



SSPX



Regina Coeli Report

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Religious Symbolism

Here is a primer on religious art and symbolism. How do symbols affect us? What is the purpose of art? We'll address these questions along with picturesque examples.

Every art worthy of the name is a vehicle of a high and noble concepts for the spectator. Art is the best fruit of culture, but culture itself is the fruit of a developed society which has the leisure to produce artistic works. A work is artful when it expresses higher truths through material elements, like canvas or stone.

Applying this definition to religion, we can say that religious art brings man in touch with God through his senses. Man is body and soul and knows spiritual truths by the mediation of the senses. Man connects with the mysterious world of God through the window

of art. Art is the divine touch dressed up in stone, sound, or paper.

We also get an integral experience of art in the Catholic liturgy. Think of the iconostasis with endless incensations by the mitred ministers of the Byzantine Rite. Recall attending a Pontifical Latin Mass in the decorum of an old cathedral, and you get the fullness of religious art: richly dressed ministers with perfectly choreographed movements; chant both old and polyphonic accompanied with a baroque organ; the stained-glassed windows and reredos; and the ornate chalice placed on the highly decorated altar.

All this expresses art as the ultimate human oblation to God. God deserves the best of what man can offer Him and religious art is a natural vehicle for it.

Letter from the District Superior



Dear Readers,

I pray that this Report finds you well. Many of our readers have told us about their various experiences of the stress imposed by the recent lockdowns.

Throughout the COVID-19 (“Coronavirus”) crisis, while preserving the necessary prudence, our priests and religious throughout the U.S. District have done wonders to provide their flocks with the sacraments under new and uncommon circumstances. Some photos included here reveal some of the District’s response. Right from the beginning, we have made sure that spiritual talks were on hand to feed your minds and souls. We have also started a Rosary Crusade for the material and spiritual well-being of our faithful. And we have kept busy offering essential reading with our regular letters and magazines.

Prayer, reflection, and contemplation: these are the weapons of the Christian soul under pressure. I recall reading *The Gulag Archipelago* by Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Although one of the bleakest books ever written, its conclusion contains a glimpse of hope with the example of that one Catholic woman—a rarity in Orthodox Russia—who stood up to the brutal regime: “You can take away my physical liberty, you cannot bind my soul and my conscience.”

One simple prayer of a believing soul has the virtue to blow away the bars of any jail. Charles de Foucault likewise said: “Have truly the Faith which takes away from your vocabulary words like weariness, peril, and fear.”

Indeed, few of us have passed unharmed during the pandemic chaos. Now, however, we may learn from this trial and quickly get back on the saddle again and promise ourselves to keep our priorities straight. The *Imitation of Christ* teaches us that “temptation does not make us weak but shows us who we are.” When we rely too much on ourselves, that is when we start sinking, like St. Peter walking on the waters during the storm: we need to keep our eyes fixed on Our Blessed Lord, who is our rock and our strength.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jürgen Wegner".

Fr. Jürgen Wegner

Seeing Visions: Catholic Symbolism in Art

“There is nothing that I tell you with more eager desire that you should believe—nothing with wider underground in my experience...than this, that you will never love art well, till you love what she mirrors better.”

— John Ruskin, *Eagles’ Nest*, Lec. II.41

Having attempted to teach Christian symbolism for the past 20-some years, I am beginning to see that it is indeed “a veritable hieroglyphic, a sacred writing of which every artist must learn the characters” (Émile Mâle¹). High school students and observant teaching assistants alike have had similar struggles deciphering the coded images in the art and architecture of a more ancient Catholic Church. An impulsive response is often to discredit the medieval mind as gullible and naïve. However, as the Benedictine author/artist Hubert Van Zeller explains, “The ultimate mysteries are the stuff of Romanesque sculpture, and if we think of it only as the use of decorative formula...we have missed the whole significance.” On this topic, a humble approach brings wisdom.

