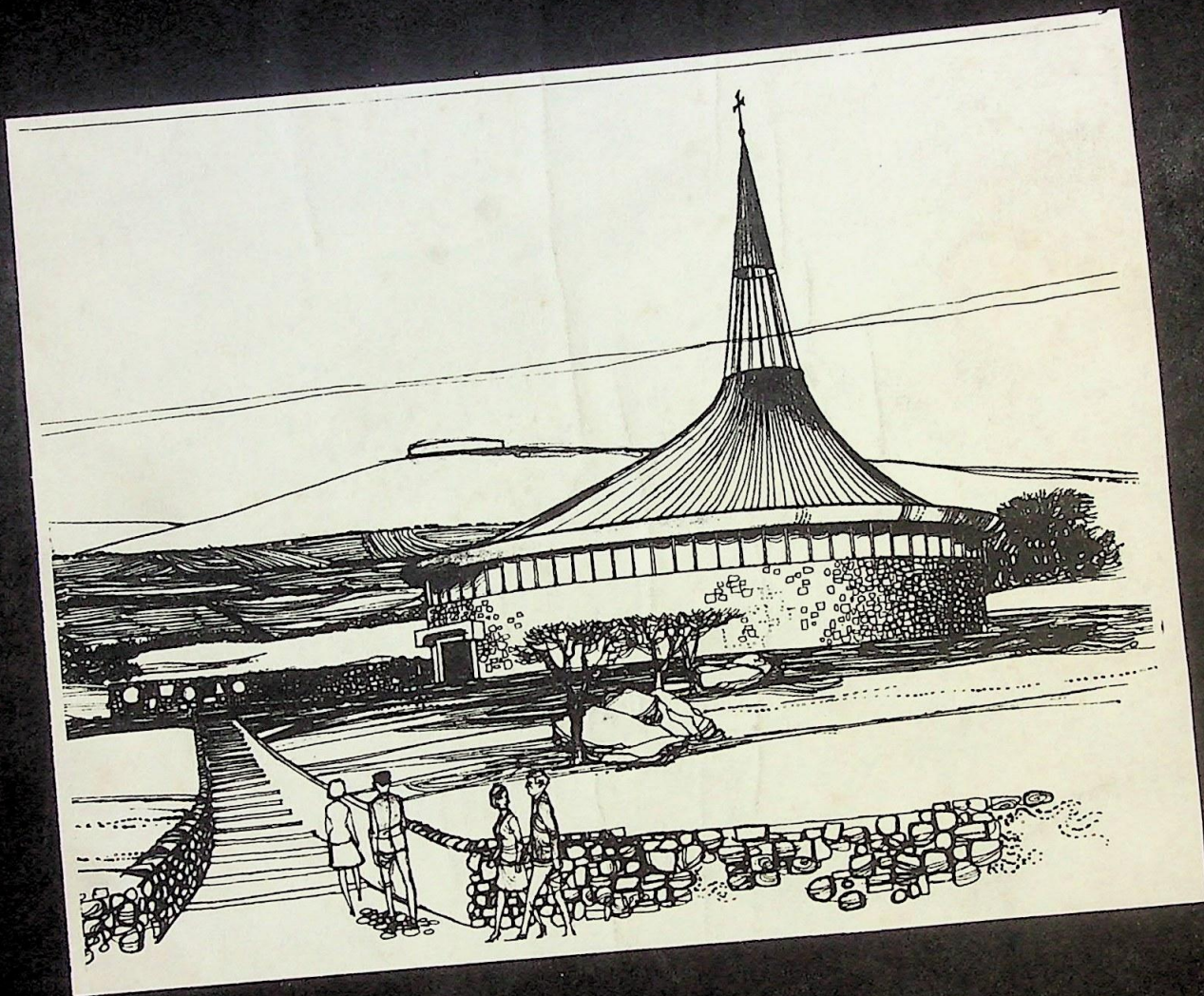


Altram Neimhe



Clare Desmond I.B.V.M.

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A L T R A M N E I M H E

* * * * *

(Fosterage for Heaven)

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INTRODUCTION

The churches and church art of Ireland cannot be compared with the grandeur of some other countries of Europe, but Ireland does not need to compete or fight for recognition, Ireland's greatest monuments are her ruins, because our Church art has a quality, interest and individuality all its own.

In this paper, I examine some buildings and artistic works of the past two decades with reference to the past also. I have visited studied and photographed the places I mention. They are chosen on the basis of importance architecturally or personal interest or for special artistic traits or curiosity or historical interest. It is in no way a comprehensive panoply of Church art and architecture. I would hope that what I have written would arouse an appreciation of the quality and standard of sacred art in Ireland today.

To fully appreciate the standard of work and craftsmanship, the need for art education in schools is a vital one. I examined what is being done or could be done in Irish schools today to educate the pupils to an awareness and appreciation and a freest way of looking at the Church and the part that art can play in this education; and to show that the education of the 'whole person' is incomplete if the dimension of religion is left out. Even the state recognizes

the value of the Arts. If they did not in some way contribute to making a person a good citizen why does the state make a grant to the Arts Council? This point was made very pertinently by Marganita Lashi in a recent interview with Andy O'Mahony on R.T.E. radio.

I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who assisted me in my research and in particular to Sr. Borgia Clancy, IBVM who gave generously of her time, sharing her insights and photographic expertise with me. I am also indebted to my sister and typist, Noreen O'Rourke.

ABBREVIATIONS

Is. Isaias

M.D. Mediator Dei

Rev. Revelation

O.T. Old Testament

Matt. St. Matthew (Gospel)

G et S Gaudium et Spes

Ps. Psalm

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PART I

THE ART OF THE CHURCH IN IRELAND

CHURCH, BEAUTY and ART

A church should be "a perpetual hymn to Almighty God" (M.D.). It must be a place where God is adored and honoured in a special way. Therefore all its features must strive to express its function. "Their holocausts and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar, for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples" (Is. 56:7). A church should be a work of art, a statement of belief. Sacred art has a task to accomplish, a message to be delivered. With a clear knowledge of the Church and what she teaches, the artist today as in times past can do great things. But to appreciate the task of the artist, one must first understand the function of art. Plato calls beauty "a delightful resplendence of a mysterious excellence". Beauty is externalised by art and beauty while it has its origin in God does not end there because it is one with truth and goodness. "Beauty is truth, truth is beauty" - Keats - Grecian Urn. The architect/artist seeks to interpret the unseen in terms of the seen. If his vision is true and he has the ability to make concrete this vision then he is co-operating in the continuation and completion of God's creative activity in the world.

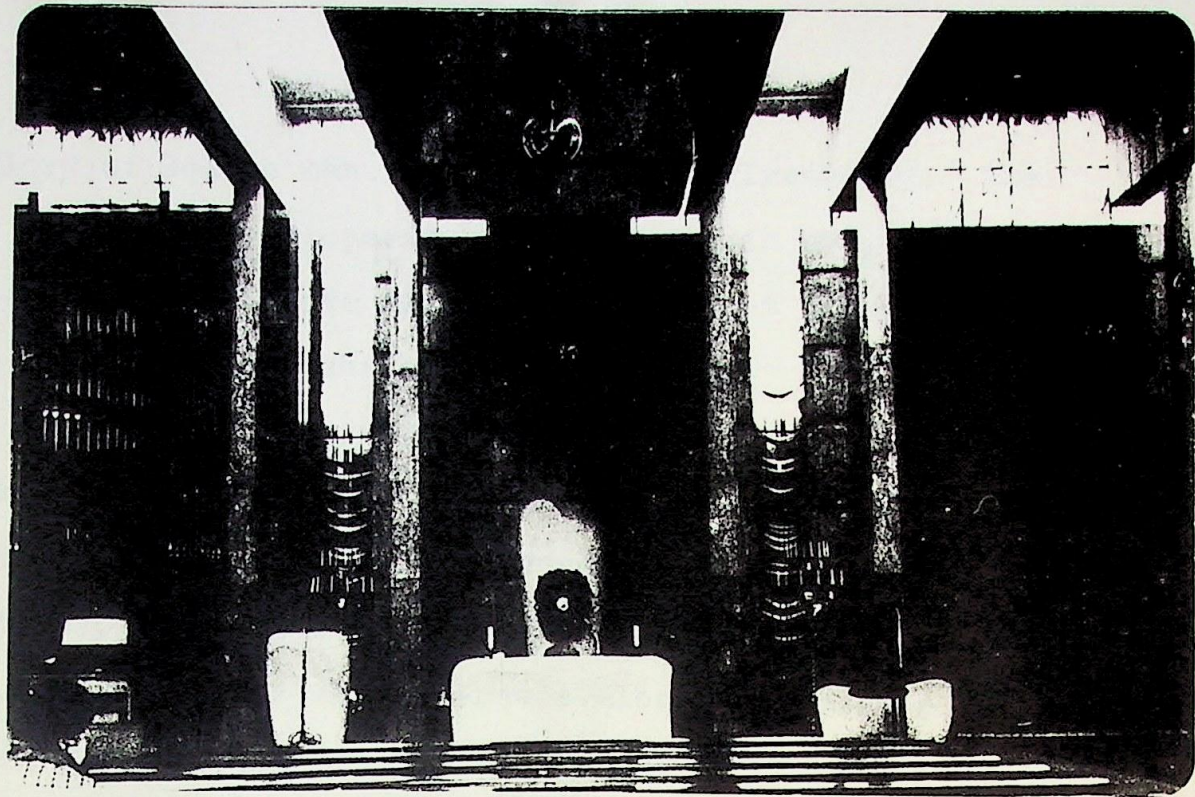
Because man is not only a rational animal, but also a religious and emotional one the type of building which he needs and desires to adore his making is one which appeals to his whole nature - to the

physical, emotional, intellectual, moral and aesthetic.

But there is an infinite gap between the human and the Divine. The human ability is limited in its interpretation of the Divine in material terms. There are needed "bridge-makers" or "pontifexes" who can through their artistic talents link the human and the Divine. Here one is reminded of Walt Whitman's poem "The Spider". He has watched the spider "launch forth filament, filament, filament out of itself". He saw that he, too, a poet, an artist, had a similar function. For he was

"Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing,
Seeking the spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need be formed,
Till the ductal anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling,
Watch somewhere, O my soul".

Words are the medium of the poet, stone, steel, bricks, mortar, stained glass, water - any materials to hand, are the medium used by the architect/artist to communicate his vision to man. With a clear knowledge of the Church and what she teaches the artist can do what writing will never do, he can illustrate and make understood things that are forever obscure in writing. His insight into a spiritual reality will shine before the eyes of men as an intimation of the infinite beauty of God, of his love for man and of man's response to God. Art is like a second tongue, it has speech which goes beyond words, it can awaken in us an awareness of a life beyond this life. The artist can forge the "gossamer thread" that links God and man with goodness and beauty. He makes it easier for man to get on the line to his Creator; he acts as a good operator.



This is the House of God

and the gateway to Heaven (Gen. 28:10)

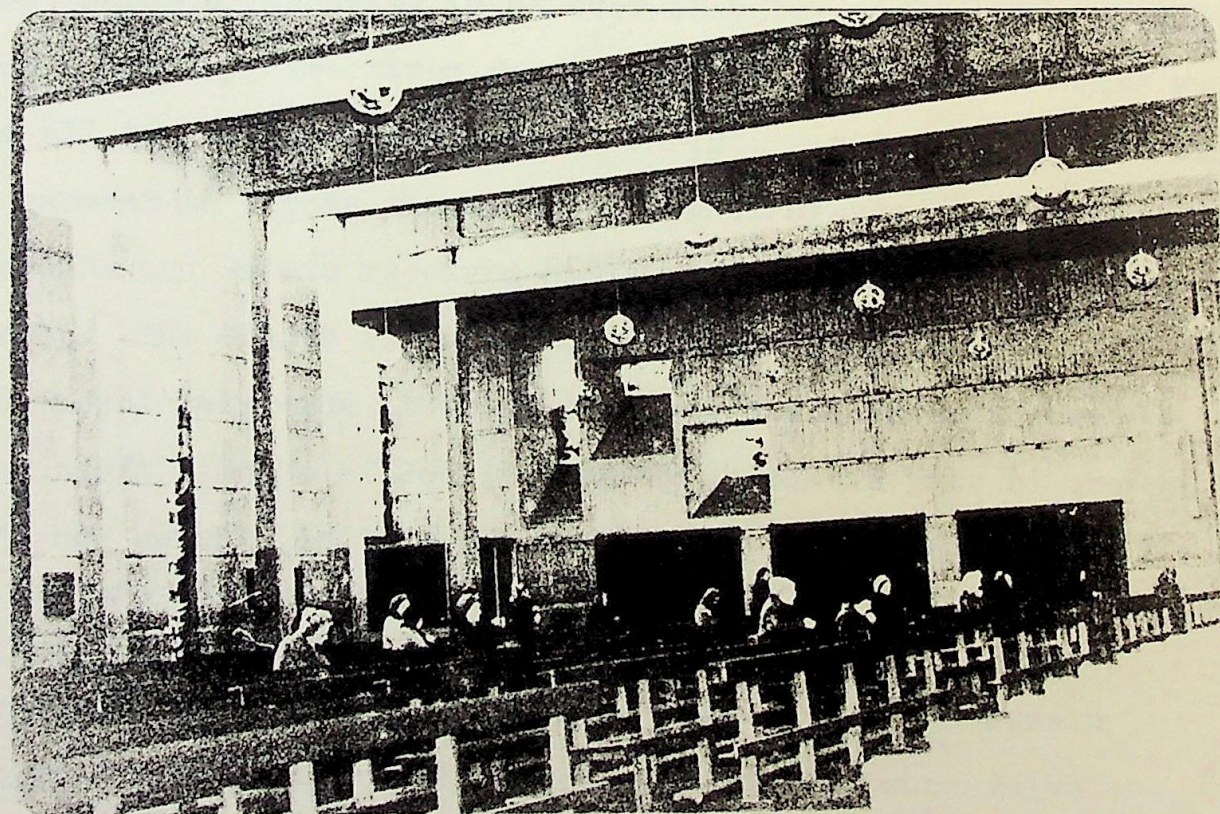


Fig. 7

"The glory of God is man fully alive" (St. Irenaeus). The artist aids this development and he begets in man, the beholder, a love of beauty, a love of God. In the past the Church has failed the artist and she humbly admits this -

"We ask your pardon we ourselves have abandoned you We have treated you in a worse manner we have recourse to substitutes, to 'oleography', to inexpensive works of art of little merit we have taken by-roads along which art and beauty, and what is worse for us, the worship of God has been badly served. (Pope Paul VI, May 1964 - Address to artists in the Sistine Chapel). This is all too clear in the cheaply produced over emotional statues which adorn many of our churches and homes. Through the years they have been forced upon men, so as to become part of their total environment, they appealed to the sentiments and were an abiding source of security in an ever-changing world. The Church did not issue any directives for the artist, she allowed works such as the all too familiar plaster-cast Christ, wearing a heart on his outer garment to become the accepted symbol of the Sacred Heart. The Madonna and Saints received similar emotional or sentimental treatment. The Church is a sign of Christ's kingdom on earth and how absolutely true it is to say that the architect when raising aloft a House of God is leading us to the gate of heaven.

"O how awesome is this place, this is the house of God and the gateway to heaven it shall be called the majestic court of God" (Gen 28:16)

The truths which the Church passes on from age to age remain unchanged but are differently formulated in each successive age, her roots are deep in history.

A knowledge of past forms of expression is necessary but this has to be understood in relation to the times in which they were produced. A study of things past will lead to a knowledge of the deep inner ideas, beliefs and faiths of former generations and this will serve to enrich the forms of our own time. Tradition can never be cast aside, neither can it be re-copied in every successive generation and every culture will have its own tradition.

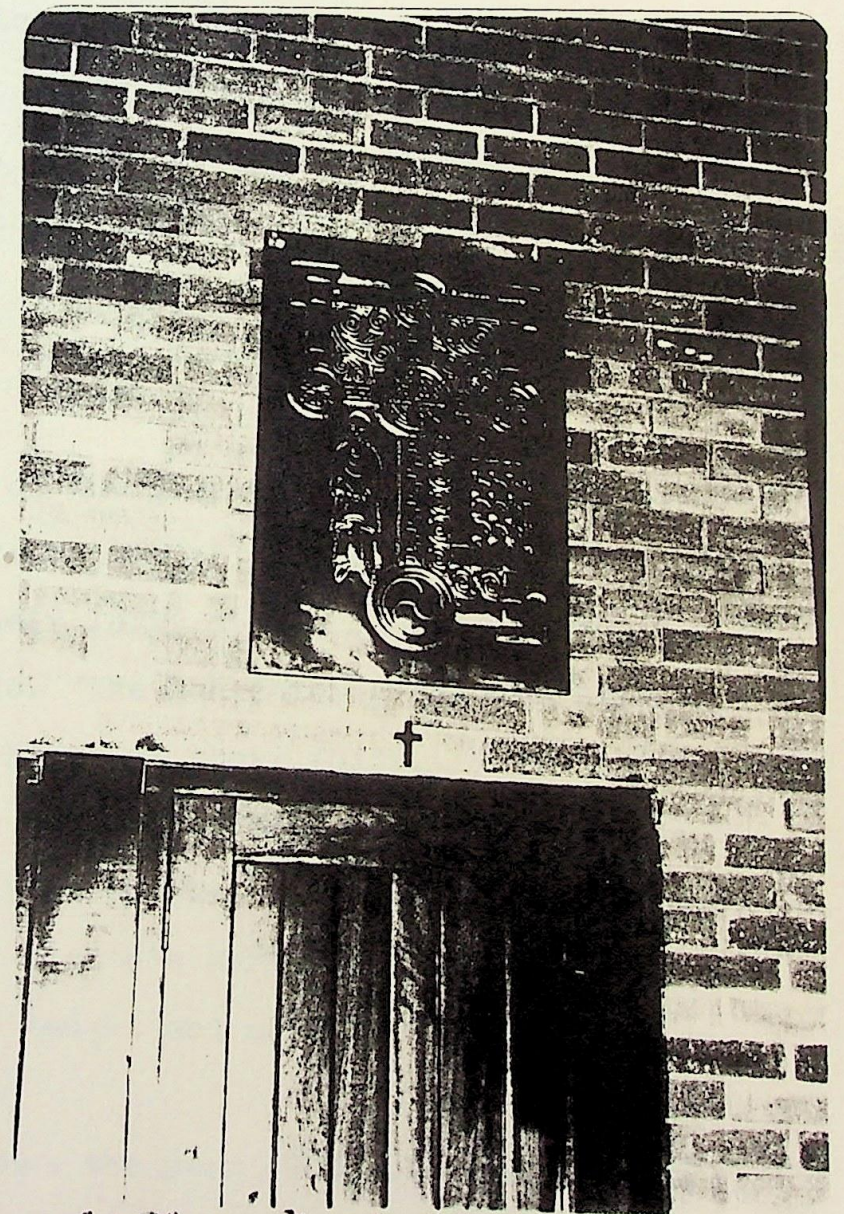
An important element which cannot be overlooked when talking about beauty, love, art, is desire. Man desires what he loves and I don't mean this in a selfish or possessive way, he longs for union - union within his environment and his beliefs. Man is conditioned by habits which are the outcome of his experience for example, the Italian acquires his love of olive trees and blue skies through his constant sight of them. He desires spaghetti because he has constantly tasted it and it reminds him of home. To bear this in mind is of vital importance to the architect/artist, otherwise he faces the risk of unintelligibility and therefore non-acceptance. Sacred art must be intelligible, give its message quickly and clearly and have an expressive value. It loses its value as a sign if it has to be explained in verbal terms. I would, for instance, question the clarity of the Stations of the Cross in the new parish church in Kilcloon, Co. Leath. The Stations are certainly very decorative and very "Celtic" in design but it demands much effort and concentration to decipher the actual event being presented in each panel and the stranger would certainly not recognise the Way of the Cross at first sight. (see fig. 5).



Fig. 7

St. Michael's, Dunlaoghaire

Sacred Art must be
both expressive and
intelligible.



