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Christ and the Triumphant Victims: Relics and the Altar in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris

A DISSERTATION

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By
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Christ and the Triumphant Victims:
Relics and the Altar in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris

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This dissertation examines the use of relics in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris in light of the Second Vatican Council’s liturgical theology. The dissertation utilizes the method described by Kevin Irwin in Context and Text.

The dissertation begins with a historical study of the extant rites of dedication of a church. It studies how the rite of dedication developed and how relics became a required element of the ritual, including the translation, vigil and deposition of relics. The work looks at the meanings associated with relics as well as the perceived relationship between relics and the altar. Beginning with the Medieval period, relics were understood to be necessary for dedication, with the celebration of Mass a festive completion of the rite. Rites of dedication include the deposition of relics as a central ritual moment from the fourth century through the middle of the twentieth century.

Through historical study, the use of Conciliar documents, and the examination of the role of relics in the schemata of the Consilium, this dissertation presents an analysis of the shifts in the understanding regarding the dedication of a church. The Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris is then examined in light of the Council’s teaching that the liturgy is the source and summit of Christian life. Renewed attention to the importance of the Eucharistic celebration led to the situation of the revised rite of dedication within the Mass and to relics becoming an optional element. The sacrifice of saints and martyrs are once again viewed in light of the
Paschal Mystery. This dissertation presents the liturgical and theological implications of including relics in the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar*.

This dissertation presents a new study of the liturgical role of relics in the rite of dedication of a church in light of the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. It aims to contribute an understanding of the liturgical theology expressed by the use of relics in the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*.
This dissertation by Suzanne Sarah Herold fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Liturgical Studies approved by Michael G. Witczak, S.L.D., as Director, and by Margaret Mary Kelleher, Ph.D., and David Dawson Vasquez, Ph.D. as Readers.

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**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation is a study of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*, the post-Second Vatican Council Roman Catholic ritual for dedicating churches, and the particular role that relics play within it. The *Ordo*, promulgated in 1977, has historical origins dating back to the fourth century. Simple historical roots developed into ornate liturgical celebrations. Rites of dedication which preceded the 1977 *Ordo* included the deposition of relics as a central ritual element. In contrast, the post-Second Vatican Council rite states that the deposition of relics is an optional element of the liturgical celebration. This dissertation will examine the history of the rites of dedication of a church in the Roman Catholic tradition, relics, and the documents of the Second Vatican Council and the Consilium in order to more fully understand the decision to make the deposition of relics optional in the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*. A broad study of the history of the dedication celebration is needed to appreciate the newly optional character of relics in the contemporary rite. Examination of the role of relics in the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar* will also allow for a more fully developed understanding of how relics influence the liturgical theology expressed by the celebration.

**Method**

In order to understand the role of relics in the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar*, it is necessary to examine the liturgical theology expressed by the celebrated rite. Kevin Irwin’s *Context and Text* provides a method for liturgical theology which builds on the concept of *context as text*. The contexts, including the historical tradition of the rite and the principles of reform, shape the liturgical theology which the celebration of the rite expresses. Irwin’s method highlights the connections between past, present and future celebrations of the liturgy. It
incorporates the historical development of the rite along with a study of the ritual elements themselves and the spirituality carried from the rite. Irwin’s method will be used in this dissertation to demonstrate how the optional role of relics influences the liturgical theology expressed by the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*.

**Context and Text**

Liturgical theology has three main components: a description of what happens in the act of worship; the theology drawn from the liturgy; and, the moral and spiritual implications derived from engaging in the liturgy.¹ The role of relics in the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* influences all three of these components of liturgical theology.

**Relating Liturgy and Theology**

Kevin Irwin’s first chapter, “Historical Perspectives”, introduces the phrase “the law of prayer grounds the law of belief,” which is often used in liturgical theology and ascribed to Prosper of Aquitaine.² Irwin concludes “…Prosper’s dictum *ut legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* in its original setting means that the liturgy manifests the Church’s faith. The statement’s reference to the apostolicity of liturgy means that liturgy is a theological source to the degree that it is founded on Scripture and is the expression of a praying Church.”³ This statement is the foundation for Irwin’s contemporary method for liturgical theology. Irwin emphasizes that liturgy is more than texts. It is “an enacted communal symbolic event with a

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2. Ibid., 3.
3. Ibid., 6.
number of constitutive elements and means of communication, including, but not restricted to, texts. The contexts of history shape each celebration of the liturgy.

