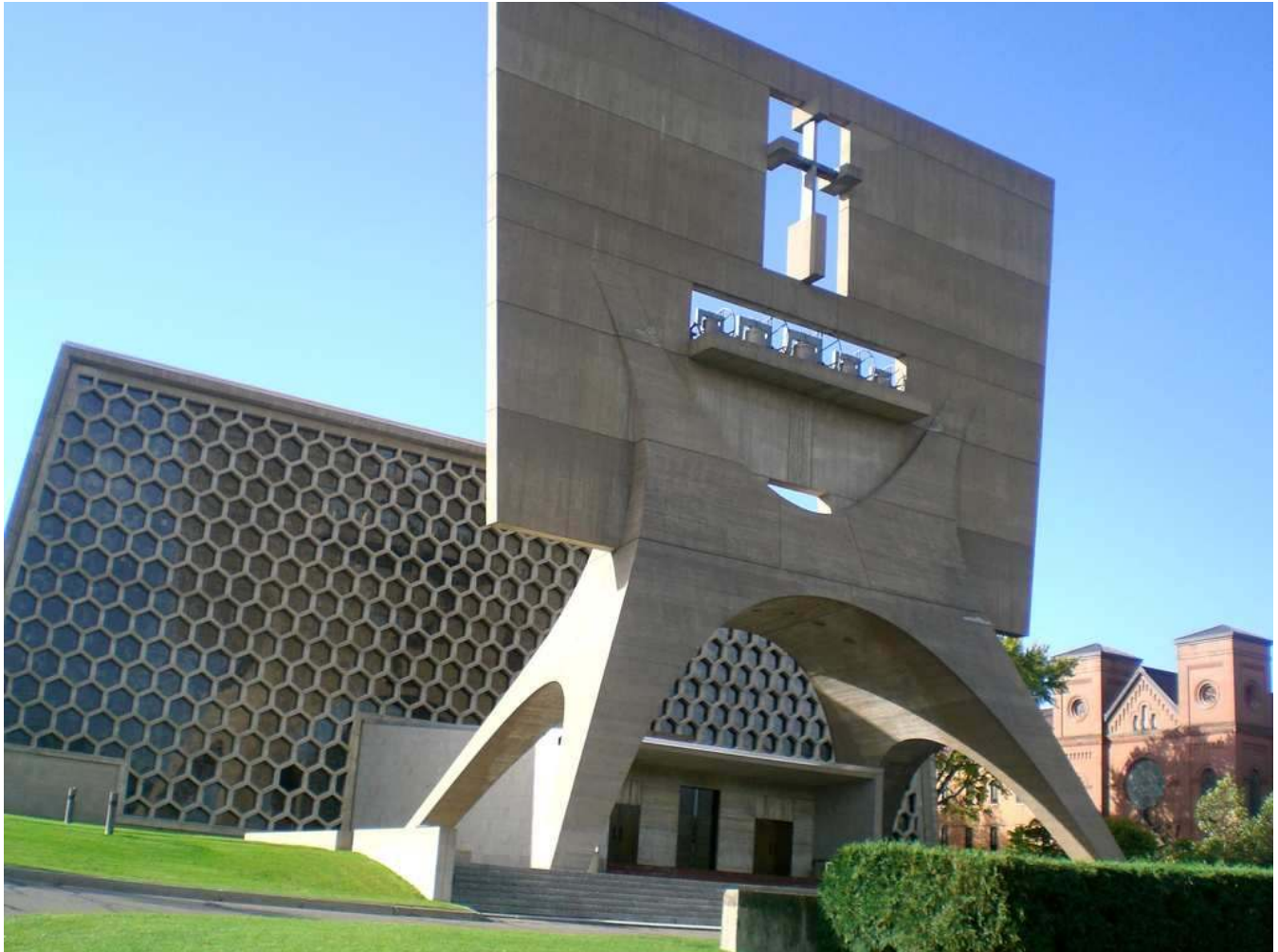


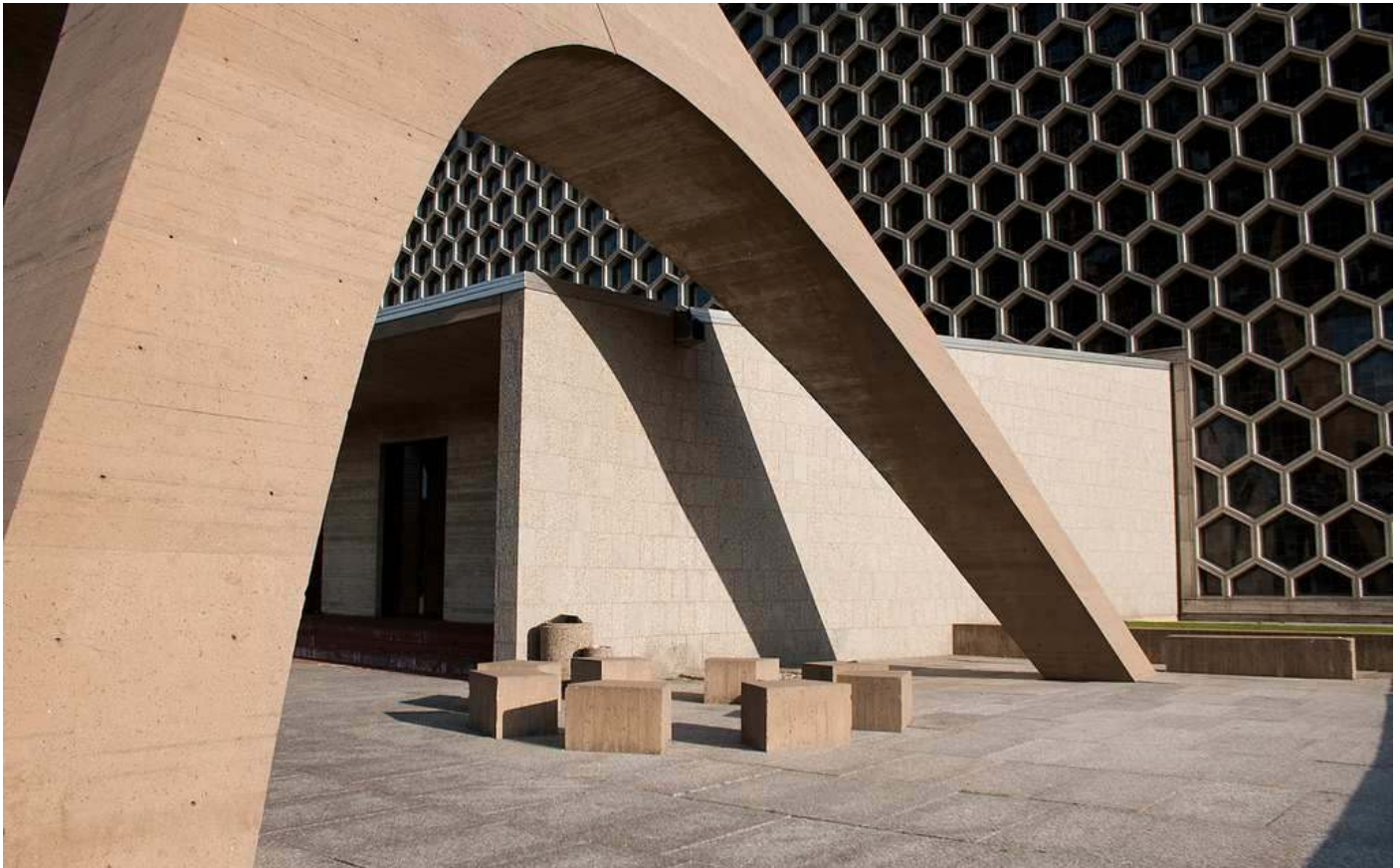


SAINT JOHN'S ABBEY CHURCH TOUR



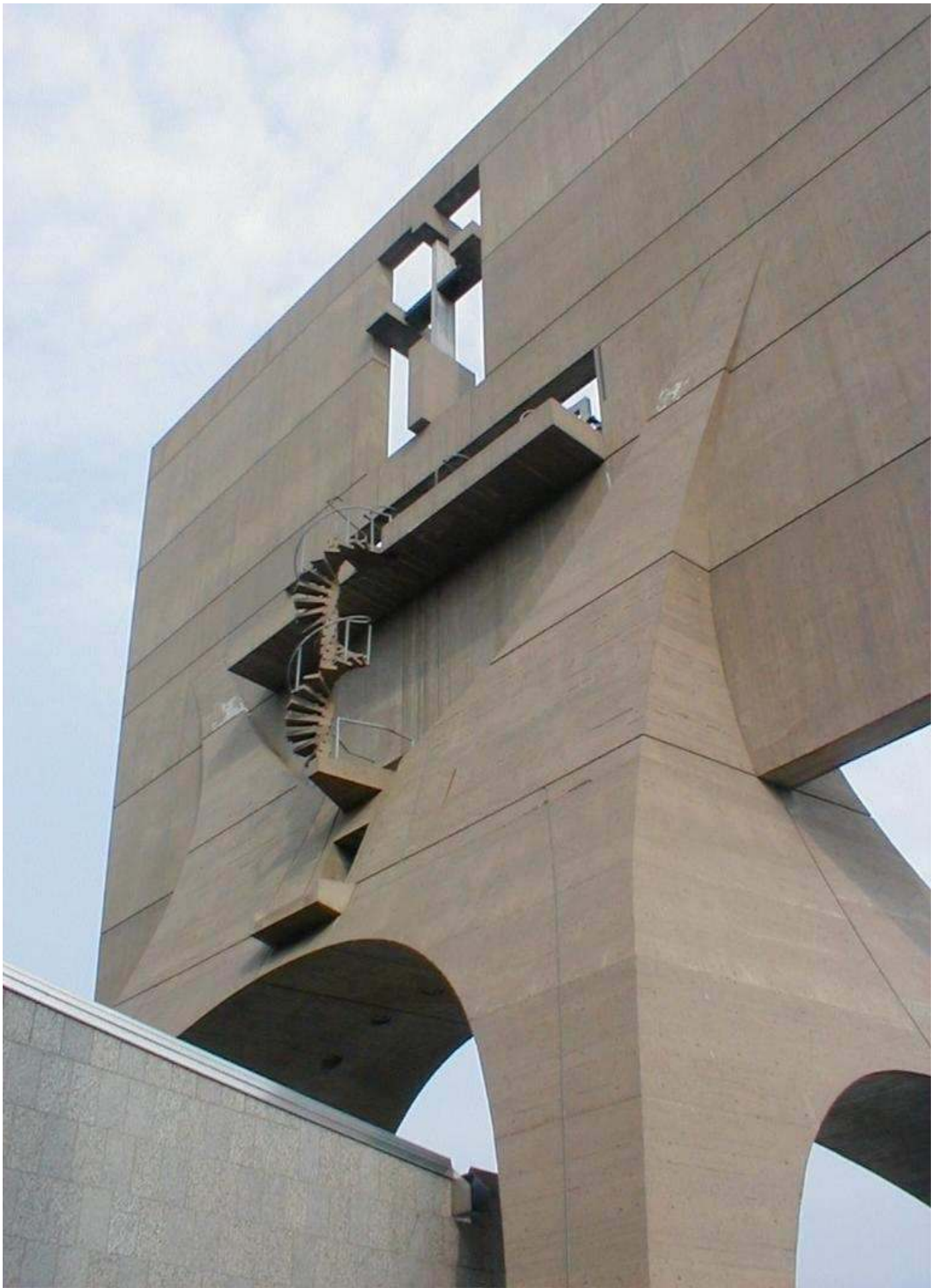
Introduction

Saint John's Abbey Church is at the heart of the Saint John's campus and community. Though strikingly modern even fifty years after its construction, it is planned according to the oldest principles of church architecture. The architect of the Abbey Church, as well as several other nearby campus buildings—including Alcuin Library and the Peter Engel Science Center—was Hungarian-born Bauhaus-educated architect Marcel Breuer (1902–1981). The liturgical art consultant was Frank Kacmarcik, OBlSB (1920–2004). Planning for the Abbey Church began in the early 1950s, well before the Second Vatican Council. The cornerstone for the Abbey Church was laid in 1958; its construction was completed and the church was consecrated in 1961. A trapezoidal design was chosen that showcased the architect's understanding of concrete, a material that not only acted to give structural support to the building but also served as the enclosure, the form.



Bell Banner





The dramatic Saint John's Abbey Bell Banner is a landmark. Standing before the entrance to the church, the bell banner is a keynote for the building, establishing the principal underlying theme of the whole structure. It is 110' tall and 100' wide at its top edge, east to west. By design, the bell banner is the tallest structure on the Saint John's campus.

