

Divine Presence in Church

Symbols

The Catholic (which means universal) Church's faith observed through the ancient tradition of symbols is intended to keep you focused upon your relationship with the Divine. Symbols are visible, concrete images that stand before you, and yet point beyond themselves to greater images of Divine reality that cannot be seen. By your embracing the symbol, you embrace the greater Divine reality that has power not only to change your life, but transform your life into a new reality.

The Catholic Church embraces the doctrine that you are created by God. But, instead of you embracing the will of God for your humanity, you embrace the will of your soul that leads to human desires against the will of God. The signs of your fallen humanity are self-evident by the pain and suffering, violence and destruction of your life. These signs point to death, not to life. If you are living the signs of death in your life, then you cannot live the life God has promised you. You live in separation from the Divine. You live without understanding of Divine Truth, therefore live without freedom in the world.

All Christian symbols in the Church point to the greater Divine Truth that God came to free you through the life of one man, Jesus Christ. Christ reconciled you to God by His death upon the cross. God united you to Himself through the redemptive act of Christ and the cross.

Symbol of the Church

God's symbol of His divine relationship with you is through Christ's Body, the Church. The Church is the visible, concrete image of your humanity standing before the divine presence and God, through Jesus Christ as Saviour of your humanity, Lord of your life, and the head of your humanity, transforming your humanity into a new creation.

Symbol of the West Wall

When you enter the west door of an ancient cathedral, you view the figures of Adam and Eve, the

symbols of your human creation by God. The direction of west symbolizes the setting sun. Just as each day ends with the setting of the sun, so too will your life end one day in death. Your life is temporal, mortal, and fleeting. Your humanity, born of Adam and Eve, is born without the divine knowledge of finding your way back to God. Your first step through the doors of the Church begins your journey back to God.

With your first step, God intends for you to be given the free and willing choice to accept or reject His divine truth. Your acceptance means your willingness to acknowledge your fallen nature and your need to turn to God, who will give to you Jesus Christ to lead you back to God. Without your acceptance, you will remain incomplete until you willingly allow God to make you complete.

God invites you to stand in His divine presence and in the still point of your turning world know that He is God. The Church provides a space, known as the Nave, for you to be awakened to God.

Symbol of the Nave

The word nave, from the Latin word *navis* means ship. A ship's purpose is to cross water. When you step upon a ship, you entrust your life to the captain and crew for safe passage across the waters.

When you step into the nave of the church, you entrust your life to Christ, who is the Head of the Church. You entrust your life to those whom Christ calls as apostles and disciples to be the image of Himself and teach you to become His image, too.

God's divine promise to you, through Jesus Christ, is that your path to Him will be made straight and certain by Christ. All apostles and disciples should know that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life that leads them to God. Those who witness Christ, witness Him leading them to eternal life. It is by their example; Christ the center of their life, that will encourage you to accept Christ as the center of your life. If Christ is not the center of the Church, then there is no Church.

Symbol of the Chancel

As you face east, toward to rising sun and the beginning of a new day, you will discover a raised

platform. This area, known as the chancel, is reserved for the choir and the sanctuary in older buildings.

Songs touch every part of your being. Singing is the highest praise to God, your joyful noise unto the Lord. Therefore, song to the Divine is not intended to add spice to our worship. Song is our worship, our praise and thanks for a joyful heart opened to God.

The symbol of your thanksgiving for Christ's sharing His divine peace with you stands at the center of the sanctuary - the altar. A divine peace you cannot contain within you, but overflows to others who stand with you around the altar. A divine peace that is given by Christ the moment you submit the whole of your life to Him.

The altar, once the symbol of sacrifice for human sin, becomes through Christ, your sacrifice of thanksgiving. Disciples remember Christ's death for human sin, the divine promise to save us from this world in the hope of resurrection to eternal life. In thanksgiving at the altar we also proclaim a new life in Christ. There, we offer God bread, the symbol of life, and wine, the symbol of joy. God, through Christ, receives our offering, transforming the bread and wine into Christ's Body and Blood to sustain our lives unto everlasting life. Christ is present through His Body and Blood and by our partaking, Christ is present through us to the world.

Symbol of the Rood Screen

The division of the chancel from the nave in ancient cathedrals was marked by a screen made of wood, stone or metal. This screen symbolized the division between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of the world. These screens were meant to symbolize humanity's journey from the kingdom of the world to the Kingdom of God. Those who journey to the Kingdom of God do not pass through the screen unprepared.

You must allow God to prepare you to stand in His full, divine glory and light. To stand unprepared means certain, eternal death.

When the Crucifix (Christ's sacrifice to death upon the cross) is visible atop the screen, then it is called a Rood screen. The term Rood is the Old English word for the cross.

The Catholic tradition of the Rood screen symbolizes the divine truth that you cannot complete your journey back to God by your own way. God's divine way is for you to pass through the Rood screen opening, and therefore you must pass through Christ's cross to complete the journey to God.

The cross is Christ, the center between God and the world.

The divine truth of Christ and the Cross is that we pass from death to life (humanity living through Christ's life) to eternal life. Every disciple of Christ follows Christ instead of following themselves. It is here, at Christ's cross, every disciple remembers His command to "Deny yourself," or proclaim yourself as false and untrue without God.

A disciple upon denying themselves as untrue, then "takes up their cross," for Christ is the Way, the truth, and the Life - He leads to eternal life. The "taking up of the cross" does not mean you carry the cross. To do so would mean to make the cross a burden you carry through life. In time, when the cross becomes too heavy to carry, you will drop it. When a disciple "takes up their cross," they take up Christ, the true, divine life that leads to eternal life.

And then, when a disciple has first "denied themselves and taken up their cross," Christ commands them to "Follow Me." His command to His disciples was very clear and direct. "Anyone who does not deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me, cannot be my disciple."

Christ and the Cross is the center of the Church. Christ is the visible witness of divine presence within our humanity through the cross. Anyone who stands in the Nave of the Church must know what Christ commands them to do in His Name. Your acceptance of Christ means your acceptance of His cross. You who profess Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, must profess His cross that leads you to salvation.

Symbol of the East Wall

Finally, when our life's journey is over, the final image upon the east wall of the Church will be realized in us - Christ's final judgement. On this last day, disciples who follow the way of Christ shall be made worthy to stand before the full glory of God's presence for all eternity.

The divine truth of the last judgement is that disciples are not born, Christ makes them disciples by His cross. You, who Christ made a disciple live God's divine purpose - living your humanity wholly to God until the day you are wholly God's for all eternity.

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