Irwin’s second chapter, “Method,” begins by offering some perspectives into the liturgy. Liturgy is anamnetic, incorporating the past salvific actions of Christ, the Church’s participation in a new experience of those actions, and the striving towards eschatological fulfillment. Liturgy is also epicletic in that it is dependent upon the action of the Holy Spirit and ecclesiological in that it is “an act of the Church’s self-understanding and self-expression.”

Context includes three key elements. First, it is the historical evolution of the rite including its place in history. Second, context includes “an examination of the present reformed rites to determine whether the contemporary celebration of these rites in specific contexts expresses what is actually envisioned in the published rites.” Finally, context shifts “attention from what is experienced in liturgy to what is often termed the critical function of liturgical theology.” This puts the emphasis on the contemporary cultural and theological context of the liturgical celebration. Context becomes the text for engaging liturgical theology, but that text also influences context. The method emphasizes that the constitutive elements of the liturgy have constitutive implications in the life of the Church, which forms the ongoing dynamic between context and text. This concept forms the structure of this dissertation. Irwin calls for a study of

4. Irwin, Context and Text, 32.
5. Ibid., 46.
7. Ibid., 54.
8. Ibid., 55.
9. Ibid., 55-56.
the evolution of the liturgical rite and of the theological interpretation of the celebrated rite, suggesting that liturgical history is a genetic vision of the present. The examination of the rites must also include the consideration of aim of the reform: full and active participation in worship.¹⁰

Irwin’s method includes the condition that “liturgical rites must be interpreted in a way that respects their nature as intended for ritual use and as bearers of theological meanings disclosed principally in liturgical celebration itself.”¹¹ Liturgical units are understood in relation to one another and the entire celebration as well as the standard for celebration set by the post-conciliar rites.¹² This idea demonstrates that the presence or absence of relics influences the entire rite of dedication. The thesis of Irwin’s method is that context is text. This opens the study of the liturgy to a number of perspectives and requires that it be influenced by both the historical evolution and the liturgical celebration. This dissertation will study the historical context of the development of a rite of dedication of a church, as well as the contexts of reform and the role of relics in the church to examine the liturgical theology expressed by the 1977 Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar.

¹⁰ Irwin, Context and Text, 57-62.
¹¹ Ibid., 65
¹² Ibid., 67.
Word proclaimed and sacramentality play key roles in the liturgy. The word proclaimed in liturgy constitutes and actualizes the Church, bringing about the Word in the sacraments. Sacramentality builds on the idea that God is present in creation and that creation is revelatory. This is especially important to the study of relics because relics, as a form of creation, help to mediate God’s presence.

Symbols help to connect images from salvation history, to incorporate the active participation of the people, and to promote interaction between liturgical texts, ritual actions, and God’s creation. This idea of symbolic engagement is particularly important in the study of the *Rite of Dedication of a Church* because it addresses how particular symbols speak within the liturgical celebration. Certainly, the communicative element of symbols was influential in the significant revision of the rite. Emphasizing the importance of symbolic engagement within the liturgical celebration serves as a way to encourage and prompt the full, conscious, and active participation of the people in the liturgy.

Euchological texts, accompanying the proclamation of the word and ritual actions, offer a number of meanings in the liturgical celebration and help to express the presence of Christ in specific elements of the liturgy. Euchology can only be properly interpreted in its context in the liturgical celebration. The method contains components of historical evolution, historical

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15. Ibid., 145.
16. Ibid., 178.
17. Ibid., 185.
critical and comparative study of the euchology in order to ascertain the various contexts in which the prayer texts have historically been used.

Liturgical arts aid in expressing the theology of incarnation and the experience of the divine in the earthly world. 18 Relics are similar to the liturgical arts in that they should only be used to “facilitate, enhance, or hinder how Scripture, symbols, and euchology are heard, understood, and appreciated in the act of the liturgy.” 19 Likewise, relics and the liturgical arts must not overshadow other ritual elements. These criteria show how the liturgical arts can influence the experience of the enacted liturgy and raise questions for how the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church influences the celebration. Irwin also notes that liturgical artifacts can be used to incorporate the local culture into the liturgy; relics should follow similar guidelines. The method here suggests that the ability of a liturgical artifact to engage the assembly in the liturgy should be the primary criteria for evaluation. 20

Text Shapes Context: Liturgical Theology

In “Doxology and Ecumenism,” Irwin says that liturgy is the beginning of doctrine and that the liturgy helps to shape a genetic vision of reality. 21 Irwin reiterates the relationship between liturgy, liturgical theology, and liturgical spirituality. 22 Worship as an essential element to the life of the Church serves as a common foundation for ecumenical dialogue. 23

19. Ibid., 229.
20. Ibid., 252.
22. Ibid., 278.
23. Ibid., 283.
Eschatological realities in the liturgy have been emphasized in the reformed rites through *anamnesis* as well as the connection between justice and mission and the liturgical celebration of sacraments.

