

# Saint Patrick Church and Gothic Architecture: Part 1 of 3

Greetings Parishioners!

Our current church at St. Patrick was built in 1897 to replace an earlier church that burned down in a fire. On the reverse side of this article is a picture of the original interior of our current church. That is how the church interior looked, with minor changes to painting and statues, until major changes were made in 1979-1980. I'm sure many of our newer parishioners have never seen a picture of the original church, and I know many of our long-term parishioners have fond memories of the beautiful church they grew up in.

Our church is built in a Gothic style of architecture, originating from the area that is today France. Gothic architecture has been used in designing Catholic Churches for a thousand years, and it continues to be a treasured part of our tradition. One characteristic of Gothic architecture is the use of pointed arches (like the arches in our ceiling and above our stained-glass windows) rather than rounded arches. This enables churches to be built with higher ceilings and support pillars. Since walls are not load-bearing, Gothic architecture allows for large stained glass windows (like our beautiful stained glass windows) that fill the church with light.

Church architecture impacts our worship of God and the celebration of the sacraments. Architecture should reflect our religious beliefs. For example, if we believe the Eucharist is truly the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the architecture should reflect that. That is the primary reason why we moved the Eucharist from the side of the sanctuary on January 1, 2017. The Eucharist is now reserved in the center of the sanctuary, on the highest step, since Jesus Christ is the center of our worship.

Many people have been taught falsely that Vatican II required major changes to churches. While the Church embraces a wide variety of legitimate styles of architecture, the fathers of Vatican II said, "There must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them" (Sacrosanctum Concilium 23). "Thus, in the course of the centuries, she [the Catholic Church] has brought into being a treasury of art which must be very carefully preserved. The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites with due reverence and honor; thereby it is enabled to contribute its own voice to that wonderful chorus of praise in honor of the Catholic faith sung by great men in times gone by" (Sacrosanctum Concilium 123). Vatican II calls us to preserve the great treasury of art and architecture that has been entrusted to us for future generations.

Stay tuned for articles 2 and 3 in following weeks. The articles will also be posted on the parish website.

In Christ,

Father Shawn Landenwitch

## Saint Patrick Church original interior