St. Michael's, Dunlaoghaire

DEVELOPMENTS IN CHURCH ARCHITECTURE

I think it is necessary to take a brief look at what could be described roughly as the great periods in church architecture.

The earliest Christian churches were built after the Battle of Milvian Bridge in 314 a.d. when Constantine accepted Christianity. These churches were modelled on the Roman Basilicae. Such buildings expressed beauty in mathematical measurable terms. The Romans had used their native genius to adapt and copy their Greek inheritance. These Basilicae were familiar to the Romans of the 4th century; they had deep roots in the everyday life; they spoke of strength and stability. They were lofty, spacious and nobly conceived. They became the models for their places of worship.

1250 - 1400 saw the birth of the great Gothic Cathedrals all over Europe and this development continued in the late Gothic period between 1400 and 1600. Their lofty spires and flying buttresses drew men's eyes heavenwards. The sun shining through stained glass illuminated the teachings of their faith. Great spirituality as well as a cheeky humour and tender rendering of natural forms makes the Gothic cathedrals to be the bibles of the illiterate. In the later Gothic period Giotto's marvellous frescoes not only delighted the eye but also taught and made live the scriptures.

It was commonly believed that the year 1000 a.d. would bring

destruction and an end to mankind on earth, so immediately prior to this date there was little interest in building-up a world that was soon to be destroyed and already existing beauty was let fall into decay. The exhilaration of being alive after 1000a.d. caused men to build both furiously and beautifully. The spires of Cologne and Chartres pierced the clouds of heaven. Local craftsmen gave their time humbly, freely and even gratefully to the building of the great cathedrals, so these were built for the people, by the people as places of worship. Man was building the world with God and for God.

This golden age of architecture and art was not however experienced in Ireland. Our Irish inheritance stems from our monastic background, with its Celtic monastic spirituality. Alice Curtayne wrote of the Irish :

"The Irish way is a bare, stark, unadorned way that holds itself independent of symbolism or material aid of any kind"

Pugin tried to restore what was lost to architecture in the Middle Ages. He found only a confused jumble of styles and symbols "borrowed" from all periods and countries. The second half of the 19th century was a period of "repository art". We emerged from this century with no art at all and no interest in intellectual life.

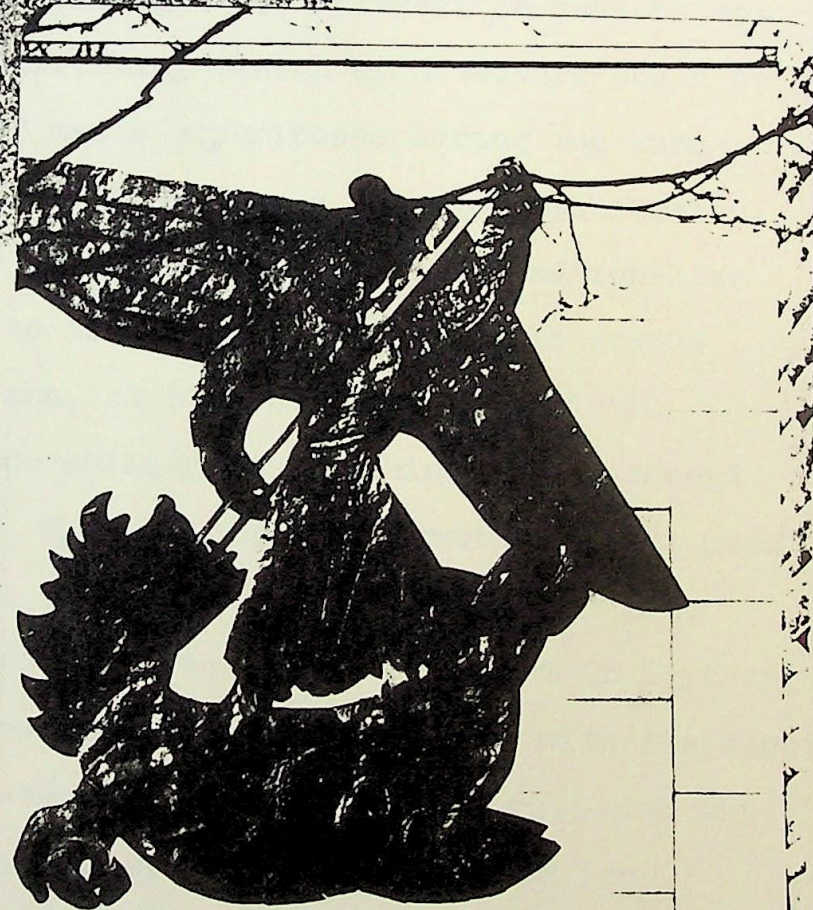
In the 1930's when fresh winds were blowing in Europe, Ireland was too poor to participate, she could only afford shoddy reproductions from workshops in Italy and France. Cheaply

produced plaster cast Madonnas etc., frequently painted in high gloss and rich only in sentimentality, were, up to very recently, all too evident in our places of worship. At this time on the Continent magnificent works were being executed.

Our common Irish taste for sacred art has been a matter for "good humoured contempt" abroad. But in our country today a more sensitive generation is growing up, a generation which depends to a great extent on visual communication. Information is communicated through television, cinema, photography and advertising. The Church has a message to communicate and this message must be put across in a language that will touch our modern generation. They must see the Church to be alive and vital and not just 'a pious old woman' because this is what leads to alienation and estrangement of many young people from the Church.



Station of the Cross
Laytown, Co. Meath
Neil Pollen



St. Michael Archangel.
Dunlaoghaire, Dublin.
Imogen Stuart.

IRELAND IN THE 20th CENTURY

In this the second half of our century church architecture exhibits few spires and exuberance has given way to simplicity. This is mainly the outcome of the Second Vatican Council which emphasised that the sign the Church lifts up is a sign of contradiction - a sign which combines truth and poverty. A very elaborate and rich style of art and architecture is unnecessary in the Church today. The priest, the people and the actions, these are central with the interest on persons not things. Another factor affecting church architecture could be the unconscious outcome of man's experiences during two wars and all that they bring in their wake - a cargo of destruction. This perhaps leads him to build simple, squat and bastion-like buildings, staying close to the ground, e.g. see Kill Avenue Church (fig. 6). Modern man, cluttered with materialistic baubles has almost lost the ability to lift himself and ascend to God on wings of faith. Such churches suit man's present need and examples are numerous. I mention as a particularly fine example one such church dedicated to the Sacred Heart in Laytown, Co. Meath. This church designed by Liam McCormick, with its stout, double-skinned oval rough-textured white walls merging with sky and sea so as to become almost undistinguishable from its surroundings, is full of symbolism. The design brief asked for a link with tradition combined with a modern form which can lift one's mind from everyday life to a closeness with nature and inspire religious feeling. Laytown does it all (see fig. 1).

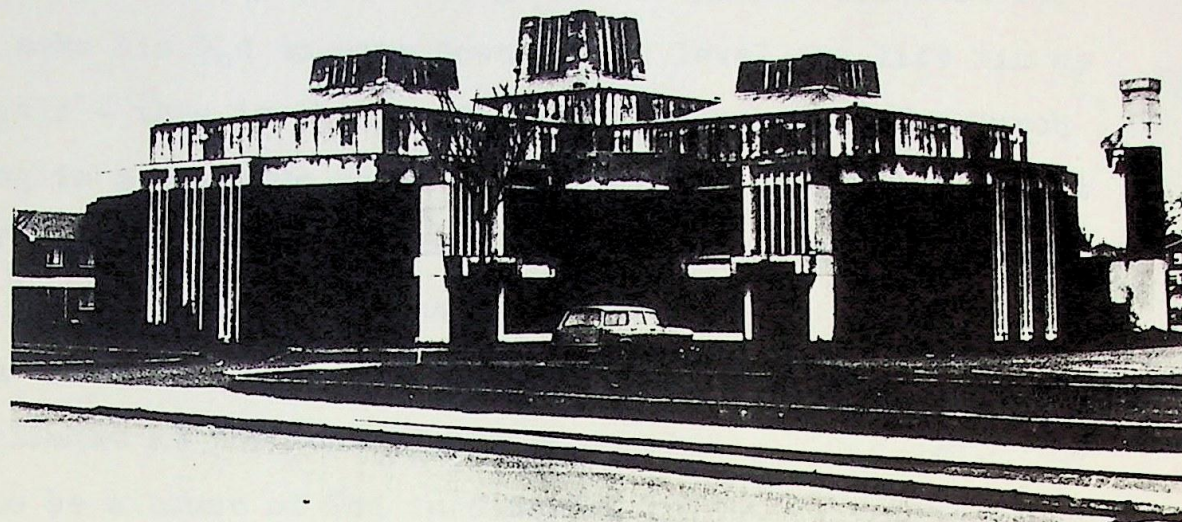


FIG. 6

Church of the Holy Family, Kill Ave. Dublin

Great bastions of the Faith



FIG. 1

Church of the Sacred Heart, Laytown.

Unconsciously perhaps, man clings to the ground for security and he asks his God to come down to his level and lift him up to himself - this is the function of the Church. The church building is a creative force in the life of the Christian but its effects on the faithful can be either positive or negative. I was, for example, left with nothing but negative feelings after a visit to the church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Fir House near Tallaght at the foot of the Dublin hills. The design is meant to be a house of God in a walled garden - landscaped. The idea of a wall also is to keep out noise and distractions, of these there are none but the beautiful situation is completely destroyed. This is a grim example of a good idea gone wrong. The bastion effect, so evident and satisfying in Laytown, is missing here. There are no graceful curves or pleasing rough-textured white stone. It does not convey the feeling of a finished work, either within or without. The four courtyards are rather haphazardly landscaped with trees and stones. The unvarnished doors appear to be in the early stages of decay. The church is cold and barn-like inside. A patchwork hanging behind the very plain and cheap looking altar and tabernacle is some effort to provide warmth and "take the bare look away". It contains the symbols of joy - birds and flowers and was "picked up" by the architect in England (see fig 2)

Poor art will say little good about our faith life and if anything tend to weaken it. For this reason the Holy See asked for commissions on sacred art and architecture to be set up in every dioceses and this should be aided by an institute of pastoral liturgy. The major efforts of this commission is to be

educational - self-educational. The education of the clergy and religious, education of the artist and laity. Its main aim is to develop an understanding of the nature and function of art in relation to liturgy and an appreciation of the quality of work being done. In Ireland, Most Rev. Cahal Daly, Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise is the national chairman and Rev. Fr. Sean Swayne is director of the Liturgy Institute in Carlow.

Since 1971 the Institute has organised seminars for priests and religious seeking advice. Exhibitions of sacred art and architecture have been held. One of the most successful of these exhibitions "Sacred Art in the Home" was held in Dublin in 1975-6. Limited editions of good quality works by artists of repute were made available at a reasonable price to the general public.

'Repository art', that is factory made wares punched out of a mould, cannot be classed as genuine art but it cannot be dismissed either. Christian men from earliest times have expressed and nourished their faith in Christ by sacred images. Factory-made objects of piety are among the "signs of our time" (G et S). The age of technology and the machine put within the reach of every man the possibility of owning his own statue. Much work produced in this field was unworthy of the Church because it lacked the quality and simplicity of real craftsmanship. All materials have unique qualities and expressive powers. Religious art should be sincere and simple and suitable to the content. Religious subject matter cannot redeem an aesthetically defective work of art. Religion must first be deeply and sincerely felt if it is to inspire great art.

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Dr. A. R. Rookmaker, professor of history of art at the Free University of Amsterdam wrote in his book "Modern art and the Death of a Culture" -

"A picture designed for a purpose must be visualized with the demands of that purpose in mind and the artist must be honest

A work of art must be in keeping with the occasion for which it is made or the function it has to fulfill

He must have a love for the people for whom the work is meant, for the materials he uses, for the subject he chooses and for the truth he is going to express"

Artists need sources of deep spiritual artistic inspiration.

During many centuries, religion has stirred the human imagination with extraordinary depth and force, but there have been many failures - works with a religious content but which are insincere, superficial, didactic or sugary sweet.

Dignity does not necessarily imply expense, what is more important is quality, simplicity and cleanliness. The preservation of natural surfaces and textures of stone, wood, etc. actually strengthen the symbolic character of church furnishings and religious objects.

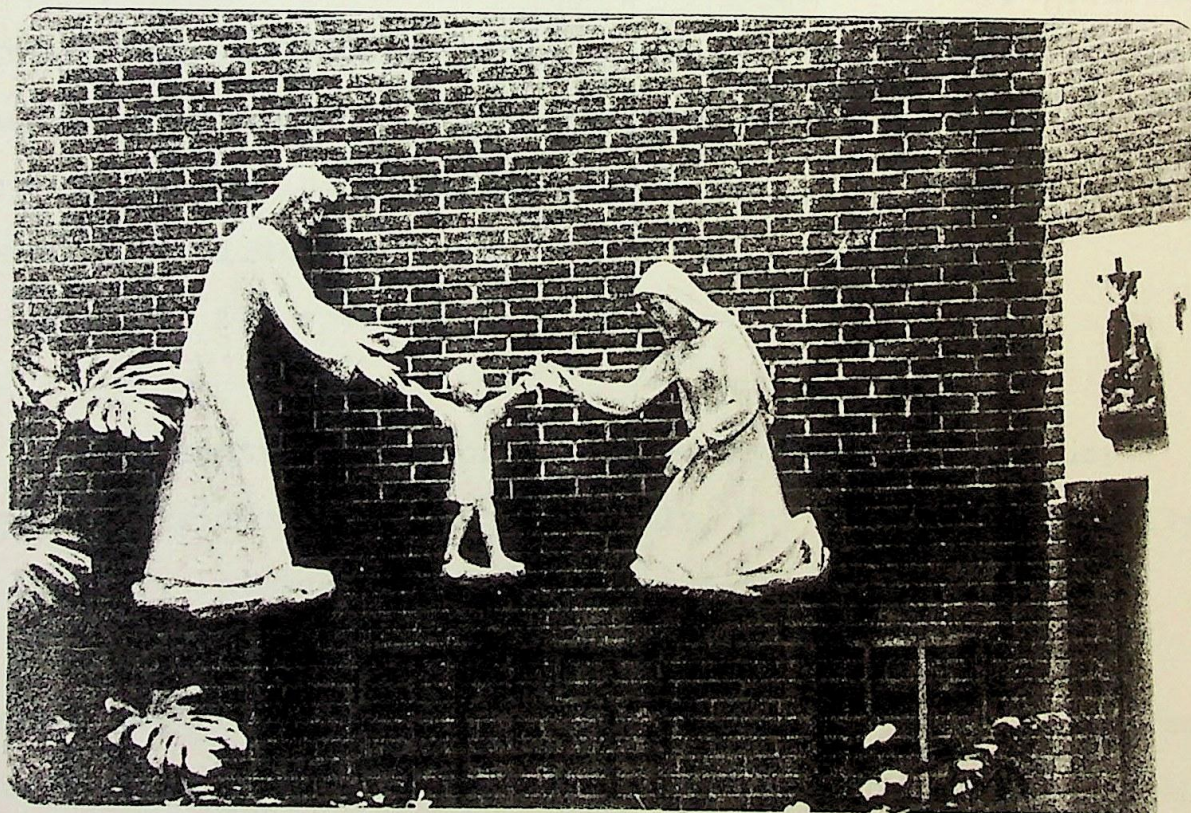
A growing number of people find the statues and oleography which they may have known in their youth do not appeal to them any longer. They find them tasteless and unacceptable and this is not felt to be a lessening of faith but rather an increasing sophistication.

A typical statue of the
Baroque period



Dignity, simplicity and the
deep spiritual inspirations of
the artist, are the important
elements today

University Church, St. Stephen's Green



Church of the Holy Family, Kill Avenue

We have artists who are providing us with works of a very high standard. The work of Nell Pollen can be seen in many of our churches. The stations of the Cross in Baytown (fig. 1) and a very similar set in Fossa, Killarney (fig. 3) are sculpted in plaster by Ms. Pollen. The designs have been very much admired and printed reproductions now appear in the New Catechism for P Primary Schools. She has also contributed to the "Sacred Art in the Home" exhibitions and one of her loveliest pieces is a bonded plaster image of the Sacred Heart in colour, just 16" high. She also works very sensitively in terracotta.

Irish art embodies in many instances the deep faith and devotion of the Irish people as expressed in the personal sensitivity of its artists. Every piece of art, be it religious or secular, be it a painting, a sculpture, a poem or any form of handicraft made with loving skill, is a sign and a symbol of the inscrutable secret of the human existence of man's origin and destiny of the meaning of his life and work. It speaks to us of the meaning of birth and death, of the greatness of man.

(Pope John Paul II, speaking in Clonmacnoise - Sept. 1979)

Other artists contributing works worthy of the Church and her liturgy are Christopher Ryan, John Kelly, Ray Carroll, Oisín Kelly, Paddy McLroy, Patrick Pye, Imogen Stuart and Benedict Tutty.

The artist must be in touch with the life of the people he serves. "A church building must in some manner demonstrate that God is there among his people, that faith, hope and charity are possible in this world; that the Spirit is a real and living person who knows us intimately and who will inspire all our actions if we will open



Fig. 7

Entrance, St. Michael's, Dunlaoghaire

Resurrection station

Bernadette Madden

Church of Nativity
Newtown



Fig. 4

our hearts to him" These are the words of architect Wilfrid Cantwell and he continues ".... there is no text-book or no regulations to help us do this. These results can be achieved only by study and prayer".

Buildings must be absorbed into and linked with peoples experience of life, their heritage and even their local heritage. This link is clear to see in Laytown (fig. 1) and also in the Church of the Nativity at Newtown, Co. Kildare. The 19th century stone tower - all that remains of the old church in Newtown has been preserved and acts as a shelter and wind-shield for the new church (fig. 4) and at the same time recalls the old.

The church that breaks no link with the past; that answers the present aspirations of the people and their needs; that carries them in faith, hope and love into the future is an assured success.

It would be very desirable to have the architect explain his ideas to the congregation, but this never happens, consequently the architect's ideas can be expressed in wood, stone, or any other medium but never "heard" by the congregation. Symbolism is rarely explained. The curate, Fr. Gleeson, in Laytown did explain to his parishioners the symbolism of David King's tabernacle and related sanctuary lamp (fig. 1). But Laytown requires little explanation, it speaks for itself, the symbolism of water, cross, sky and sea can draw a response from even the most unenlightened hearts.

Opportunities to help the people to grow into modern church art are lost. Our education is often by "shock". An example of this can be found in the effect of Imogen Stuart's Stations of the Cross in the Church of the Holy Spirit, Muckross, Killarney. These Stations show hands only. For people brought directly from the pictorially explicit Stations in older churches, these hands hold very little meaning. This is also true of the Stations in the Church of St. Oliver Plunkett, Kilcloon, Co. Meath (fig. 5). An introduction to the Stations would have encouraged more reflection than did the older style of Stations through which one looked on at an event.

