

## The Church Building

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General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM, 2011): For the celebration of the Eucharist, the People of God are normally gathered together in a church or, if there is no church or if it is too small, then in another respectable place that is nonetheless *worthy of so great a mystery*. Therefore, churches or other places should be suitable for carrying out *the sacred action* and for ensuring the active participation of the faithful. *Moreover, sacred buildings and requisites for divine worship should be truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities.*<sup>1</sup>

1. Sanctuary: “the place where the altar stands, the Word of God is proclaimed, and the Priest, the Deacon or other ministers exercise their functions” (GIRM no. 295).
2. Altar: “on which is effected the Sacrifice of the Cross” (GIRM no. 296-306)
3. Candlesticks: “on the altar or around it” (GIRM no. 307)
4. Cross: “the figure of Christ crucified upon it” (GIRM no. 308)
5. Ambo: “from which [the Word of God] may be proclaimed” (GIRM no. 309)
6. Chair: “the chair of the priest Celebrant” (GIRM no. 310)
7. Seats: “benches or seating usually should be provided” (GIRM no. 311)
8. Choir: “the *schola cantorum* (choir)” (GIRM no. 312)
9. Tabernacle: “the Blessed Sacrament should be reserved in a tabernacle” (GIRM no. 314)
10. Sanctuary Lamp: “near the tabernacle a special lamp” (GIRM no. 316)
11. Sacred Images: “images of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and of the Saints” (GIRM no. 318)

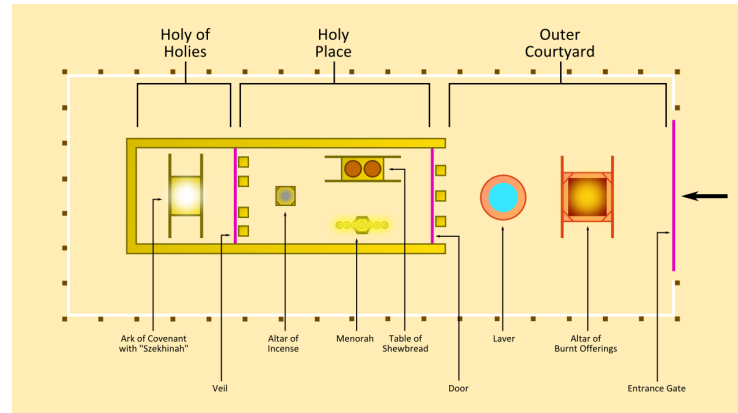
## The Jewish Temple

### The Tabernacle of Moses

And let them make me a *sanctuary* [Hebrew *miqdash* “holy place”; Latin *sanctuarium*], *that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the tabernacle, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it...* (Exodus 25:8-8)

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<sup>1</sup> *General Instruction of the Roman Missal*, no. 288. In *The Roman Missal*, 58.



### **The Altar of Sacrifice**

*You shall make the altar of acacia wood, five cubits long and five cubits broad; the altar shall be square... You shall overlay it with bronze... You shall make it hollow, with boards; as it has been shown you on the mountain, so shall it be made. (Exodus 27:1-2, 8)*

### **The Gold Lampstand**

*You shall make a lampstand (Hebrew menorah) of pure gold... You shall make the seven lamps for it; and the lamps shall be set up so as to give light... See that you make them according to the pattern for them, which is being shown you on the mountain. (Exodus 25:31, 37, 40)*

### **The Ark and the Cherubim**

*They shall make an ark of acacia wood... You shall overlay it with pure gold... You shall make two cherubim of gold... The cherubim shall spread out their wings above, overshadowing the mercy seat with their wings... You shall put the mercy seat on the top of the ark; and in the ark you shall put the covenant that I shall give you... (Exodus 25:10-21)*

### **The Chanting of the Psalms**

*These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark rested there. They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the Lord in Jerusalem... (1 Chronicles 6:31-42; cf. Psalms 1-150)*

## **The Jewish Synagogue**

### **The Reading of the Law from the Pulpit**

*And Ezra the priest brought the law (Hebrew torah) before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding.... And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men*

*and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. And Ezra the scribe stood on a wooden pulpit which they had made for the purpose... And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was above all the people; and when he opened it all the people stood. And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God; and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands; and they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. ...The Levites, helped the people to understand the law, while the people remained in their places. And they read from the book, from the law of God, clearly; and they gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. (Nehemiah 8:2-8)*

### **Moses' "Chair" and the "Seats" in the Synagogue**

Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on *the chair* (Greek *kathedra*) of Moses; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach... They love to have... *the best seats in the synagogues*... (Matthew 23:1-7)

## **The Mystery**

### **The New Temple**

William Durandus (13<sup>th</sup> century): *It is from both the tabernacle and the temple that our material church has taken its form... It is in imitation of this [ark] that in some churches, like in the temple of Solomon, an ark or tabernacle is placed on the altar.*<sup>2</sup>

### **The New Synagogue**

St. Isidore of Seville (7<sup>th</sup> Century): Tradition teaches that to proclaim reading is an ancient institution of the Jews. For indeed on the legitimate and prescribed days they used readings from the Law and the Prophets *in the synagogues*. [The churches of Christ preserve this by ancient institution of the Fathers.].<sup>3</sup>

### **The Heavenly Temple**

1. Sanctuary: "God's temple in heaven was opened" (Rev 11:19)
2. Altar: heavenly "altar" (Rev 8::3)
3. Candlesticks: seven "golden lampstands" (Rev 1:12)
4. Cross: a "Lamb standing as though slain" (Rev 5:6)
5. Ambo: a "scroll" is opened and read (Rev 5:1-5)
6. Chair: "a throne stood in heaven" (Rev 4:2-4)
7. Seats: "round the throne were twenty-four thrones" (Rev 4:4)
8. Choir: the elders in heaven "sing a new song" (Rev 14:1-4)
9. Tabernacle: "the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple" (Rev 11:19)

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<sup>2</sup> William Durandus, *Rationale of the Divine Offices* 1.1.5; 1.2.5. In Guillaume Durandus, *Rationale Divinorum Officiorum* (5 vols.; trans. Janet Gentles; s. l.: Paschal Light, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Isidore, *On the Ecclesiastical Offices*, 10.1-3. In Isidore of Seville, *De Ecclesiasticis Officiis* (trans. Thomas L. Knoebel; New York, N.Y./Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 2008).

10. Sanctuary Lamp: “seven golden lampstands”

(Rev 1:12)

11. Sacred Images: “the elders,” “four living creatures,” the “woman” (Rev 4:4-8; 12:1)

Catechism: To enter into the house of God, we must cross a *threshold*, which symbolizes passing from the world wounded by sin to the world of the new Life to which all men are called... *Our visible churches, holy places, are images of the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, toward which we are making our way on pilgrimage...* (CCC 1186, 1198)

### Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How does the Church building resemble the Jewish Temple? The Jewish Synagogue? In your experience, does your Church a “threshold” to the heavenly Jerusalem?

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2. In your experience, do most churches seem to be patterned on the Tabernacle or Jewish Synagogue? What about the Church you currently attend? In what ways are they similar and in what ways are they different?

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### For Further Reading

1. Duncan G. Stroik. *The Church Building as a Sacred Place: Beauty, Transcendence, and the Eternal*. Chicago, Ill.: Liturgy Training Publications, 2012.
2. Allan Doig. *Liturgy and Architecture: From the Early Church to the Middle Ages*. London: Routledge, 2008.
3. Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*. Translated by John Saward. San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius, 2000.