

## II. ARRANGEMENT OF THE SANCTUARY FOR THE SACRED SYNAXIS (EUCHARISTIC ASSEMBLY)

295. The sanctuary is the place where the altar stands, where the word of God is proclaimed, and where the priest, the deacon, and the other ministers exercise their offices. It should suitably be marked off from the body of the church either by its being somewhat elevated or by a particular structure and ornamentation. It should, however, be large enough to allow the Eucharist to be celebrated properly and easily seen.<sup>115</sup>

### *The Altar and Its Appointments*

296. The altar on which the Sacrifice of the Cross is made present under sacramental signs is also the table of the Lord to which the People of God is called together to participate in the Mass, as well as the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist.

297. The celebration of the Eucharist in a sacred place is to be carried out on an altar; but outside a sacred place, it may be carried out on a suitable table, always with the use of a cloth, a corporal, a cross, and candles.

298. It is appropriate to have a fixed altar in every church, since it more clearly and permanently signifies Christ Jesus, the living stone (1 Pt 2:4; cf. Eph 2:20). In other places set aside for sacred celebrations, the altar may be movable.

An altar is called "fixed" if it is attached to the floor so as not to be removeable; otherwise it is called "moveable."

299. The altar should be built apart from the wall, in such a way that it is possible to walk around it easily and that Mass can be celebrated at it facing the people, which is desirable wherever possible. The altar should, moreover, be so placed as to be truly the center toward which

115 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 91: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898.

the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns.<sup>116</sup> The altar is usually fixed and is dedicated.

300. An altar whether fixed or movable is dedicated according to the rite prescribed in the Roman Pontifical; but it is permissible for a movable altar simply to be blessed.

301. In keeping with the Church's traditional practice and the altar's symbolism, the table of a fixed altar is to be of stone and indeed of natural stone. In the dioceses of the United States of America, however, wood which is worthy, solid, and well-crafted may be used, provided that the altar is structurally immobile. The supports or base for upholding the table, however, may be made of any sort of material, provided it is worthy and solid.

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

302. The practice of placing relics of Saints, even those not Martyrs, under the altar to be dedicated is fittingly retained. Care should be taken, however, to ensure the authenticity of such relics.

303. In building new churches, it is preferable to erect a single altar which in the gathering of the faithful will signify the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church.

In already existing churches, however, when the old altar is positioned so that it makes the people's participation difficult but cannot be moved without damage to its artistic value, another fixed altar, of artistic merit and duly dedicated, should be erected and sacred rites celebrated on it

116 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 91: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898.

alone. In order not to distract the attention of the faithful from the new altar, the old altar should not be decorated in any special way.

304. Out of reverence for the celebration of the memorial of the Lord and for the banquet in which the Body and Blood of the Lord are offered on an altar where this memorial is celebrated, there should be at least one white cloth, its shape, size, and decoration in keeping with the altar's design. When, in the dioceses of the United States of America, other cloths are used in addition to the altar cloth, then those cloths may be of other colors possessing Christian honorific or festive significance according to longstanding local usage, provided that the uppermost cloth covering the *mensa* (i.e., the altar cloth itself) is always white in color.

305. Moderation should be observed in the decoration of the altar.

During Advent the floral decoration of the altar should be marked by a moderation suited to the character of this season, without expressing prematurely the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord. During Lent it is forbidden for the altar to be decorated with flowers. *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), solemnities, and feasts are exceptions.

Floral decorations should always be done with moderation and placed around the altar rather than on its *mensa*.

306. Only what is required for the celebration of the Mass may be placed on the *mensa* of the altar: namely, from the beginning of the celebration until the proclamation of the Gospel, the *Book of the Gospels*; then from the Presentation of the Gifts until the purification of the vessels, the chalice with the paten, a ciborium, if necessary, and, finally, the corporal, the purificator, the pall, and the Missal.

In addition, microphones that may be needed to amplify the priest's voice should be arranged discreetly.

307. The candles, which are required at every liturgical service out of reverence and on account of the festiveness of the celebration (cf. no. 117), are to be appropriately placed either on or around the altar in a way suited to the design of the altar and the sanctuary so that the whole may be well balanced and not interfere with the faithful's clear view of what takes place at the altar or what is placed on it.

308. There is also to be a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, either on the altar or near it, where it is clearly visible to the assembled congregation. It is appropriate that such a cross, which calls to mind for the faithful the saving Passion of the Lord, remain near the altar even outside of liturgical celebrations.

#### *The Ambo*

309. The dignity of the word of God requires that the church have a place that is suitable for the proclamation of the word and toward which the attention of the whole congregation of the faithful naturally turns during the Liturgy of the Word.<sup>117</sup>

It is appropriate that this place be ordinarily a stationary ambo and not simply a movable lectern. The ambo must be located in keeping with the design of each church in such a way that the ordained ministers and lectors may be clearly seen and heard by the faithful.

From the ambo only the readings, the responsorial Psalm, and the Easter Proclamation (*Exsultet*) are to be proclaimed; it may be used also for giving the homily and for announcing the intentions of the Prayer of the Faithful. The dignity of the ambo requires that only a minister of the word should go up to it.

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117 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 92: AAS 56 (1964), p. 899.

It is appropriate that a new ambo be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual<sup>118</sup> before it is put into liturgical use.