The final section of the method addresses spirituality, especially developing the *lex vivendi* component of the method. The interconnected element of the method depicts how the enacted texts, liturgy, impact every aspect of Christian living. Liturgy expresses the *hodie*, today, which demonstrates the present experience of Christ. The celebration of the liturgy allows the fundamental elements of Christianity to shape Christian life as well as community. Spirituality derived from the liturgy helps the Christian to experience the salvation won by Christ. Liturgy, the prayer of the Church, impacts how the Church perceives itself and influences the enactment of Christian life as part of God’s saving plan. Liturgical spirituality always looks at the pastoral implications of the liturgy and the role of liturgy in expressing the eschatological hope of the Church. Ultimately, liturgical spirituality is a way of living out the virtues which are expressed by the liturgical celebration.

**Summary**

Irwin’s method for the study of liturgy offers a comprehensive picture of the liturgical celebration, including the historical roots and the celebration of the ritual text. This is particularly valuable for the examination of the role of relics in the 1977 *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* because relics influenced the evolution of the rite and the way in which the contemporary


25. Ibid., 317-322.

26. Ibid., 324.

27. Ibid., 346.
rite is celebrated. The context and text method provides a platform for evaluating the evolution of the liturgical celebration of dedication as well as a way to understand the cultural shifts which helped bring about the reform.

The method presented in Context and Text is particularly valuable for examining the changing role of relics within the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar because it takes into consideration the cultural, social, and theological contexts which shape the use of relics. Irwin’s method in liturgical theology allows for ways of understanding the different ritual elements involving relics. Further, it provides a framework for examining the symbols, eucharistic, and use of Scripture to determine the liturgical theology expressed through the deposition of relics beneath the altar. The examination of the method here provides the foundation for studying the 1977 Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris with and without the deposition of relics.

**The Dissertation**

This dissertation will examine the role of relics in rites of dedication of a church. Dedication will be understood here as the “sacred rite instituted by the Church by which a profane place is made sacred and is designated for divine worship in perpetuity by a legitimate minister.”28 The optional role of relics in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris necessitates an understanding of how relics have historically been incorporated into celebrations of dedication.

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Part I will begin with a historical overview of the use of relics in the rituals for dedicating a church and the development of the cult of saints and relics from the Patristic period through the seventeenth century. Part II will examine the context of 20th century liturgical reform and the role of relics in the 1961/2 Pontificale Romanum. This part will then examine some of the principles of Vatican II and the work of the Consilium. Historical development of the Rite of Dedication of a Church provides important context for understanding the text of the contemporary liturgical celebration.

Part III will examine the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris in detail, looking particularly at the role of relics in the rite. Part IV will then present a comprehensive analysis of the role of relics in the 1977 Ordo.

Understanding the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church has important pastoral and liturgical implications. Not only does the role of relics influence how the dedication liturgy is celebrated, it also helps to shape the future liturgical life of the parish and how the community understands itself in relation to the universal Church. This paper will address important implications of including or excluding relics which should be considered by those preparing for the celebration of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar. The study contributes to the knowledge of the liturgical theology expressed by the celebrated Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris in light of the optional character of the deposition of relics. In addition, the dissertation contributes to understandings of the liturgical reforms of the Second Vatican Council in light of its historical study. It also contributes ways in which the liturgical spirituality of the Christian community may be influenced by the ongoing presence or absence of relics in the worship space.
Chapter One: History of the Rite of Dedication from the Peace of the Church through the Seventeenth Century

The history of the 1977 Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar extends back to the legalization of Christianity. The historical development of the rite provides an essential background for understanding the 1977 Rite. This chapter explores that history, beginning with texts from ecclesial writers, and then focusing on liturgical sources starting in the sixth and seventh centuries. We follow this historical evolution to the seventeenth century. We take up the history from the Liturgical Movement onward in Chapter Three.