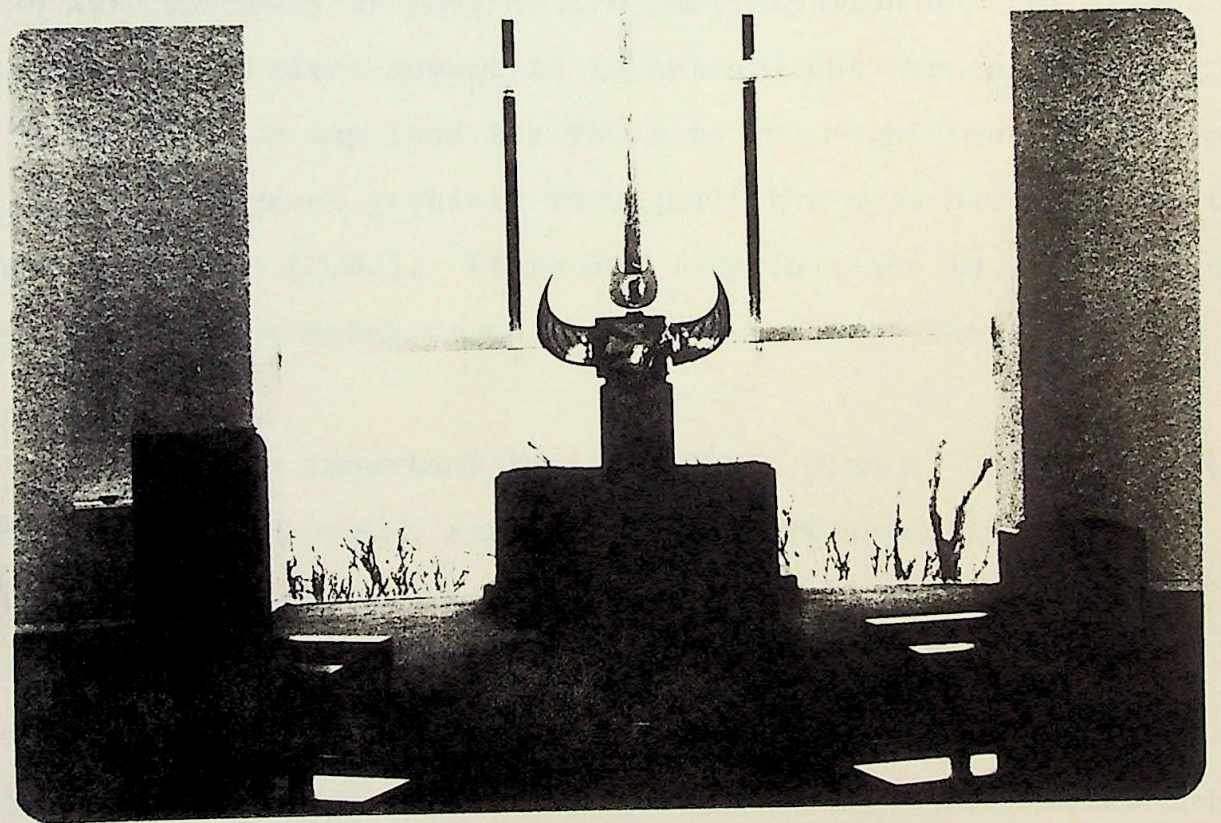
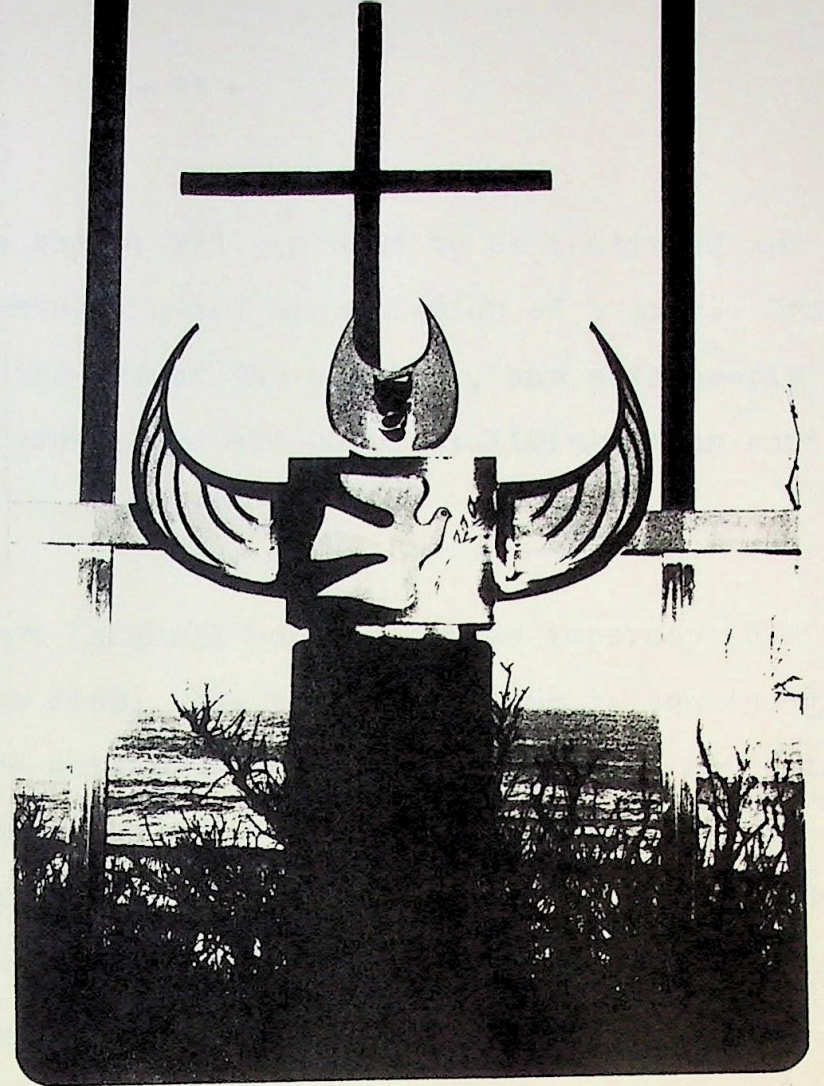
"Taste" varies with geographical position, what appeals to the Indian and is regarded as beautiful does not call forth a strong emotion in a European and even within one small country, peoples responses to what is considered beauty will vary and standards of beauty will change from one epoch to another. The good architect will have his antennae attuned to time as well as to space and experience. The taste of an advanced technological age will differ greatly from the taste of a feudal age.

A strong, open line of communication is needed between the architect, the man who approves of his plan (usually the parish priest) and his parishioners. They need education that will help them to understand and appreciate the symbols the architect has assembled to lead them to God whom they seek to worship. This help the Pastoral Institute can provide. While frequent requests for advice are made, the response the commission meets is frequently neither heartening or enthusiastic. Understanding and intuition

Laytown.

"It speaks for itself."

Symbolism requiring
little explanation.



cannot be assumed to exist; all men need to be initiated and educated to an understanding and appreciation of beauty. True we say beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but some people do not know the difference and are happiest living in an environment shaped by others.

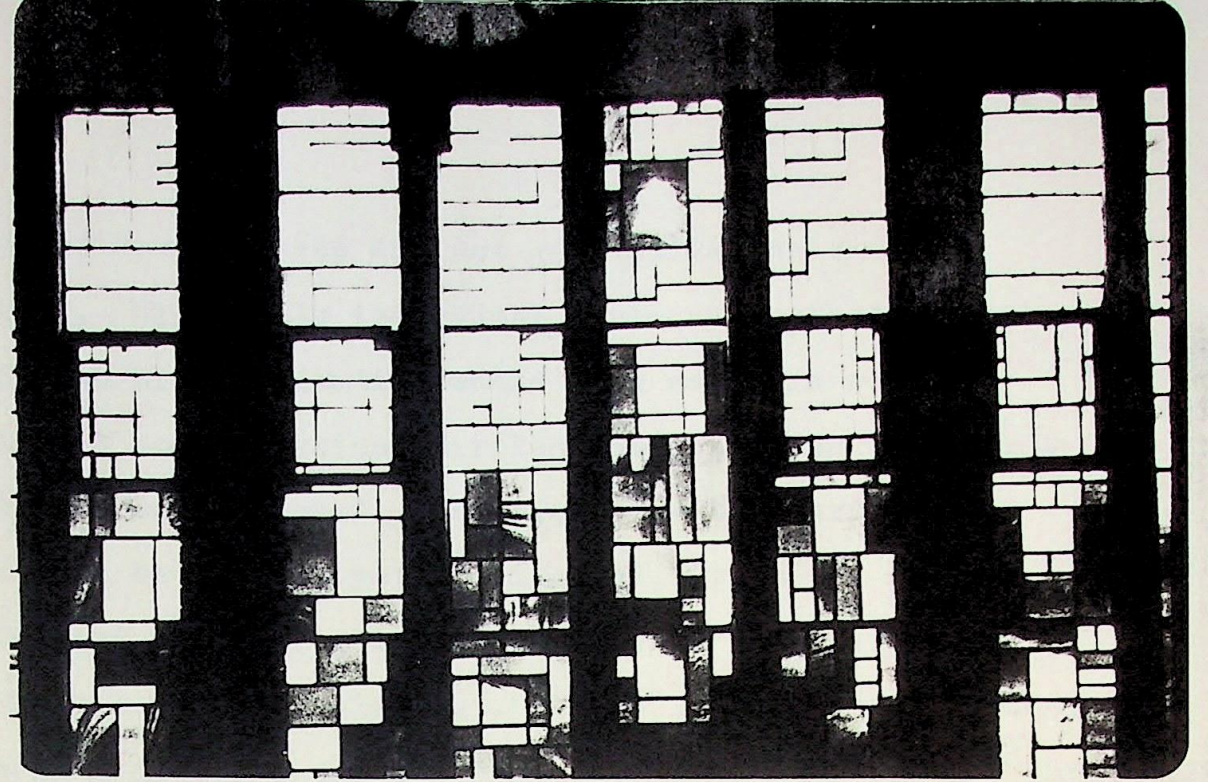
"The environment" says Marshall McLuhan "is as imperceptible to humans as water is to fish. The total environment, beauty, grace, sights and sounds are not always properly understood, appreciated or even noticed". So often we are blind to what is going on around us, we only see what came before, we must as it were, step outside ourselves and our environment to become aware of what is going on, all this takes courage, faith and education.

The liturgy today demands active participation and not devout attendance. Modern movements in art are not enemies of religion. "Modern art too may lend its voice to the magnificent chorus of praise which great geniuses throughout the ages have sung to the Catholic faith (M.D.). It is our duty to adapt to our life-style. Our senses must speak to us through a language that will move us.

It is extremely important that the whole plan of the architect be carried out, otherwise seemingly small but actually vitally important elements can be omitted and with disastrous results. We cannot afford to look upon painting and sculpture as optional additions in a church. Liturgical vestments, baptismal fonts, statues, crosses, altar utensils, tapestries, embroideries and stained glass must be a total harmony with the building itself.

Light is an important feature of modern church buildings - bent, coloured and mysteriously introduced, light has the power to change the drabness of man's life. Often it is pure abstract beauty throwing an unearthly light across the simple interior which delights our aesthetic sense and urges us to adore, praise, reverence and serve the sublime God. See stained glass in Kill Avenue (fig. 6). In the church of St. Michael's, Dun Laoghaire, the austerity of the columns and great beams in naturally finished concrete is relieved by delicate stained glass windows and recessed tinted roof lights. Of course, one is immediately reminded of Le Corbusier's Church, Notre Dame du Haut, Ronchamp in France (fig. 7).

Ireland attained world recognition in the craft of stained glass during the early part of this century. She had artists of unique talent in Michael Healy, Harry Clarke and Evie Hone. The work of Evie Hone is perhaps the most outstanding, because she gives expression through her work to deep personal and religious feelings and devotion. Through her simplicity and strongly individual style, she gives expression to the common religious feelings of the Irish people. Her work can be seen in colleges and churches throughout the country and abroad also. A beautiful example of her work may be seen in University Hall, Hatch Street, Dublin. This is a series of five symbolical windows Alpha and Omega, Lamb, Fish, Pelican, Dove. Her contact with Cubism was a natural link with Irish abstract art. "All that the abstract movement stands for combines with all that I love in early Irish art" - Evie Hone.

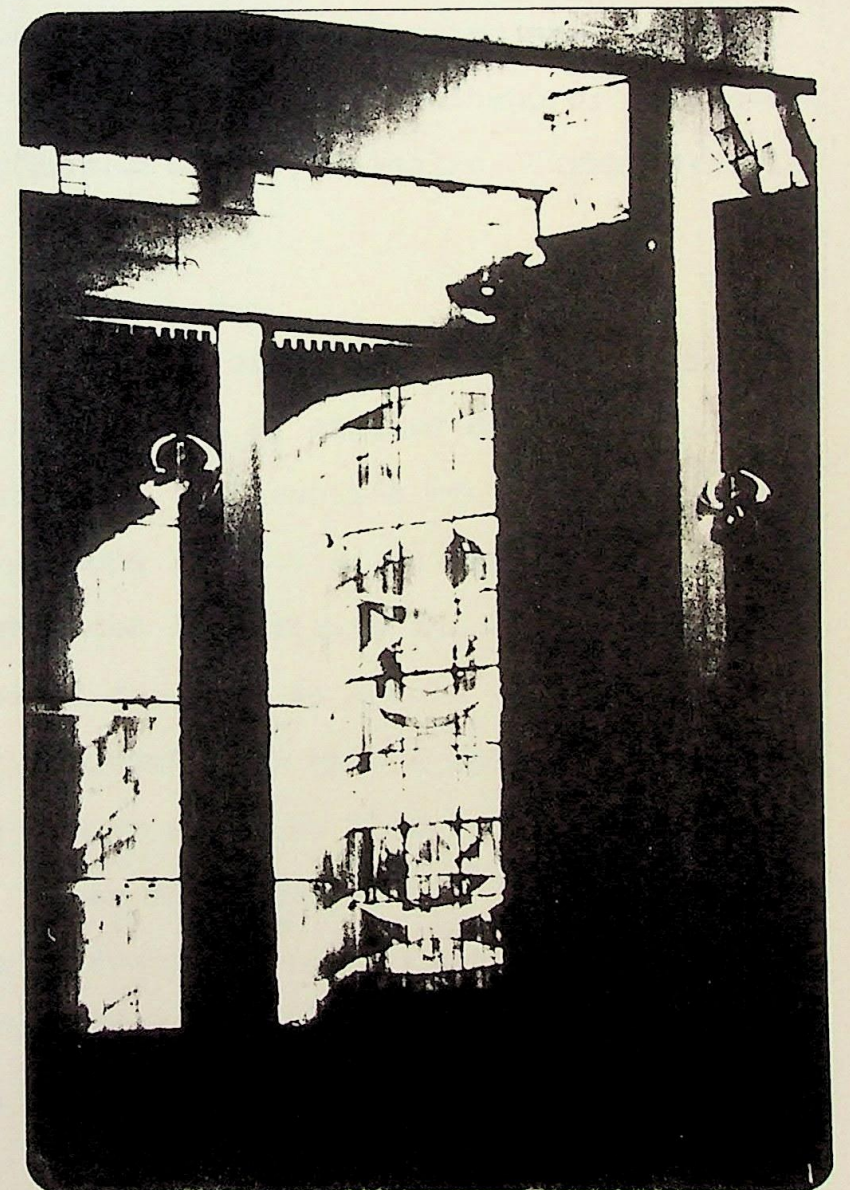


"Church of Light" ~

Kill Avenue

Light, in its abstract
beauty, delights our
aesthetic sense

Dunlaoghaire



The work of Harry Clarke did not gain quite the same reputation. His highly individual style and method of work, coupled with his imagination would have made his work unpopular in ecclesiastical circles where patrons would only tolerate the conventional. The problem with church art is that it must be modern, yet traditional, it has to be both beautiful and popular. St. Thomas Aquinas defined art as "that which being seen pleases". We in Ireland have a tendency to live in a glorious age in the past, with a deep fear of the future. We are extremely critical of anything which steps outside the "norm", it makes us uncomfortable because we do not understand it. The work of Harry Clarke can also be seen throughout much of the country. Examples of his work are for instance in St. Joseph's Church, Terenure; St. Peter's, Phibsboro; the Jesuit retreatants chapel, Rathfarnham Castle; Catholic Church, Renvyle, Co. Galway, etc.

Another aspect of the introduction of light into a church is the substitution of plain glass instead of stained or hammered glass, so that rather than cutting out the beauties of God's creation, the ever changing sky and cloud formation, so characteristic of our country can be contemplated from within the church. It is after all a monastic idea of the past to have a place with a view for prayer. Laytown again provides us with a splendid example of this 'view' as an aid to prayer and also Liam McCormick's other little Church of Christ Prince of Peace, Fossa, Tillamney (fig. 3). In the latter, attention is drawn beyond the altar to the magnificent panorama of mountain and lake and as in Laytown, the symbolic cross is placed in the foreground.

A disappointing church in this respect is Richard Hurley's Church of the Nativity, Newtown, Co. Fildare. For the visitor it holds a brief enchantment and invites an exploration through light and shade and texture but soon one becomes uncomfortable in the dim light, the church seems to lack the light and joy of resurrection and Bernadette Madden's Stations of the Cross in batik cry out for that light which is so important to experience the full impact of the artist's medium (fig. 4).

We are Christians in the world but not of the world, the Church is a sign of Christ's kingdom on earth. A church building should be a work of art, a statement of belief. The beauty and power of symbols can stir us out of our lethargy. It leads us to question and grasp more fully the meaning behind the symbol when we are faced with it. It forces itself on our intelligence. On entering the church of St. Michael's, Dun Laoghaire one is immediately struck by the beaten copper main entrance door and screen, the bronze handles incorporated scenes and symbols of the Last Judgement. Overhead, also in copper by Inogen Stuart, the figure of St. Michael the Archangel dominates the approach to the edifice dedicated to his name (fig. 7).

A real danger to the potential of art of quality and taste in the Church is the attractive package offers of many firms today, they endanger creativity itself. Too often we have evidence of the gaudy and cheap, the artificial and costly in our churches. Recognition of what is artistic, architectural, historical or even sentimental has often been completely disregarded when planning or reorganizing churches. On the otherhand, there are churches

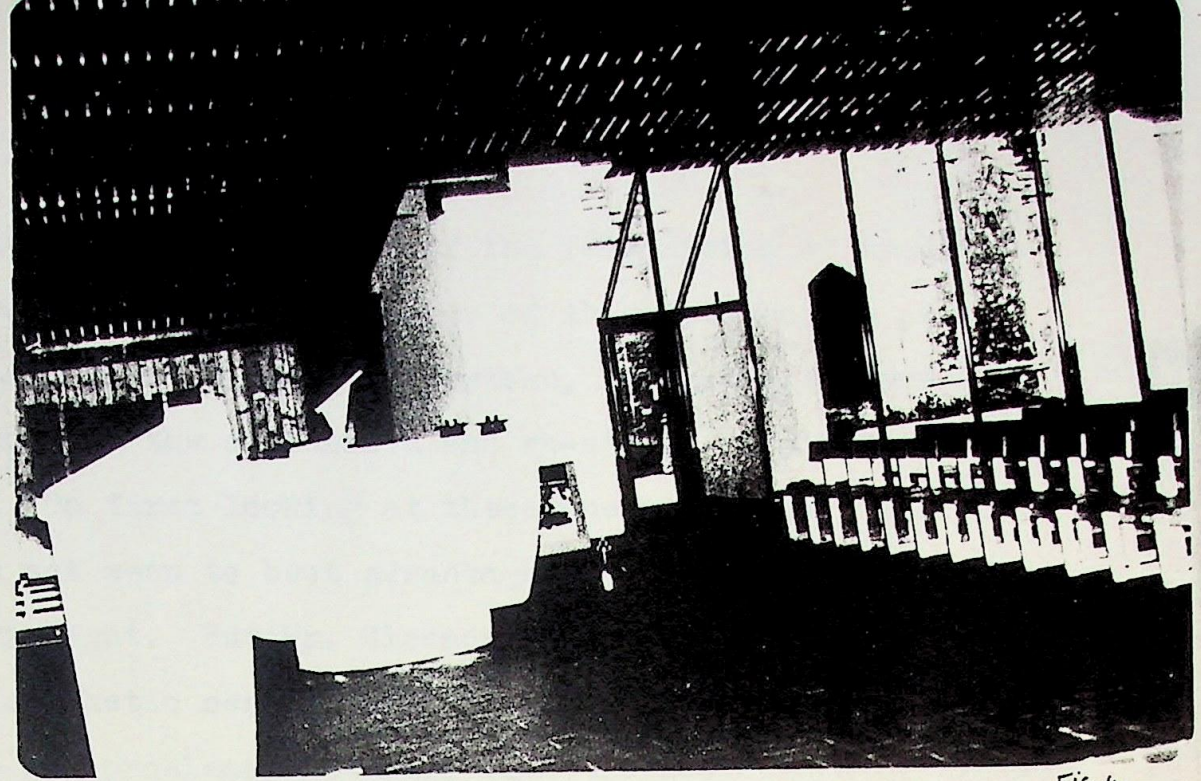


FIG. 4.

Newtown.