Numerical Symbolism

Numbers have symbolic functions. “Medieval iconography is obedience to the rules of a kind of sacred mathematics” (Émile Mâle). Both St. Jerome and

¹ Émile Mâle was a French art historian and one of the first to study sacred medieval art and the ways in which it was influenced by Eastern European iconography.



St. Augustine pondered the number of fish St. Peter pulled out of the Sea of Galilee in John 21:11: “Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken.”

St. Jerome sees the number as the known fish of his day and thus all men. St. Augustine states “This is a great mystery ... Accordingly, inasmuch as there were seven disciples taking part in that fishing, Peter, and Thomas, and Nathaniel, and the two sons of Zebedee, and two others whose names are withheld, they point, by their septenary number [7], to



the end of time. For there is a revolution of all time in seven days. To this also pertains the statement, that when the morning had come, Jesus stood on the shore; for the shore likewise is the limit of the sea, and signifies therefore the end of the world.”² So, the 153 fish signify the fullness of the Church in Peter’s boat (7), filled with the Holy Spirit (7), perfected by adding one for unity in her faith ($7 \times 7 + 1 = 50$) and multiplying by (3) and adding (3) for faith in the most holy Trinity = 153.

Shapely Symbols

From numbers we turn to shapes and geometric forms, the building blocks of church design which speak to us as well. The circle—oneness and infinity; the square—the world, the altar, *etc.* It is not by chance that an equilateral triangle lies at the points in the summit of the Gothic arch; nor the graceful increase of the golden spiral in a hurricane or the seed pattern of a sunflower.

To the Medieval mind, the form of a building and all of its details could teach lessons otherwise inaccessible to the common man. Speaking of Notre Dame de Chartres Cathedral, J.K. Huysmans (French novelist and art critic) states, “Everything was contained in that building: the scriptures, theology, history of the human race...thanks to symbol-

ism, a pile of stones may be a macrocosm.”

One of the most ubiquitous of these analogies is the cross. Churches such as Hagia Sophia, Chartres Cathedral, and St. Peter’s Basilica all lie on a cross-shaped floor plan. This seems obvious to us, but merely because we have not forgotten it. “For the circle is perfect and infinite in its nature; but it is fixed for ever in its size; it can never be larger or smaller. But the cross, though it has at its heart a collision and a contradiction, can extend its four arms for ever without altering its shape” (*Orthodoxy*, by G.K. Chesterton).

Intrinsic to Creation

At first glance this symbolic language seems to be encyclopedic but arbitrary. The owl symbolizes the monk; the eagle, the ascension. Eventually one comes to see that these “mirrors” into deeper realities—spiritual or supernatural—are intrinsic to the created world and are ordered by an omnipotent God. In previous centuries they were understood by a culture that was less artificial and more expectant. The hidden messages were more easily interpreted because they were rooted in the foundations of the world. Otto von Simson (Scholar of medieval and renaissance architectural and art history) states that “for us the symbol is an image that invests physical reality with poetical meaning. For medieval man the symbolic instinct is the only

² Matthew 13:48-49 St. Augustine, *Tractate 122* (John 20:30-21:11), section 8



reliable guide to understanding.” The symbol is not applied over the reality: it is merely contained in created reality which is God’s word to us.

Color and Time

One of my favorite stories, discovered first in Victoria Finlay’s book *Color*, is that of the color red—or in the language of Isidore of Seville: “cinnabar.” Pliny narrates that the color is the aftermath of a struggle of an elephant (believable enough to us, though the “impossible animal” of the middle ages) and its mortal enemy the dragon (not as common, perhaps, in our mind). After trying to scrape the dragon off his back by leaning against a rock, the elephant falls to the ground and crushes the dragon beneath him. The mixing of their blood makes the color “cinnabar.” This is what the “gullible” medieval mind believed. The elephant is an analogy of man: cumbersome body, long memory. His enemy, the dragon, has symbolic roots as deep as Scripture. Incredibly enough though, the elephant (grey and heavy like the substance mercury) and the dragon (yellow and pungent, like the demonic sulphur) when mixed, form the color cinnabar. Perhaps the medieval mind has something to teach us after all.