The banner's architectural form recalls early mission churches in the Southwest. Its tremendous concrete slab, cantilevered on parabolic cross vaults, is pierced by two large "windows," the upper one framing a laminated white oak cross harvested from the nearby abbey forest, fabricated by abbey carpenters, and stands 12' feet tall and 7' wide (*including the concrete pieces off each of the four wood pieces, the overall size of the cross is 28' tall x 15' wide*). The lower window houses five massive bronze bells produced by Petit & Fritzen bell foundry in Aarle-Rixtel, Holland, and purchased through I. T. Verdin Company of Cincinnati, Ohio. The largest weighs over 8,000 pounds. The bells were dedicated in 1989 to the Holy Trinity, the Blessed Virgin Mary, Guardian Angels, Saint John the Baptist, and Saint Benedict.



The function of the banner is first of all a proclamation, a bold announcement of the church. Secondly, it provides a great entrance to the church under its sweeping parabolic arches. It has a practical function as well in that it both provides some shelter at the entry to the church and reflects the sunlight into the stained glass of the north façade of the church. Most importantly, the banner holds aloft the bells and the cross—the sign of salvation—and in a single gesture it proclaims and defines, renews faith, and inspires hope. The banner has a majesty

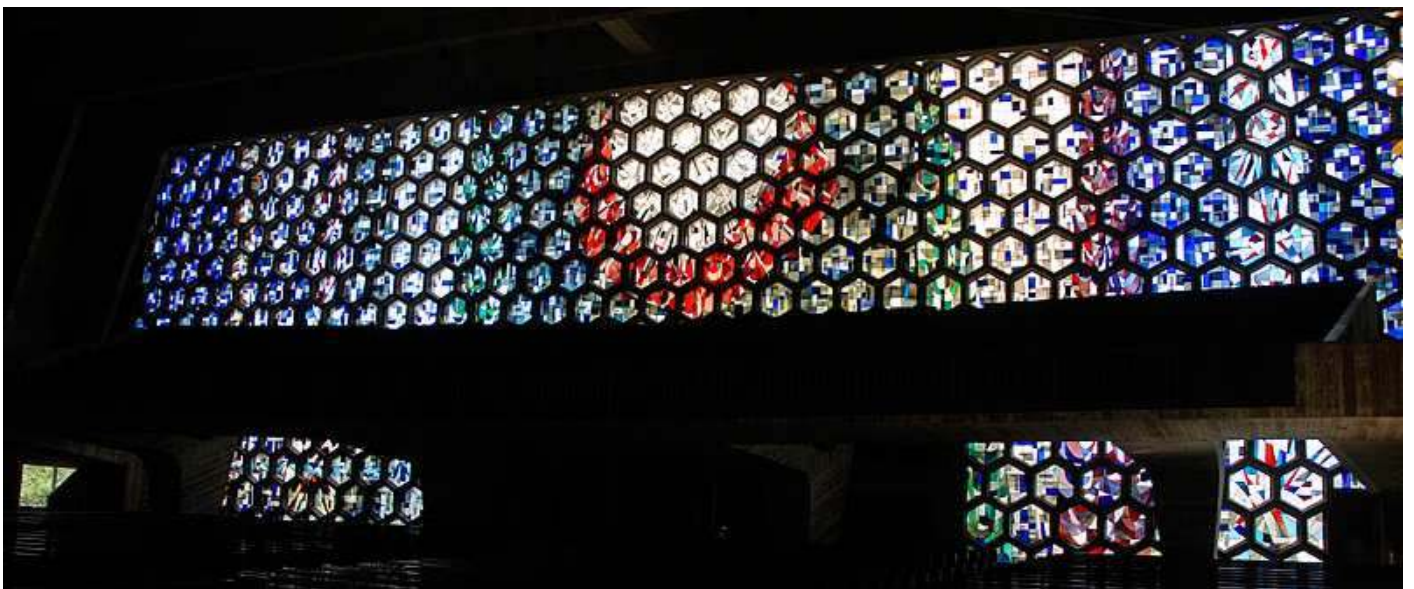
and strength that compel one to stop and look, while at the same time it warns that here is a building not to be entered lightly.