Fourth Century Beginnings: Eusebius of Caesarea and Ambrose of Milan

This period established the foundation for the celebration of the dedication of a new church. At first, the ritual was simply the celebration of the Eucharist in the church to be dedicated, and then it began to become more complex.

The primary sources in this period are the writings of Eusebius of Caesarea and Ambrose of Milan, which demonstrate examples of specific church dedications celebrated in the fourth century.

Eusebius of Caesarea: A Foundation for the Celebration of Dedication

While Christians used various buildings, including homes, for their earliest worship spaces, it is only after the legalization of Christianity that we find evidence of a ceremony to mark a building as dedicated to Christian worship. The first written evidence of a celebration of the dedication of a church is found in the writings of the church historian Bishop Eusebius of
Caesarea (260 A.D. – 341 A.D.). Eusebius describes a dedication in his *Ecclesiastical History*. He enjoyed a close relationship with Emperor Constantine and had the prestigious responsibility of delivering the inaugural address at the Council of Nicaea.¹

Eusebius traveled throughout the Roman Empire and recorded the history of the church at the time, including the martyrdom of Christians and the dedication of a new church. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius depicts the dedication of the church at Tyre sometime around 316-319 A.D.:

> After this was seen the sight which had been desired and prayed for by us all; feasts of dedication in the cities and consecrations of the newly built houses of prayer took place, bishops assembled, foreigners came together from abroad, mutual love was exhibited between people and people, the members of Christ’s body were united in complete harmony. […]

> At the same time people of every age, both male and female, with all the power of the mind gave honor unto God, the author of their benefits, in prayers and thanksgiving, with a joyful mind and soul. And every one of the bishops present, each to the best of his ability, delivered panegyric orations, adding luster to the assembly.²

Eusebius’s brief description provides the earliest recorded celebration of the dedication of a church, which, notably, did not include a specific description of the celebration of the Eucharist.

The dedication of the church in Tyre demonstrates an evolution in the way the Christian community dedicated its liturgical spaces since this public ritual was possible because of the legalization of Christianity in 312 A.D.

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It should not be surprising that we have no recorded rituals prior to the fourth century. The absence of recorded rituals prior to Eusebius would not have been unusual. Prior to the legalization of Christianity, Christian worship, primarily the Eucharist, was celebrated in the homes of Christians. The gathering of Christians for worship in the homes of community members is seen in Paul’s letters. Ignazio Calabuig writes that specifically instituted places for worship would have been contradictory to early Christian self-understandings. Christians, who did not immediately construct specific buildings solely for the purpose of worship, would not have needed a dedication ritual.

The expansion of the rites for the dedication of a church paralleled the spread of Christianity in this period. A transition from the use of already existing buildings, such as Christian homes, to spaces specific to Christian ritual use emerged as Christianity was legalized. The earliest record of a celebration of dedication dates from this time of transition. The early fourth century, marked by Emperor Constantine’s ecclesiastical building program, saw the dedication and construction of great new buildings as well as the modification of formerly pagan basilicas for Christian worship. Constantine “offered every encouragement to the builders once an appropriate site had been chosen… to demonstrate his superior patronage of the Christian


4. See, for example, 1 Cor 16:19.


The legalization of Christianity and the patronage it received from the emperor allowed for an increased number and size of liturgical spaces.

The Constantinian building program also led to the use of the basilica style of architecture for Christian worship space, through the construction of new buildings and the repurposing of pre-existing buildings. The basilica was significantly different in size and shape from the *domus ecclesiae*. It spurred changes to Christian liturgical practices. Anscar Chupungco writes, “The atmosphere and architectural ambience of basilicas demanded, at any rate, a more splendid form of celebration. The prayer formularies were rhetorically enriched in consonance with the ambient of the imperial hall.”

Prayers began to include Hellenistic literary traits such as abstract terms and a solemn and rhetorical tone, as well as juridical terms found in Roman oratory style. Construction of these specifically Christian worship spaces spread throughout the empire.

These buildings, constructed for all to see, showed that Christianity was welcome in the empire. The rite of dedication of a church aided Constantine’s plan to create a unified empire. Wilbricht explains, “Thus, immediately following the peace of Constantine, the dedication of sacred buildings became an opportunity for the establishment of ecclesial unity among diverse peoples.”

Christian unity is evident in Eusebius’s account of the dedication of the church at Tyre where he recounts themes of harmony among the people and unity in Christ’s body. Also,


9. Ibid.

the assembly of bishops who have gathered to celebrate the dedication of a new worship space demonstrates the theme of unity.

