest nieodwracalna, Głos w sprawie tendencji powrotu do liturgii przedsoborowej – trydenckiej') published in *Liturgia Sacra* (25:2019), and Przemysław Nowakowski, in his article entitled 'Liturgical Reform is Irreversible. A Voice in Defence of the Conciliar Liturgical Reform' ('Reforma liturgiczna jest nieodwracalna. Głos w obronie soborowej reformy liturgii') in *Liturgia Sacra* (25:2019), take positions on the interpretations of the post-conciliar transformations, whereas the importance of beauty of the liturgy and of its accompanying objects is emphasized in the papal encyclical letter *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* (Encyclical on the Eucharist by Pope John Paul II - Encyklika Ojca Świętego Jana Pawła II o Eucharystii, Katowice 2003).

The author of this article discusses the undertaken research issue in several monographs published in the Silesian Scientific Publishing House (Wydawnictwo Naukowe Śląsk) in Katowice. The publications include: 'Architecture of the Historical Form of the Church versus the Altar' ('Architektura historycznej formy kościoła a ołtarz współczesny – Architecture de la forme historique de l'église et l'autel contemporain') (2003), 'The Beauty of the Altar and the Gothic Temple' ('Piękno ołtarza i świątyni gotyckiej – Beauté de l'autel et du temple gothique') (2014), 'Relevance of Functions of the Gothic Temple' ('Actualité de la fonction de l'architecture du temple gothique – Aktualność funkcji świątyni gotyckiej') (2016), 'Collegiate Church in Mons and the Heritage of Gothic, Architecture, Altar, Applied Art' ('Kolegiata w Mons a dziedzictwo gotyku, architektura, ołtarz, sztuka stosowana – La collégiale de Mons et l'héritage du gothique, l'architecture, l'autel, l'art appliqué') (2020).

The present work highlights the significance of the post-conciliar liturgical renewal of the Catholic Church in the scope of the architectural arrangement of the modern sacred interior defined by the separation of the altar and tabernacle. The tolerance of the Code of Canon Law, which was evolving in the 20th century, contributed to such transformations. This article indicates that many of the introduced liturgical changes, which require new proper visualization and implementation in art and architecture, are not sufficiently

understood, not only by the opponents of the renewal but also by architects designing new Catholic churches. Graphic images included in this article present French and Belgian experience. These solutions, along with Italian and German ones, clearly had an impact on the development of the Liturgical Movement preceding the Second Vatican Council and post-conciliar transformations. This article aims to serve architects creating sacred interiors when the objective is the manifestation of faith and the visual accessibility of the altar with the separated tabernacle, which is a spatially rational arrangement.

2. Relevance of the post-conciliar renewal reflected in the liturgy and architecture

In the context of the Council's sessions and deliberations, a special attention should be paid to the Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' published in 1963. This most important document of the Second Vatican Council, states, in Article 123, that the Church does not consider any architectural style to be its own. In accordance with the character and conditions of various countries as well as the needs of different rites, the Church allows artistic forms of each epoch, creating thus, with the flow of time, definitely worth-preserving heritage of the sacred art. In compliance with this document, contemporary art may also flourish in the liturgical space of the Catholic Church, provided it adequately meets its liturgical purpose (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1963, art. 123). The Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, supplemented with the Instruction 'Inter Oecumenici' of 1964 on the duly execution of the above-mentioned Constitution, is still relevant today. The Instructions 'Tres abhinc annos' of 4 May 1967 and 'Liturgicae instaurationes' of 5 September 1970, following the previous Instruction 'Inter Oecumenici', are not concerned with the issues of the architectural arrangement of the sacred interior.

In 1967, the Sacred Congregation of Ceremonies collected all statements and practical norms issued by the Council in the Instruction on the Worship of the Eucharistic Mystery 'Eucharisticum Mysterium'. Preservation of the heritage of the Tridentine Council can be seen in the papal encyclical 'Mysterium Fidei' including Paul VI's teaching on the Holy Eucharist and its cult, published on 3 September 1965 during the Council's sessions. This document does not refer to the architectural aspects of the church interior at all, whereas other post-conciliar documents, such as the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (published in 1970 and 1975) as well as the renewed Code of Canon Law of 1983 include such references.

What the architect should bear in mind is the official legalization of the extraordinary form of the Roman Rite, i.e. pre-conciliar rite, which was done by Pope Benedict XVI in 'Summorum Pontificum' of 2007. This work is concerned with the rule of mutual tolerance and understanding of other views on the way of celebration within boundaries defined by the teaching of the Catholic Church. It serves the purpose of the assurance that the supporters of the new ordo, i.e. the majority of Catholics, acknowledges the old ordo and

shows respect towards the liturgy performed according to the Tridentine form of the Latin Rite. In the same way, the supporters of the old ordo recognize the new ordo as an ordinary form of the celebration of the Roman Catholic liturgy (Nowakowski, 2019, p. 436). Pope Francis respected Benedict XVI's stand on that issue, however, he limited the celebration according to the old ordo to special occasions and circumstances (Motu proprio 'Traditionis custodes' of 16 July 2021). In doing so, he reinforced, in a sensitive way, the relevance of the post-conciliar renewal of the 20th century.

The approval of the liturgical reform means the acceptance of the ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council and its consequences. That constitutes the negation of the Lefebvists' (the Priestly Fraternity of Saint Pius X) convictions which reject the renewed liturgy of the Catholic Church with its whole post-conciliar vision of openness, decentralization of the Church, the role of lay people and interreligious dialogue (Nowakowski, 2019, p. 434). The opponents of the renewal reject a post-conciliar functionalistic vision of the Church treated as the house of the faith community. The above-mentioned objectors are inextricably connected with the basilica system or multi-nave hall church system in terms of creation of sacred architecture. This fact does not serve the architectural vision of freeing itself from historical monumentalism and the purpose of introduction of entirely new solutions showing the liturgical renewal. In consequence, the separation of the tabernacle from the altar and the Holy Mass said in a native language by the celebrant facing the congregation are unimaginable for the opponents of the reform.

It is good when the contemporary architect is able to emphasize that the church which is architecturally defined as the house of the congregation of God's people is at the same time God's house. That comes into being because the architect creates space for the realization of the presence of the altar and tabernacle as well as the pulpit and baptismal font. This space is supplemented with the sedilia and the zone of the faithful. In this way the so-called self-sufficiency of the God's house is achieved. In fact, it is not the most important thing that the above-mentioned elements or zones located under one roofing constitute a monumental dominant as the entire system. The hyper-productivity of form was already spoken about by the prophets (similarly to the Acts of the Apostles 7,48), when they preached that the God Most High does not dwell in houses built with the human hand (Bondelier, 1999, p. 126). As a result, Church (Ecclesia) is first of all the congregation, the community of the faithful which, after Vatican II, gives its name to the architectural object – the place where such a community has been gathering (Nyga, 1990, p. 18-19). Faith and reason are absolutely crucial for the understanding of significance of this case. While faith tells us that transparent architectural exposition of the system of liturgical celebration is sufficient for the religious progress and preaching of truth, reason assures us that the monumental formal language does not have a status of self-sufficiency without the true discovery of liturgy in the scope of the contemplation of truth.