Stained-Glass Window

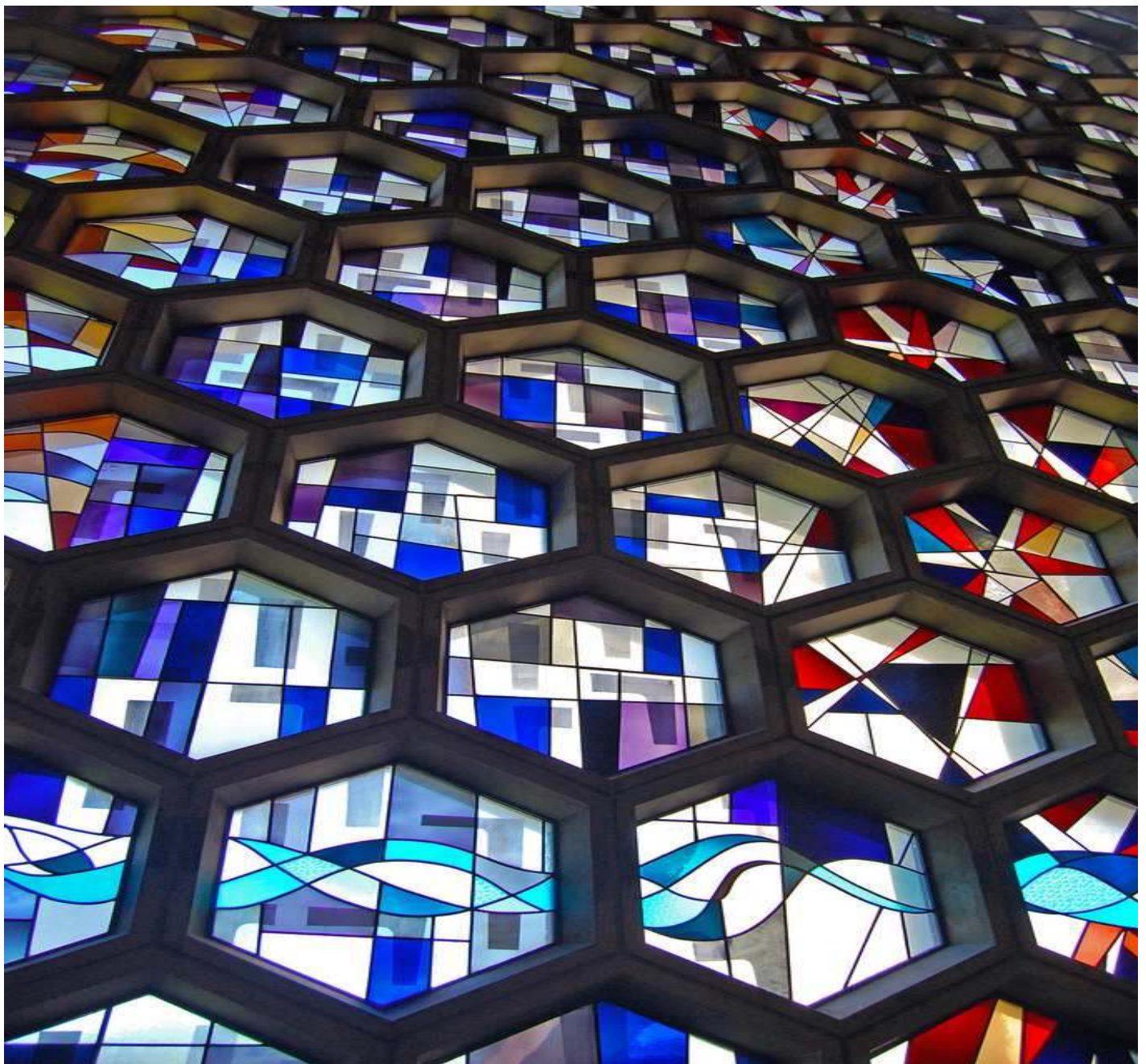




When the church was built, the hexagon or honeycomb window was one of the largest stained-glass structures in the world. Designed by university faculty-member-artist Bronislaw Bak (1922–1981), the stained glass was assembled by monks, faculty, students, and other volunteers in the abbey's defunct dairy barns, the herds having been sold off a few years earlier. The colors of the stained glass correspond to the colors of the liturgical year. The honeycomb structure of the window gives amazing strength, each component supporting the others, thus architecturally symbolic of the Saint John's community, denoting the strength of community and how essential all components are in making a community strong—many parts makes one body: monks, students, faculty and staff, parishioners, friends, and guests—all of whom are called and welcome to gather and worship around a single altar in the Abbey Church.



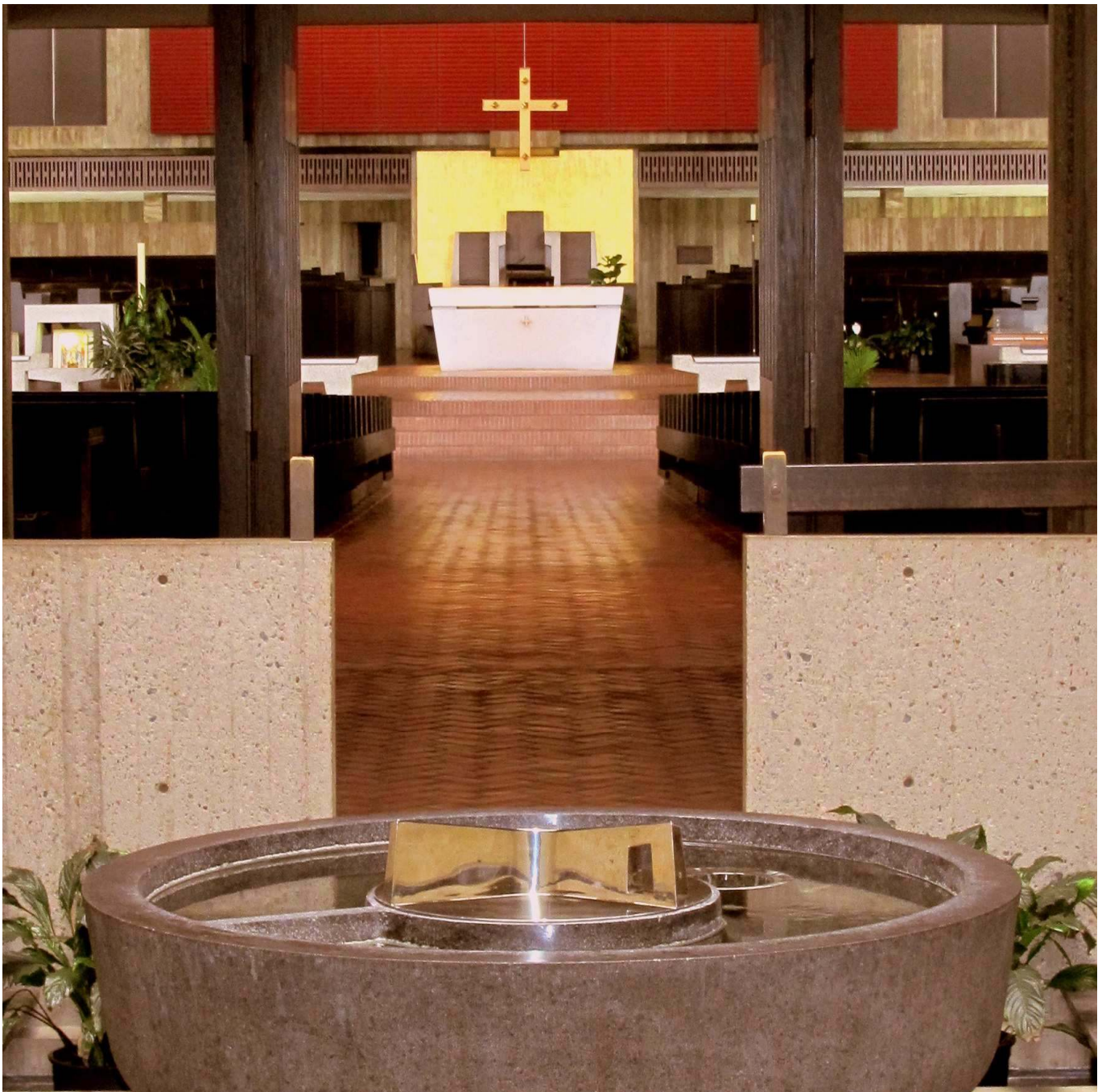
Sursum Corda: Lift Up Your Hearts to God. This is the theme of the church's window. The blue, prominent throughout the window, is simply the background or "canvas" upon which the window's design rests. Central to the design of the window is the singular, prominent circle in the center. It is white, pure, silent. It is a modern interpretation of an old medieval symbol, the Eye of God. There are some straight lines radiating out from it in various directions representing the grace of God pouring out upon us. The red section that seems to dominate the window represents the People of God returning their thoughts to God in worship and praise. The two green columns on either side of the window refer to the Tree of Good Fruit found in the Garden of Eden, and the Tree of Jesse in reference to the lineage of Christ. A horizontal blue line lower down on the window refers to the waters of baptism, by which we become Christians. The first column on the far left of the window is golden, representing the season of Advent. The next red and blue column refers to the incarnation, Christ is born, Christmas. To the right of the center is a purple column that refers to Lent. At the end, Easter, coming as it does at the end of Lent, is a column of red and blue, much like Christmas. Finally, the last column on the far right, also displayed in gold, refers to Pentecost. In total, the theme of the massive window is worship of God; the lifting up of our hearts to God. *Sursum Corda*. This is the sole purpose of life: offering praise and glory to God. *Sursum Corda*.



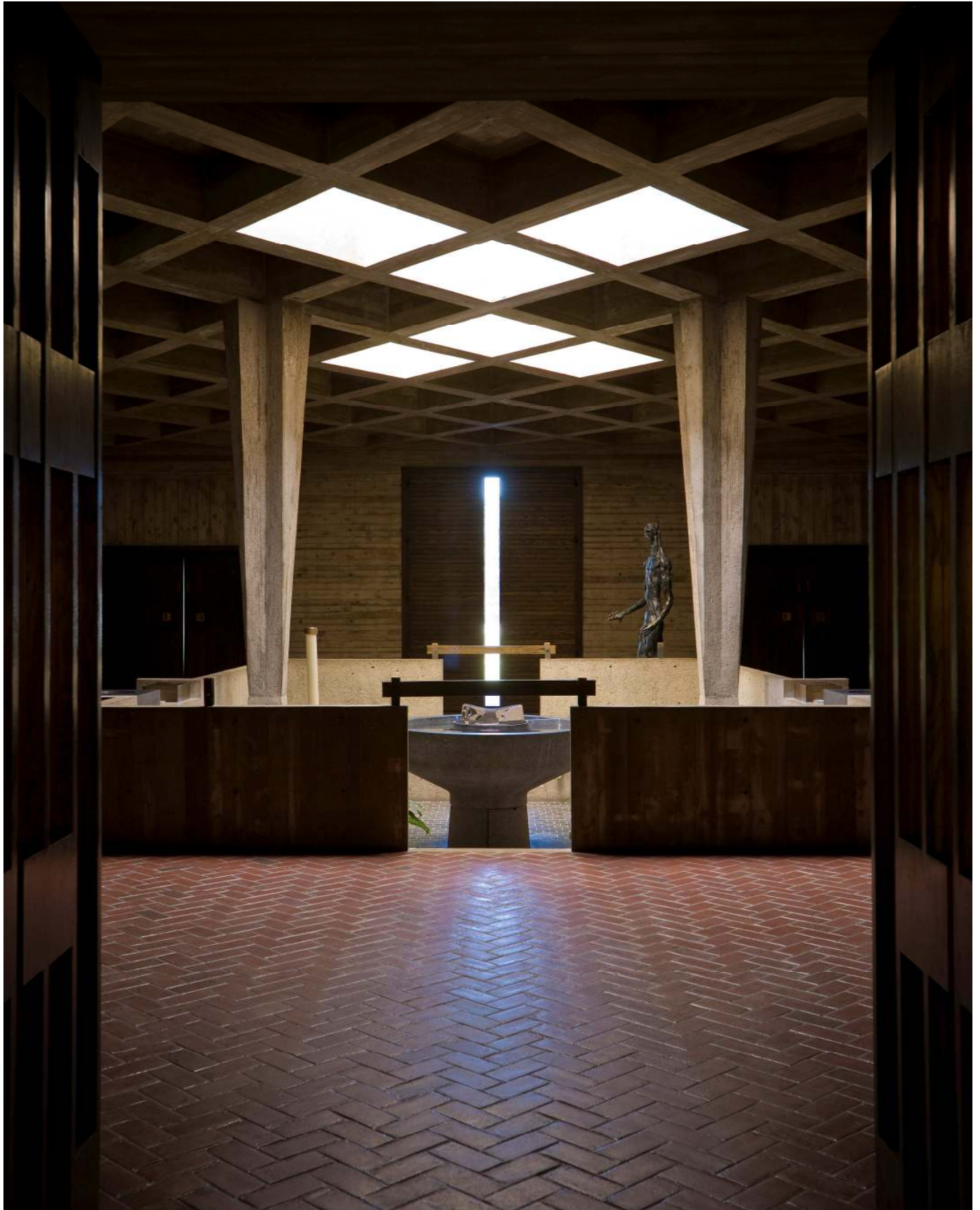
Sacred Axis

The baptistery, the nave, the altar, and the abbot's throne establish a sacred axis around which the plan of the church is organized. The two wings of the choir define the sanctuary, and along the axis the worshipping congregation is assembled close to the altar. The church is 225' long, 180' wide, and 65' tall.