19th century tower
"Overlooking new and old"

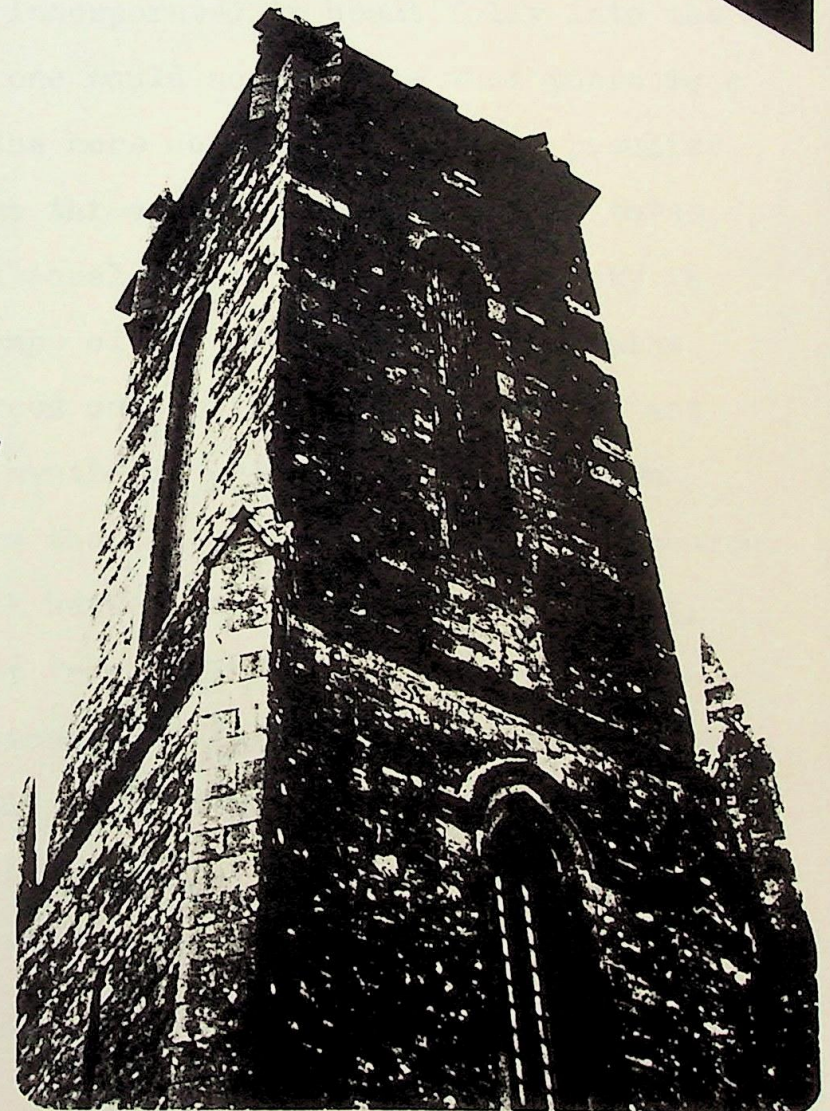


FIG. 4

which give tangible evidence of the recognition of tradition and a well ordered incorporation of this into modern plans. The stained glass windows in Laytown, for example, have been preserved from the old church and re-set in deeply recessed windows. On first looking at these one is disappointed that they are not seen to best advantage, they do not receive the necessary light. But Fr. Gleeson, C.C., a man possessing an obvious aesthetic sense, with his sensitivity and courage has overcome all problems. He has, with the assistance of another priest, placed tin foil and plain glass behind these windows to reflect the sun, and the windows can also be illuminated by electric light. In his design the architect retained the gable wall of the old church and incorporated it beautifully into the new. From a casual glance one would not realize that there is a new church at all, but to the more observant something peculiar will be evident - the gables three light windows contain three bells rather than the traditional stained glass and the sky is visible behind. The landscape of the old church also remains undisturbed, the two old trees on either side of the gable act as a frame (fig. 1). As I mentioned previously, the Newtown Church (fig. 4) also retains the tower of the 19th century church (fig. 4) which acts as a link between the past and the present, but it has no function apart from this whereas in Laytown the old gable does have a function apart from housing the bells. It is grafted into the new building. On crossing over the moat and passing through the two timber doors, instead of a dark porch so typical of our Irish Churches, one stands in a glassed area,

Meeting the challenge of
the new and
conserving the old

Newtown,
Kilcock

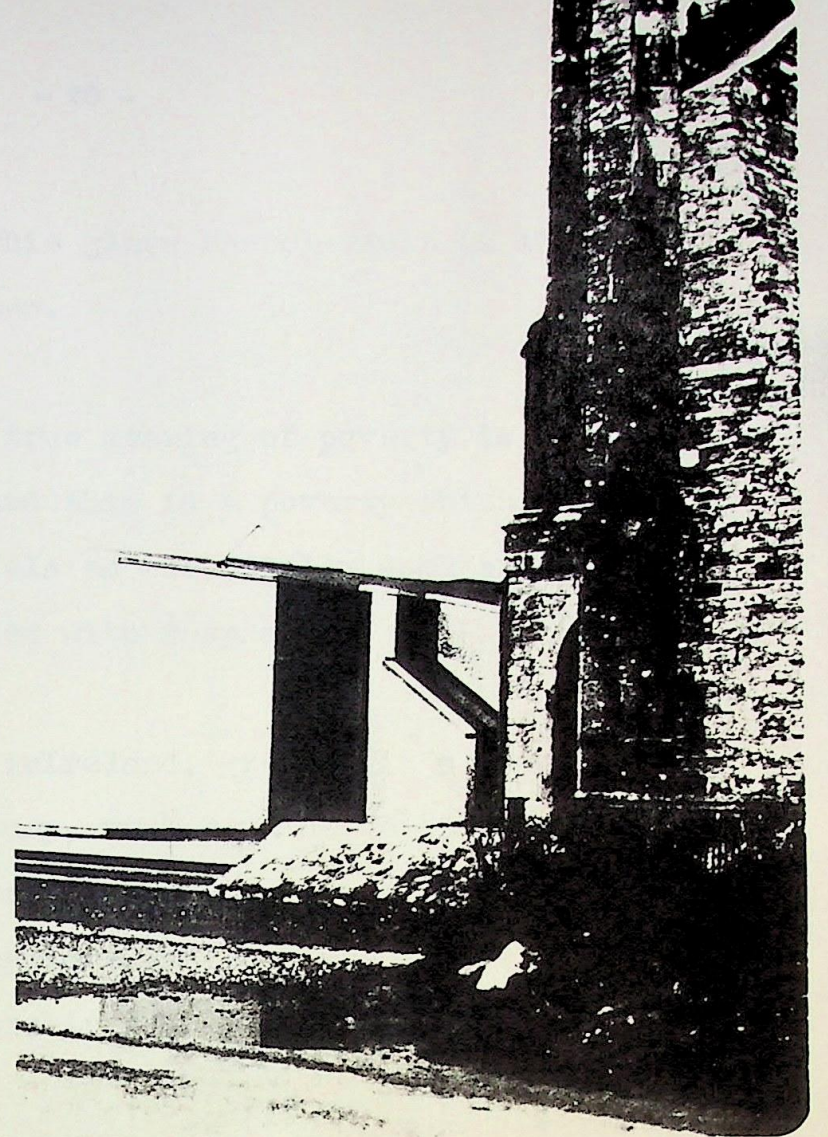


FIG. 4

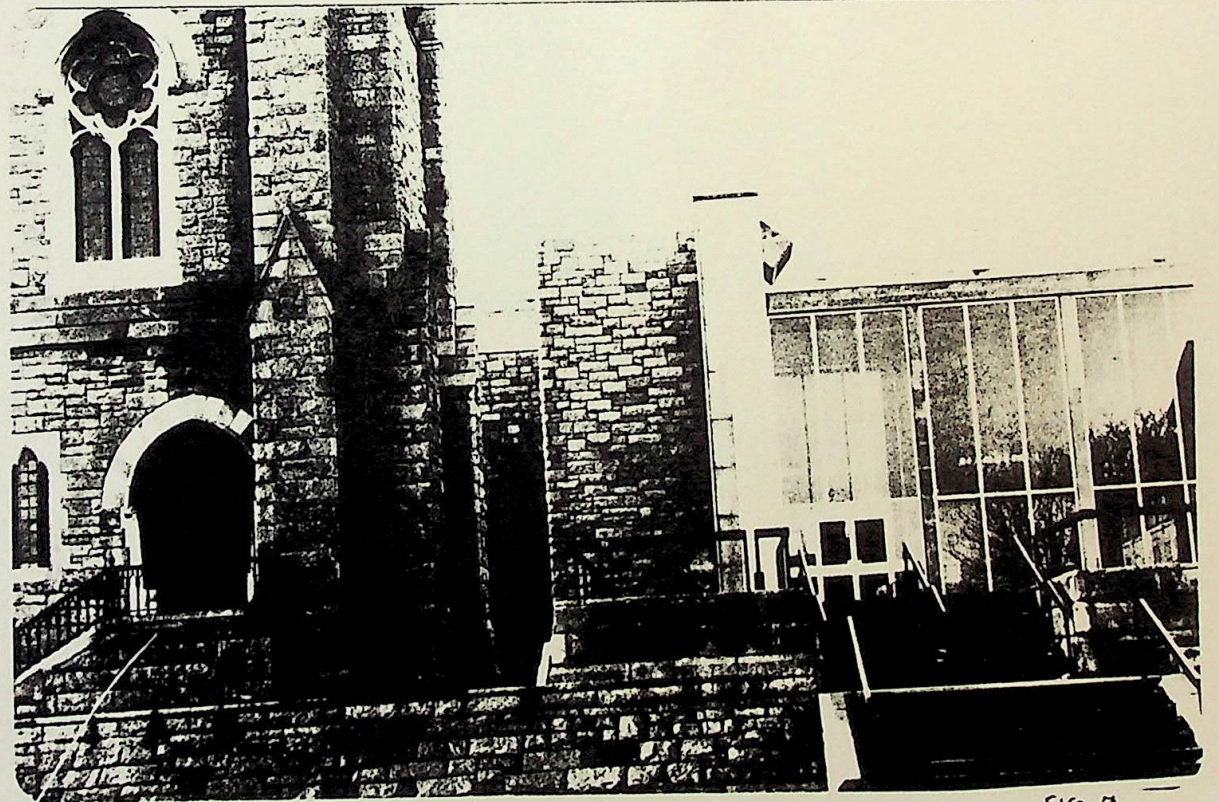


FIG. 7

Side entrance, Dunlaoghaire

suspended over a pool. This glass barrel-vault is the link between the old and the new.

A full understanding and true meaning of poverty is necessary when designing a church and this is a poverty which recognises all things and all materials as essentially good and therefore to be conserved and treated with respect.

In the art of the Church in Ireland, great things have been achieved during this century, much remains to be done, but Ireland can enter the 90's and take her place with the great artists and architects anywhere and continue to build and adorn truly worthy houses of worship where the faithful may assemble to meet their God.

The "barrel vault"

Laytown

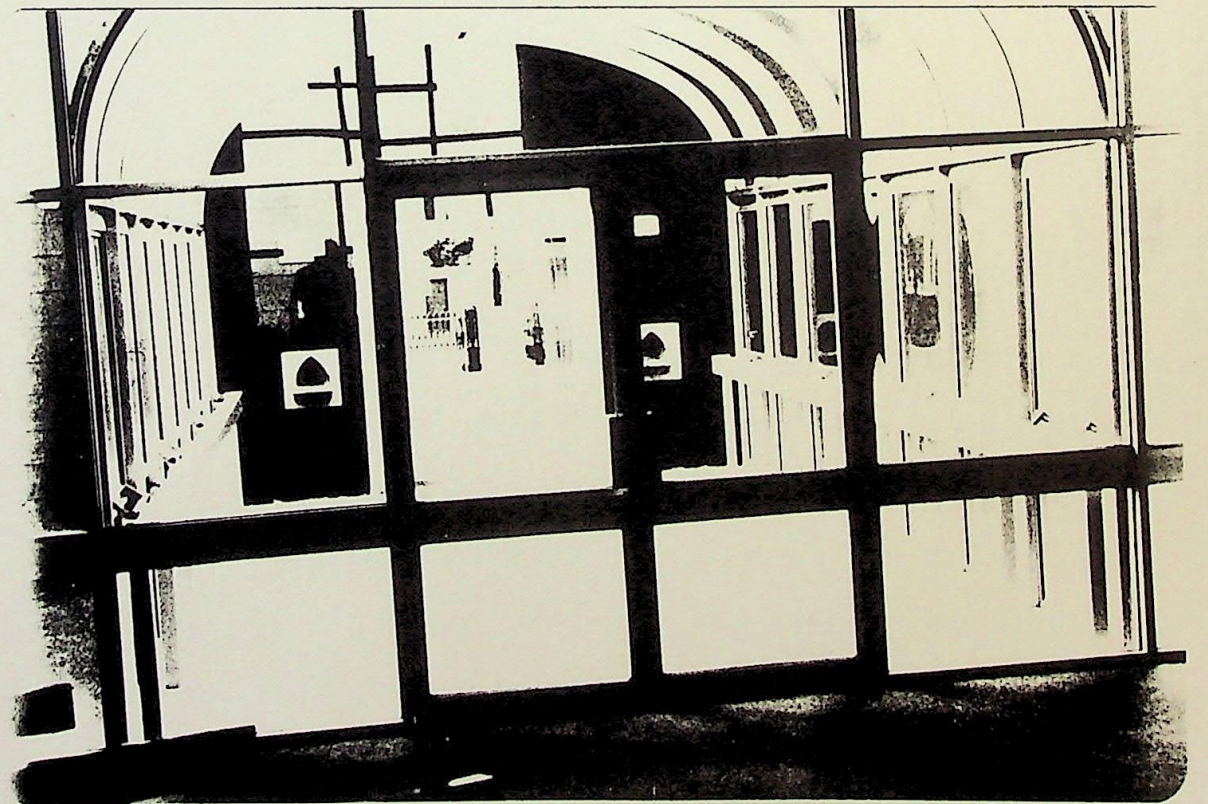
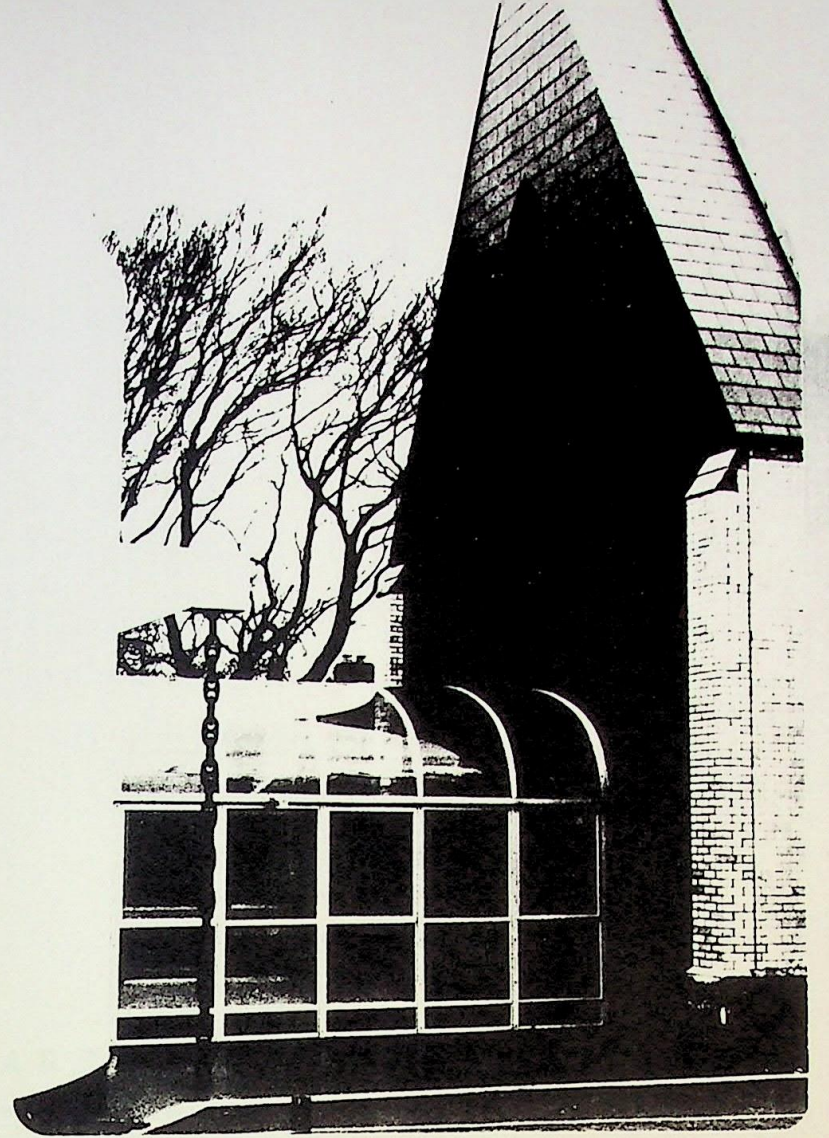


Fig. 1.

PART II

RELIGION, ART and EDUCATION

To omit the dimension of art from education is to maim education. All human activity is interrelated and interdependent. Normal life is varied in interests because interests too are interrelated. All men cannot be all things, but all interests must be harmoniously integrated. The end of education is the development of the whole human person with his/her powers of understanding, feeling and intuiting; of acting in accordance with his/her nature so as to show forth by being fully active, the glory of God.

Both art and religion are among the most primitive expressions of human life. R.G. Collingwood in his "Speculum Mentis" (1924) said "Art is imagination" and art gives expression to the belief of man in a Supreme Being. Religion and art are highly developed in primitive societies. Plato described the artist as a man "maddened by beauty" and this intoxication leads him by stages from the love of bodily forms to the love of spiritual realities.

"O what a piece of work is man", Hamlet exclaims. Never are we so conscious of the divine in man as when he pulls aside the curtain and reveals to us the harmony and grace of the universe. To 'catch' and present that harmony and grace is the work of the artist. If the artist is not given a chance to mould the human soul of the growing child there is every reason to fear that this pupil may grow into a Philistine - with a drive to power, full of pride, strutting through life, trampling underfoot the primrose and the violet and

only building up scaffolding to prop up his ego and fool himself into thinking he is indestructible.

Religion is a striving to bring about a harmony between the individual and the world around him. Religious art appeals to man's feelings, it arouses feelings and stimulates inspiration. Goethe said "Religion stands in precisely the same relation to art as any other of life's higher interests. It is to be considered purely as material having equal rights with all the other materials life affords". Jane Harrison has declared "It is at the outset one and the same impulse that sends a man to church and the theatre".

Art draws its subject matter from nature, but also from human activities and interests. Symbolic language, i.e. the language of poet and writer, gives expression to inner experiences and feelings, but the artist can communicate these intuitions even more vividly, so religion finds its fullest expression in art.

CHAPTER 2.

THE "CURRICULUM BOUND" SYSTEM and the ART TEACHER

The Secondary School System.

The Secondary school is an environment of separate disciplines, partly from choice, partly from pressure. The purpose for this is to achieve and sustain a certain pattern of attainment. The best efforts to change this system come up against the demands of external examinations, parents, inadequate buildings, impossible numbers and conflicting attitudes. Progress can only be made by individual teachers within a school which can devise means by which students can think and move freely and naturally across the various areas. This demands a certain amount of background planning and subject co-operation - a planned integration of subjects where two or more teachers combine their approaches to a theme. But any artificial linking of one subject with another can lead to more harm than good. This linking must come "as naturally as leaves to trees" (Keats). The merging of interests and subjects is an attitude to be developed, ideas must be encouraged to root and grow in areas where they do so naturally and only where the soil is right.

The Art Teacher's Contribution

What can the art teacher do from his/her particular place in the school? There is a time table to cope with and the other teachers to consider and consult.