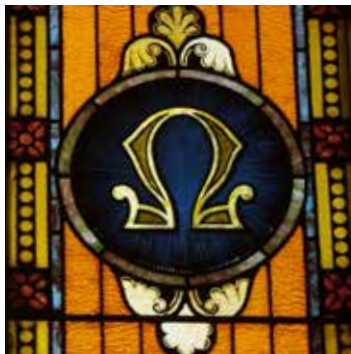
Unlike the frenzied world of today, Medieval man lived his year in a sequence that was natural and liturgical, imperative and essential. Similarly, St.

Bernard saw the history of the world as a garden. Medieval man understood his labors as mirrors of the divine plan: the sower, the harvest, the hunter. Stained glass windows in churches depicted such farmers, but they were understood to represent the Apostles and the Eternal Judge as well.

Seeing With a Medieval Eye

Art historian Émile Mâle states: “Such a constant use of symbolism will astonish those unfamiliar with medieval artists...What is significant is the scorn for things of sense, and the profound conviction that reaching out to the immaterial through the material, man may have fleeting visions of God.”

We are surprised at this cryptic symbolic language and perhaps feel burdened by it. But this way of seeing is fixed in another Reality. It is hard for us because, as the makers of the Fellowship of the Ring understand, “Some things that should not have been forgotten were lost. History became legend. Legend became myth. And for two and a half thousand years the ring passed out of all knowledge.” The wise man, who sees Reality as it is and understands what it was made for, is not duped by appearances and must not be scandalized by deeper significance. To see with humility is to see things as they really are without assuming that one’s own generation has the clearest vision.



Christian Symbolism

Interview with Brother Marcel

What do we mean by the word symbolism?

Symbolism is an image that expresses an idea beyond mere appearances. The Sacraments are an outward sign of something invisible. A picture is worth a thousand words as the saying goes. The symbol summarizes in an image an idea, a doctrine.

Why is it employed in religious art?

Religious symbolism invites contemplation. Paganism employed symbols. Ancient Egyptian artwork depicts the scarab (kheper) beetle (an incarnation of the Sun-God “Khepri”) rolling a dungball (the sun) across the “sky.” Moses’ Brazen Serpent, a bronze image of a serpent upon a Tau cross, was a figure of redemption through the Cross. Those bitten by the plague of vipers (sin) were cured by looking at it. The serpent is not always a symbol of evil but also one of wisdom. Christ is the Wisdom of God. The Paschal Lamb was also a symbol of Christ’s redemptive crucifixion which the Jews failed to recognize. Symbols are vehicles which represent and convey a truth beyond the sign itself. St. Patrick’s shamrock convinced the Irish of the Trinity. The Litany of Our Lady contain examples pregnant with meaning, like “Ark of the Covenant.” The ark (Our Lady) enclosed the Ten Commandments, the manna and Aaron’s rod. Christ is the new manna, gave the commandments and is the Eternal High Priest. Our Lady encloses God within her womb.



Brother Marcel, SSPX

How is the meaning of symbols conveyed?

In our present circumstances the promotion of contemplation through symbols in sacred images is very difficult. We are so attached to electronics and entertainment that we hardly have the attention. Often the clergy and teachers are ignorant of the value of symbols. Too often our chapels are furnished with common mass-produced pieces, or worse, sentimental images, salvaged from so-called “liturgical” antique stores. These images

are superficial and lack profound symbolism.

Are you saying that naturalistic images are not symbolic?

In liturgical art it is better to avoid naturalism. There must be a balance in representation. The accidentals are accessory. The more naturalistic something is may distract, by its accidentals, from its actual meaning. Take two images of the crucifixion. One showing realistically its physical horror, a broken torn man. The other showing a noble figure with simple wounds without much gore. One focuses on the physical horror but the other on a noble Savior, an image not ghastly but beautiful. On the other hand we must avoid an excess of symbolism that becomes an enigma, even ugliness. This is a fault in contemporary art.