While the ritual elements of the liturgical celebration are not specified in Eusebius’s description, the use of a new sacred space was an opportunity for celebration and expression of unity among the Christian community. Further, the dedication is already seen as an occasion to pray for unity and thanksgiving to God. Therefore, the communal celebration and unity among the Christian community characterize the dedication of a church from the earliest recorded event.

**Ambrose of Milan: Expanding the Celebration of Dedication**

Later in the fourth century, Ambrose (337 A.D. – 397 A.D.), an active patron of church building, provides two examples of the use of relics in the dedication of two churches in Milan, which he describes in his *Epistula 22*. Ambrose offers the first witness to, and describes the importance of, the deposition of relics in the dedication of a church.

Prior to his translation of the relics of the saints Gervase and Protase, described below, Ambrose used relics in the dedication of the Basilica in Porta Romana (Basilica Apostolorum) early in 386. This dedication incorporated relics, which was very popular with the assembly. Ambrose’s dedication ceremony set the precedent for future dedications in Milan.

In his *Epistula 22*, Ambrose provides insight into his own ritual actions in the dedication of a newly constructed basilica in Milan in 386, as well as the theological tenets which he believed were expressed by the inclusion of relics. Ambrose’s description, which follows, is the

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first extant record of specific ritual elements for the dedication of a new basilica and the deposition of martyrs’ relics.

In *Epistula 22*, Ambrose shows the relationship between the altar as Christ and the relics of martyrs:

The noble relics are dug from the unknown sepulcher, trophies of victory are spread before heaven. The burial mound is drenched in blood, the marks of triumphal blood become visible, the relics found inviolate in their place and order, the head removed from the shoulder. Now the old repeat that they once heard the names of these martyrs and once read their inscription. The city which had taken those who were not its own had lost its own martyrs. Nevertheless this is God’s undertaking, I cannot deny such a grace which the Lord Jesus grants to the times of my priestly office; since I am not worthy to be a martyr myself, I have acquired these martyrs for you.

The triumphant victims come to their rest in the place where Christ is victim: he, however, who suffered for all is on the altar; they who have been redeemed by his sufferings are beneath the altar. I determined this place for myself beforehand, for it is suitable that the priest may rest there when he was accustomed to make offering; but I give up the portion on the right for the sacred victims: this place is owed to the martyrs. Therefore, let us bring together the sacred relics and convey them to worthy thrones and celebrate the entire day with faithful devotion. The people acclaimed that the deposition of the martyrs should be delayed to the Lord’s day, but that the celebration should carry over at length on the following day.12

This description of the translation and deposition of relics situates the relics in direct correlation with Christ’s sacrifice. It is clear that Ambrose does not intend the altar to be honored by the

presence of the relics. Rather, relics receive honor through their resting place beneath the table where Christ’s sacrifice is celebrated. Christ the victim is above the relics of martyrs. His death redeemed the martyrs; their death is a witness to his sacrifice. There is a Eucharistic connotation to translation and deposition of relics as portrayed by Ambrose. Ambrose’s letter also emphasizes the relationship between relics and the community. It is logical that the relics of Gervase and Protase would rest beneath the altar because they are from the area and were known to the elders of the community.

The deposition of relics in the Basilica Apostolorum struck a chord with the people of Milan. They begged Ambrose to include relics in the dedication of the Basilica Ambrosiana, although he had intended the basilica to be his final resting place. Ambrose consented to the people’s demands, provided that he could find relics. The next day, Ambrose, filled with a prophetic ardor, dug and discovered the relics of Gervase and Protase, twin brothers, in the Naboriana, the Church of Sts. Felix and Nabor in front of the chancel rails. These saints, long forgotten in the minds of the Milanese, had been buried ad sanctos (in close physical proximity to the saints) in the previous church, not in a cemetery. The saints were evidently martyrs from an earlier period. Ambrose was able to use them as additional propaganda in his fight against heresy, particularly the ongoing problems with Arianism, in the empire.

Martyrs were seen as a sign of favor from God to the Catholic Church in Milan. Those who did not support the harmony which the presence of the saints encouraged were seen as heretics. During their excavation, the identities of the saints were revealed and local people

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were said to be cured of their illnesses. After he discovered the relics, Ambrose arranged for their transport to a nearby basilica, the basilica of Fausta, where the faithful celebrated a vigil throughout the night. The relics went from the Church of Sts. Felix and Nabor to the basilica of Fausta and then to their final resting place in the Basilica Ambrosiana. On the following day, the relics were carried in procession to the new basilica and installed in the place which Ambrose had planned to reserve for himself.

