

Catechism on the Liturgy I,15

4. St. Charles states that windows should be constructed as high as possible, and in such a way that a person standing outside cannot look inside. They should be odd in number, and should be the principal source of illumination for the church. Their illumination must be such that the congregation is not prevented from having a clear view of the main and side altars. St. Charles also pointed out that nothing but the sky should be seen through the windows. However, if the windows are low, then they should be of stained glass.

5. The bell and bell towers are another vital component to the exterior of a church. They are to call the faithful to the Sacred Liturgy, to mark the times of the Consecration, the Divine Office, the Angelus, weddings, and funerals. The bells should be in a freestanding tower, or part of a tower that forms the façade of the church. If there is only one tower (two are the ideal), then it must be on the epistle or right side of the church. A cathedral should have seven bells, but even a humble church that can afford only one bell, should have a bell that can be played in two distinct manners (e.g., one way for funerals, another way for weddings). The tower is to be of solid construction, but the actual belfry should be open to all sides so that the sound can radiate in all directions.

6. The towers should have a fixed cross at their apex. A clock and weather vane may be incorporated into the bell tower's design. Unlike a regular clock, the face of a church clock should show the day's 3rd, 6th, 9th and 12th hours to mark the times of the Divine Office. The tower's fixed cross may serve as the vane's fixed shaft. The variable component should be the figure of a rooster. The fixed cross represents the solidity of faith, while the moveable cock represents the ever changing world – the variability of everything except faith. It reminds all of the denial of St. Peter.

7. The main altar and sanctuary should be the nave's axial focus. The transepts should be large enough to accommodate a side altar. If the church is not large enough to accommodate transepts, then the side altars should be the axial focus of the side aisles.

8. The floor of the sanctuary should have an odd number of steps above the floor of the nave. If possible, the sanctuary floor should be of a more durable, refined and carefully crafted material than the floor of the nave. The sanctuary vault should contain mosaic or other decorative work, to reflect the vault of heaven. The sanctuary should be large enough to easily accommodate a Solemn High Mass with all the ministers. The ambry (the covered inset into the wall in which are placed the Holy Oils) should be on the epistle side in the back wall of the sanctuary.

9. The main altar should rest on at least one step up from the floor of the sanctuary, and ideally three steps. It should be made of solid stone or faced with marble, and must contain relics of at least two saints. If it is not made of stone, then it should have an altar stone laid into the wood of the mensa (the table portion of the altar). The side altars should also contain relics, and support at least two devotional statues. The tabernacle should rest directly on the main altar, though there should be tabernacles on the side altars for use in such times as Holy Week. Interestingly, he says that the tabernacle for a Cathedral was not to be located on its main altar, but should be in a separate chapel dedicated for that purpose, adjacent to the sanctuary.

10. Since the sacrifice should be made during the daylight hours – especially the morning – he envisions that the light of the church should be primarily

natural, though the Lampadarium (holy lamp) and certain candles or lamps for the saints should be burning regardless of natural illumination. The Lampadarium should be in close physical proximity to the Blessed Sacrament, and ideally in the cathedral it would consist of seven lamps, to represent the seven spirits who constantly behold the face of God. The crucifix and candles are to be made of matching metal of superior quality.

11. Ideally there should be two ambones, one for the Epistle and the other for the Gospel. The pulpit is outside the sanctuary, and elevated high above the faithful, in the nave. A single pulpit may be used both as an ambo for the proclamation of scripture, and for preaching, but it is placed in the sanctuary on the Gospel side.

12. There should be two sacristies, one for vestments and the priests, and the other for working on the things needed for the sanctuary. If possible there is a vestibule near the main entrance, to facilitate the processions and recessions of the High Mass. In more modest churches it is in the sacristy.

13. The baptistery should be located within a separate chapel at the

rear of the church on the Gospel side. Ideally, it should have a stepped depression to signify descent into the sepulcher.

14. The confessionals must focus on the privacy for the penitent, while at the same time removing any appearance or avenue for inappropriate conduct or pecuniary gain.

15. He took great care to make sure that the images of God and the saints be appropriate, realistic, and reverent. The art must be so clear as to be unmistakable as to what it portrays, though symbolism may be used. If the image is obscure, then the name of the saint must be written under the image. No images were to be in the flooring, because they would not be properly honored there.

Please keep these guidelines in mind, so that when you see the drawings of what our new church will look like, you will see a structure which conforms itself closely to what St. Charles taught a church should look like.