

We are the Community. We are the Church.

*Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the First Mass
at Sacred Heart Church at Nelthorpe Street
on September 5, 2015*

11

November 16-17, 2014

An architectural design for the modern era

Simplicity, like that of a child. That's what the design of Sacred Heart Church in Saanich represents. As Jesus said: "I tell you truthfully, the man who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child, will never enter into it." Mark 10:15.

The focus is exclusively on Jesus. His Caring Heart. His Loving Heart. His Sacred Heart. There are no distracting embellishments nor extraneous extravagances in this community's house of songs of praise, prayer, meditation, the Good News and communion. Noted Victoria architect, John de Castri [1924-2005], who had designed St. Patrick's Church in Oak Bay and St. Joseph the Worker Church in Saanich, was tasked to design the Sacred Heart Church.

The site is snuggled at an elevation of 53 metres on the southern slope of a 108-metre-high hill that coincidentally carries the name of the birthday of Jesus: Christmas Hill.

There is a commanding view of Swan Lake, Victoria, and the majestic Olympic Mountains beyond the Salish Sea.

The church design is modern. No steeple with spire. No bell-tower.

In his article, Architecture and the New Liturgy, in *The Torch*, published in November 1965, soon after Sacred Heart Church was opened, de Castri states: "Buildings built for worship have always reflected the spirit of the church at a particular period of history. They have also indicated

man's relationship to his religion and the philosophical and technical thinking of the age."

On Gothic cathedrals he states: "While we can appreciate the magnificence of these mystical monuments, the dignity of man is overwhelmed by the symbol of both ecclesiastical and secular authority."

" . . . It is an awesome and remote God whom the faithful worship in Rome or Florence, and not the Christ who said 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.'"

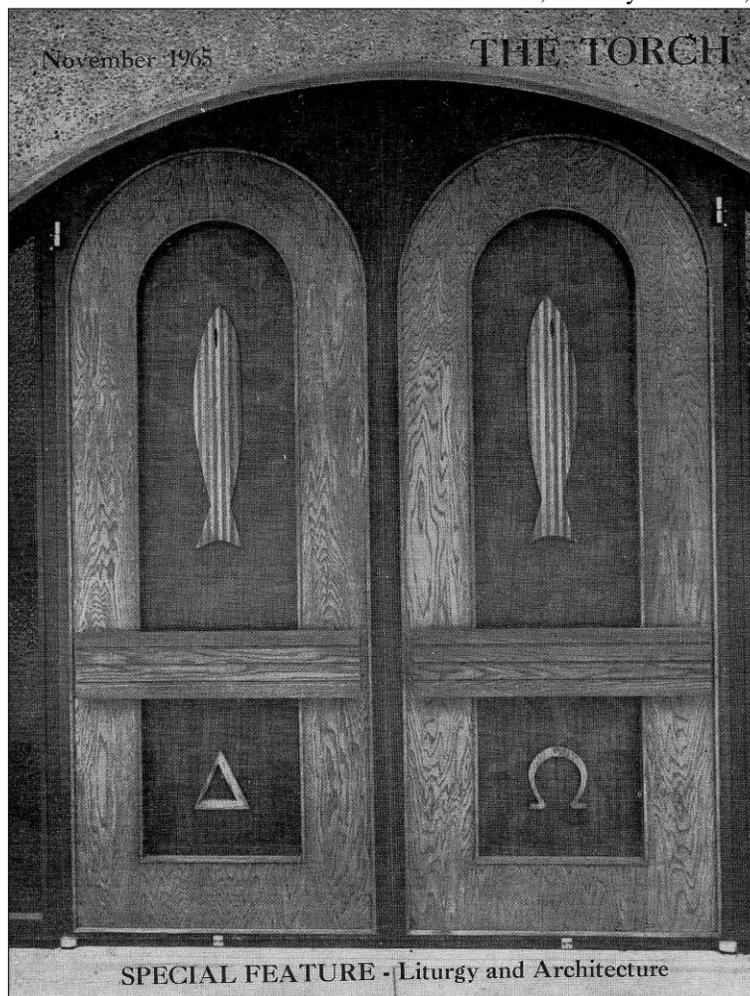
"Architecture, in many instances, largely determined liturgical

worship. The building became the church instead of the people. It did not contribute to the needs of the worshipping assembly."

Di Castri indicates that the new liturgy resulted in changes, such as freeing interior space from columns and bringing the people closer to the altar. Pews are angled to also bring the faithful closer to the sanctuary and to give the feeling of community. More natural light is let into the church to anticipate the Spirit. There is no crying room. The baptistry is at the rear.