Pope John Paul II, in his encyclical 'Fides et Ratio' of 14 September 1998, wrote that faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth. He distinguished rational learning and knowing through faith. According to Pope John Paul II, rational knowledge should be called the knowledge of a human calibre and be supplemented with faith which surpasses rational learning and constitutes a more profound form of knowledge. In the Pope's opinion, the faith concerning the revelation and works by the God of Israel should not be treated as depriving reason of its autonomy or the limitation of the space of its operation (Kowalczyk, 2020, p.79). It is only natural nowadays and backed up by rationalism to treat the post-conciliar church interior through the prism of the departure from the mystical aspect in art towards the pure transmission of functions of the house of liturgical congregation. It brings an element bereaved of metaphysics and highlights the way of action which was not fully accepted in the pre-conciliar Church.

Referring to the epoch of the Middle Ages, there was a widespread conviction that there existed constant presence of the supernatural world affecting each human action. It was underlain by gradualism which defined and classified beings in accordance with their gradual ascent (Latin *gradus* - degrees): from the matter, through carnal and spiritual beings, to purely spiritual beings. In compliance with such a vision of the world, the art had to reveal transcendent beauty based on light and harmony, which were achieved using means nowadays defined as artistic ones. In the Middle Ages, the temple was perceived as the harbinger and image of the Kingdom of Heaven or the Holy City of Jerusalem - a perfect reality which was symbolically imagined with reference to the Apocalypse of St. John (Sadoch, 2018, p. 198).

Taking into consideration the awareness and perception of the contemporary architect and artist, similar transcendent beauty is almost impossible to realise in our time. On the other hand, taking into account the sphere of the contemporary sacred art, the attention is paid to the architectural means of reinforcement of the sign of the faith manifestation in the construction of new churches and adaptation of historic architectural objects. The latter with the preserved main altar in the presbytery may be adapted to the prolongation of the liturgical function of their historical tabernacle in relation to the post-conciliar altar table, which is located closer to the congregation. In addition, both the altar table and tabernacle are arranged on the central axis of the sacred system. The location of the tabernacle at the end of the central axis of the system, irrespective of the fact whether it is higher than the mensa of the historical altar, or exists independently, symbolically reinforces the significance of the post-conciliar altar located in front of it (see Photo 1 A, B)

Architectural clarity of the church building should testify to the presence of the altar and tabernacle. The tabernacle along with the altar constitute the central architectural object of the interior and their image should evoke the mystery that, in no other space, Jesus is present to such a degree as in the space of Eucharist. In the context of the facilitation of

understanding and reception of this mystery by the faithful, a real risk is posed by extreme individualism of both designers and visual artists. According to Rev. Henryk Nadrowski, little attention is paid to the good of the community of faith which would benefit from carefully thought-out and adapted, theological, liturgical and iconographic programme of a certain church. Instead, what counts is the desire to make impression by means of the architecture consumed by the 'dogmatic cult of technology' or the interior which irritates, disturbs or shocks by the imposition of 'artistic formal defamiliarizations' meant as the final purpose of the work (Nadrowski, 2005, *Teologia i Człowiek*, pp. 135-136).

All these aspects influence the attitude and behaviour of both individuals and groups of people, the whole community and even co-creating behaviour. The point is that the entire mediatic and iconic layer of the liturgy must not be oversimplified or even limited to the so-called 'attractiveness'. Both the first and the second layer, in their more profound expression, should take into consideration a crucial issue (for both liturgy and art), namely the aspect of participation. It refers to co-participation and co-creation (Nadrowski, 1987, *Studia Theologica Varsoviensa*, pp. 75, 91).

According to Joseph Andreas Jungmann, one of the precursors of the Second Vatican Council, the solution comes through the creation of space serving the purpose of praying community; the space isolated from the world, the internal space, in a spiritual sense close to God who is the Spirit and should be worshipped in spirit. Then all things external lose their charm and attraction. In Jungmann's opinion, the Service of God and the House of God must be beautiful in terms of the beauty understood as veneration, adoration, holy fear before God's mysteries, and not in terms of earthly splendour understood as the reflection of heaven (Jungmann, 1992, p. 102).

What is important is the atmosphere of the temple when we visit it, gaze attentively at icons, listen to religious singing, organ music, or Gregorian chant. A similar influence is exerted by the Image of Divine Mercy (Merciful Jesus), the painting with the inscription 'Jesus, I trust in you', or the painting 'Ecce Homo' by Brother Albert Chmielowski. The key issue is a certain dimension of artistic creation, when great works of art stimulate us to undergo transformation and begin 'artistic' work on ourselves (Jaworski, 2012, p. 10).

3. Zone of Eucharistic Liturgy - architecture versus the Code of Canon Law

The nave where the faithful are gathered and the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, where the altar is erected, constitute two different sites in the church. However, since the Tridentine Council (1545-1563) there should be good visual communication between these two spheres. Following Vatican II, there has been a clear approach of bringing people closer to the altar and a new way of saying the Mass by the liturgy celebrant facing the congregation, facilitating thus the participation of the faithful in the Holy Mass.

Single-nave plans, which are regulated axially as a longitudinal system, assured and still assure good communication between the celebrant and the community. A single-nave system, which is constructed on the plan in the form of a rectangle or trapezium, serves its purpose well when it accentuates the central 'path' leading to the altar being located at the end of the system axis (see Figure 1/a,b,c,d). That does not refer to the temple constructed on the circular or square plan with the altar situated in the geometrical centre of these figures.

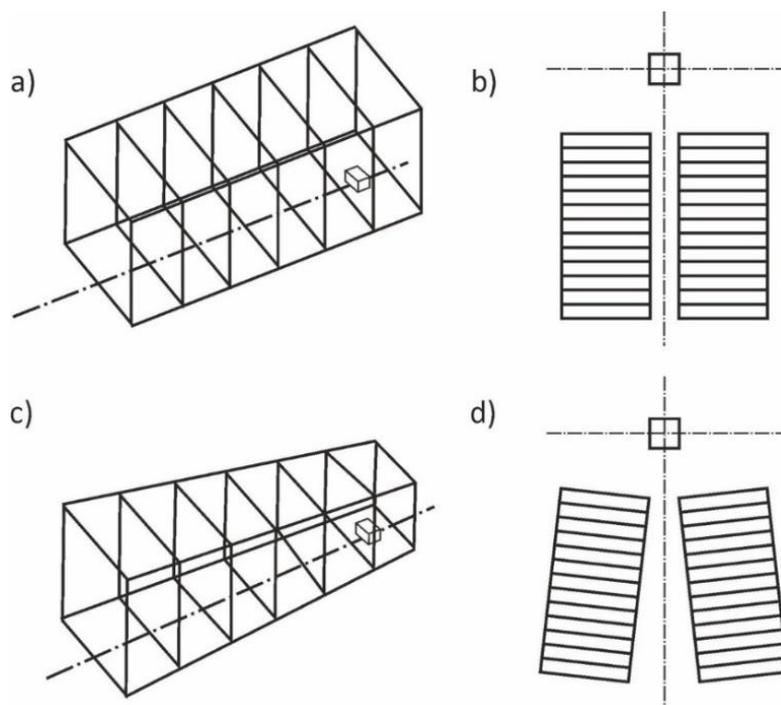


Figure 1/a,b,c,d. Theoretical single-nave plans with the altar situated at the axis termination. Plan built on the projection of a rectangle (a,b) with preservation of the parallel layout of benches for the faithful (b) and the plan built on the projection of trapezium (c,d) without preservation of the parallel layout of benches for the faithful (d). Drawings by Author.