The art room is a place where the students can be given broad freedoms to explore. A familiar problem for the art teacher is the student who comes up with "I have no ideas" or "I can't think of anything to do", etc. If a student is stuck, if he can find no starting point, a possible answer might be in an interest elsewhere, in an area which does not necessarily associate with art, but could lead to very expressive work. The teacher should examine what does the student believe as a result of background and family influences - e.g. his religious beliefs - whether believing or disbelieving, the student will want to express these in the media he feels most attracted to. The beginning of an appreciation of art forms in the church will have its roots in the student's own efforts to give expression to his inner self i.e. what he watches or takes part in, what he considers important, reassuring or disturbing - missions, demonstrations, marches, pilgrimages, rituals, etc. He may need brushes, charcoal, clay, wood, fabrics to convey his feelings. Only when he begins to give expression to his own deeper religious feelings can he begin to appreciate, criticize or have a feeling for work done by other artists in other times and other cultures as well as today.

The Cross is a universally recognized symbol of Christianity, students could be led to an investigation of different types of crosses,



The High Cross

Moone, Co. Kildare

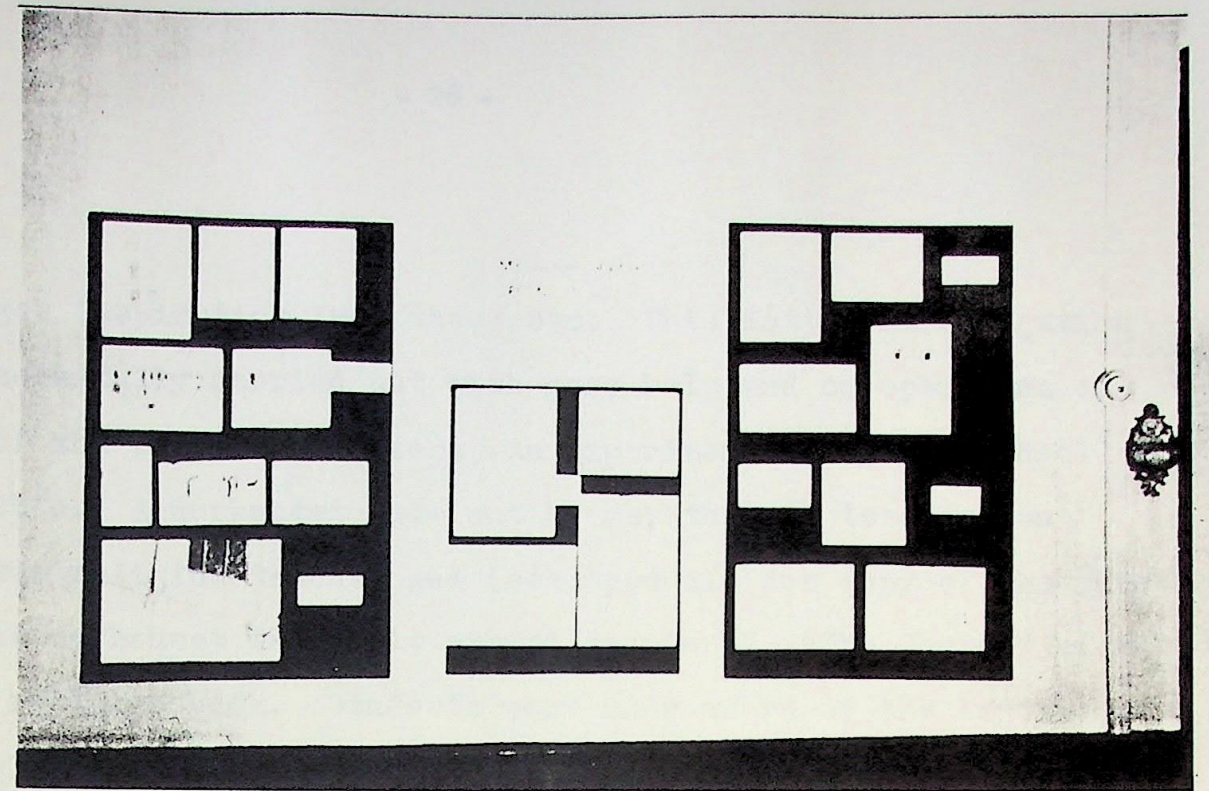
and their uses. This study could begin in the classroom with a short introductory talk by the teacher and a slide show on Irish High Crosses and reliquaries, following this a visit to Clonmacnoise or Monasterboice or to any local High Cross. Students would be handed a worksheet to be completed after or during the visit, answers would include both visual records and written information.

A visit to the National Museum could be arranged to see the Cross of Cong. It is a reliquary. This will provide material for another class. A worksheet would help here also. Students will be led to compare and contrast the Cross of Cong with the High Cross, to make a historical study of each and to assess their aesthetic qualities and usefulness. To value their cultural heritage.

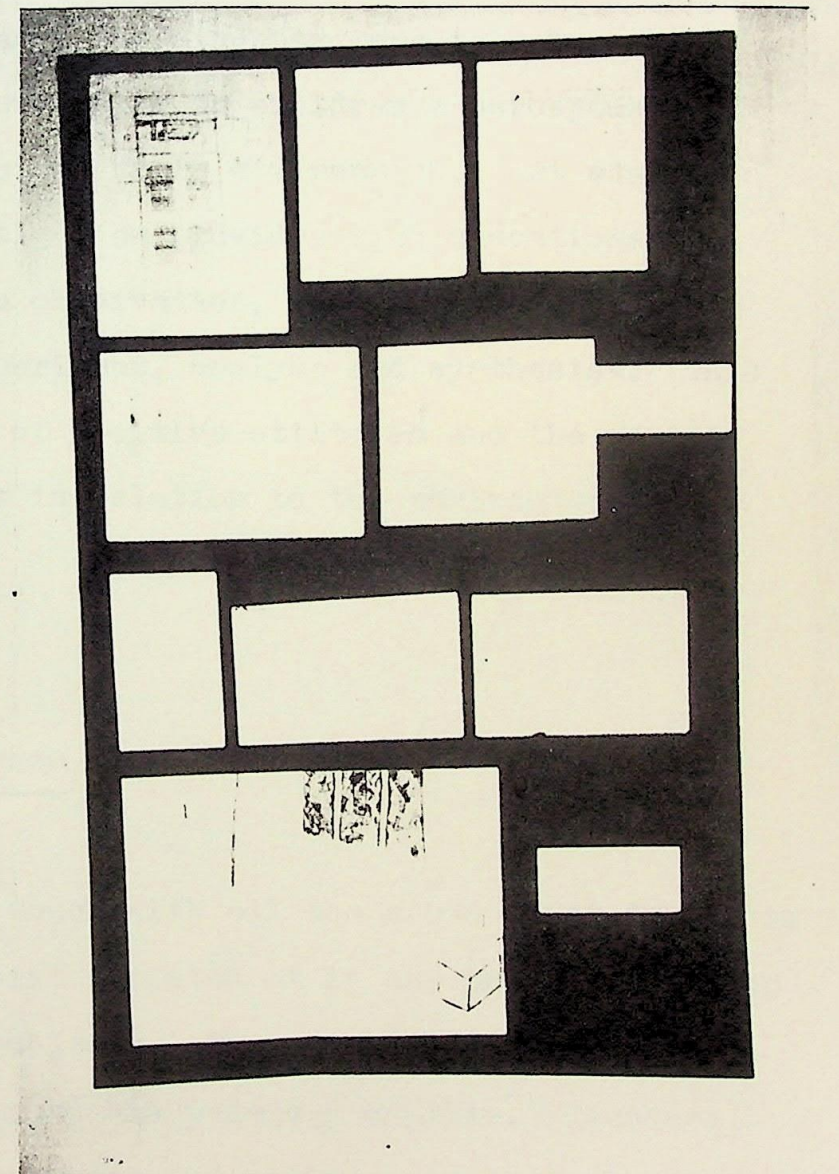
With the assistance of the religion teacher, pupils could study the Latin Cross or crucifix bearing the image of Christ. The cross as a symbol of death and Resurrection could be her theme. How have artists represented the figure of Christ on the cross - a suffering or a glorified image? How does this affect the treatment of the cross?

All this study will lead students to a desire to express their own feelings about the Cross and what it means to them. To do this the student will be involved in figure drawing and both two and three dimensional work.

In this way students will begin to question why did the artists do it that way? What message are they trying to get across? Was the work done because of their faith, beliefs, influences or pressures, the availability of materials around them, etc. They will be led to question their own places of worship. Do they mean a lot to them?



*Developing
Visual Awareness*



Can they get inspiration from them? etc. This latter investigation can be successfully carried out with some help and co-operation on the part of the religion teacher. An experiment in my own school revealed this. A worksheet made out by me, the art teacher was given to the religion teacher and (see appendix for copy of the questionnaire). The worksheet was built around chapter 7, "The Church" of the students' religion book. Students were made aware of the importance of their place of worship through a study of the teaching of the Church, historical background and discussion and then were asked to fill in the questionnaire which was to be accompanied by a worksheet and drawing exercise. At art class, the students were told how to approach this aspect, thus developing in children a perceptual and visual awareness of one aspect of their environment. Art education based on environmental investigation provides rich educational opportunities for training in observation, encouraging students to think, research, compare, experiment, analyse and synthesise. This will lead to the development of positive attitudes and the ability to make qualitative judgement in relation to the environment.

"Thinking Love" in the Classroom

The art teacher should be in touch with all the areas of study of his students so that he could assist the student in any possible link-up or connection between other subjects. This demands what Pestalozzi called "thinking love". He based his pedagogy on this. Teachers must have understanding, forbearance and patience so as to lead students



Following up ideas with experiment



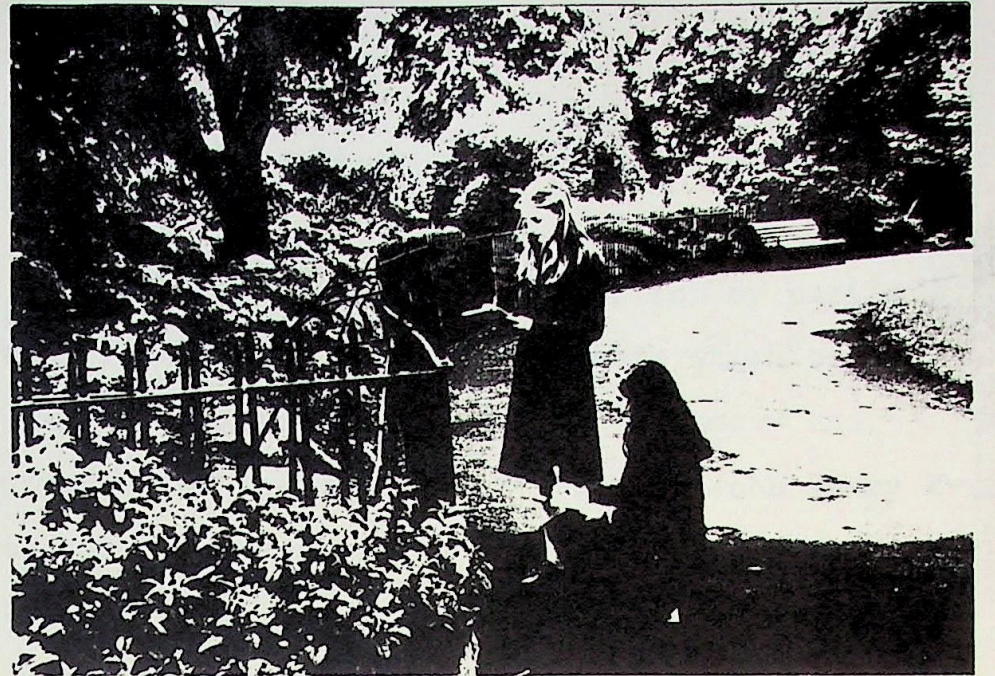
into a deepening enquiry into the forces and circumstances that affect them, following up ideas with experiment and experiment with ideas.

Leading the students towards self-expression can present a dilemma for the art teacher because an established body of knowledge and standards must be passed on and accepted by pupils, without unduly restricting or inhibiting them. There must be a maximum of passing with a minimum of restriction.

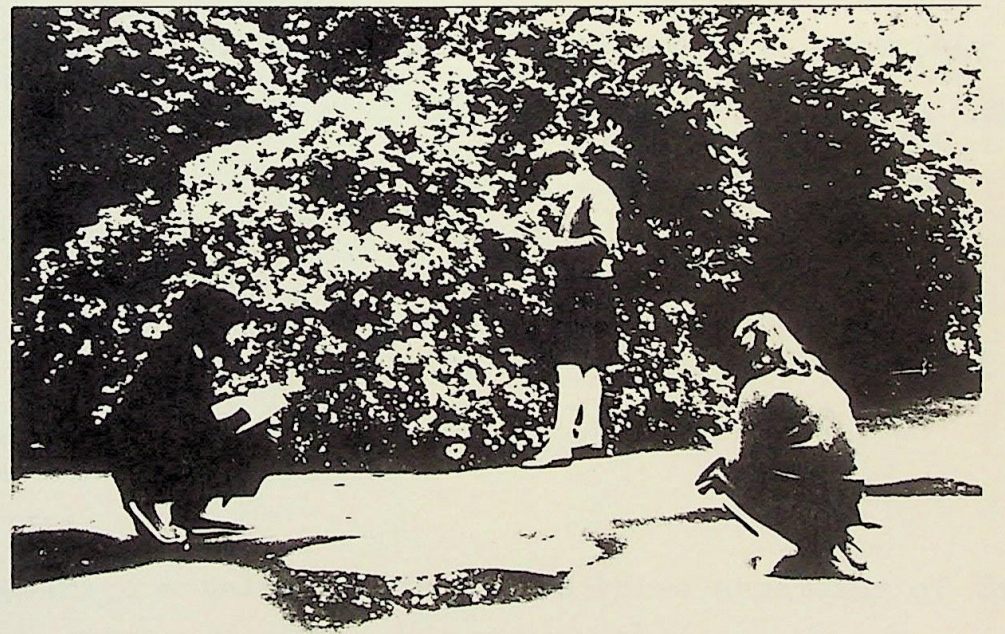
Activities in the classroom can easily become unstructured, aimless and therefore pointless. The misunderstanding of Pestalozzi's theories on child-centred education is a real danger for every teacher, and possibly to a greater extent, for the art teacher. The way to creativity is not through total freedom, but a totally authoritarian classroom is not the answer either. A structured, secure environment is probably the most suitable for creativity. Creativity is never the outcome of chaos, but is the outcome of order. Children should be provided with a liberal education, i.e. an education which introduces the learner to as many forms and fields of knowledge as possible.

Developing an Enquiring Mind

John Dewey saw all education as a process of actual living - growing, assessing, re-assessing and assembling previous experience. The child must be directed towards interest in finding things out, interest



Interest in finding things out



Environmental studies

in making things and interest in artistic expression.

The art teacher can assist here also. For example, for my pupils in St. Stephen's Green, I devised a set of worksheets which could be used to take my class to University Church for a sensory and visual study. My introduction would be a short talk on John Henry Newman whose idea it was "to build a large barn and decorate it in the style of a Basilica with Irish marbles and copies of standard pictures". The Church would be built in the Byzantine style (subject for another study). How successful was Newman? Let us investigate. The first visit would consist of a sensory study and the second visit a visual study. My proposed worksheets are included in the appendix.

Once students have made discoveries, expressed feelings and formed judgements, they will be urged to give expression in concrete form to their own feelings. The development of ideas will depend on the interest and ability of the children, the subject and what materials are available, but should cover a wide range of media both in two and three dimensional work.

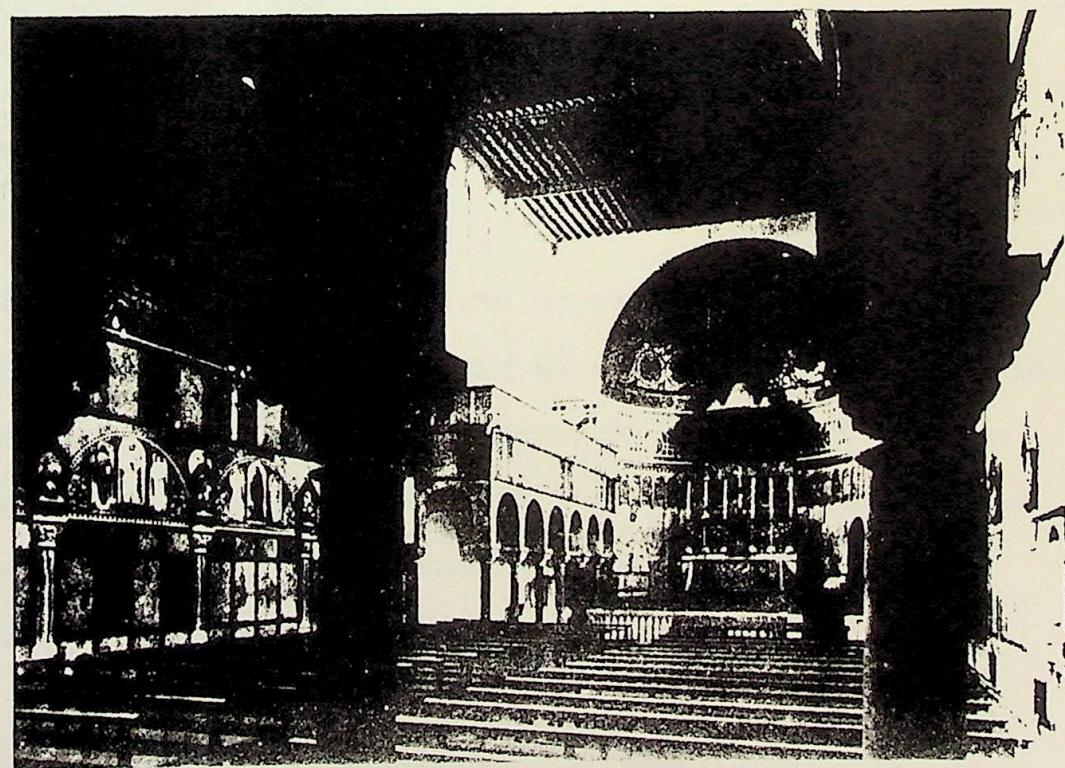
Parent - Teacher Co-operation

The teacher can encourage a talent better if he knows something of the student's background. Has he been helped to develop it over the years? What kind of help has he had? Has he met with opposition or indifference? What effects have these had on his work?.



John Henry Newman

University Church, St. Stephen's Green



Contacts between home and school are to be encouraged. Parents can inform on family interests; teachers know the child's ability. Between them ways may be discovered to enlarge the child's experience.

As the child develops, ideas tend to become many-sided, he is less sure of familiar symbols and ways of expressing them. What is right for today may be wrong for tomorrow. He is influenced often by other peoples interpretations and he comes to doubt his own as a result, so he is led to question, to look for other ways of thinking and expressing other ways of saying things.

The adolescent needs help in finding means to express himself in his own advancing world - in finding a new visual language. The art lesson should in some way connect with earlier experiences and lead on towards new ones.

Man as Co-Creator

Students should be encouraged towards an appreciation of the many aspects of life. They should be looking at art and all construction work to see the rich variety of things men make. In this way the student is learning to come to terms with the world around him and his own imagination. Both student and teacher work together to achieve the full personal development of the student.

Many children grow up today in conditions of environment calculated to stifle their artistic sensibility. They are accustomed to

machine made articles, produced cheaply and speedily by manufacturers whose one aim is to sell. There is often little care for aesthetic qualities. The public accept what is produced, not because they like it, but because they are accustomed to it. High standard of design is equated with luxury because hand-made goods are expensive and they feel that only hand-made goods can be beautiful, so they usually go for imitations of hand-craft made by machine.

Pupils will have their own ideas and opinions about machine and hand-craft products. To formulate these, they could be presented with a familiar plaster statue of the Blessed Virgin and a hand-carved one as well. Ask them to list the merits and defects of each. Which would they prefer - a plaster statue of the Blessed Virgin or a bronze reproduction of Michelangelo's Pieta? What is it that we dislike about machine produced objects? Would it be that the mass-production of objects means the imposition of one man's ideas on the public so that we are channelled into thinking in the one way? On the other hand is there not a certain security about this? We are often afraid, as it were, to step outside our environment and be different.