Where do we start with symbolism today?

We must learn again the meaning of symbolism. How will we know unless we be taught. This must be done in the home, schools, in catechism, in sermons. How many of our schools have art classes? Fr. Edward Leen in his work *What is Education* explains the need to teach art in a practical manner. This charity must begin at home first and within ourselves. The symbol is missionary.

Would you offer some sources?

Dr. Hilgar’s splendid articles in *The Angelus* magazine on Christian architecture, can initiate the study of the treasures hidden behind Catholic symbolism. J.K. Huysmans *The Cathedral* delves at length into Christian iconography. But we cannot just “dig up” the Medieval times. We should acquire the medieval “spirit” which viewed all things with a religious outlook, this is the Catholic spirit.

Can we produce symbolic works today with such poverty in art?

There will always be artists. What is lacking today are the ideas. There is no originality. Catholic art always brings out of its treasure things new and old. But artists need patrons, or they will starve and the faithful will not be edified. Michelangelo would be an unknown without a Medici or a Julius II giving him the opportunity or if the Church did not provide the material.



Rose petals and roses are readied for Our Lady at a May crowning at St. Pius X Chapel in Washington, DC.

The beautiful Mission Cross in St. Vincent de Paul Church in Kansas City following recent renovations.



One of several decorative shields that have been given new life as a part of the restoration of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Kansas City.



An outdoor Mass at St. Mary Magdalen Chapel in Mexico, MO did not stop a young parishioner from being able to receive his much anticipated First Holy Communion.



An empty panel truck worked well to house an outdoor altar at St. John Vianney Chapel near Long Prairie, MN during the recent pandemic.



Despite state-imposed restrictions and social distancing, Laetare Sunday was celebrated in a fitting manner on an outside altar at St. Anne's Church in Livonia, MI.



At Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in Los Gatos, CA parishioners "circled the wagons" for an outdoor Mass.



Parishioners from Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church in Richmond, VA erected a large white tent for their “socially distanced Masses.”



The outdoor setting for recent Masses made a procession in honor of Our Lady a natural consequence at Our Lady of Fatima Roman Catholic Church in Richmond, VA.

A Lenten outdoor altar on the grounds of St. Mary’s Assumption Church in St. Louis, MO.



An outdoor Requiem Mass at St. John Bosco Mission in San Diego, CA.



U.S. District Superior Fr. Wegner blessed the ground in a short ceremony, sprinkling holy water on it in all four directions, thereby setting it aside for sacred use. Then Fr. Rutledge and Fr. Wegner broke ground for the new Immaculata in St. Marys, KS.

Fr. Wegner and Fr. Rutledge plant the cross where the main altar will be erected.



The St. Vincent de Paul Academy high school students in Kansas City, MO performed *The Scarlet Pimpernel* at the H & R Block City Stage, Union Station on February 21, 22, and 23.





Fr. William Kimball watches as a young parishioner of St. Anne's Church in Livonia, MI crowns Our Lady.

The choir director at St. Christopher's Mission in New York City, Elena Baquerizo, is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Organ Performance at the Juilliard School of Music. She recently had the exciting opportunity to perform at St. Patrick's Cathedral. She is pictured here with Pastor Fr. Carl Sulzen and faithful from St. Christopher's who attended the event.



Priests at St. Aloysius Retreat House were stir crazy from the quarantine and went on a Memorial Day drive around nearby Lake Lexington in a 1942 Willys WWII Jeep.



A Weekend of Sacred Music was held at St. Michael's Church in Farmingville, NY featuring special guest, Dr. Andrew Childs, Associate Dean of St. Mary's College.