In this place, we can cite the Code of Canon Law, which is the fundamental legislative document of the Catholic Church of the Latin Rite. The above-mentioned document was published in 1983. It was promulgated on 25 January by Pope John Paul II in the apostolic constitution *Sacrae disciplinae leges*. It replaced the pro-Benedictine Code of Canon Law and numerous ecclesiastical laws issued after 1917. Further amendments to the Code of Canon Law of 1983, which were made in 1988 by Pope John Paul II, in 2009 by Pope Benedict XVI as well as in 2015 and 2016 by Pope Francis, had no impact on the fourth book of this document. The book is entitled *The Sanctifying Office of the Church* and provides church legislation on the celebration of the Eucharist, its storage and its cult beyond the Holy Mass (Miazek, 1987, p. 308). The book focuses on the sanctifying function of the gift of the Holy Mass and Eucharist in accordance with canon 899 of the Code of Canon Law (Code of Canon

Law, 1983, can. 899 § 1). What follows in terms of architectural arrangement is a new site for the post-conciliar pulpit located exclusively in the presbytery.

For the purpose of better involvement of the faithful present during the liturgy, the most important issue is – in compliance with canon 928 – the post-conciliar equality of a native language and the Latin language (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 928). As a result, the Holy Mass celebrated in a native language is no longer the rite celebrated in a foreign language. This fact has been emphasized since 1963 by the Constitution of the Holy Liturgy - Sacrosanctum Concilium, which deems this phenomenon very useful for the sake of the faithful (Sacrosanctum Concilium, 1963, art. 36). In terms of architecture, this fact can be highlighted by the proper design of the ‘no-barrier’ character of co-participation of the congregation zone and the celebrant’s zone.

Canon 897 of the Code of Canon Law, referring to co-participation, speaks about the duty of active participation by the faithful in the celebration of the Holy Mass (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 897). This declares a completely joint and common (community) character of the Eucharistic worship. That is the reason why the aspect of bringing the altar closer to the community is important, as it unites the congregation under the bishop’s or priest’s lead into one (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 899 § 2). This fact should be reflected in the architectural layout of the church interior. A special attention should be paid to the design of the post-conciliar presbytery, which is often called the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy after Vatican II.

The zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy should be highlighted by the elevation of its floor plane in relation to the floor of the nave. At the same time, one must not forget that this sphere is formally disparate and has different decor. Its size must be sufficient for a free and comfortable celebration of liturgical ceremonies (Inter Oecumenici, 1964, no. 91). The act of attributing the presbytery with a function of the central zone should be connected with the spatial means expressing the presence of the mystery of Eucharistic transubstantiation and the site of storing the consecrated Hosts. The architect should also decide if the tabernacle, detached from the altar table, will find its place in the presbytery, nave or a chapel.

Contemporary churches having single-nave layouts do not have the limitations typical of the layouts of historic basilicas or multi-nave hall churches. In the contemporary churches, the faithful experience greater visual connection with the celebrant, altar and community. The arrangement of seats (benches) for the faithful is not limited now by the system of vaults or spans, but is made according to rational co-ordination of the congregation’s vision (sight) in relation to the altar location. The fact of bringing closer the zone of the faithful’s seats to the sacrificial table should reinforce active participation of the congregation in the Holy Mass. In consequence, to visually present the architectural form, which can be read out as the focal point of faith, one should apply the central system of the presbytery location with the altar in the geometrical centre of the object projection rather

than the longitudinal system with the presbytery and altar situated at the termination of the central axis of the church interior (see Figure 2/a,b).

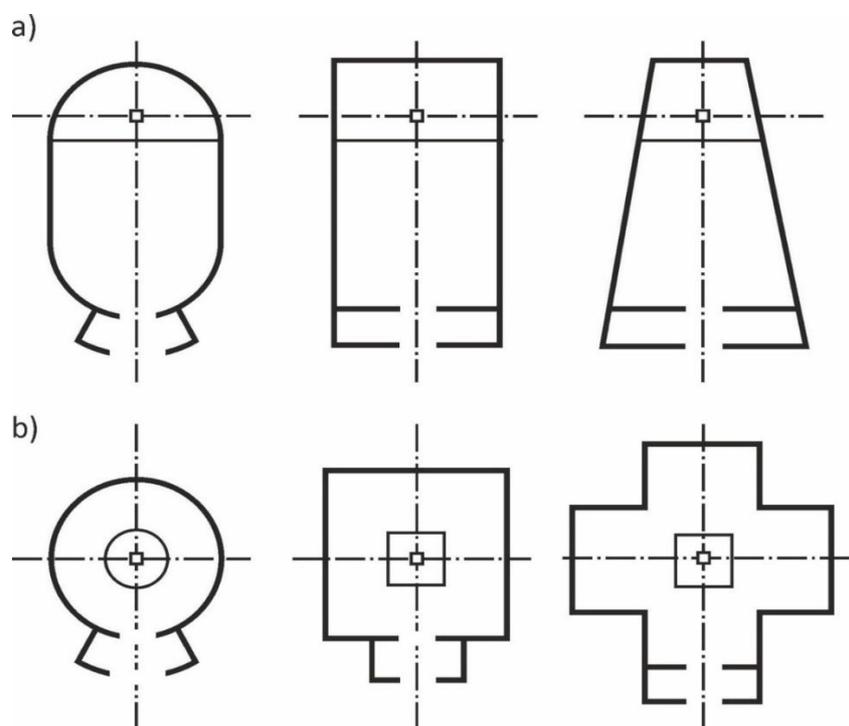


Figure. 2/a,b. Theoretical sacred space layouts, longitudinal and central a). Longitudinal layouts of sacred space based on the plan of the synthesis of two circles, rectangular plan and trapezium plan. b). Central layouts of sacred space based on the plan of circle, square and Greek cross. Drawings by Author.