Is it the message or the medium that offends us when we are critical of the mass-produced? After all there are many good quality reproductions of the Pieta coming from factories today. The machine can be made to produce articles of real quality if the possibilities and limitations are understood properly. People must be made to appreciate and understand these qualities; they must take an intelligent interest in the design of the things which surround them.

The native taste of the child must be developed to bring out their sense of beauty and values, so they they will realize the relation of good design and of art to everyday life. Children must be led to an awareness of their environment and all it contains. They must question why things look the way they do. Even very young children can do this by examining familiar objects like their cereal spoon, why is the handle so long, the surface so smooth, etc. Could it be made differently? Could you make a spoon of your own design? Does it feel good, does it work as well as the one you used at breakfast?

Interchanging Religion and Art

To the average Irish adolescent, religious goods are expensive and because they feel that only hand-made goods can be beautiful, they will usually go for imitations of hand-craft made by machine. The machine can be made to produce articles of real quality if the possibilities and limitations are understood properly. People must be made to appreciate and understand these qualities, they must take an intelligent interest in the design of the things which surround them.

The native taste of the child must be developed to bring out their sense of beauty and values, so that they will realize the relation of good design and of art to everyday life.

To the average Irish adolescent, religion plays an important role in his attitudes to his environment, to his ways of thinking, looking, seeing and judging. His attitudes will be either positive or negative - he is affected by the spiritual in one direction or the other.

He needs guidance and direction from parents and religion teachers but also from the art teacher. These people can play an important role in his attitudes to his environment, to his ways of thinking, looking and seeing and judging. His attitudes will be either positive or negative, he is affected by the spiritual in one direction or the other. He can be led to evaluate the wealth of verbal and visual information which leads him to make his response to the spiritual in the environment in which he finds himself.

CHAPTER 3.

TEACHING ART THROUGH RELIGION and RELIGION THROUGH ART

The Beauty of Form

I would hope to "expose" my 13 year old pupils to the beauty of form of a modern church. "Form" has been extremely well explained by Herbert Read in his book "Education through Art". We say a race-horse is "in good form". By this we mean that he raced as well as racing can be done. So that horse, be he Arkle or Red Rum, is an "artist" horse. He performs an action well, very well, and there is none better. Herbert Read also uses form as a verb "we form" working committees, i.e. we "give shape" to a number of people for a specific purpose.

Both of these uses of the word "form" apply to the artist. He gives "shape" as well as shape can be given, to some object. This shape is a shape found in some form in the universe and is the result of unobstructed growth.

Pupils can be led to understand this basic idea of form. They can be shown a cockle shell; or a crystal; or a pollen grain under the microscope. Then they can be shown a slide or a photograph of a new church. Questions like "What does it remind you of?", have you seen a shape like this before?, can be asked and gradually even young students can be led into contact with the "form". Visual form can tell us many important things and the communicative function of an object is

equally as important as the structural function. Here art education-
alist, Peter Green would suggest an "exploration of aspects of visual
function and trying to discover through appropriate problem solving
activities, why things look the way they do". Exercises like this
are extremely important for the adolescent's perceptual development.
At the age of 12 Piaget holds that the child has reached the stage
of solving problems in his mind and of drawing meaningful
conclusions from purely abstract data and he will realize the need
to accommodate or adjust to the world if he is to survive. Piaget
was most interested in the development of reasoning, a skill that he
holds almost always involves the creative use of language but I would
take this a step further and say that it also requires the assistance
of art to give expression to feelings which go beyond words and
understanding. The reasons for the form of a church or a bank - why
they look the way they do - is crucial to the development of work
in design education.

Form is the sum of human experience expressed in mathematically
measurable terms. If my pupil were senior level I would help them
to look at the ratio between the sides of a rectangle and see if the
proportions please or displease them. In this way they will be engaged
in maths and simple science. There are no inhibiting subject labels,
but pupils are unconsciously involved in a whole education process
There is a problem to be solved. This requires the assistance of
maths or technology. The student will be led to make use of other
subjects naturally to assist them in design problem solving.

Problem Solving Exercises

Students must be encouraged to give reasons for their likes and dislikes. For example, they could be asked to give reasons for their like or dislike of the form of their parish Church. This will lead to a discussion on the use of buildings. "Form follows function". (Le Corbusier) Function will dictate the form of a building, whether it is a church or a living room. Pupil could examine different lived environments - homes, offices, shops, factories, churches, etc. What are the important considerations when designing for these? Miniature three dimensional environments could be built in the art room and this could lead to the design and creation of a suitable environment for the celebration of the school's end of year Mass or religious service. Students would participate in all aspects of the design process, from initial planning, to design, building of furniture (if necessary) making hangings or falls, curtains or cushions, vestments and altar vessels. All students in the school could be involved and if possible other teachers also. The religious teacher informing on liturgical requirements, the home-economics teacher could help with sewing and baking of unleavened bread where this is required. The art teacher would monitor work throughout.

Expressing Feelings

In the case of a Church, the human experience of God is what the architect has to body forth. All human experience can be expressed

in terms of love or hate. How do we express these sentiments? What is a loving expression? How do we communicate feelings of hatred?.

I would begin this investigation by getting the pupils to "role-play". A group of children could mime an event from the pages of their bible for example, the "Prodigal Son". How do the father and son express their feelings for each other? The second son expressed hatred through his anger at the father's treatment of the prodigal, how does he look? The other children watch the expressions and sketch these.

Mary presents her mother with a gift, how does her mother respond? John threw stones at the soldiers, what expression was on his face during the action? Children enjoy role playing and it motivates them to think, feel and express sentiments visually. This also provides an opportunity for them to release tension, express fears, doubts, joys and sorrows and is beneficial to mental health. Love is the creative, hate the destructive agency. Both are necessary that good may flourish, so that evil may be eradicated.

Function creates form and form, when it is contemplated, i.e. purged of all ideas of function, is beautiful. It is to the fountain of beauty that the young pupil is to be led.

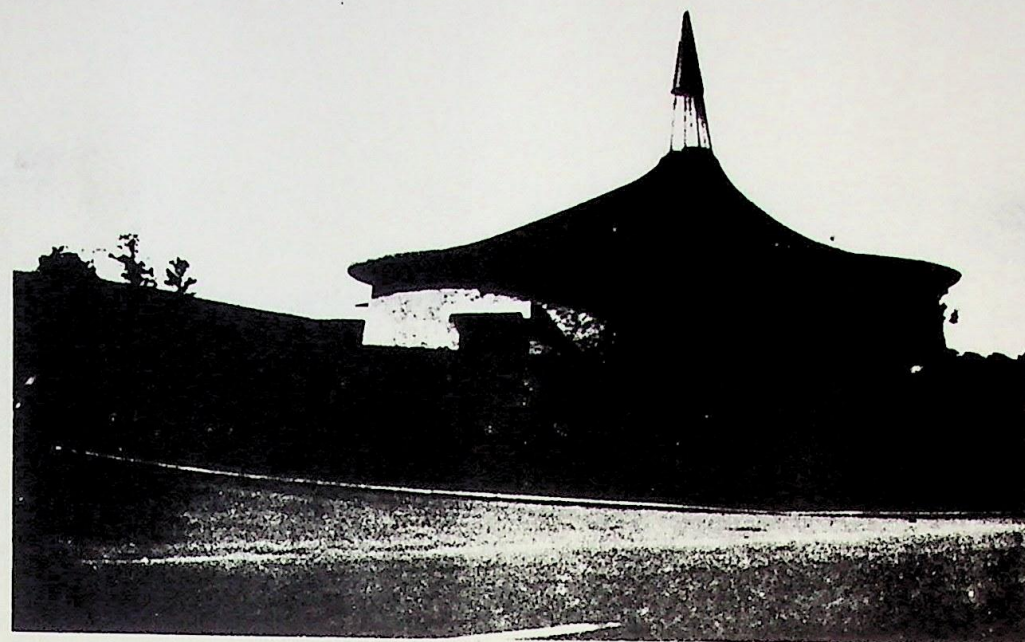
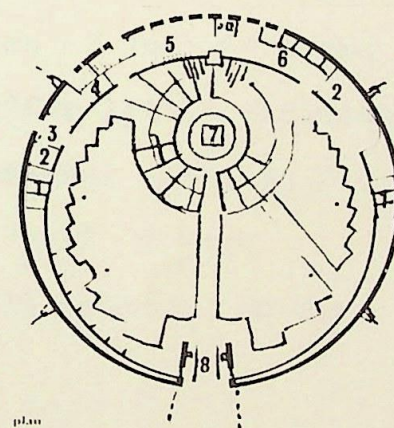
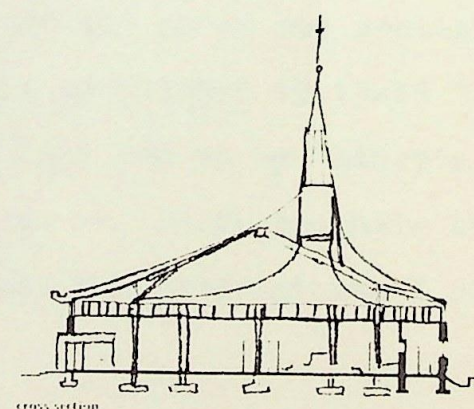


FIG. 9

Church of St. Aengus, Burt.



- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| key | 1, porch | 6, priests' seats |
| 2, confessional | 4, store | 7, altar |
| 3, service | 5, boys' choir | 8, lobby |

Parish Investigation

Question No. 1 in the questionnaire (see appendix) is to ask students to draw a simple outline of their parish Church. Should that Church be the modern Church of St. Aengus, Burt, Co. Donegal (fig. 9), I should hope to stand the pupils at the foot of Grianan Ailigh and show how the shape of the church echoes the lines of the Grianan. Students will see this and respond. It is their church; rooted in their soil of their parish, reflecting the shape of their countryside. Because it is associated and bound up with their lives it speaks of love and family and security. These are a symbol of hope and as such act on the subconscious.

This church has a gentle sloping spire. It speaks of humility as it nestles at its mountain's foot. It is graceful, shy and modest. It generates feelings of the power and protection of God; it seems to say what Christ said in Matthew 19.13-15 "Suffer little children to come to me; I will lead you to my Father's eternal home; do you adore, praise, reverence and serve him here in Burt? I have protected your ancestors for generations, I shall continue to care for you".

Burt is a low church, clinging to the soil of Donegal; ideally suited to a people and a countryside that cling to the faith of Patrick, Brigid and Columcille. Much of the past can also be recalled with an account of St. Aengus.

The need for an education of this kind is very apparent from the findings of my questionnaire. Most students knew very little about their parish church - when it was built, why it is called after a particular saint, etc. It had never occurred to them that this information could have relevance to them. Perhaps one reason for this could be the fact that my research was done in an urban area, where all students come from different places, go to different churches and in the case of many students they have no deep roots in the soil of their parish, they are first generation city or suburban dwellers. The response may be totally different in a rural environment, where facts and fables of community and parish life are told and re-told, treasured and passed on from one generation to the next.

In question 4, I asked for a drawing of the sanctuary.

Should the pupils that I hope to bring to the worship of God by introducing them to the beauty of the sanctuary come from Laytown, Co. Meath (fig 1), I should point out to them the altar made of clean strong local limestone. From it the priest, as he begins to celebrate Mass, faces all the people and invites them to approach God here and ask his pardon for refusing this friendship in the past. Here that same priest raises aloft the Body and Blood of Christ as he offers himself again in love to his Father on this Laytown altar.

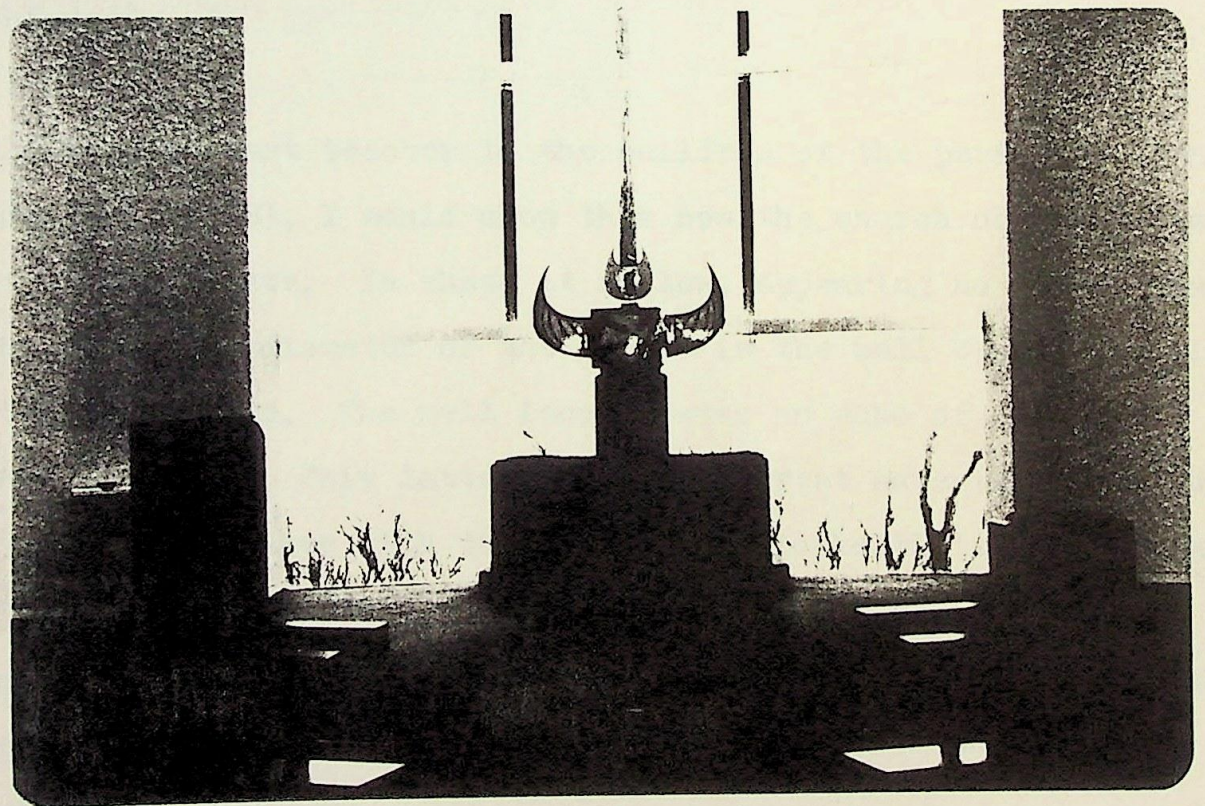
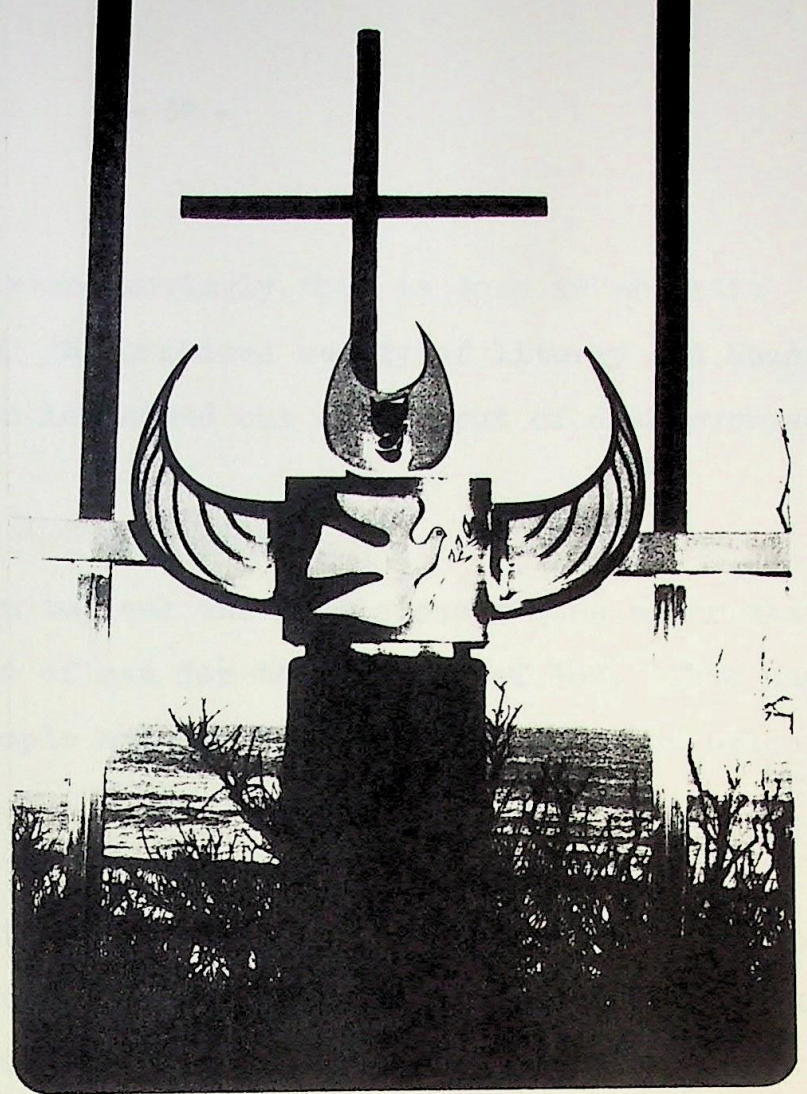
The shape of the raised surround of the altar is curved and by its shape invites those at Mass to come to receive the Body of Christ as the sacrifice is offered.

The liturgy itself is simply the artistic revelation of revealed

Laytown.

"It speaks for itself."

Symbolism requiring
little explanation.



truth and how profoundly and movingly this is done in artistic surroundings. Because of the combined beauty of liturgy and House of God, the whole person is raised out of the rut of drab everyday materialism.

I would get the children to feel the hard stone of the altar that was quarried by the hand of man for the worship of God. This was the work of their own people and would give them a sense of belonging.

The lectern is made of the same stone. Here I should ask the children questions about its purpose and why it is so well-suited to its function. In their answers many students criticize plastic, imitation, artificial and cheaply ornamented church furniture in their parish churches. Our modern generation look for simplicity and honesty.

Should I be the art teacher to the children of the parish of Bawnoge, Clondalkin (fig 8), I would show them how the church occupies the heart of the estate. In shape it is low, appearing no higher than the houses. The diameter of the circle is the wall behind the altar and the tabernacle. The wall incorporates an echo of the old Clondalkin tower. This latter is used to great advantage, not only for the link it makes with the history of Clondalkin's past but also for light effects on the tabernacle. The top of the tower is a window and the light is so deflected that when the sun comes on the tabernacle it appears like light from heaven. This the students would experience.

The altar is of wrought iron with a wooden table. In front is the Transfiguration motif - the work of Paddy McElroy. This motif is

repeated on the abo. Both can be draped with colours appropriate to the liturgical seasons.

The tabernacle has much of the outline of the old Irish "standing stones" (matter for another lesson). It is covered with cloisonne enamel. This can also be discussed and connected up with many materials that could be and have been used in altars in the past. The church is quiet and peaceful and conducive to prayer. There are no obstacles in the line of pillars between congregation and altar. The church has functional beauty, beauty of line, beauty of ornament. It is a house well suited for God's dwelling among us.

Behind the altar in Laytown, the sea ebbs and flows. A stark wooden cross stands outside the window. Its rough wood has a message of suffering; suffering that leads to the Resurrection. If Christ has risen, we too shall rise. Death is not the end but the beginning. With questions and gentle probing, I would hope to lead the pupils to realize this and take it with them on life's journey.