Through baptism we enter into communion as members of the Body of Christ. We are given a radical redemption, being liberated to the very root of our being, freed from sin. We move from darkness to light; the Light of Christ. At the end of this earthly life, we join the heavenly community at the sacred banquet represented by the altar. The abbot's throne symbolically recognizes that the abbot holds the place of Christ in the monastic community. The twelve folded walls of the church body boldly represent the twelve tribes of Israelites of the Old Testament and the twelve apostles of the New Testament. The Sacred Axis, around which the Abbey Church is built, clearly symbolizes the sacred pilgrimage of faithful believers: from birth in water and spirit through life in community to eternal life and its everlasting banquet.



Baptistery



The saving mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, which is symbolized by the cross enshrined in the bell banner, is communicated to the Christian in the sacrament of baptism. As one becomes a member of the

church in the sacrament of baptism, so it is fitting that one enter the house of God through the baptistery. This is a fundamental orientation for a person about to take part in the worship of God.

To underline the significance of baptism, a number of patristic and traditional symbols have been incorporated into the baptistery. First of all, the baptistery proper has been recessed into the floor three steps and one recalls the three questions: (1) "Do you believe in the Father?" "Yes, I do believe in the Father." (2) "Do you believe in the Son?" "Yes, I do believe in the Son." And (3) "Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?" "Yes, I do believe in the Holy Spirit." And with each answer one descends into the area of the font one step, thereby giving symbolic expression of Saint Paul's words, "We were buried with Christ by means of baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ has risen from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4). The recessed floor also recalls a favorite patristic theme: as the Israelites of old were rescued from the slavery of Egypt and gained access to the Promised Land by passing through the waters of the Red Sea, so the Christian is rescued from slavery to sin and brought into fellowship with God by passing through the waters of baptism and into life with Christ. Furthermore, Christ himself descended into the waters of the Jordan River when he was baptized by the great prophet John the Baptist. On the other side of the font, one ascends three steps and enters into the arms of the gathered community assembled around the altar, and is received as a member of the Body of Christ.



The contemporary bronze statue is of John the Baptist, patron of Saint John's. Sculpted by contemporary artist Doris Caesar (1892–1971), this remarkable statue stands 7' tall. Though not too "pretty," the sculpture is considered a fine work of art and one of Caesar's finest sculptures. Its symbolic portrayal of John the Baptist is quite descriptive. Tall and muscular, it speaks to John's being an imposing figure in his day, the last of the great prophets, a formidable person. His sinewy build, clad only in an animal's skin, speaks to his strength as well as his ascetic life, living in the desert on a diet of locusts and honey. The massive size of the neck and throat emphasizes the power of John's voice, "a voice of one crying in the wilderness 'Make straight the way of the Lord'" (John 1:23). The cross in John's left hand denotes his martyrdom, the cross being a common hagiographic symbol placed in the hands of martyrs. His right hand points the way, and we are reminded of John's words the day after he baptized Jesus. Seeing Jesus walk by, John said "'Look! There is the Lamb of God!' The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus" (John 1:35-36). Caesar's statue gestures toward the baptismal font, as it is in this direction we must go in order to follow Jesus, since through baptism we have life with Christ; and toward the interior of the church and the altar, since it is in life in community, gathered around the Eucharist, that we are given the promise of eternal life with Christ.

The green plants surrounding the font and the gentle agitation of the water in the font itself suggest life. They are reminders that baptism has made us "dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (Romans 6:11). Again, they suggest the ancient parallel between the Garden of Eden, where we walked with God, and the kingdom of heaven, where God will dwell with us, "and they shall be his people, and God himself will be

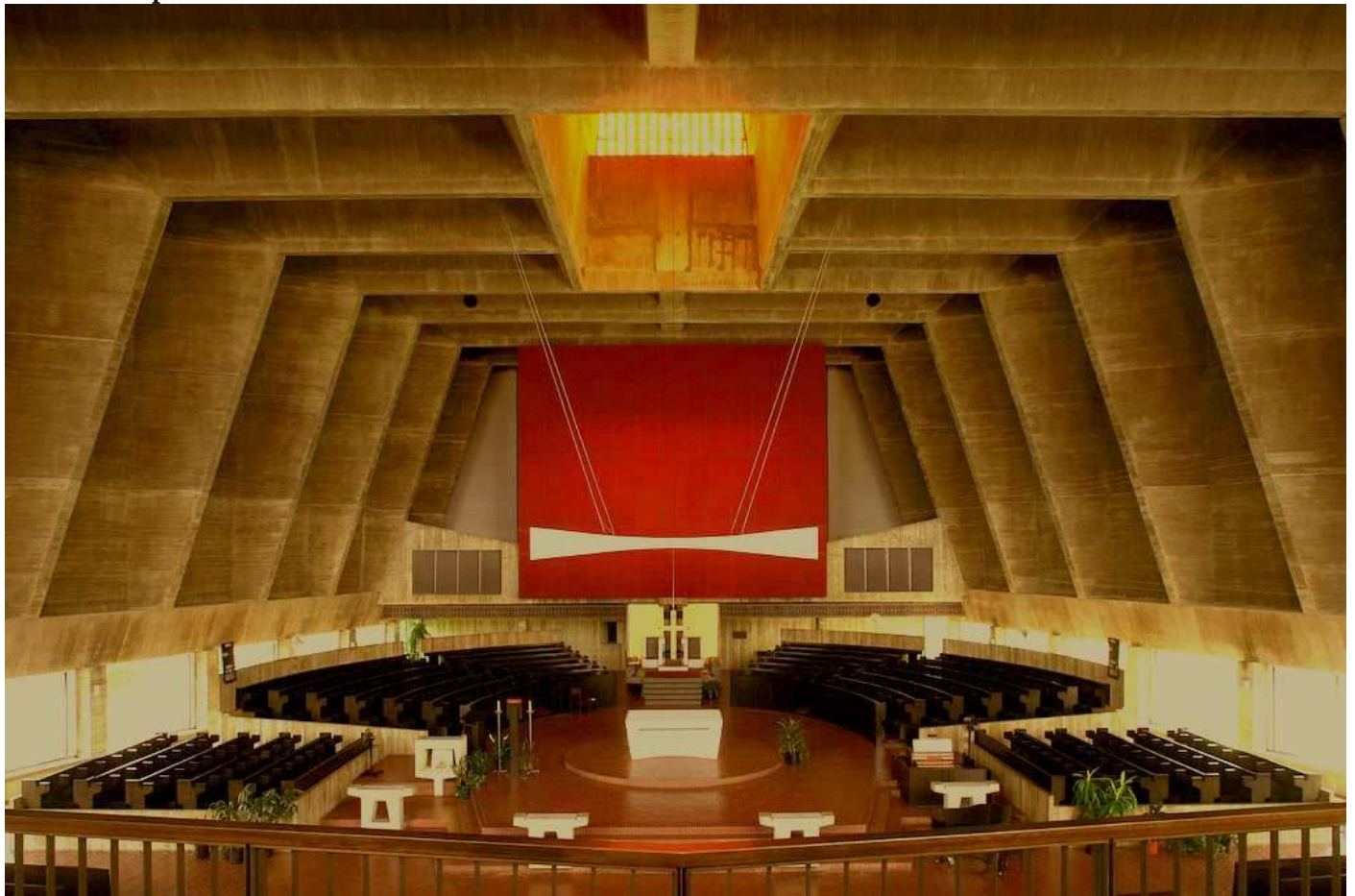
with them” (Revelation 21:3). Just as “the spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” of creation (Genesis 1:2), so the Spirit hovering over the waters of baptism gives them a creative power. It is here that we “are born again of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Moving water is seen as living water. Stagnant water is seen as lifeless water.

Finally, outside of the Easter season, the Easter candle is also located in the area of the font, representing the Light of Christ, illuminating the way to everlasting life. In a similar way, the skylights above the font remind us that God’s grace comes to us “from above” (John 3:3; James 3:15). “You were once darkness, but now you are enlightened in the Lord . . . Thus it is said, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will enlighten you’” (Ephesians 5:8, 14).

Architecturally, the baptistery is a separate room, commodious but still on a human scale. Except in the area of the font itself, the room is somewhat dark and therefore creates an impression of aloneness. This is a fitting atmosphere for entering the church. Christians are baptized as individuals and encounter God in their personal lives as individuals, in the obscurity of faith. Yet one’s individuality is not the ultimate good. By baptism one becomes a member of that great Body of Christ composed of all the baptized, and it is only by membership in this Body that one’s individuality finds perfection and fulfillment. As members of Christ, Christians are deputed for a larger role. For each person becomes a member of “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people; that he or she may proclaim the perfections of him who has called him or her out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

The monastic community welcomes the body of a deceased monk in the baptistery as a reminder that the monk was once born out of nature and water but has now passed over to eternal life.