Architecturally regulated and visually important, the bringing of the faithful closer to the altar, which is the object of a great mystery, required time in terms of legislation. It is understandable that the post-conciliar deletion of canon 858 of 1917 took place, as the canon allowed the reception of the Holy Communion only after fulfilling the fast lasting from the midnight preceding the oncoming day. In a similar way, the restriction provided for in canon 857 of 1917 concerning the reception of the Holy Communion only once a day was deleted. In addition, the ban on the reception of the Holy Communion under two kinds in compliance with canon 852 of 1917 was lifted (Gaudemet, 1989, p. 50). It was replaced with canon 952 (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 952). In the meantime, canon 919 reduced the time of fasting before the communion down to one hour (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 919). The current Code of Canon Law makes it possible to receive the Holy Communion more frequent than once a day (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 917). In accordance with canon 803 of 1917, the possibility of co-celebration existed only in relation to the ordination of priests and the

consecration of bishops. The present canon 902 provides for greater liberalism in this context (Gaudemet, 1989, p. 50).

The tolerance can also be reflected in the participation of daily light, i.e. non-coloured light, introduced into sacrum without the presence of stained-glass windows, which were historically, so to speak, obligatory. This refers to the previously unknown structure of the offset roof or the window letting clear sunlight into the presbytery - the sphere of invisible spiritual light. An indirect inspiration for the design of the space of the church interior by means of highlighting zones with daily light to emphasize the exposition of the altar, tabernacle or another liturgical object can be derived from verses 5-7 of the First Letter of St. John defining God as the light of the world (St. John the Apostle, *The First Letter*, verses 5-7, p. 1387)². In this way, using the arrangement of the light in the presbytery, architecture is able to support the contemporary declaration of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal on the necessity of creating a clearly exhibited permanent altar in the sacred interior. This refers to the altar table removed from the background wall of the presbytery, which fact allows walking around it and saying the mass while facing the congregation. The altar as an object sanctified by the office of the Church should show in an architectural way that it constitutes the centre of the sacred space, attracting at the same time the sight of God's people (OWMR, 1975, can. 262; *Inter Oecumenici*, 1964, no. 91).

At the same time, there exists a possibility of proper manifestation of the double presence of Christ, who 'being the priest' during liturgical transubstantiation becomes also the sacrifice (Bandelier, 1999, pp. 12-13). This is emphasized by the Code of Canon Law (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 932)³. As a result, the priest celebrating the Holy Mass symbolizes Christ himself. That is emphasized by the architectural design of the church interior directing the congregation's sight towards the celebrant's face. The architectural system serves the purpose of observation of the celebrant's face by the participants in the liturgical gathering.

4. Two functioning altars and one functioning tabernacle

Post-conciliar documents advise that the newly-built churches should have only one liturgically-functioning sacrificial table, connected to the space of one nave. It refers to the space serving the purpose of a large congregation gathering on Sunday, i.e. the nave

² 'This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.'

³ 'Through the anointing with the cross, the altar becomes the symbol of Christ, who, first of all, was anointed and is called the anointed one. The Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and made him the Great High Priest so that he could sacrifice his own life on the altar of his Body for the salvation of all people'.

designed to exhibit only one sacrificial table in its interior. This regulation, with the exception of the concept of heightening the altar by means of predella and tabernacle, basically does not negate the existence of two rite forms of the Roman Catholic Church in our time. What is important from the architectural perspective is that the priest, during the celebration, always has the sacrificial table in front of him, whereas the post-conciliar law decides from which side the congregation will be placed in relation to the celebrant's face.

Apart from the contemporary, so-called, ordinary form (*forma ordinaria*) of the Eucharistic liturgy celebrated according to the Missal published by Paul VI (reissued by John Paul II), there exists an extraordinary form (*forma extraordinaria*) of the Roman Rite, in other words the 'Tridentine Mass', celebrated according to the Roman Missal promulgated by the authority of John XXIII in 1962. It constitutes a version of the Missal of 1570 which was edited after the Tridentine Council (1545-1563) (V. Semenova, 2019, p. 419).

In spite of the fact that these constitute two versions of one and the same rite of the Roman Catholic Church, the Sacred Congregation of Rites emphasizes a rational aspect of building only one altar in the post-conciliar sacred interior. It refers to the permanent sacrificial table signifying one Saviour and one Eucharist of the Church which exists for one congregation of the faithful. At the same time, it is accentuated that it is possible to place another altar in a chapel separated from the nave. An independent chapel may replace the liturgical functions of the nave on some occasions, such as the exposition of the tabernacle, the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament and the celebration of the Holy Mass on weekdays for a small number of the faithful. This fact has been emphasized since 1978 by the Roman Pontifical, Chapter 4, no. 7, on the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar, which text was discussed and quoted by Fr. Franciszek Małaczyński, OSB (*Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, 1978, IV/7; Małaczyński, 1984, pp.213-214)⁴.

Having dedicated the altar in the chapel to the weekday gatherings of the church congregation, it is possible to create a contemporary sacred interior in the form of two spaces belonging to their own individual altars. It is like constructing a small church next to the big church, or a small nave next to the big nave. The architect must address this new challenge. It refers to two cubatures, which are individual in terms of visual, artistic and especially functional conditions taking into consideration the recommendations of placing only one tabernacle serving the above-mentioned two spaces. The General Instruction of the Roman Missal gives permission to build even more than two altars in the sacred interior, however,

⁴ 'In new churches, only one altar should be built to signify one and only Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ and one Eucharist of the Church during the gathering of the faithful. However, if possible, the chapel which is somehow separated from the church nave where the tabernacle for the Blessed Sacrament is placed, the second altar can be placed, where the Holy Mass can be celebrated for a small congregation on weekdays'.

their number should be kept small and each of them should be located in a chapel properly separated from the church nave (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, no. 267)

According to the Code of Canon Law, this refers to only one tabernacle in the sacred interior. Such a tabernacle is situated not far from the altar of the Eucharistic zone of the 'Sunday church', or from the altar of the Eucharistic zone of the chapel of the 'weekday church'. Such an arrangement contributes to good performance of liturgical functions by the altar (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 938). At the same time, it becomes the source of adoration and contemplation. This function remains obviously unchanged for the tabernacle, as it is defined in the instruction *Eucharisticum Misterium* of 1967, when it is situated beyond the above-mentioned two zones in a different chapel connected with the church nave (*Eucharisticum Misterium*, 1967, no. 52-53). Such a chapel with no altar is an architectural space which serves the purpose of the exposition of the tabernacle, which either accompanied by the exposition table, or not, remains an independent object in its space in the 'readable' vicinity of the church nave and the chapel of the weekday church.