A Sense of Belonging

On two sections of the side circular wall of the Bawnoge Church are drawings by the pupils of the local schools. These are well mounted and presented by the teachers. Surely this gives a sense of belonging to the young student! This suggests an opportunity to motivate students to design for their church (of course with the consent of the parish priest). Perhaps it could be a Resurrection banner for

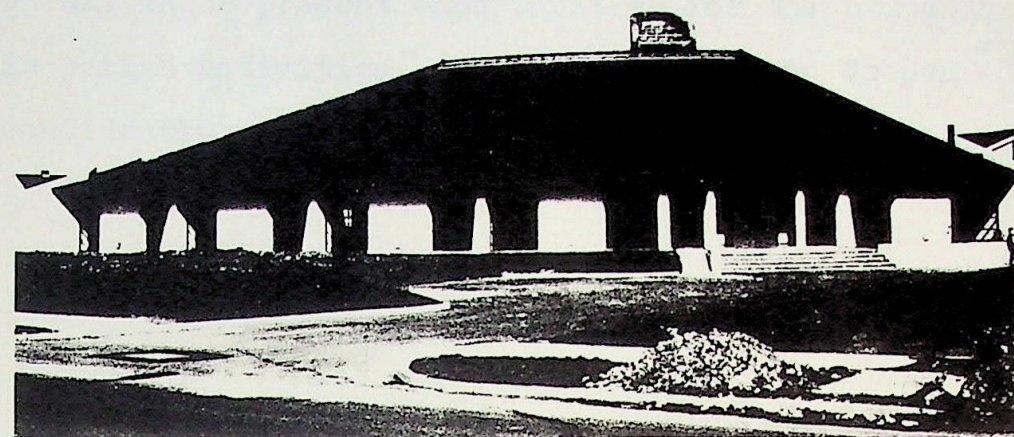


FIG. 8

Church of the Transfiguration

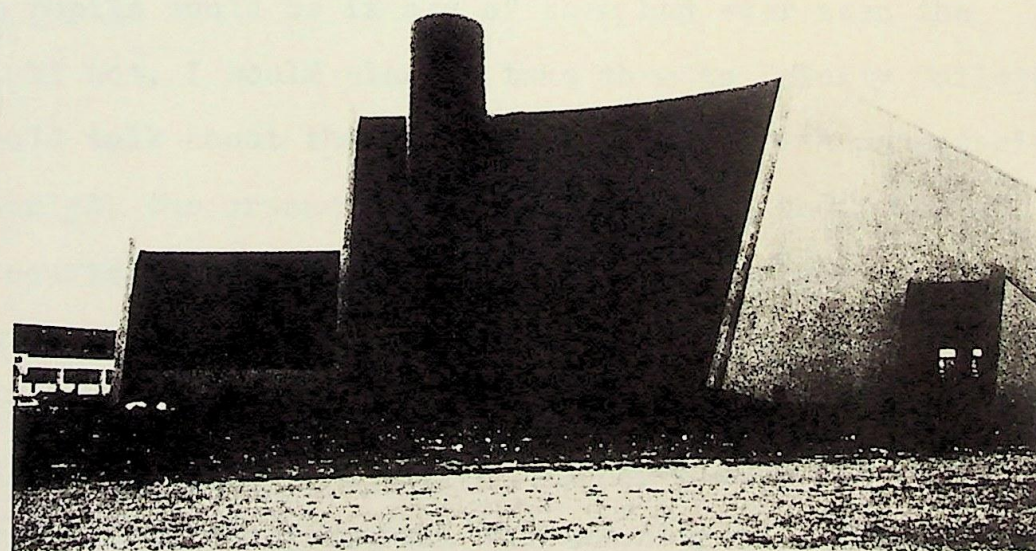


FIG. 8

Easter, an ambo fall for Confirmation Day, a poster to advertise the parish Folk Mass. All these present opportunities for the students to become involved in parish activities, thus helping them to deepen their roots and confidently grow in security towards maturity.

Roots in History

In most, if not all nations, art was born at the foot of the altar as an expression of religious belief. We have but to think of the history of art of Western Europe from Giotto to our own time.

Question 6c mentions the Stations of the Cross. I discovered a very beautiful set of copper Stations in the Church of Kildoon, Co. Kildare (see fig. 5). If I were a teacher of art or religion in the local school I would take my pupils to see these Stations. My first question to the pupils would be if any of them had ever seen the Book of Kells. If not, I would plan to take them to Trinity College one day. We would talk about the scriptoria of the Irish monasteries, the beautiful script, the ornamental capitals (all in their way of expression, of course), perhaps leading to a lesson on calligraphy and different styles of writing. I would allow pupils the opportunity to do some creative script writing themselves, using a poem or excerpt from one of their text-books. To experience the full impact of these Stations would require the maturity of adults. I would still hope that the pupils would appreciate their link with the past, with Ireland's Golden Age and that having been initiated and been given a love for their Christian heritage they might be moved in

future time to delve deeper into the passion of Christ and to seek to understand the faith of their fathers.

Building a House for God

Question 6d asks for suggestions about improvements that the students would like. It is possible, that they would like to re-build the whole church according to their plans and have no inhibitions about suggesting how to do so. For example, one pupil if she were designing her parish church would remove all the pillars which obstruct the view and this she believes possible if the roof was lowered and the overall shape of the church changed slightly to allow more space. This space is not intended to fit more people. The pupil holds that the height of the building was necessary to provide air for a large congregation. This would not be necessary if there was more ground space, then each person would have "room to breathe".

It is, however, possible that when designing their own church, students will lack one or two unusually deeply intuited needs. I mention as an example of these needs remaining unfulfilled the Church of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Fir House, Tallaght. It is a church lacking any spiritual atmosphere. All that the students saw as essential needs and aids to prayer are missing in this cold and bare almost cheap-looking building. The architect's plan does not cover the overall design and furnishings of the church and this is an essential part of church design which students may never consider

important. They see the architect and builder on one side and the artist and craftsman on the other, just waiting for the builder to leave so that they can move in and get down to the really "important business" of decorating the church. They must be led to a realization of the importance of architect, artist, priest and people coming together at the outset to design a church that meets the needs of the community it is serving.

This will also raise another question for the students. Today everything is considered in terms of expense, economy and value for money. Even children are constantly asking "how much does it cost", "is it worth it"? and they will quickly ask this about their new church or statue also. They will be critical in their evaluations concerning value for money. They will often say, for example, well it looks good so it was worth the money. Children must be made aware that good design does not have to add to the price of a building, whether this building is a church or an office block. They must also be made aware that the frequently advertised "package-deal" churches are no answer to economy needs. "The liturgy cannot take place in a 'package' - to put it in the words of Bishop Cahal B. Daly. The Church in Ireland is very well aware of the need for a high level of liturgical art and design and she depends on better education of the clergy and people. This education must begin in schools.

If for example, the Fir House church lacks appeal, the students must be led to question why: They may not be able to put into words what it is that displeases them, but they can be led to stalk the answer, to outflank it and maybe to come up on it from behind.

Hundreds of thousands of sense impressions, memories, experiences,

historical facts are all condensed into the fundamental unity - the House of God. When a church lacks appeal there must be contradiction among these things for it does not then have the variety that is reduced to unity.

Abstract Beauty of Light

Question 6d can also be used to lead to a discussion on stained glass - its abstract beauty and the out-of-this-world atmosphere it can introduce into the church. This is something many of my students commented on. When nothing else appealed to them or held their attention, they found in the stained glass windows a source of inspiration and beauty, setting an atmosphere which leads to contemplation. Stained glass is a feature of many modern churches. Especially pleasing are the massive windows in Kill Avenue, Church of the Holy Family. (fig 6).

The environmental design project I outlined earlier (P.35) could include also a design for stained glass. Pupils could make windows using black paper and coloured tissue to create the effect of coloured glass and these could be fitted into the existing windows of the room being used. Here they will learn something of the disciplines of the craft, the need for simplicity in design and how the necessary lead separating the glass pieces becomes a feature of the overall design.

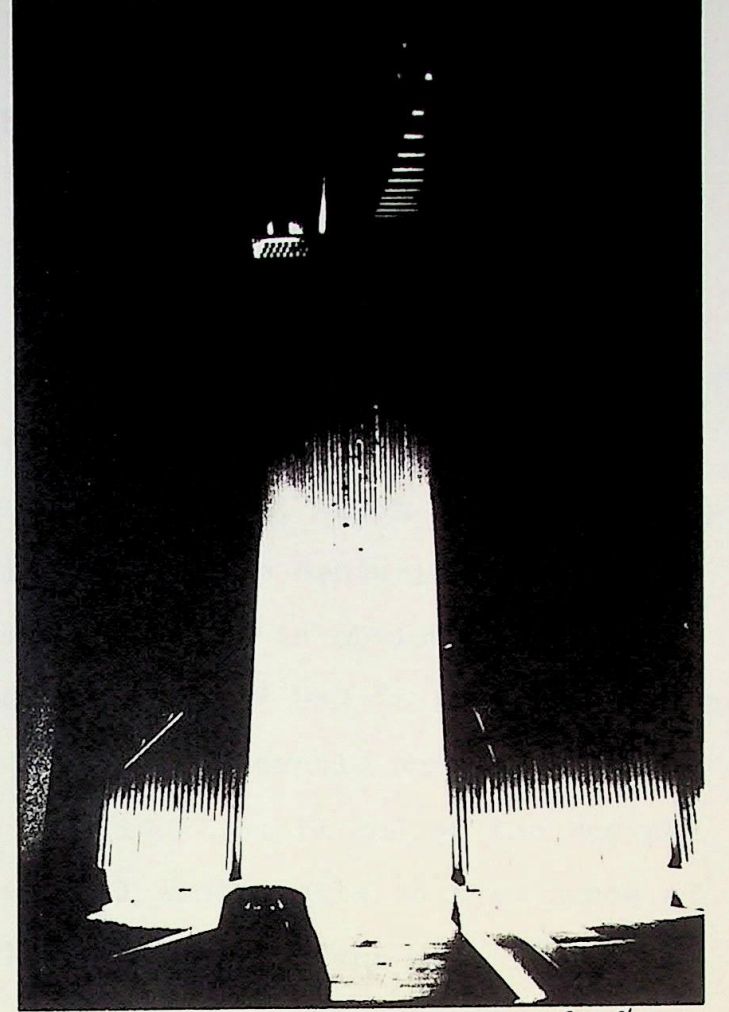


FIG. 8

Selling an atmosphere
for contemplation.



Conclusion

Artists wield the most powerful of all educational instruments - that lovliness that conquers the hearts of men, which fixes indelibly what it touches and perpetuates it through the centuries. Because of the important sociological role of art, it is obvious that the teacher, who is an artist, who is inspired and has it in him therefore to inspire others, can make what he touches lovable and will confer an indestructable benefit on the individual pupil and on the nation that he/she loves. Such a teacher will lead pupils to the Source of Truth, Goodness and Beauty - to God Himself. He/she will lead their pupils to the gate of Heaven which is ajar from time to time and they will see the light that shines out for a moment between the opening and the closing. It will give them a longing for all that is good beautiful and true.

I should hope that this is my lot as an artist who is also a religious.

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Fig. 1

Church of the Sacred Heart
Laytown,
Co. Meath.

1979

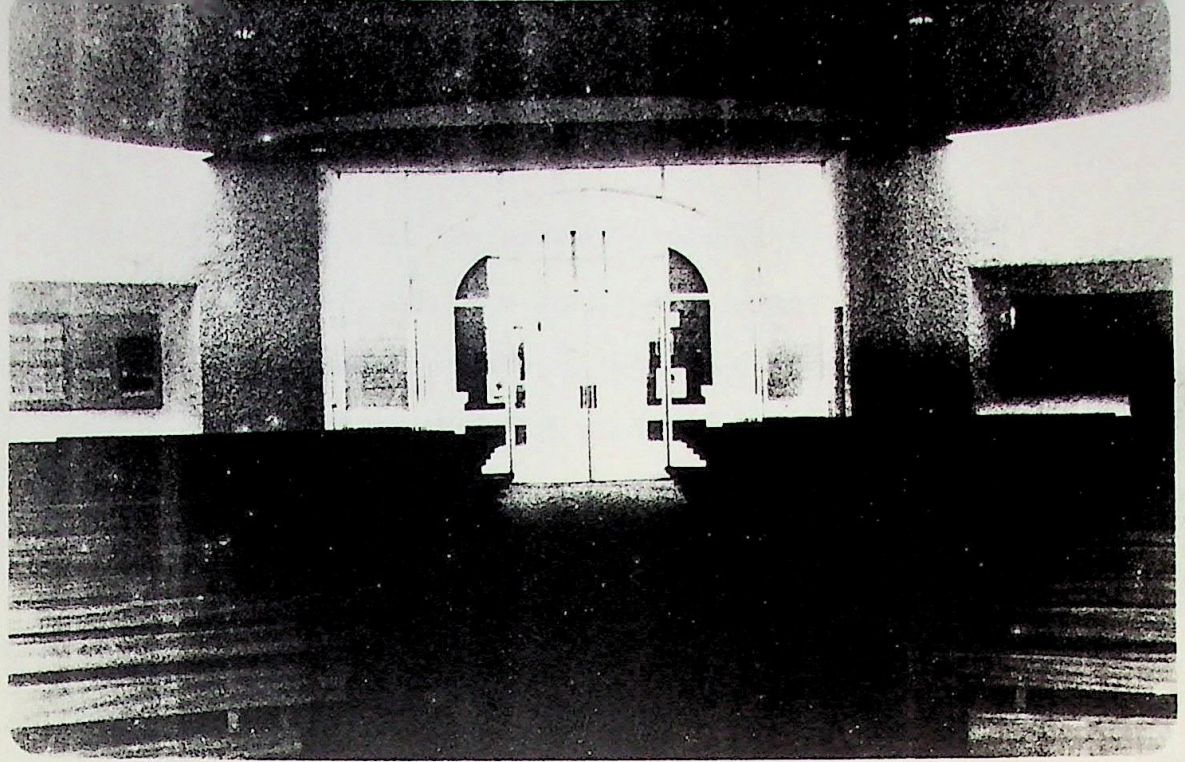
Architect : Liam McCormick

The frontage and mature landscape of the old church (built in 1876) remains undisturbed.

The west gable has been retained and the three light windows now hold three bills. The old gable is surrounded by a shallow moat. The two arched timber doors retain very much the link with the past. The glass porch inside is built over a pool designed to accommodate a standing overflow congregation. Immediately inside the main entrance is a stone blessed by Pope John Paul II at Knock and it is elegantly lettered by Ruth Brandt. Part of the original church is to be found also in the re-use of the carved limestone holy water stoups.

Moving into the interior, one enters a wide oval-shaped form - the wall of white rough textured plaster finish (a feature of the outside also). The building is double skinned, so there is nothing "sticking out". Sacristy, confessionals, conference rooms, crying room all are accommodated between the two walls.

The floor is covered with wall-to-wall olive green carpeting. Selected pieces of stained glass from the old church are set into the deeply recessed windows.



Laytown

"Reflections"

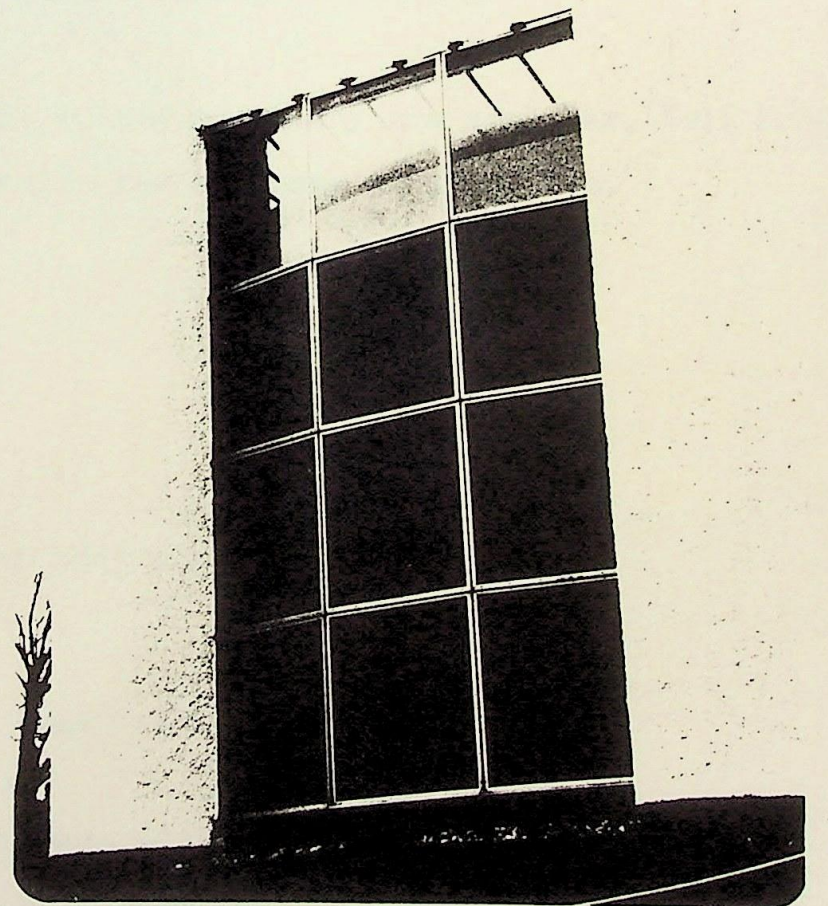


FIG. 1.

large wooden cross. The high wall is designed to shut out distractions and noise. Between wall and church, the idea is to provide a landscaped garden in each of four courtyards. There is little of artistic value in this as yet unfinished building. Seating accommodation is only temporary. Stations of the Cross have not yet been provided. These are being designed by Imogen Stuart. There is clear vision of the raised altar and sanctuary from any point in the church. It is a cold, bare, unadorned church. It speaks of cheapness and little effort is at present evident of a harmonious blending of furnishings and religious objects within the church. Perhaps this will be overcome when the church is finally completed.

Looking at this church from the road, one cannot help but feel that it does nothing to enhance its surroundings but if anything only serves to spoil the landscape.

Fig. 3

Church of Christ-Prince of Peace
Fossa,
Killarney,
Co. Kerry

1977

Architect : Liam McCormick

The church is octagonal in design and planned to

harmonise with the beautiful surroundings in which it is sited. It is built of wood and tiled with Bangor slate.

On entering through the main door with its Dove and Ark motif by Helen Moloney, attention is drawn to the altar bearing a quotation from the Canticle of Daniel (O.T.) and beyond to the Kerry Mountains and lake expanse. A symbolic cross is placed in the foreground.

*The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is set apart from the main church for private prayer. It contains the tabernacle designed by John Behan and murals "Scenes from after the Resurrection" by Patrick Pye.

To the left of the altar are placed theambo and sedelia bearing the ancient Greek word "ICHTHYS" (meaning fish). The fish being a symbol of the early Christians. The carving both here and on the altar is the work of sculptor Imogen Stewart.

The baptismal font and two illuminated stained glass panels just inside the entrance door were removed from the old church, St. Lelia's (which still stands directly opposite the new) built in 1830. This now serves as a community centre.

In the aisles, the Stations of the Cross are the work of Nell Pollen and are sculpted in cast plaster and

paintedin browns and ochres.

*It is an interesting point to note that when Liam McCormick was designing the Church of the Sacred Heart in Laytown, he did not make a separate Blessed Sacrament Chapel, though it was in his original plan. The reason for this was that Fr. Gleeson, C.C. visited Fossa, realized thatthe people, conditioned to having the Blessed Sacrament in the main chapel, continued to pray there and ignored the small Blessed Sacrament Chapel. He discussed this matter with Fr. Swayne in the Liturgy Institute. The latter found it difficult to approve or disapprove because liturgically a side chapel is more correct but sometimes even the liturgy must adapt or bend to meet the needs and traditions of a faithful people.

Fig. 4

The Church of the Nativity of Our Lady
Newtown,
Kilcock,
Co. Kildare

1976

Architect : Richard Hurley

The Church of the Nativity explores various aspects of the human predicament and in particular man's relationship with God. The building seeks to express deep human values which say "no" to technology as the means of ascent to freedom. The

overall horizontal and asymmetrical emphasis of the space contrasts strongly with the vertical thrust and "fixed" feeling of the 19th century stone tower which is all that remains of the old church (1840). This stands overlooking the new church and the old.

There are no coloured windows or no wealth of decoration in this church. It is rather dark calling one to reflect, be calm, listen and worship. It is open to the road, built in bogland and its rough-stone finish expresses no joy. The Stations of the Cross are the work of Bernadette Madden.

Fig. 5

Church of St. Oliver Plunkett,
Kilcloon,
Co. Meath.