Church Proper



Thus one passes from the subdued light and the individuality of the baptistery into the monumental spaciousness of the community space of the church proper. In the expansive and all-embracing atmosphere created by the soaring folds of the walls, the wide banks of pews and choir stalls, and the complete absence of columns, statues, and lighting fixtures, the attention in this monastically austere space is fixed immediately upon the altar that so obviously holds the place of honor. The corrugated walls and ceiling provide incredible strength, supporting the massive weight of concrete and steel that makes up the structure. The slight, subtle curve of the east and west walls provides extra strength as well as visual grace. To bring in additional light, the side walls were lifted off the ground to rest on a series of pencil-thin piers framing plate-glass windows, as if to suggest that the entire concrete superstructure was weightless. The windows themselves allow for views of the cloister gardens in the two exterior bays, one on the east side of the church and the other on the west side of the church. Waxed red brick covers the floor in continuity with the warm homemade brick of the nineteenth-century Quadrangle visible through the west-side windows of the church.



The concrete of the church was poured into oiled wood frames to give it its form. After the concrete had cured, the board frames were put aside, leaving the imprint of the wood grain on the surface of the concrete. It was said that the construction of the church had as much or more to do with the fine carpentry work as it did with the pouring of the concrete, so critical were the wood frames to the building of the structure. The concrete gives the impression of petrified wood.

Balcony

It would be easy for the height and magnitude of the church to overawe visitors and call their attention away from the altar. The architect has precluded this by a strategic employment of the balcony. Visitors are not immediately aware of the height of the nave as they enter it. Instead, they are introduced to it gradually

by passing under the balcony, and the bottom edge of the balcony catches their eyes and directs them to the altar.

Nave

Including the balcony, the seating capacity of the nave allows for 2,064 worshipers. The pews are fabricated of dark-stained oak. Separated by aisles into four sections, worshipers sitting in the nave all have a good view of the sanctuary. Small speakers for the sound system are located beneath the pews throughout the church, allowing for easy listening.

Sanctuary

The altar is further emphasized by a vertical architectural accent. As the twin pillars and skylight of the baptistery created a vertical emphasis over the baptismal font, so the altar is emphasized by a series of structural variations that rise in a developing series on the site of the altar. The floor of the sanctuary is raised above that of the nave; the altar is raised upon a separate platform within the sanctuary. Above it hangs the great white baldachin, which serves as a crown to the sacred space occupied by the altar. Finally, above the baldachin the roof is pierced by a lantern of stained glass designed by Josef Albers (1888–1976), which admits natural light over the sanctuary. All these features have a long tradition in the church. The altar is given a raised position so that it may be seen more easily; and the baldachin, here illuminated by its lantern, has the very ancient role of enhancing the altar's prominence and dignity.

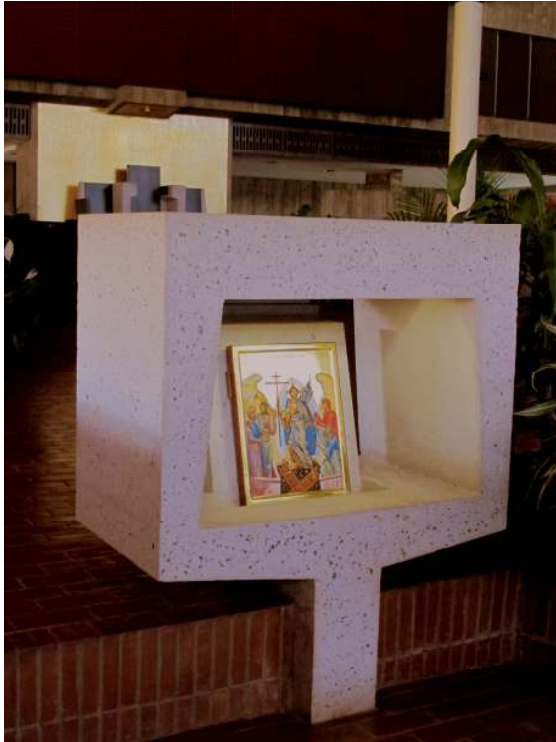


Choir Stalls

The choir stalls for the monks and guests of the monastic community are positioned around the altar. It is here that the monks and their guests gather to pray the Divine Office and celebrate daily Eucharist. Monks are men who have devoted themselves to the service of God in the monastic manner of life. In their midst is the

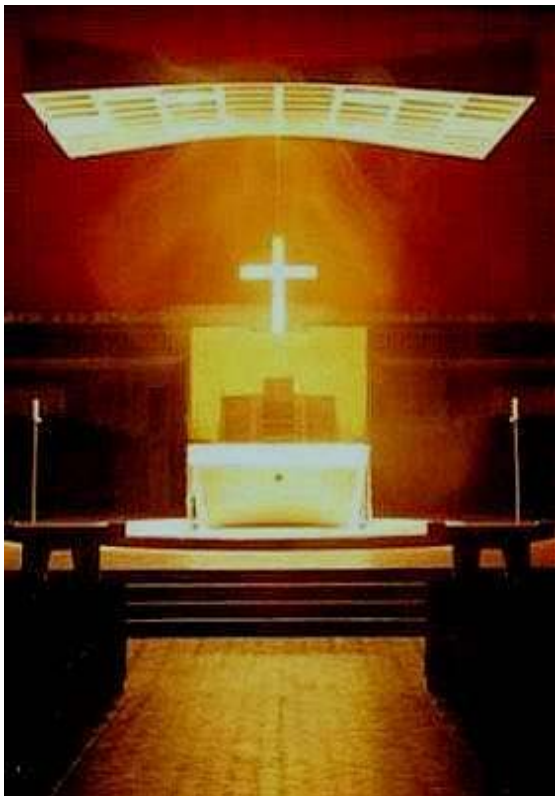
throne of the abbot, who “is believed to hold the place of Christ in the monastery” (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, chapter 2). The abbot presides from the throne for high liturgies and special occasions. Usually, the abbot sits in the choir stalls along with the other monks and guests. In the space around the altar, monks and their guests come together for the daily praying of the Divine Office, the marvelous compilation of hymns,

psalms, and readings from Sacred Scripture that Saint Benedict commended to all his followers as “the work of God,” to which “nothing is to be preferred” (*Rule of Saint Benedict*, chapter 43). The Divine Office is prayed three times daily. The Divine Office is directly associated in its content with the Mass of the liturgical calendar for each day. By anticipating and extending the scriptural tapestry of each feast, the Divine Office brings the graces and inspiration of the Mass into every part of the monk’s daily life



Ambo

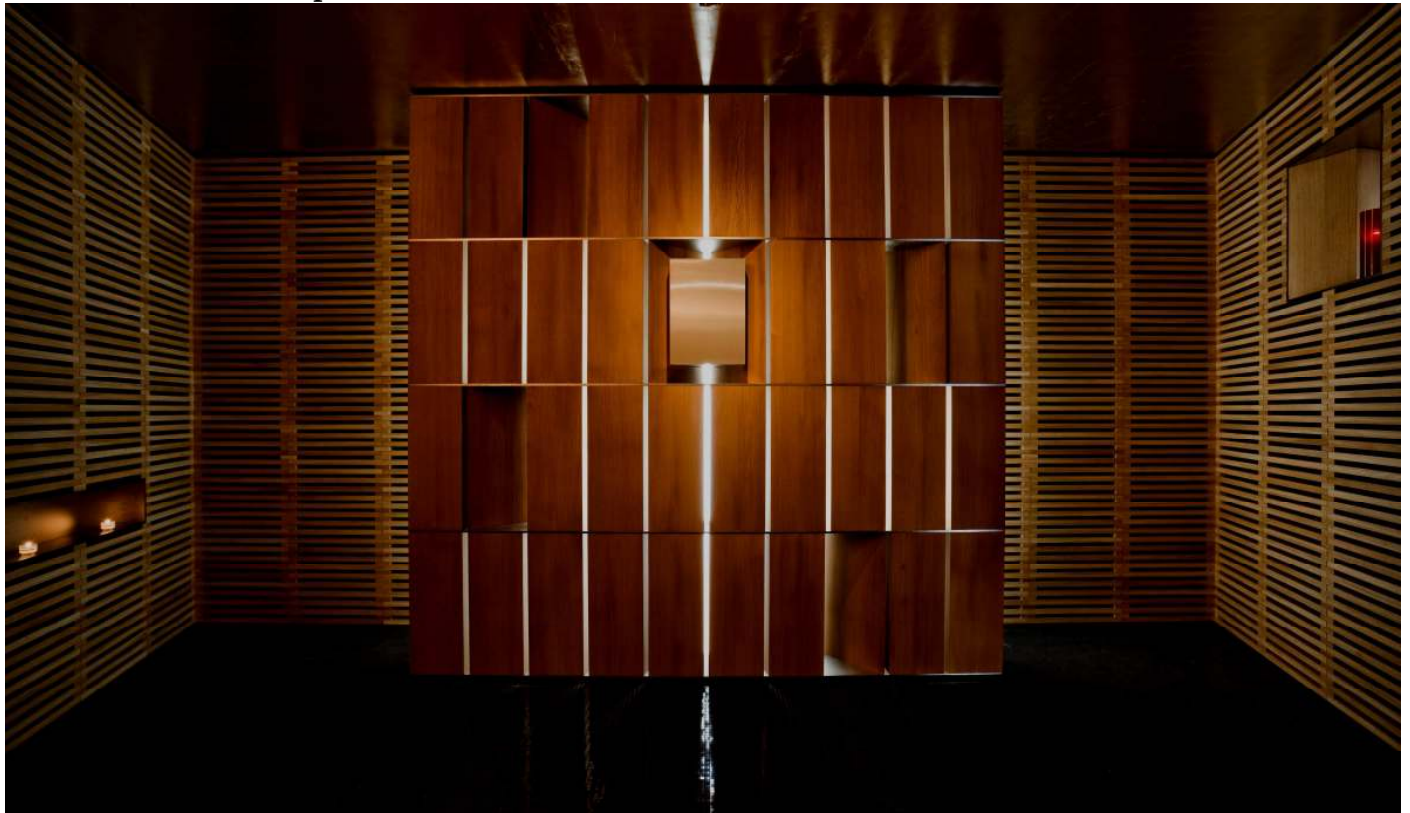
Here, around the altar, the new “assembly of the people of God” gathers as Israel of old once gathered around Moses (Exodus 19:5-8) to hear the word of God proclaimed and to ratify their covenant with God by a sacred banquet. Hearing the word of God is a necessary preliminary to acceptance of Christ, and the white granite ambo on the east side of the altar is an essential part of the eucharistic center of the church. Its significant presence intensifies our awareness of the “word of truth” by which God has begotten us (James 1:18); for “faith depends on hearing, and hearing on the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17). “How are they to believe him whom they have not heard? And how are they to hear, if no one preaches?” (Romans 10:14).