5. Post-conciliar altar erected without the tabernacle

Nowadays, when the Holy Mass is celebrated by the celebrant facing the faithful, such a liturgical position introduces a new form of transparency. From the perspective of architectural design, the most important element is the surface plane of the mensa elevated above the floor plane of the nave. The properly elevated mensa, preceding the celebrant on the central axis of the system, ensures an adequate exposition of all his actions. The role of the designer is different now when they have to highlight a readable gesture of the celebrant's hands during the breaking of the bread, and not subtly hide them, as it was previously expected in the construction of the pre-conciliar altar. The lack of post-Tridentine settings of the rite, that is the elements elevated above the altar, such as *retabulum*, *predella* and tabernacle, makes it possible to treat this space in a less imagery way. At present, all attention is focused on the shape of the altar, which can be inscribed into the cubature of cuboid – being a sufficient spatial object to exhibit the full expression of the post-conciliar sacrificial table. Finally, the contemporary altar without the *retabulum* is not a vertical composition, which shows the growth and building up the form, but it constitutes a horizontal composition. All is based on the statics of the mensa, which must not slide from its base or be damaged by unreliability of its supports. The mensa has always been the basic element of the altar structure, but never – except for the time of the Fathers of the Church (1st-8th centuries) – has it been treated so independently as it is today. The architect must be aware of the fact that the space where the Miracle of the Eucharist takes place is not related to the internal space of the cubature, which is designed to manifest faith, but at a level of a

statically-stabilized limited horizontal plane which is elevated above all floors of the sacred interior.

Romano Guardini defines the presence of the altar in the temple as the existence of an object built on a solid base (stipes), which is symbolically compared to truthful will of a human being. While describing the structure of the altar elevated above the nave floor, the above-mentioned author refers to the implementation of its fundamental function related to Christ's sacrifice. It is connected with the description of the top of the mensa being the plane which is perfectly prepared for the exposition of this great Eucharistic sacrificial work (Guardini, 1987, p. 66)⁵.

Since the very beginning of the Church, the Eucharist has concerned the same thing, the true 'concealment' of a real person of Christ in the form of bread and wine. It comes into being with the presence of 'invisible' Communion and remaining in a state of grace (John Paul II, 2003, p. 46). At the same time, the post-conciliar reform in the 20th century not only defined the concealed presence of the Eucharistic Christ on the altar and beyond the altar, but also reinstated, in the context of the teaching of the Church Fathers (1st – 8th centuries), the correct meaning of each element of the celebration. It encompasses rational reasoning and emphasizes that, due to the clarity of the sign occurring on the altar of the Holy Mass celebration, one should not accentuate the presence of the Eucharistic Christ too soon, as this presence is a result of the consecration (Eucharisticum Mysterium, 1967, no. 55; Inter Oecumenici, 1964, no. 95). That is why the sacrificial altar – the visible centre of the liturgical action – ceases to be the place of storage of the Blessed Sacrament after the Second Vatican Council. The function of storage is taken over by a separate tabernacle, which is distinctly separated from the altar mensa and becomes one more significant element of the architectural interior.

The symbolic 'eternal light' in front of the tabernacle reminds us about the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. This purpose is served by a special 'eternal lamp' which signifies Christ and encourages the worship of Christ (Code of Canon Law, 1983, p. 940). This light burns day and night in the church and evokes the flame which never goes out as well the light burning day and night, according to tradition, in the Temple in Jerusalem. As is indicated by Fr. Alain Bandelier with reference to Psalm 121(4): '*This flame is the sign that He who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep*' (Bandelier, 1999, p. 129).

⁵ The altar stands in the most sacred location in the church, elevated by a series of steps above the rest of the church space, which itself is separated from the sphere of human activities, isolated and distinguished - similar to sanctity of the soul. It stands on a solid base as truthful will in a human being – the will which knows about God and is ready to defend His cause. On the stipes, there is a mensa, the place perfectly prepared for making the offering: a free, even plane, without any nooks or recesses. There is no unclear practice here, hidden in penumbra – everything is clear and in the limelight'.

6. Altar in the post-conciliar Zone of Eucharistic Liturgy

The altar at which the daily Eucharist is celebrated, i.e. the post-conciliar sacrificial table (nowadays without the tomb containing relics) should be composed of two basic elements: mensa (tabletop) and stipes (base) on which the mensa is placed (W. Koch, 1989, p. 85). The altar should be built from solid materials and permanently fixed in the Zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy. In accordance with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, a good building material for the altar mensa is a traditional material, such as natural stone, which should be prioritized. A wider selection of materials is available for the mensa stipes and the altar foundation. The dignity and duration of its form should be borne in mind at all times (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, can. 263)⁶.

From the architectural perspective, the location of the sacrificial table is extremely important. It should be located in the centre of the presbytery, on an elevated platform which is higher by a few steps than the circulation area of the whole Eucharistic Liturgy Zone. The zone itself should be highlighted in terms of composition and indicated as space of a special character against a background of the whole interior. This can be achieved by its elevation as well as the use of a different form and decoration. In addition, its size should also be sufficient in order to comfortably celebrate liturgical rites (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, can. 258). Three basic functional places of this zone should be defined as: the altar - the sphere of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the pulpit - the sphere of the Liturgy of the Word, and the sedilia - directly connected with the celebrant's sitting place (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, cans. 271-272). The tabernacle and the baptismal font constitute two functional objects and complement the Zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy (Presbytery). They may, but do not have to, be located within the boundaries of this zone.

The contemporary furnishings of the altar include: an altar cloth, cross and candlesticks. The cross may be placed on the altar, or next to it, and should be clearly visible for the congregation of the faithful. The candlesticks may be standing next to the altar, however, they should not obscure or disturb the liturgical action (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, can. 269). In this way, the post-conciliar sacrificial table, which is externally highlighted as a sacred object, may be situated, in accordance with the post-conciliar regulations, above the holy relics of saints, even if they were not martyrs (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, can. 266). That does not refer to a portable altar, which may be made from any refined and durable materials from which liturgical

⁶ 'In compliance with the traditional custom of the Church and due to its symbolic meaning, the mensa of the altar should be built from natural stone. The foundation and stipes of the mensa may be made from any material, provided it is dignified and durable.'

equipment is usually made in a given country (General Instruction of the Roman Missal, 1975, can. 264).

Dignity of the Word of God, accompanying the dignity of the Lord's table, requires that, in the sacred object, the Word should be preached from a place which spontaneously attracts attention of the faithful during the Liturgy of the Word. In principle, it should be the pulpit understood as permanently fixed structure, and not an ordinary portable pulpit, as the readings, responsorial psalm and the Easter Proclamation are read from it. The pulpit also serves the purpose of delivering sermons and saying the General Intercessions, i.e. the Prayer of the Faithful (Inter Oecumenici, 1964, no. 96). Apart from the altar and sedilia, the pulpit constitutes the third fundamental element of the Liturgy of the Eucharist, therefore it should be best located on the right side of the altar. In this context, the lector's pulpit should be situated on the left side of the altar.

7. Storage of the Eucharist in the post-conciliar interior

The fundamental and original purpose of the storage of the Eucharist outside the Holy Mass is the administration of viaticum. The second goal is the distribution of the Holy Communion and adoration of Jesus Christ present in the sacrament (Eucharisticum Misterium, 1967, no. 49). In consequence, consecrated Hosts should be renewed with proper frequency and stored in a box or vessel in a sufficient number for the Holy Communion of the Sick and other faithful outside the Holy Mass (Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 939).