A hexagonal shaped low-size building in rural setting. A feature of this church which makes it quite a tourist attraction is the beaten bronze Stations of the Cross by Stephen Delvaney, the design source for these is the Book of Kells. The Tabernacle is enamelled and the Altar, Ambo and Tabernacle pillar are granite. This church is not yet completed, there are plans for further artistic embellishment. The Lady Chapel is now a week-day oratory for Masses and reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The statue of the Blessed Virgin has been erected in the main chapel, but is rather out-dated and not really in keeping with its modern surroundings.



FIG. 5

Church of St. Oliver Plunkett. Kilcloon

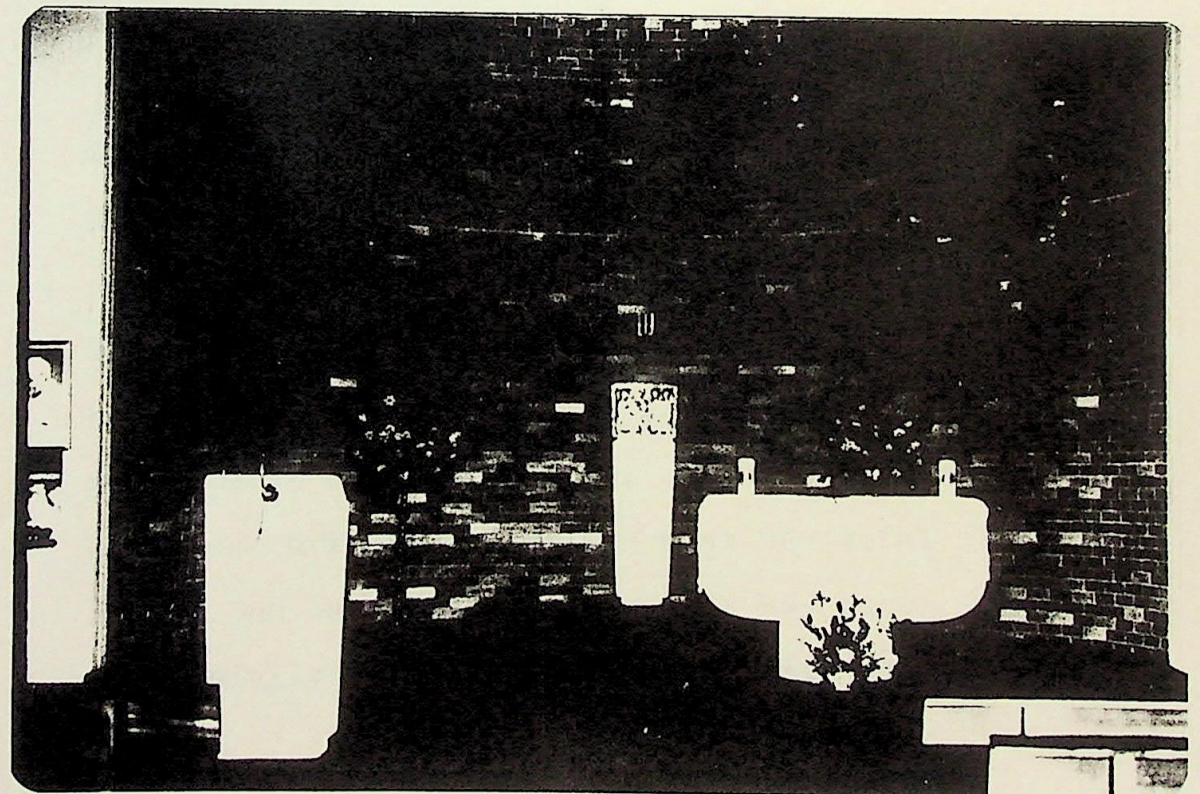


FIG. 6

This may however be just a temporary fixture.

Fig. 6

Church of the Holy Family
Kill Avenue,
Kill of the Grange,
Dublin

Architect : John L. Griffith

This church was rightly named the "Church of Light".
The sunlight penetrating the coloured glass behind
the sanctuary and organ gallery casts abstract
multicoloured patterns on altar and congregation.
The sensitively hand-carved Holy Family group and
also the rather ornate but not unbeautiful statue
of Our Lady of Loreto came from workshops in Italy.

Fig. 7.

St. Michael's Church
Dun Laoghaire,
Dublin

Architect : Pearse McKenna

The original church was destroyed by fire in 1965.
However, the fine spire was untouched by the fire
and capable of preservation. It is both a landmark
and a seamark and one of the most beautiful elements
in the Dun Laoghaire skyline. It has been
successfully incorporated into the new building.

The interior of the Church relies for its effect on
the simplicity of the space created and the dignity
of its proportions. Slender columns, great beams and

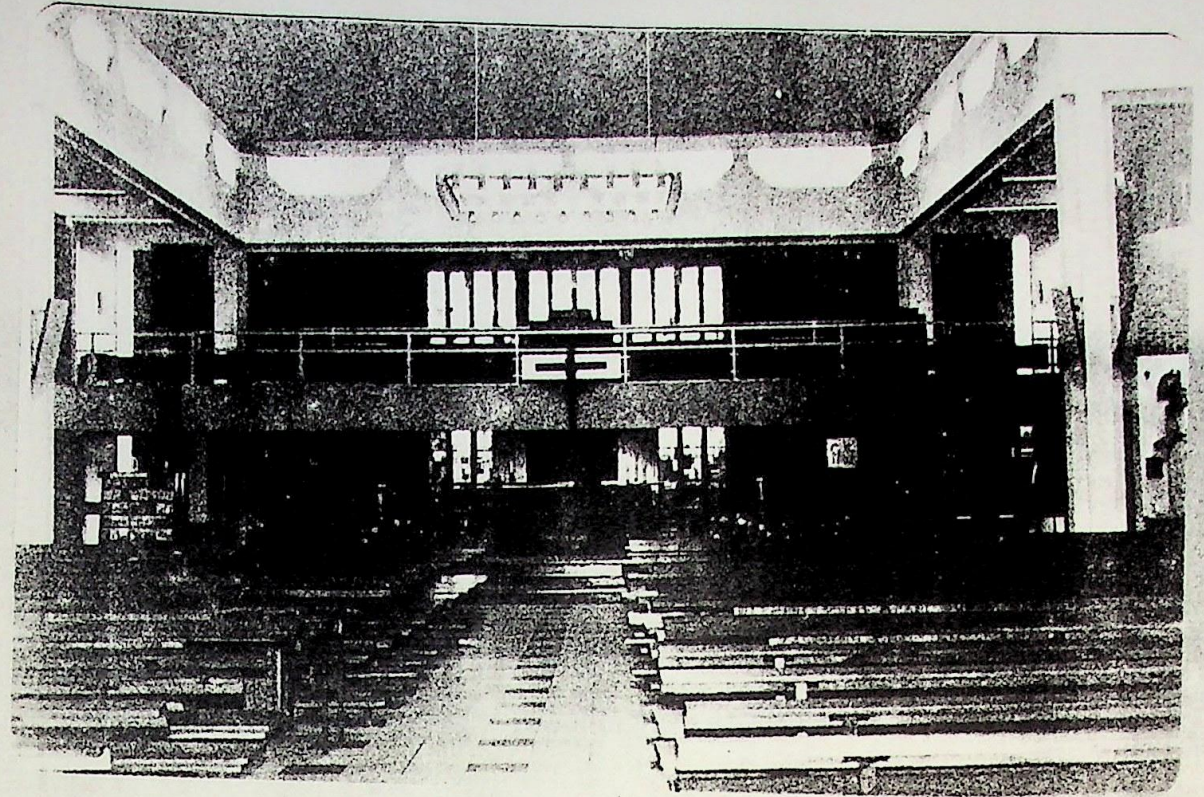


FIG. 6

Church of the Holy Family, Kill Avenue

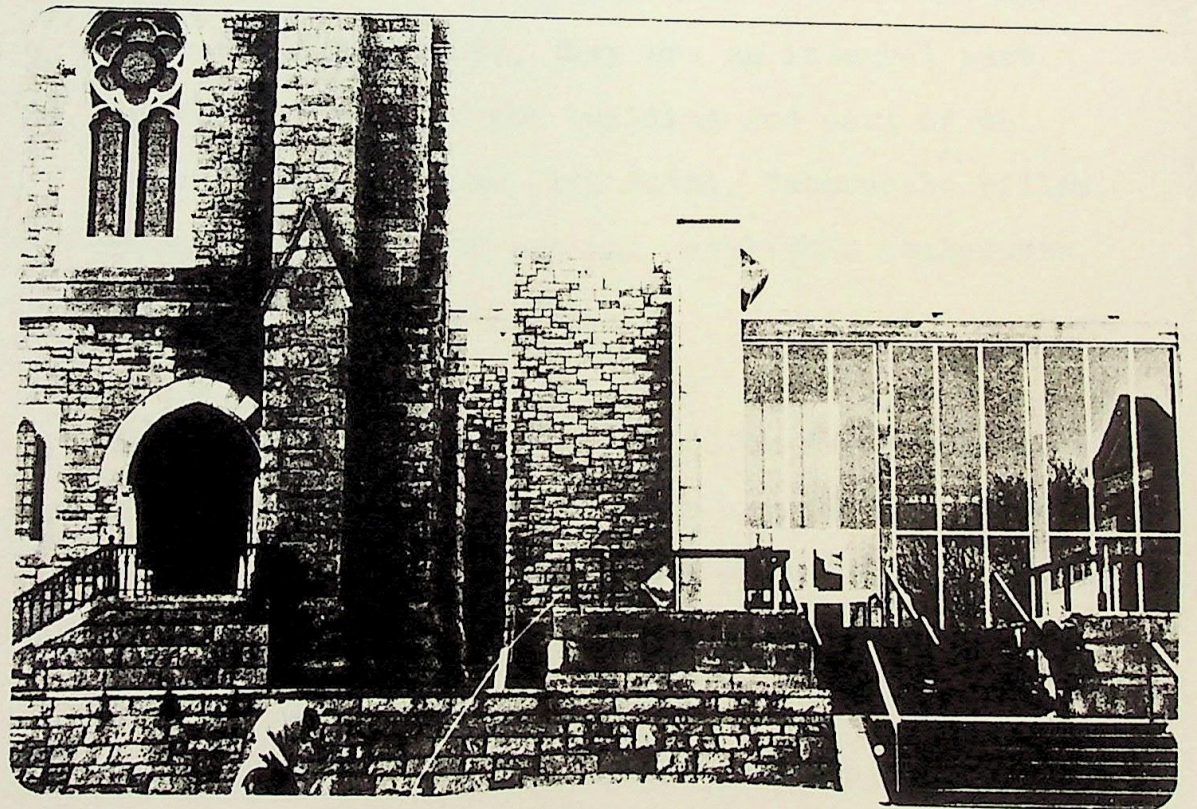


FIG. 7.

St. Michael's, Dunlaoghaire.

walls are in naturally finished concrete. This could be rather austere but the delicate stained glass windows prevent this. These symbolise in abstract the tree of life. Shafts of clear natural daylight are admitted "invisibly" above the island sanctuary. Similar shafts emphasise the Tabernacle and Baptistry. The latter is a sunken area near the principal entrance.

The external granite walls were supplied by the ready-made 'Quarry' of the remains of the old church.

The works of art embellishing the church are not just extra additions, they are an integral part of the function of the building and part of the overall design. The High Altar, Tabernacle Pillar, Ambo, Seat and Font are all monolithic sculptures, the work of Michael Biggs.

The tabernacle, crucifix and altar furniture are in bronze and enamel, these works of Linda Ling. The Stations of the Cross are wood-carved by Imogen Stuart. The main entrance door is of beaten copper with bronze handles also by Imogen Stuart. St. Michael the Archangel over the door is also in copper. These also are the work of Imogen Stuart.

Fig. 8

The Church of the Transfiguration
Bawnoge,
Clondalkin,
Dublin

Architect : Robert L. Kingston

This church was dedicated in July 1980. It was built by SHARE (funds contributed by every parish in the diocese).

It is a low-size, wedge shaped building, covered with an expansive sloping roof, dominated by a large curved and glazed roof tower. The form of this tower echoes the form of the 7th century round tower in Clondalkin village.

The architect's concept of the Church was - "a clean-lined building incorporating the honest use of materials". The Altar, Ambo and Tabernacle stand are all made of forged steel frames; on the Altar is depicted, again in forged steel, the Transfiguration of Christ. The Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove is represented on the Ambo. The Tabernacle is decorated on all four sides with panels in cloisonne enamels, depicting a Host of Angels guarding the Presence within.

The Liturgical artist is Paddy McElroy, head of the Fine Art Metalwork Department, National College of Art and Design, Dublin.

Fig. 9 Church of St. Aengus, Burt, Co. Donegal
Architect : Liam McCormick 1967
Designer : Una Madden

A circular building on a slop^ε below the circular stone ring-fort, Grianan of Aileach and owes much of its inspiration to this ancient royal seat of the O'Neills. It overlooks Lough Swilly.

Liturgically it is very successful for all functions especially Mass. The circular altar is lit by a lantern in the roof above, it stands on three concentric raised circular platforms. Benches are curved and deployed in sections which are segments of a full circle. Light and colour are provided by the high non-figurative coloured glass windows. Behind the altar there is a wooden crucifix on beaten silver. The Stations are denoted by plain crosses. Hanging on the ambo is a lovely woven panel depicting the symbols of the Four Evangelists in brilliant reds, blues and purple. The entrance doors have fine panels of beaten copper.

APPENDIX

UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Worksheet No. 1.

Sensory Study

Materials needed : Drawing paper
Writing paper
Pencil
Charcoal
Crayons

1. What are your first impressions
 - a) as you approach the Church
 - b) as you walk inside

Record these impressions in the ten first words that come into your head.

2. Be reverent, be quiet, walk around slowly to sense the atmosphere of the place. Does it appeal to you?
3. What colours attract you? What shapes intrigue you?
What attracts you - floor, furniture, walls, ceiling, etc.
4. What smells do you get? What sounds do you hear - near and far?
5. What textures are around? Do you like them?
6. In what architectural style is the Church built? Does it convey the spirit of the age or period?

7. The interior of the Church is very richly decorated
 - a) What do you like most about it?
Make a drawing
 - b) What do you like least about it?
Make a drawing
8. Does the apse decoration have any meaning for you, or is it just decoration? Could you record some of the painted details.
9. Are there any comments you would like to make?
10. What are your impressions of :
 - a) The large painting on the side of the Church
 - b) The paintings in the lunettes?

UNIVERSITY CHURCH

Worksheet No. 2.

Visual Study

Materials needed : Drawing paper
Pencil
Writing paper
Charcoal
Crayons

1. Make a sketch of the porch and note any details of interest.
2. Why has the Church such a long porch?
3. The pillars have carved capitals. What are the designs based on? Sketch your favourite one and say why you chose it.
4. Count the number of birds
 - a) in sculptures,
 - b) In paintings
5. Why do you think the walls are decorated in such a way as to give the impression of arcades?
6. How many coloured marbles can you find?

7. Of what materials are the candelsticks made of? Are they easily recognizable: Are the designs echoed anywhere else? Sketch a candlestick.
8. When was the Church built? Do you know anything of its history.
9. What is the correct title of the Church?
10. Have your impressions or attitudes towards the building changed since you started this worksheet?

(i)

PARISH CHURCH PROJECT

Worksheet No. 1

Materials needed : Drawing paper
Pencil
Crayons

1. Draw a simple plan of your Church
2. Make a drawing of your Church from the outside (any angle)
3. Make a drawing of the sanctuary and its furniture
(altar, ambo, etc.)

Do your drawings as large as possible.

PARISH CHURCH PROJECT

Worksheet No. 2.

Materials Needed : Writing paper
Biro

Try to find out the following and write down your answers

1.
 - a) When was your Church built?
 - b) What or who is your Church called after?
 - c) Is there any special reason for this title?

2.
 - a) Write briefly what your Church means to you
 - b) Can you get inspiration from it?
 - c) Does the architecture or art work help you to pray or lead to distractions?
 - d) Who did the art work in your church
(e.g. Stations of the Cross, Crucifix, Tabernacle, statues, paintings, etc.)
 - e) If you were asked to suggest improvements for your Church, what is the first thing you would do?

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SYLLABUS OUTLINE
for
POST PRIMARY ART EDUCATION

In education all man's powers need to be developed, that is, if it is a true education - or a "liberal education", to use the words of Newman.

To develop then a child's aesthetic sense is part of this true education. This can be developed by looking at the Van Gogh "Sunflowers" as well as by looking at the noble proportions of a Church. The experience of beauty in this latter however, can be even deeper, more lasting and fruitful because it is bound up with the inner core of man's belief - and a child's upbringing within its home environment.

A child needs to be exposed to beauty. Beautiful objects by their very shapes affect the sub-consciousness and unconsciousness. Let a child feel the natural work on the lectionary; let him smell it. Then the latent, but as yet undeveloped sense of time and eternity, of change and unchangeableness will find an outlet from the deep well-spring within.

GENERAL AIM

To promote the harmonious development of the whole person through his relationship with his God, his environment and his own self-expression.

LOCAL AIMS

To develop a relationship between the student and his environment, which will lead him to a deeper appreciation and understanding of his Creator.

The student is led to a discovery of the world around him through:

- a) development of aesthetic values
- b) development of creative ability
- c) development of problem solving ability
- d) development of visual awareness
- e) development of critical ability

COURSE OUTLINE

A study of the environment, both natural and man-made, will provide the basic raw material for the art class.

Ideas will be developed in 2d and 3d work. Art appreciation will be introduced and continued throughout course.

- i) appreciation of the natural beauties of creation
- ii) man's efforts to beautify his surroundings

Individual and group projects.

Outings - visits to places of interest, art galleries, museums, public buildings, exhibitions, etc.

FIRSH YEARS

"God saw all that he had made
And God saw that it was very good"

Gen. 1:31

Discovering the basic structure of the natural environment through
a study of line in nature

1. Line, movement, rhythm - free and controlled
2. Rhythm in music
3. Line and rhythm in the human figure
4. The human figure in pictorial composition
5. Colour and line in the environment
6. Opportunities for free expression in line and colour
7. A group project - theme chosen would depend on students capabilities and initiative and their responses in the areas of study covered during the course.

SECOND YEARS

"God made earth and heaven
And God took man and settled him in the garden to cultivate
and take care of it"

Gen. 2:5, 15

Developing an awareness and appreciation of the natural and built
environment

Environmental Project - Rural or Urban

1. Motivation and discussion
2. Collection of data
3. Photographs and resource material
4. Pattern - natural and man made
5. Colour - natural and applied
6. Shape - buildings, etc.
7. Tactile - natural and man made textures

THIRD YEAR

"It was you who created my inmost self
For the wonders of myself, I thank you
I thank you for the wonders of my being"

Ps. 139

A closer study of the natural environment and man's efforts to beautify his surroundings.

Structure and Form

1. Structure in nature - leaves, vegetables, fruit, etc.
2. Develop into design - cut paper, posters, still life
3. Structure in the local landscape
4. Construction of a textural landscape in paint/in fabric
5. Structure of the human figure - life drawing
6. Getting to know the person that is "me" through exercises in self-portraiture in 2 and 3d, e.g. drawing and modelling heads with the use of a mirror, using pencil, charcoal, paint, clay, plaster, etc. as well as life drawing exercises using a model.
7. The human figure in pictorial composition

FIFTH YEAR

"I see His Blood upon the rose
And in the stars the glory of His Eyes
His body gleams amid eternal snows
His tears fall from the skies"

J. M. Plunkett

An indepth study of one aspect of the natural environment

PERSONAL PROJECT

1. Suggested themes - light, seashore, water, etc.
Example :- Light : the effects of light on objects and the interaction of colour between objects
2. Theme explored in all aspects including a craft and written essay
3. Artists who studied similar subjects - their approach and treatment
4. Study of people - life sketching in different media.

SIXTH YEAR

"Here God lives among men"

Rev. 21:2-4

An investigation of the built environment and man's privilege and responsibility as co-creator in this environment.

Analytical Study, approach to design

Visual study project - my place of worship

1. An investigation of the built environment, the form and function of buildings.
2. My parish Church - an indepth study
3. Supporting visual education essay - illustrated
4. Art history - artists of the Church today and yesterday