*The Chair for the Priest Celebrant and Other Seats*

310. The chair of the priest celebrant must signify his office of presiding over the gathering and of directing the prayer. Thus the best place for the chair is in a position facing the people at the head of the sanctuary, unless the design of the building or other circumstances impede this: for example, if the great distance would interfere with communication between the priest and the gathered assembly, or if the tabernacle is in the center behind the altar. Any appearance of a throne, however, is to be avoided.<sup>119</sup> It is appropriate that, before being put into liturgical use, the chair be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.<sup>120</sup>

Likewise, seats should be arranged in the sanctuary for concelebrating priests as well as for priests who are present for the celebration in choir dress but who are not concelebrating.

The seat for the deacon should be placed near that of the celebrant. Seats for the other ministers are to be arranged so that they are clearly distinguishable from those for the clergy and so that the ministers are easily able to fulfill the function entrusted to them.<sup>121</sup>

118 Cf. The Roman Ritual, *Book of Blessings, editio typica*, 1984, Order for a Blessing on the Occasion of the Installation of a New Ambo, nos. 900-918.

119 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no 92: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898.

120 Cf. The Roman Ritual, *Book of Blessings, editio typica*, 1984, Order for a Blessing on the Occasion of the Installation of a New Cathedra or Presidential Chair, nos. 880-899.

121 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 92: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898.

### III. THE ARRANGEMENT OF THE CHURCH

*The Places for the Faithful*

311. Places should be arranged with appropriate care for the faithful so that they are able to participate in the sacred celebrations visually and spiritually, in the proper manner. It is expedient for benches or seats usually to be provided for their use. The custom of reserving seats for private persons, however, is reprehensible.<sup>122</sup> Moreover, benches or chairs should be arranged, especially in newly built churches, in such a way that the people can easily take up the postures required for the different parts of the celebration and can easily come forward to receive Holy Communion.

Care should be taken that the faithful be able not only to see the priest, the deacon, and the lectors but also, with the aid of modern technical means, to hear them without difficulty.

*The Place for the Choir and the Musical Instruments*

312. The choir should be positioned with respect to the design of each church so as to make clearly evident its character as a part of the gathered community of the faithful fulfilling a specific function. The location should also assist the choir to exercise its function more easily and conveniently allow each choir member full, sacramental participation in the Mass.<sup>123</sup>

313. The organ and other lawfully approved musical instruments are to be placed in an appropriate place so that they can sustain the singing of both the choir and the congregation and be heard with ease by all if they are played alone. It is appropriate that, before being put into liturgical use, the organ be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.<sup>124</sup>

122 Cf. Second Vatican Ecumenical Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 32.

123 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Musicam sacram*, On music in the Liturgy, 5 March 1967, no. 23: AAS 59 (1967), p. 307.

124 Cf. The Roman Ritual, *Book of Blessings, editio typica*, 1984, Order for the Blessing of an Organ, nos. 1052-1067.

In Advent the organ and other musical instruments should be used with a moderation that is consistent with the season's character and does not anticipate the full joy of the Nativity of the Lord.

In Lent the playing of the organ and musical instruments is allowed only to support the singing. Exceptions are *Laetare* Sunday (Fourth Sunday of Lent), solemnities, and feasts.

#### *The Place for the Reservation of the Most Holy Eucharist*

314. In accordance with the structure of each church and legitimate local customs, the Most Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle in a part of the church that is truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer.<sup>125</sup>

The one tabernacle should be immovable, be made of solid and inviolable material that is not transparent, and be locked in such a way that the danger of profanation is prevented to the greatest extent possible.<sup>126</sup> Moreover, it is appropriate that, before it is put into liturgical use, it be blessed according to the rite described in the Roman Ritual.<sup>127</sup>

125 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 54: AAS 59 (1967), p. 568; cf. also Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 95: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898.

126 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 52: AAS 59 (1967), p. 568; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Inter Oecumenici*, On the orderly carrying out of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, 26 September 1964, no. 95: AAS 56 (1964), p. 898; Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments, Instruction *Nullumquam tempore*, 28 May 1938, no. 4: AAS 30 (1938), pp. 199-200; The Roman Ritual, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, editio typica, 1973, nos. 10-11; *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 938 § 3.

127 Cf. The Roman Ritual, *Book of Blessings*, editio typica, 1984, Order for a Blessing on the Occasion of the Installation of a New Tabernacle, nos. 919-929.

315. It is more in keeping with the meaning of the sign that the tabernacle in which the Most Holy Eucharist is reserved not be on an altar on which Mass is celebrated.<sup>128</sup>

Consequently, it is preferable that the tabernacle be located, according to the judgment of the diocesan Bishop,

- a. Either in the sanctuary, apart from the altar of celebration, in a form and place more appropriate, not excluding on an old altar no longer used for celebration (cf. no. 303);
- b. Or even in some chapel suitable for the faithful's private adoration and prayer<sup>129</sup> and organically connected to the church and readily visible to the Christian faithful.

316. In accordance with traditional custom, near the tabernacle a special lamp, fueled by oil or wax, should be kept alight to indicate and honor the presence of Christ.<sup>130</sup>

128 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 55: AAS 59 (1967), p. 569.

129 Cf. Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 53: AAS 59 (1967), p. 568; The Roman Ritual, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, editio typica, 1973, no. 9; *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 938 § 2; John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenaе*, 24 February 1980, no. 3: AAS 72 (1980), pp. 117-119.

130 Cf. *Codex Iuris Canonici*, can. 940; Sacred Congregation of Rites, Instruction *Eucharisticum mysterium*, On the worship of the Eucharist, 25 May 1967, no. 57: AAS 59 (1967), p. 569; The Roman Ritual, *Holy Communion and Worship of the Eucharist outside Mass*, editio typica, 1973, no. 11.