Nowadays, the Blessed Sacrament is kept in one tabernacle, which fact calls for its special treatment in the architectural context of the church interior. The tabernacle should be made in the form of a fireproof and armour-plated box; it should be immovable, strong and untransparent; moreover, it should be locked to exclude the risk of profanation (Inter Oecumenici, 1964, no. 95; Eucharisticum Misterium, 1967, no. 54; Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 938; Bandelier, 1999, p. 129). Statically, it should be connected with the form of a small mensa providing space for the placement of at least two vessels containing hosts (after the opening of the tabernacle) and two candles, one on each side.

Rational liturgical requirements recommend moderation while decorating this space of veneration and exposition of the Christ presence under the appearance of bread. The symbol used on the tabernacle doors or just next to them should be clearly readable and leave no doubt as to the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle (Eucharisticum Misterium, 1967, no. 57). In the context of the tabernacle interior, the tabernacle doors should also be highlighted as the most important visual element of this sacred house and should encourage the faithful to individual or joint adoration.

The history of the church tabernacle starts with richly decorated towers located next to the northern side of the altar, beginning from 13th century. In the epoch of Renaissance their height was lowered and as a result they stopped being called 'towers'. They were made in the form of small houses or boxes and were placed in the central part of altars. In large churches, it is usually the chapel of Holy Mary (built at the end of the axis behind the Gothic choir) that houses nowadays the tabernacle (Bouyer, 1991, p. 75). A similar termination of the central axis of the church may be achieved in the interior which is designed without the ambulatory by means of the contemporary tabernacle, which accentuates (in the presbytery) the terminating architectural element of the entire system. This cuboidal unit, either decorated or without any decoration, visible against a background of the presbytery wall, should – in terms of composition – clearly exhibit its liturgical co-dependence on the altar and the pulpit (see Photo 2 A,B.) The tabernacle is more compositionally independent when it does not have the function of the terminating architectural element of the whole system and is not connected with the central axis of the object. It is then located on a stela – a pillar made of marble or another workable stone. One can walk around such a tabernacle, as it is done around the altar, touch and contemplate it from four sides during the adoration.

The words of John Paul II, written in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharystia*, referring to the 'art of prayer' are very important. According to the Pope, the prayer is indispensable to Christians in our time. It refers to a spiritual dialogue during silent adoration in front of the Blessed Sacrament (John Paul II, 2003, p. 32)⁷. A very individual artistic form of the tabernacle is not in contradiction with the above words. In spite of its dissimilarity to the altar, the tabernacle should always be treated as the satellite of the sacrificial table (see Photo. 3 A/B). The architect may also design the tabernacle as a tiny house, multiple times smaller than the cubature of the church. Such a house, set in the wall of the church, attempts to cross the material boundaries connected with the symbolics of the wall and simultaneously evokes the feeling of fusion of its matter with the church matter. If the tabernacle constitutes a part of the stained-glass window composition, the wall is already symbolically opened. The colourful light shows through it surrounding the concentric form of the house encasing the Eucharistic kinds. The modernist tabernacle located in the wall with the stained-glass window constitutes a different concept to the post-Tridentine tabernacle, when this small house finds its place on the mensa connected with the altar retabulum playing the role of the terminating architectural element of the main nave or chapel (see Photo. 4 A,B). The post-Tridentine tabernacle still finds its relevance in liturgically renewed old churches when it becomes an object independent of the mensa of the post-conciliar liturgical altar. When it does not refer to the main altar, it is placed on the altar in one of the church chapels.

⁷ 'If Christianity is to distinguish itself in our time, first of all, by 'the art of prayer', it is only strange not to feel the renewed need for a longer halt in a spiritual dialogue, the silent adoration full of love before Christ present in the Blessed Sacrament'.

A lot depends on the artist and their vast creative space. According to the Pope, it concerns both fine arts and church music. Pope John Paul II mentions this in his Encyclical *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* and states that the Church has always given vast creative space to artists. When speaking about sacred art, it is emphasized that such art must be able to skilfully express the mystery contained in the faith of the Church (John Paul II, 2003, p. 64)⁸.

The desire to constantly 'see the Host' originated the cult of the Eucharist in the form of 'perpetual adoration' – the incessant veneration of the exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. Since its introduction in Roman churches by Pope Clement VIII in his bull *Graves et diuturnae* on 25 November 1592, the worship has been continuing till the present day in municipal churches having special chapels of adoration (Pintal, 2010, p. 218). Such chapels are usually related to the presence of the tabernacle. Their architectural conditions contribute to the atmosphere of intimacy and show respect for private prayer and adoration which result in spiritual calm and inner peace (*Eucharisticum Misterium*, 1967, no. 53; Code of Canon Law, 1983, can. 938). It is reasonable to place such a chapel and its tabernacle close to the presbytery. Such a location shortens the way the priest has to cover while carrying hosts from the altar integrated with the nave and facilitates the process of distributing the Holy Communion. At the same time, the liturgical dependence between the chapel, the altar of the Sunday church and the congregation zone becomes clearly visible.

8. Tabernacle in the contemporary interior - being the terminating architectural element of the Zone of Eucharistic Liturgy or located next to the altar

Taking into consideration the beauty of the historical unit (box) housing the holy sustenance in the main altar of historical value, the positioning of the contemporary tabernacle in the Zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy on the axis behind the post-conciliar altar becomes a case of special significance. In the design of modern sacred interiors, the contemporary tabernacle placed in the presbytery at the end of the central axis of the church evokes the heritage of its historical location and is able to visually emphasize the culmination of the whole architectural system. The application of a few steps in front of the tabernacle seems a reasonable solution, as it becomes elevated above other objects located in the presbytery and thus is not obscured by the celebrant standing at the altar with his back towards the tabernacle. Nevertheless, the positioning of the tabernacle with the Blessed Sacrament at the end of the central axis in the presbytery so that the celebrant at the post-conciliar altar could be performing celebrations with his back towards it – is, for a group of the faithful, a controversial solution (Bandelier, 1999, p. 129). This issue can be resolved by a

⁸ The Church has always given vast creative space to artists. However, sacred art must be able to skilfully express the mystery contained in the faith of the Church in compliance with the pastoral guidance properly developed by competent church authorities. It refers both to fine arts and church music'.

non-axial exposition of the tabernacle in the Zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, for instance the exposition on a wall, or as an element of a stained-glass window, or on a stela – creating thus the ‘Eucharistic column’ designed in the vicinity of the sacrificial table. Such a location is justified by artistic reasons, yet it does not overly accentuate or centralize its function. With or without the tabernacle located in this zone, the altar should always be designed as the most important liturgical object of the church.