International Pilgrimages

SSPX 50th Anniversary Lourdes Celebration Pilgrimage Southern France Marian Shrines and First Christians

October 16-27, 2020

Travel from Lyon to Lourdes giving thanks to God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the saints for these remarkable 50 years of preservation of Catholicism. Attend the SSPX 50th anniversary celebrations in Lourdes with faithful from around the world. Also visit La Salette, Laus, Lourdes and sites related to St. Mary Magdalene, St. Martha, St. Lazarus, St. Maximin, St. Anne, St. Margaret Mary of Alacoque, St. Claude de la Colombiere, St. John Vianney, St. Irenaeus, St. Bernadette, and many others.

SSPX 50th Anniversary Lourdes Celebration Pilgrimages Lourdes and Rome

October 22-November 2, 2020

What better place to go after thanking Our Lady in Lourdes than Rome? After attending the SSPX 50th anniversary celebrations in Lourdes, spend six days in Rome visiting the main shrines of Christianity and giving thanks for being part of the restoration of the Catholic Church. Visit the main basilicas, miraculous images, sites of the first martyrs, the patron saints of the city, and many others. Enjoy free afternoons to explore the sites of your preference.

The Way of St. James Walking Pilgrimage (last 70 miles)

April 20-29, 2021

The year 2021 is a Jubilee Year in Santiago de Compostela in Spain, which means that visiting pilgrims can gain a plenary indulgence! Don't miss this opportunity to walk the Camino de Santiago with fellow traditional Catholics. Walk 70 miles in six days, passing through charming villages that have seen Camino pilgrims since the 10th century. Have your Camino passport stamped along the way, earn your "Compostela" certificate, and gain countless graces. Begin the trip in Sarria, then walk to Portomarín, Palas de Rei, Melide, Arzúa, Pedrouzo, and finish in Santiago de Compostela. Accompanied by Fr. Patrick Summers. Space is limited to 30 pilgrims.

For more information please contact: Regina Pilgrimages
866-369-8149 | 785-437-2883 | info@reginapilgrimages.com
P.O. Box 67, St. Marys, KS 66536 | www.reginapilgrimages.com

Mass Stipends

To request a Mass intention, please note the current requested stipends:

- For one Mass: \$20
- For a novena of Masses
(9 consecutive Masses): \$200
- For Gregorian Masses
(30 consecutive Masses): \$800

Eucharistic Crusade

Monthly Intentions

June: In reparation for sacrileges against the Holy Eucharist



O Sacrament most holy! O Sacrament Divine! All praise and all thanksgiving be every moment Thine!

July: For the return of churchmen to Tradition

O Holy Spirit, Creator, be propitious to the Catholic Church; and by thy heavenly power make it strong and secure against the attacks of its enemies; and renew in charity and grace the spirit of thy servants, whom Thou hast anointed, that they may glorify Thee and the Father and his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

E-mail: eucharistic-crusade@sspx.org

Upcoming Retreats

Men:

Jul 6-11	Ignatian	Sanford, FL
Jul 16-18	3.5-Day Ignatian	St. Louis area, MO
Aug 31-Sep 5	Ignatian	Ridgefield, CT
Sep 7-12	Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA
Sep 14-19	Ignatian	Phoenix, AZ
Oct 19-24	Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA
Nov 9-14	Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA
Nov 16-21	Ignatian	Ridgefield, CT
Dec 9-12	3-Day Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA
Dec 14-19	Ignatian	Phoenix, AZ

Women:

Jun 22-27	Ignatian	Sanford, FL
Jul 6-11	Ignatian	St. Louis area, MO
Jul 13-18	Ignatian	Ridgefield, CT
Sep 21-26	Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA
Oct 5-10	Ignatian	Phoenix, AZ
Oct 12-17	Ignatian	Ridgefield, CT
Dec 2-5	3-Day Ignatian	Los Gatos, CA

Mixed:

Oct 21-24	Matrimony	Phoenix, AZ
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Dates subject to change. For more information please contact:
816-733-2500 | www.sspix.org