Altar

Hearing of the Word demands a response on our part: a sign that we accept what we have heard and recognize its implications for our own lives. This response is found in the Eucharist. In the Eucharist, Christians encounter the Word himself, and in “the bread that has come down from heaven” they find the living source of those “words of life everlasting” that have been spoken to them (John 6:51, 70). The altar, composed of white granite, is itself in two parts, the table of the bread (New Testament) being superimposed upon the stone of sacrifice (Old Testament). The great Easter mystery is symbolized by the crucifix suspended above the altar. Here the cross, the symbol of death, is surmounted by the figure of the living Christ; the symbol of degradation and infamy becomes the symbol of triumph and victory. Suspended above an altar, whose historical connotations are those of blood and sacrifice, it transforms the altar into a table of life-giving food. Christians gather here not to mourn but to rejoice, not to speak of death, but to renew their certainty of eternal life. The corpus on the crucifix was sculpted by Gerald Bonnette (1931–1988).

Blessed Sacrament Chapel



At the east entrance to the church is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Renovated in 2009, this space provides a dignified location that houses the Blessed Sacrament, is easily accessible from the nave, and is visibly connected to the altar and the Eucharistic celebration. The lit candle in the small opening of the chapel's wall informs visitors that the Blessed Sacrament is present, inviting them to enter for a moment of prayer and meditation. Designed by Vincent James (VJAA), the chapel was dedicated in May 2009. The focal point of the chapel is the nickel-plated tabernacle housing the consecrated Hosts, which are kept readily in reserve for communion to the sick and for devotional purposes. Following a tradition that goes back to the original Ark of the Covenant of the Old Testament, the nickel-plated tabernacle is wood-lined. The chapel itself is conceived as a tabernacle, and, as with the nickel-plated tabernacle, is also wood-lined; thus the nickel-plated tabernacle is a "tabernacle inside a tabernacle." This concept acknowledges the sacred presence of Christ in each one of us, as well as his presence in the sacred Hosts. The horizontal lines of the white oak laths give the illusion of a larger room. The vertical lines of the white oak screen holding the tabernacle give the illusion that the room is taller. The screen is illuminated by the window behind it; thus, in combination with the reflective surface of the platinum-leaf ceiling and highly polished black-marble floor, it provides an ethereal effect around the tabernacle. The natural woodwork of the chapel contrasts with the dark stained woodwork of the church proper, distinguishing the Blessed Sacrament Chapel as a special, distinctive place in the church.



Flemish Crucifix

Behind the abbot's throne, not visible from the main area of the church, hangs a beautiful wood-carved thirteenth-century Flemish crucifix. As the monks enter the Abbey Church from the monastic cloister, they first encounter this reminder of the saving mystery of Christ's death and resurrection as they go to pray and worship.

Dedication Stones

On the walls surrounding the church are granite stones faced with finely carved crosses. These stones were anointed by the bishop with blessed oil in the elaborate ceremony of consecrating the Abbey Church on October 24, 1961. A lighted candle was mounted in the recess on the top of each consecrated stone. In consecrating a church, the community is blessed and consecrated. Every October 24 since 1961 the community commemorates the church's dedication and anniversary, lights and places new candles in each of the stone

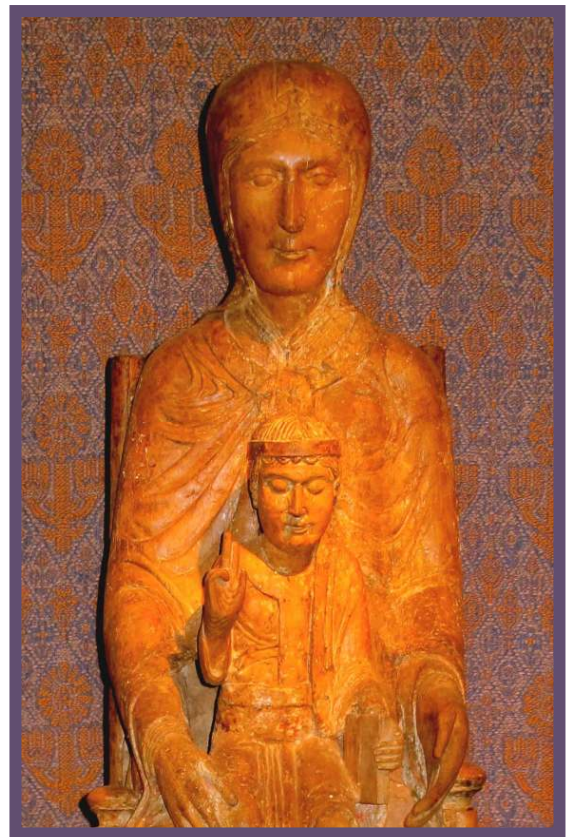
holders, and renews its commitment of worship and work on behalf of the universal church.

Stations of the Cross

Along the floor at the east and west sides of the church, embedded in the floor, are granite Stations of the Cross, commemorating Christ's passion and death.

Chapel of Mary, Throne of Wisdom

At the west entrance to the church is the Marian Chapel. In our Christian life, with its shades of darkness and light, of grace and sin, Mary is the perfect pattern of redemption, the perfect hearer of the Word of God. By acquiescing in what God's word asked of her, she became the first human creature to receive the Word incarnate, and she was the first to enjoy the fruits of Christ's redemptive work. She has thus become a symbol of the whole church, for all of us are striving to attain what God has already accomplished in her. In the twelfth-century Romanesque, Burgundian statue in this chapel, Mary is seen as a throne for the Savior of the world. This has ever been her role: to show us Christ, so that by accepting him as she did, we may follow after her into eternal blessedness. The statue, carved out of a single piece of walnut, shows Mary sitting on a chair. She in turn is the "throne" upon which Jesus sits. The official title of the statue is "Mary, Throne of Wisdom." In this marvelous sculpture, Mary is presenting to the world, presenting to us, her son, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world.



Holtkamp Organ

The abbey organ is the last large contract that Walter Holtkamp Sr. (1894–1962) completed before his death. He designed the instrument in consultation with abbey organist Father Gerard Farrell, OSB (1919–2000). Many contemporary organists consider the abbey's Holtkamp organ to be Holtkamp's magnum opus. Completed in November 1961, the organ pipes were placed behind the red screen above the abbot's throne. The screen is acoustically transparent, chosen primarily for architectural considerations. With the interior of the church so monastically austere, not to mention large, a pipe display was thought to be inappropriate and perhaps might be dwarfed by the scale of the church. The organ was never conceived for concert use but rather to serve the monastic community at prayer.



Organ Specifications

Holtkamp, Cleveland, Ohio, 1961

Manuals: 61 notes, C - c''

Pedal: 32 notes, C- g'

46 registers, 47 speaking stops, 3 blanks, 65 ranks

Standard Unison Couplers

Great to Pedal Reversible (thumb and toe-stud)

6 General Pistons (thumb and toe-stud),

5 Divisional Pistons (each),

1 General Cancel

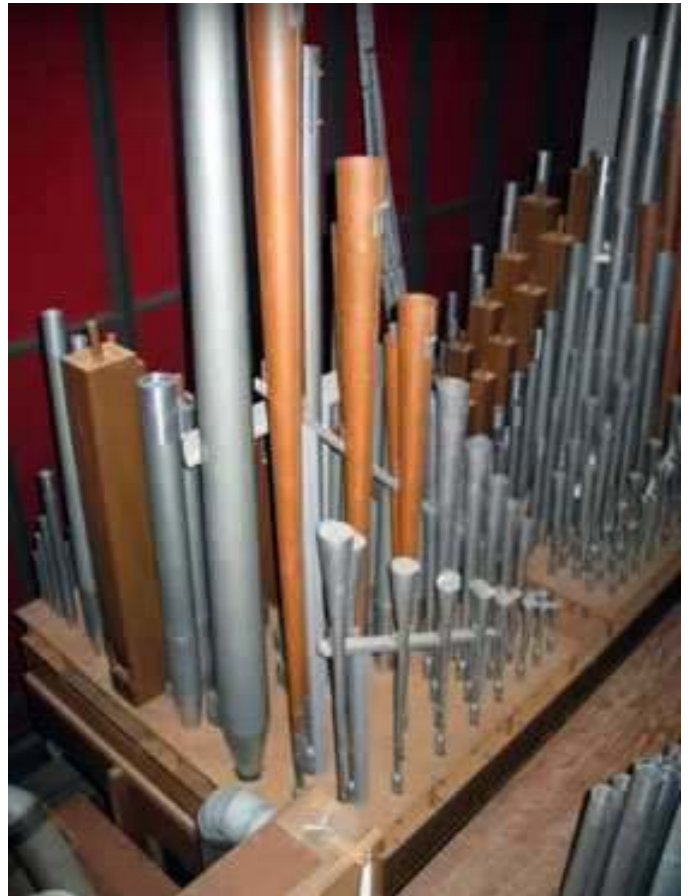
Swell Pedal

Crescendo Pedal

Sforzando Reversible (pedal latch-down)

SSL Combination Action (32 levels, replacing original setter-board)

The entire organ is under 2 ¾ inches wind pressure.