Firstly, the altar means the mortification of our senses, or our heart. Secondly, it signifies the spiritual Church, whereas the four corners of the sacrificial table symbolize the four directions of the world over which the Church reigns. Thirdly, the altar is an image of Jesus Christ without whom no gift can be offered in the way giving joy. Fourthly, the altar is an image of the Lord’s body. Finally, in the fifth place, it represents the table at which Christ drank and ate with his disciples (Durand de Mende, 1996, p. 55).

The proximity of the tabernacle and the altar as well as the method of its emphasis when both objects are located in the presbytery may, but do not have to, visually and architecturally reinforce the symbolic presence of the above-mentioned five elements. They are related to the domain of faith. The language of symbolics in the sphere of architecture and fine arts conveys meaning in the sphere of objectivism and subjectivism. It is important to use rational solutions in order to facilitate the distribution of Holy Communion, therefore the positioning of the tabernacle in the presbytery has a universal character. The distribution may also be facilitated by a balustrade dividing the presbytery from the nave, which is nowadays not installed.

However, the first and foremost factor is the proximity in which the congregation of the faithful may approach the foot of the altar in the post-conciliar church. When placing stained-glass windows, a wall painting or a low relief in the presbytery, we must not forget about its full thematic dependence on the liturgical purpose of the altar. The very stipes of the altar serve the purpose of the visual exposition of a certain religious theme. The elements of the low relief in stone, wood or metalwork showing scenes of the institution of the Holy Eucharist, such as ‘The Last Supper’, are profoundly justified.

We should cite here the ever-relevant words of Pope Paul VI spoken to the artists in the Sistine Chapel in 1964. The Pope called for the creation of accessible and understandable artistic forms which would express the invisible world. The Pope spoke about art whose role is to seize hold of treasures from the spiritual world and clothe them in words, colours and forms, thus making them accessible for people (Paul VI, 1964, *Znak*, pp. 1425-1426).

Conclusions

Taking into consideration the contemporary art and architecture, the article is concerned with the proper co-existence of the altar and tabernacle, which brings us closer to the domain of faith. At the same time, the article discusses unprofessional simplifications in

the construction of new temples and adaptation of historical churches. Such simplifications often cause the loss of the sacral identity of the object. It is obvious that such a loss should be prevented by avoiding bad case-studies or the imposition of incomprehensible forms on the local community. What can be suggested is the avoidance of parish priests unaware of church regulations connected with the post-conciliar renewal and architects with no knowledge of the liturgical practice and post-conciliar revival. The architect, by means of introducing the zone order of major objects of the sacred interior, should assure that the 'readable' exposition of the functional and liturgical language is of the utmost importance and precedes the production of visual details and their abundance.

Almost 60 years of practice of the post-conciliar formation of architectural-liturgical space of the Catholic Church has developed a specific rational approach to the liturgical use of the architectural space of the church interior. It refers in particular to the following issues:

1. Altar and tabernacle as separated individual elements have become more visible to the faithful.
2. Post-conciliar Holy Mass is more comprehensible to participants as the celebrant directly communicates with the faithful in their native language.
3. Compulsory introduction of the pulpit into the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy visually bonded the zone of the Liturgy of God's Word with the zone of the Liturgy of Lord's Body and Blood.
4. Possibility of the introduction of the tabernacle and baptismal font, as independent elements, into the zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy, which visually gathers all elements of the liturgical furnishings of the interior in the most important zone of the temple.

With reference to the practice of the formation of the post-conciliar interior, it is important that its architectural image be defined as the house of the community of the faithful - 'domus ecclesiae'. That is why the architect should undertake the challenge to create the design satisfying the spatial requirements without the necessity of returning to the historical systems of basilica or hall churches and without the obligation of introducing internal supports serving the purpose of visual separation of the presbytery from the congregation zone. At the same time, there is no obligation of the presbytery (Zone of the Eucharistic Liturgy) exposition at the termination of the central axis of the system and the evocation of the Latin cross symbolics in the church layout. The creators of the architecture and sacred art of the Catholic Church should skilfully convey information that the post-conciliar presence of the altar and tabernacle exists in compliance with the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' as well as in accordance with the post-conciliar recommendations of the Holy See. Simultaneously, they should take into account the fact that the Church upholds the declaration that the liturgical reform is irreversible, but in

special circumstances the Church allows, apart from the ordinary form of the Roman Rite (*forma ordinaria*), the extraordinary Tridentine form of this Rite.

A lot depends on the creative imagination of the architect who designs the forms and zones of the sacred interior where one single tabernacle is able to basically serve two altars – each of them belonging to the ascribed space of the church nave and the space of chapel of the weekday church. Contemporary architecture treating the altar as the focal point of the sacred space should visibly substantiate the functional co-organization of the tabernacle and the above-mentioned central point as well as all zones and chapels located in the church interior. The architect designing sacrum should aim to bring closer the nature of the true faith and show its manifestation. Therefore they should subjugate their artistic subjectivism and translate it into the language of serving one's neighbour. Only then their creations will allow each of the faithful to truly experience the encounter with the Sacred Liturgy of the Catholic Church.

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Photo. 1. Post-Tridentine tabernacle on the mensa of the pre-conciliar altar and the contemporary one; both located in the presbytery at the termination of the axis of the sacred system highlighting the post-conciliar altar. A). Church of Our Lady of the Sablon (Brussels, 16th c.). B). Church of Our Lady of Fatima Mediatrix of All Graces (Paris, 1951-1954, designed by H. Vidal). Photo: Author