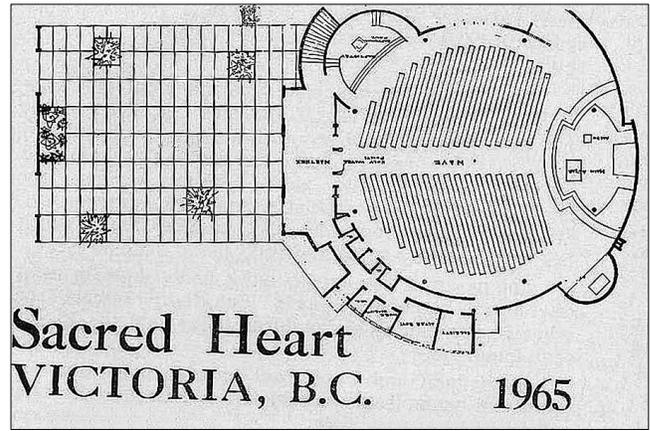
Sacred Heart Church's interior is circular with, below the octagonal roof line, 40 half-moon windows that enable "new light streaming," as the song *'Gather Us In'* beckons. These windows flood the church with unimpeded natural light, thus blessing it with nature's beauty.

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The church was also designed in keeping with the changes in the liturgy brought about by the Second Vatican Council.

- Parishioners form a positive assembly around the altar and ambo — the latter is said to signify a mountain or elevation: "Jesus, when he saw how great was their number, went up on to the mountain-side; there he sat down, and his disciples came about him. And he began speaking to them;" [Matthew 5:1,2].
- The positioning of the altar and ambo enables the pastor to face the congregation, like a good shepherd.
- There are no communion rails — this in keeping with the teachings that Jesus and his disciples sat around a table [Mark 14:22] at the Last Supper — and communicants receive the Eucharist standing.
- The altar of reservation is in a separate area, but still related to the sanctuary; the baptistry is an extension of the nave; the choir is beside the sanctuary.
- The celebrant is at the rear of the sanctuary, where he can preside over the assembly.



- The forecourt at the church's entrance allows a change of attitude before entering the House of God and permits social exchanges after; the courtyard and church entrance provide easy access to persons in wheel chairs.
- Besides simplicity, the design is about inclusion, inclusion, inclusion . . . the hallmark of the Sacred Heart faith community.



Focus on Asia

Jesus told his apostles [Matthew 28: 19-20]: ". . . you, therefore, must go out, making disciples of all nations, and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all the commandments which I have given you."

After the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, His apostles travelled to other parts of the Asia sub-continent in their missionary journeys. Tradition indicates that Peter travelled to present day Turkey — Antioch [near Antakya] and Asia Minor, Pontus, Galatia and Cappadocia in the Anatolia region. Andrew is also said to have visited Asia Minor and Constantinople [formerly Byzantium now Istanbul] in Turkey.

Philip the Apostle, not to be confused with Philip the Evangelist, is said to have preached in Syria and Phrygia, part of Anatolia [in 2011, archaeologists claimed to have unearthed the tomb of the apostle in Hierapolis, close to Denizli in Turkey].

John also went to Asia Minor, is said to have lived there to direct the church in the region from Ephesus. James, son of Zebedee, is not reported to have ventured to other parts of Asia beyond the Holy Land. On the other hand, Thomas is said to have been active in Syria and pushed his missionary journeys as far south as Mylapore, not far from Chennai [Madras] in India, where he suffered martyrdom.

James, son of Alphaeus, administered in Syria while Matthew preached in Persia [Iran]. Thaddeus [also known as Jude] preached in Syria, Mesopotamia [the Tigris-Euphrates rivers' area that includes modern-day Iraq, Kuwait, northeast Syria, southeast Turkey and southwest Iran], Edessa [ancient town in Turkey] and Beirut, Lebanon, where he was martyred.

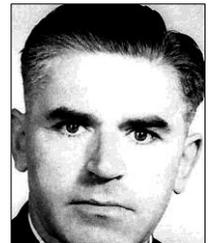
Bartholomew is said to have preached in Mesopotamia and Persia [Iran] and is claimed to have gone as far as Mumbai [Bombay] and India's Konkan coast. Tradition holds that Simon the Zealot went to Persia [Iran] and Lebanon, where he was martyred. Finally, Judas Iscariot, of course, did not travel because he hanged himself after he betrayed Jesus.



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Fr. Jan Planeta

Fr. Planet said, in an interview in 1959 that he was arrested by the Gestapo on October 16, 1939, and taken to jail, where he remained for five months. This was followed by five months in a labor camp. In June 1940, he was sent to concentration camps at Auschwitz and Dachau.



"I worked as a car mechanic, carpenter, bricklayer, basket weaver, cement laborer, barber and office clerk. The types of suffering we were exposed to were many and varied, but most common was whipping, hunger and cold [they deliberately removed all windows from the buildings and piled them on the ground, and we were to sleep under these conditions at 35 degrees F of freezing with only two thin blankets], long hours of work, and medical experiments [apparently they wanted to find a vaccine for Malaria and used the prisoners as human guinea pigs].

"The most difficult suffering to bear was mental, and for me, it was in the form of humiliation to my priestly dignity. All priests wore a distinguishing stripe on their clothing, and many of the guards would pick these priests out to receive a special brand of contempt and hatred."

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