Lower Church

The lower church is designed to provide an element of privacy. If the upper church is grand and monumental, the lower church is close and intimate. It is characterized by rather low ceilings and diffused light, thereby creating an atmosphere suitable for meditation and private prayer.

Assumption Chapel



As visitors descend from the baptistery, they are momentarily confused by two elements that seem to vie for attention. The larger of these is the Assumption Chapel, the place of worship for special groups, as well as a place for private devotions. The second is the relic chapel between the two staircases that descend from the baptistery.

Reliquary Chapel

The church has always felt the need for giving its followers positive and emphatic examples that will direct their thoughts toward the truth that “will make them free” (John 8:32). The church has found this example in the martyrs who valued their faith above all things and were willing to surrender life itself in order to preserve that faith intact. A veneration of the relics of martyrs has therefore been an integral part of Christian devotion from earliest times.



However exaggerated some developments of this veneration were in the past, they do not vitiate the fundamental concept. In its relic chapel, Saint John's Abbey Church preserves this authentic and primitive Christian tradition in a setting that recalls the best elements of this witness of its martyrs. In the center is an altar built over the complete remains of the martyr Saint Peregrine. This practice is reminiscent of the ancient custom of erecting altars over the tombs of martyrs, perhaps best exemplified today by Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, which is built over the tomb of the apostle Peter. As in typical catacomb chapels, the altar-tomb in the Abbey Church is surrounded by the burial niches of many other martyrs, though here the niches are occupied not by the bodies of saints but by reliquaries containing fragments of their bones. The random shapes and arrangement of the niches suggest the spontaneous character of the catacomb burials, which were carried out on momentary notice and without design. This random arrangement of the burial niches of the relic chapel is continued in the windows extending along the north wall of the lower church to the right and left of the shrine. The theme of catacombs and martyrs therefore becomes the dominating feature of the rear wall of the Assumption Chapel.

Private Chapels



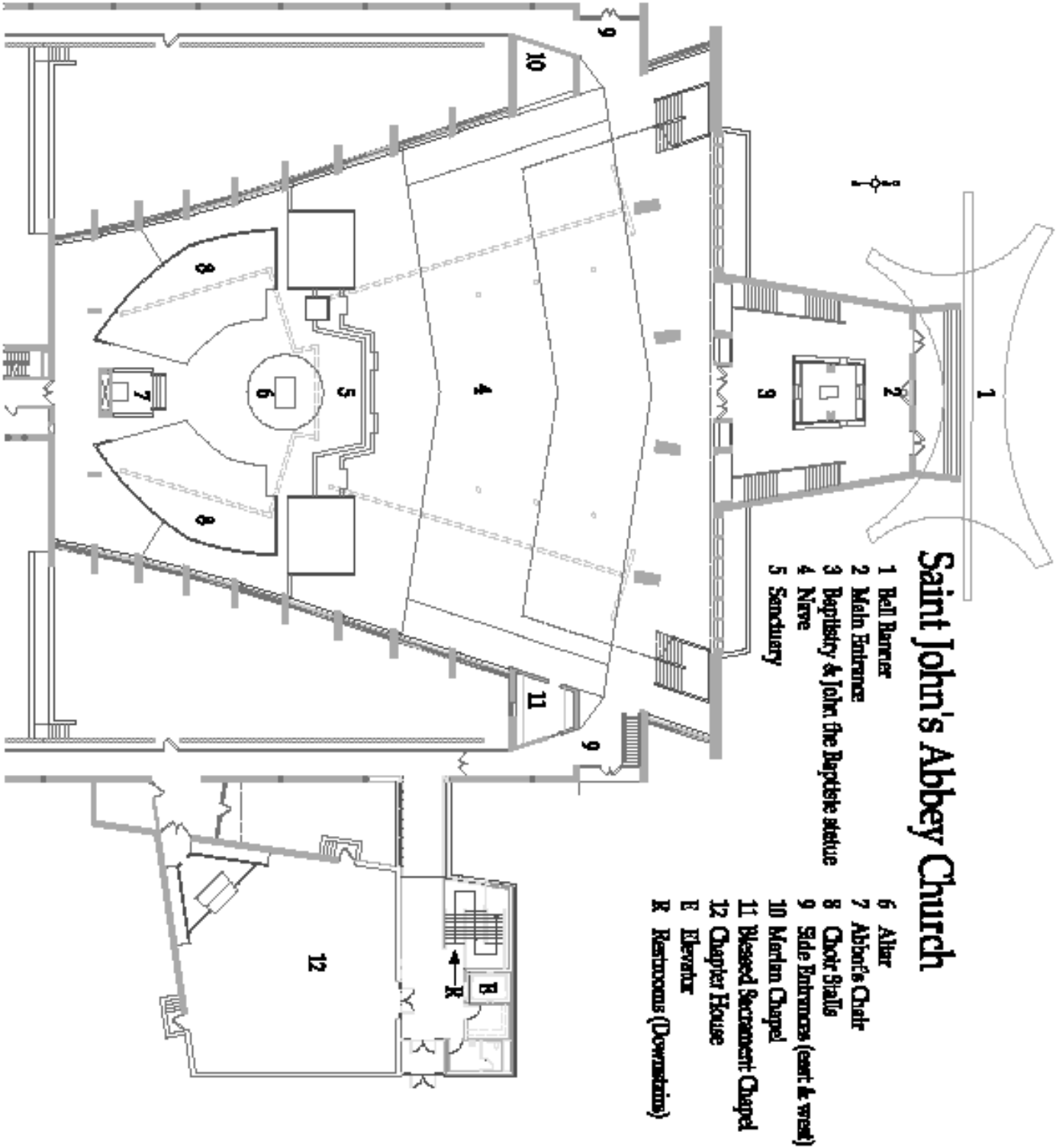
On either side of the Assumption Chapel is a corridor with private chapels, seventeen in each row. These chapels hark back to a pre-Vatican II practice when each priest was encouraged by church law to celebrate daily Mass, a practice that fell by the wayside when the Second Vatican Council reintroduced the ancient practice of concelebration, thus making obsolete the need for so many chapels. Before this change took place, in a monastic community that had many priests in its membership, numerous chapels were necessary to deal with the requirement of the numerous daily Masses. Each of the chapels is conceived of as a church in miniature. Each altar has been given independent architectural expression as a free-standing "table of the Lord," and its importance is emphasized by its raised platform and baldachin. Half of the altars were designed by the architect, Marcel Breuer (1902–1981), and the other half by Frank Kacmarcik, OLSB (1920–2004). The individuality of the chapels has been further emphasized by the manner in which the particular patrons have been portrayed. Every altar is dedicated in honor of a saint whose relics are enclosed, if possible, in the altar. The saint's image on the wall of the chapel is a visual presentation of the heavenly patron. This special and diverse presentation of each heavenly patron illustrates the marvelous diversity of God's graces. As they now stand beside the altars, each of them reminds us that it is only through the graces dispensed from the altar that we too will be able to rise from the uncertain and confused existence of this world to the blessed fulfillment of eternal glory. In addition to the image of the patron of each chapel, a unique crucifix hangs over the altar, reminding the celebrant of Christ's salvific sacrifice.

Saint Benedict's Chapel



Between the two rows of chapels, at the rear of the crypt and at the basement entry from the monastic cloister, is the Chapel of Saint Benedict. The atmosphere of peace and recollection that prevails in the chapel provides opportunity for private prayer or meditation for any member of the monastic community. Here, too, the Blessed Sacrament is reserved in a tabernacle. The monastic community occasionally uses this space for the celebration of Eucharist and Evening Prayer when the upper church space is being used by other groups.

APPENDIX
Church Floorplan



MARY, THRONE OF WISDOM

TWELFTH CENTURY STATUE, TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY ICON

by Catherine Combier-Donovan

The lovely "Seat of Wisdom" statue in the Saint John's Abbey Church in Collegeville, Minnesota, was carved from one piece of walnut with no trace of an original joint anywhere. The back of the statue was hollowed out, not to be used as a reliquary but to remove the center core of the log that would shrink more slowly than the outside, and perhaps also to lighten the weight of it. Since the drapery "calligraphy" or fold pattern usually characterizes regional styles, the provenance of this one appears to be from Burgundian workshops in the second half of the twelfth century. The statues follow the rigid conventions of the genre. Large hand open, the Mother is presenting the Redeemer to the world with the unique dignity of the Theotokos, while her other hand often tenderly and lightly holding him. Though the pose is always quite static when seen from the front, viewed in profile there is vitality implicit in the forward thrust of the heads of both Mother and Child. The statues radiate serenity and majesty, welcome and gift, immanence and transcendence. Almost all of the statues still rest in their original churches or chapels, serving as a sacramental image of the Dwelling Place of God.



Though far from a Romanesque church, the Marcel Breuer Abbey Church of Saint John's has the same massive, earth-bound architecture, minus the curves. In this church, the Throne of Wisdom statue plays a similar iconographic role, reminding all who worship there of the merging point of the humanity and Divinity of Christ, and the role of Mary in the Incarnation and Redemption story. It also serves as a reminder that in the contemporary church, we too need symbols that speak our story beyond words, and that a work of art may be the most expressive way.