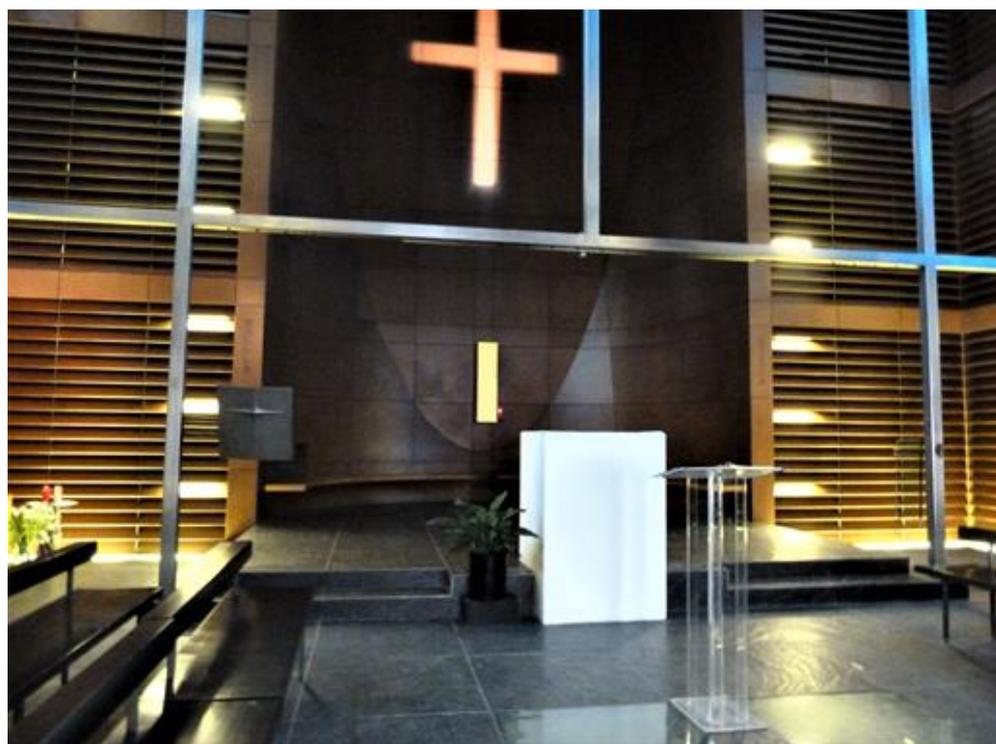


Photo. 2. Tabernacle, altar and pulpit, the liturgical objects in the post-conciliar form located in the presbytery of Gothic and contemporary single-nave churches.
A). Church of St. Elizabeth (Gdańsk, 14th c.). B). Church of Our Lady of the Ark of the Covenant (Paris, 1985-1998, designed by Architecture Studio). Photo: Author

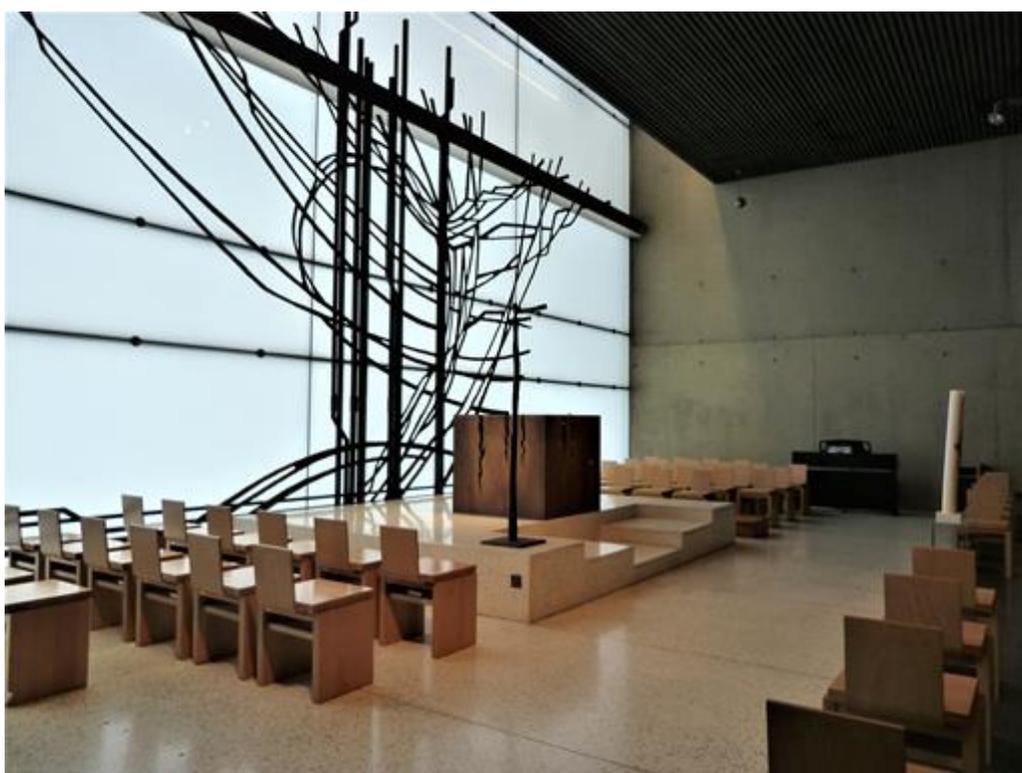


Foto. 3. Tabernacle in the sculptural form (artist Pierre Sabatier) and altar in the block form, objects having post-conciliar form exposed individually in the zones of the contemporary interior. A/B Church of Our Lady of Pentecost (Paris, 1994-2001, designed by F. Hammoutène). Photo: Author

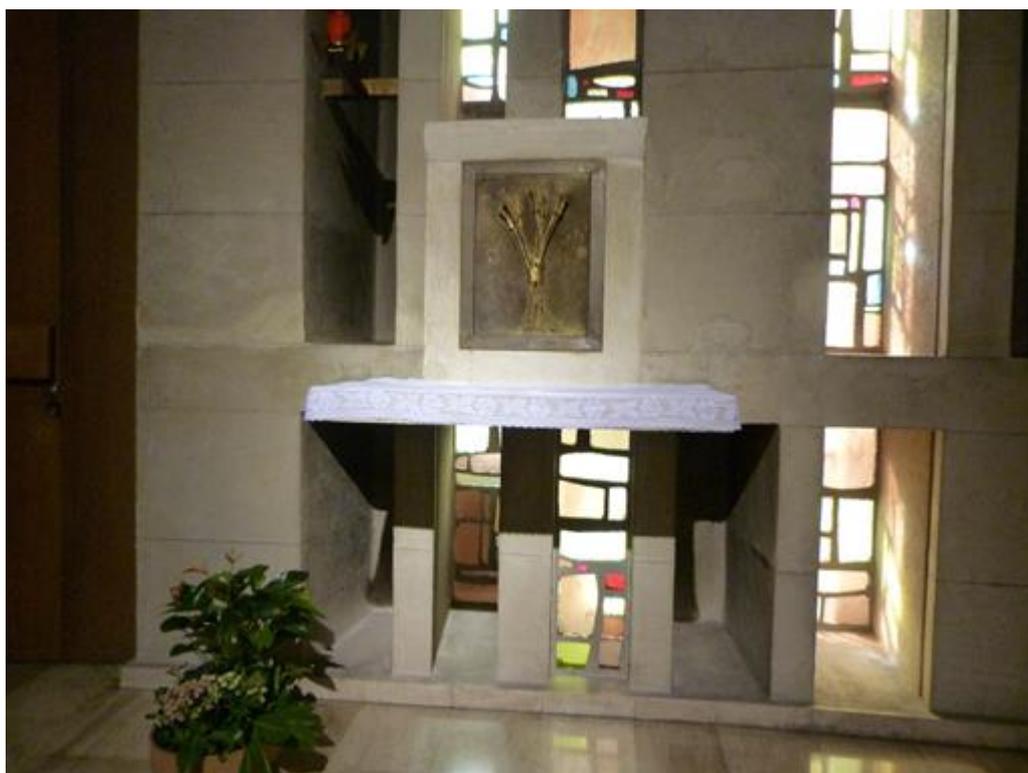


Photo. 4. Post-Tridentine tabernacle close to retabulum and contemporary tabernacle located in the stained-glass window wall; both liturgically active. A). Church of Our Lady of the Chapel, chapel of the weekday church (Brussels, 13-16th c.). B). Church of Our Lady of La Salette (Paris, 1965, designed by H. Colbot). Photo: Author