

Dear Bishop Malesic,

The Ritual for Dedication of a Church calls for a few brief notes explaining, “what the new church expresses in its art and in its own special design.” I am grateful to Fr. Turner, to our entire seminary community, and to you for the opportunity to share these highlights.

Built of Living Stones, The United States Conference of Catholic Bishop’s document of Guidelines on Art, Architecture and Worship, paragraph 276 states, “The most technically brilliant architecture can lack a Christian soul if it does not house a community with the mind and heart of Christ.” Mindful that the real goal of such a work as this is to inspire the Christian soul, with your guidance and input, the faculty, staff, seminarians, and the community gathered around us sought to preserve a sense of continuity with the generations of faithful who have worshiped in this space, while being attentive the needs of the Church today and our hopes for those who will follow us.

One of the greatest contributions among the deliberations of this community as it contemplated what this renovation might achieve, is encapsulated with the sentiment, “whatever we do, it should look like it was always meant to be here.” This initiated a conversation about this chapel’s aesthetic characteristics that were worth preserving and an appeal to communicate something of the timeless.

To accomplish this, we noted that the statue niches you see before you in each nave and the major arches marking the transition from nave into the sanctuary, are characteristically Romanesque. The new reredos you now see before you was crafted with this in mind and its shape echoes those niches. The columns you see on those became the pattern for the columns you see in the reredos and in the altar and ambo.

The proportioning of the reredos in the space of the sanctuary follows classical architectural ratios. Both the reredos and altar before it make ample use of the “golden ratio” from architecture which delivers a sense

of harmony and rest and stability to the human eye. The Shrine area around our Mary Seat of Wisdom statue received a new smaller reredos styled after the Sanctuary reredos to help tie these two areas together.

The beautiful colors of the stained-glass windows played a key role in leading us to a new palette of colors that, together with all the wood features, would return a sense of warmth to this space. The pews were refinished and stained to match the reredos.

To highlight the large arches before us, and the liminal characteristic they serve, stenciling was added with colors drawn from the existing windows.

So that all who worship here can participate with even great focus in this small space, the sanctuary floor was elevated about 8 inches in total allowing for three steps shorter into the sanctuary, which hints at a Trinitarian connection.

The Ambo and Presider's Chairs we also repositioned to improve visibility for both celebrants and assembly alike.

The altar candle stands which you will soon see, were matched to a similar aesthetic to the candles in our Marian shrine which came to this seminary from St. Mary's previous location on Ansel Road.

The statues you see on the walls came from the Borromeo High School dormitories, except for our new St. Anthony statue which Henninger's helped match to our collection. All of these wooden statues were stained or lightened to match the corpus of Jesus on the Crucifix which had previously hung in our Aula Magna.

To inspire hearts and minds in accord with the new Program for Priestly formation, these statues were intentionally placed. In the East (Borromeo) wing, where our seminarians are focused on discipleship, of learning what it means to be a Christian man, and being a student of

philosophy, the saints represented there are all Prophets or Doctors of the Church, including the two smaller statues in the niches of St. Borromeo and St. Terese of Lisieux. In the Main Nave, recognizing that as seminarians move from the discipleship stage of formation at Borromeo into a configuration stage of formation at St. Mary's where they are to become more configured to Christ and ever greater witnesses to the Gospel He proclaimed, the saints represented there after Mary and Joseph, are all Apostles and Martyrs, all whom gave at their deaths a complete witness to the faith we are to called to emulate.

That those who pray here might always recall the immediate context of this space, the new altar with its new mosaic of the pelican takes us to the altar of our Cathedral Church. This connection also shines through the stars added to the ceiling above which are placed in a pattern reminiscent of the stars as they would have appeared on the morning of April 23, 1847 looking straight up from Cleveland, Ohio. This date, of course, is the date our diocese was erected from the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

But, context runs much deeper than our Local Church. To bring the local into the universal, this project saw the restoration of the original tabernacle installed in 1948 by the Good Shepherd Sisters when they began Marycrest School for girls on this site. It had been preserved in our Borromeo seminary archive. Henninger's graciously restored it and in a stunning way.

To draw the imagination ever deeper into the Eucharistic mystery we will celebrate here each day, the stars behind tabernacle and Cross, same as the stars on the ceiling, were designed to look like the stars around the crown of Mary as she's depicted in the Immaculate Heart of Mary window in the Main Nave. But, on the reredos, they were placed with the thought to tie together both the mystery of our Lord's Incarnation on the morning of the Annunciation, with our Lord's victory on Calvary, the mystery of his Passion, death, and resurrection in Jerusalem. Thus, these stars are modeled after the stars as they would have appeared on the

morning of the Feast of the Annunciation when Jesus was conceived in the flesh, but looking East from Jerusalem. It adds a layer of meaning for us which helps connect the Real Presence of Our Incarnate Lord reserved in the Tabernacle directly to the Cross he endured to bring us this gift.

And so here, at last, in this special place prepared for us, we can now join the mystics of our faith who recognize that, “from the vast abyss past the stars above”, charity abounds in all things as the light of God’s mercy shines on those who never cease to sing God’s praises!