Reproductions of this beautiful statue are available in wood toned resin, bronze toned resin or antique/copper toned resin.

ABBEY ICONS

Set in the ambo of the Abbey Church is an original icon that marks the liturgical season being celebrated. As the season changes, a different icon is displayed.

- During the Easter season, we have two different icons that are possibly on display at any given time. (1) A marvelous icon of Christ's resurrection, written by Aidan Hart. Written in the orthodox style (in keeping with this style, there are no nail marks in Jesus' hands and feet), the icon shows the resurrected Christ after having released Adam and Eve, John the Baptist (the patron of Saint John's), and King David. (2) A lovely icon of Mary Magdalene finding the resurrected Christ in the garden on Easter Sunday, written by Sister Marie-Paul Farran, OSB, of Mount Olives, Jerusalem.
- During Ordinary Time, we have two different icons that are possibly on display at any given time. (1) An icon of our patron, Saint John the Baptist, or (2) the Pantocrator. Both written by Aidan Hart.
- During Advent, an icon of the Annunciation, written by Aidan Hart.
- During the Christmas season, (1) a beautiful icon of Our Lady of Tenderness, showing Mary, Mother of Jesus, holding the infant Jesus, written by Father Nathanael Hauser, OSB, and (2) the Nativity, written by Aidan Hart.

- During Lent, an icon of Christ in the Desert, written by Aidan Hart.
- The Transfiguration, written by Aidan Hart.

THE RELICS OF COLLEGEVILLE: SOUVENIRS OF THE SAINTS

by Michael Kwatera, OSB *The Abbey Banner* Fall 2002



In his *Rule* for monks, Saint Benedict encourages them to “keep death daily before one’s eyes.” He wasn’t being morbid. The “man of God” knew that our passing-over with Jesus Christ to eternal life is the fulfillment of our earthly life. One way that the Church has revered the mystery of death leading to life is its practice of venerating the relics or bodily remains of saints. Saint Augustine (354–430) observed that “the bodies of our deceased must not be treated lightly or disregarded, particularly the bodies of the faithful or of the virtuous; for these bodies were used by their souls in a holy manner as instruments of all their good works.”



After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, careful search for human remains in the rubble of the World Trade Center was followed by especially reverent treatment of them when found. Here, separated by sixteen centuries, we find the same wholesome, human instinct: a desire to venerate the memory of the deceased by honoring their remains.

From earliest times the Christian community showed special honor for martyrs. The bones of the mid-second century martyred bishop, Saint Polycarp, were considered more precious than jewels and more valuable than gold. They were laid away in a suitable place where Christians celebrated his martyrdom.

The burial places of the martyrs became the sites of Christian churches. Eventually every altar became a kind of tomb for the saints, for the altar was required to contain at least one relic of a saint (usually a particle of bone). The Middle Ages witnessed a lively traffic in relics, many of which lacked authenticity. The sixteenth-century reformer Martin Luther rightly condemned such abuses.

Today, relics “may be placed *beneath* the altar, as long as the relics are of a size sufficient for them to be recognizable as parts of the human body and that they are of undoubted authenticity” (*Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*, United States Catholic Conference, 2000, no. 60).

Such was the provision made for the body of Saint Peregrine in Saint John’s Abbey Church. This second-century boy martyr was tortured and burned to death in Rome. His body found a resting place in the Benedictine abbey church in Neustadt-am-Main. When fire destroyed the church in 1854, his relics were saved and later passed into the possession of the noble Lowenstein family in Bavaria.

In 1895 Gerard Spielmann, OSB, a monk of Saint John’s Abbey, petitioned Prince Karl-Heinz for possession of the relics which were then transferred to Saint Anselm’s Church, Bronx, New York, a parish staffed by Collegeville Benedictines. The relics were moved and solemnly enshrined in the former Saint John’s Abbey Church on May 6, 1928, and were later placed with other relics in the relic shrine in the lower abbey church.

Saint Peregrine's remains are covered in gold and silver-embroidered silk and ornamented with jewels. He is preserved in a glass reliquary beneath an altar of bush-hammered concrete. The surrounding relic niches with their vigil lights suggest the burial places carved into the walls of the Roman catacombs.

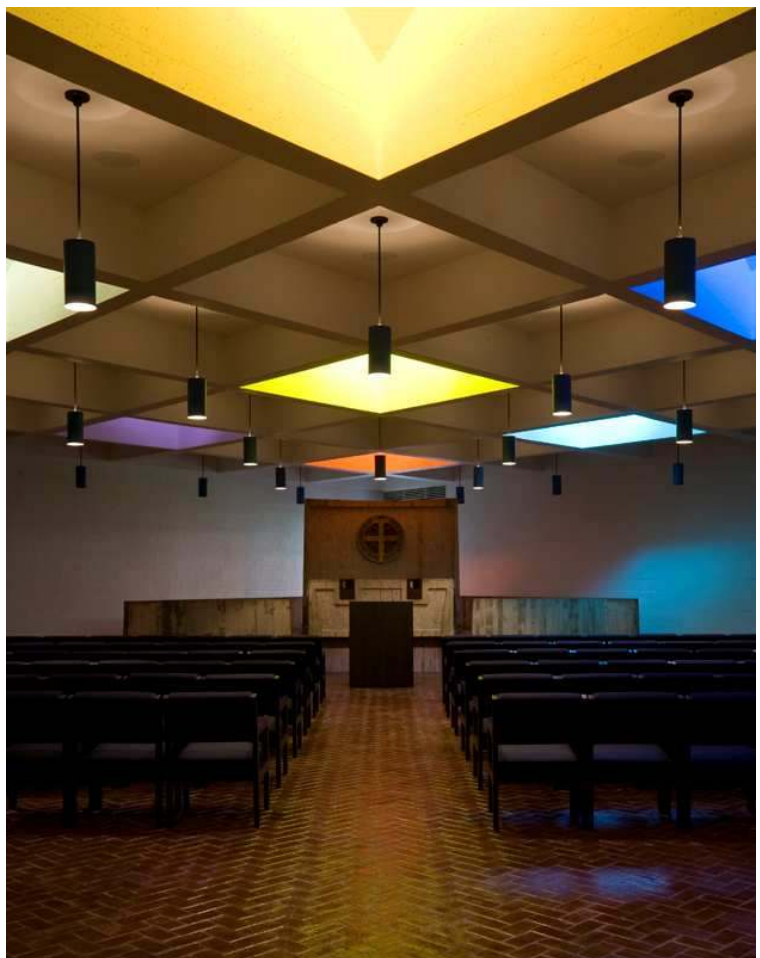
These relics represent saints from antiquity to the twentieth century. Among them are saints associated with the history and work of Saint John's, for example, Saint Benedict, the order's founder, and Saint John the Baptist, the abbey's patron. Saint John's also has several relics of the true cross on which Jesus died.

There are three classes of relics: (1) the body or part of the body of a saint; (2) a piece of clothing worn by a saint or an article used by a saint; (3) something that has decorated or touched a saint's tomb.

Relics are displayed in reliquaries, that is, vessels, cases, containers or repositories made of precious metals, gilded wood or glass. The reliquaries invite us to examine their contents, decipher the Latin inscription of the saint's name and remember the saint. All the reliquaries in the Collegeville relic shrine make it a kind of "Saint John's catacombs." Keeping relics is much like our human instinct of retaining keepsakes from people who are dear to us in this life. The Church honors the relics of the saints because through their bodies they brought the Lord's salvation to others, just as Jesus did. The relics at Saint John's bear witness to this truth.

ABBEY CHAPTER HOUSE

The chapter house connects directly to the east side of the Abbey Church. Historically, the space derives its name from the practice of the abbot meeting daily with the community of monks to discuss matters concerning the monastery and its inhabitants. These meetings began with a reading aloud a chapter from the *Rule* of Saint Benedict, as well as a passage from the Bible. The reading of the chapter of the *Rule* in time became associated with the meeting itself, and individual monks were referred to as members of the chapter, or capitulars, and the building became known as the chapter house. The recently renovated chapter house at Saint John's serves as the monastic community's main meeting room, but also serves the public as a space that can be used for various types of functions such as retreat conferences, workshops, and seminars. The facility's location near the Abbey Guesthouse provides an excellent venue for programs related to guesthouse activities. Besides the meeting room, the Abbey Chapter House includes a lobby area; an elevator allowing parishioners, students, guests, and visitors easy access to the church; large restrooms; a bride's room and a groom's room; and a tunnel connection to the guesthouse for use especially during inclement weather. The meeting room itself is one of the finest meeting spaces on campus. The beautifully coffered ceiling is light-illuminated through stained



and colorful stained glass windows. The ceiling is coffered and illuminated by colorful pendant lights. The floor is made of dark wood with a herringbone pattern. The room is furnished with rows of dark wooden chairs facing a stage area with a wooden altar and a large cross on the wall.

glass designed by Josef Albers (1888–1976). The comfortable furnishings were fabricated by Abbey Woodworking. The emblem at the front of the room, on the backdrop of the dais, is a representation of the Jubilee Medal of Saint Benedict.

The lobby area boasts a woodprint of Pope John XXIII, pope when the Abbey Church was blessed. The print is by local artist Joseph O'Connell (1927–1995).

The stairwell in the lobby leads down to a miniature gallery and the area where restrooms are located. It also leads to a lower connection to the Abbey Church as well as the tunnel connection to the Abbey Guesthouse. Hanging in the stairwell is a beautiful iron sculpture of the crucifixion sculpted by Gerald Bonnette (1931–1988). The renovation of the Chapter House and its addition were completed by Vincent James (VJAA) in 2007.