Ambrose’s writing introduces a number of themes which influenced the use of relics in future rites of dedication and which were incorporated into contemporary discussions over relics. First, the story of the discovery of Gervase and Protase became blended with the rhetoric of the socio-political and theological struggles of Ambrose’s time: dealing with the Arian heresy. Ambrose argued that the discovery and presence of relics was a sign of the rightness of the true faith and of God’s favor. According to Barbara Abou-El-Haj, “Ambrose’s well-timed ‘discovery’ of Saints Gervase and Protase … may have insulated him from expulsion by the Arian empress Justina.” Second, the relics were brought to the altar in the church to be dedicated and placed underneath it; this is clearly a greater honor than their original location ad sanctos, in close proximity to the saint’s burial place. The translation of relics introduced a new ritual element into the dedication of a church. Finally, relics of martyrs belong below the altar, not in the altar, because it is Christ’s sacrifice alone which is celebrated on the altar. The relics


17. Ibid., 212.

do not belong in the altar because the altar symbolizes Christ. Those who have been redeemed by Christ’s sacrifice have a place of honor beneath the altar where the sacrifice takes place. Ambrose’s excavation, translation, vigil, and deposition of relics established the precedent for the role of relics the rite of dedication of a church for centuries to come.

Ambrose did not invent the idea of martyrs resting below the altar, but enacted a biblical idea in his liturgical celebrations, although the Bible is not cited by Ambrose in his *Epistula 22*. The Book of Revelation includes a reference to martyrs having their final resting place beneath the altar of Christ. At the opening of the fifth seal in the Book of Revelation, martyrs are revealed under the altar: “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God and for the testimony they had given; they cried out with a loud voice, ‘Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood on the inhabitants of the earth?’” The Book of Revelation’s connection between martyrs and the altar may have inspired Ambrose’s willingness to include the deposition of relics beneath the altar in this liturgical celebration of the dedication of a church.

The connection between the sacrifice of martyrs and the eschatological nature of the Eucharistic celebration can also be seen in Acts of the Apostles and in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. These passages connect Christ’s triumphant return with the sacrifice of martyrs, and they support Ambrose’s idea that relics of the martyrs were valuable jewels for the life of the church.

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Although there are no extant liturgical sources of a rite of dedication of a church from the patristic period, it is evident that this period witnessed the move to designate worship places for the Church, the rise of ritual action to mark the space as sacred, increased building and dedication of churches, and the placement of relics beneath the altars in some churches. Each of these developments would become a factor in shaping the rites of dedication of a church when specific rituals emerged.

**The Liturgical Articulation of the Dedication of a Church, 500-950**

The first liturgical sources of rites for the dedication of a church date from the sixth century *Verona Sacramentary*. The Christianization of the Franks during this early medieval period led to more elaborate rites of dedication with a number of new elements. The fourth-century core of the celebration of the Eucharist and the use of relics were maintained in the expansion. Texts addressing the dedication of a church from this period can be best divided into two categories: ecclesial documents, including papal letters, and liturgical texts.

The appearance of liturgical texts for the dedication of a church helps to shed light on what practices may have been used at the time and prior to the extant liturgical sources. These liturgical texts are preceded by ecclesial commentaries which addressed the emerging changes. Together, these sources show the expansion of the rite of dedication of a church during this period.

The primary sources from this period are papal letters and ecclesial commentaries by Popes Vigilius and Gregory the Great, and sacramentaries, including the *Verona, Old Gelasian,*
and Gregorian. Finally, the Ordines Romani, particularly ordines XLI, XLII, and XLIII complete the liturgical sources of this period.

**Ecclesial Documents: Necessity of Dedicating a Church**

In 494, Pope Gelasius I (d. 496) forbade the celebration of the Eucharist in a church that had not been properly dedicated. He encouraged all churches to be dedicated by the authority of the Roman Church.\(^{21}\) The proper dedication of a church had was a part of the life of a church by the beginning of the sixth century.

**Vigilius**

Pope Vigilius described one dedication of a church in a letter to Bishop Profuturus of Braga in 538. Pope Vigilius wrote:

> But concerning the building of a church anywhere, if it has been demolished, it is to be established, and if the solemnities of consecration are to be repeated where no shrines have been, we judge nothing to hinder this, if at least exorcized water is sprinkled through it: because, if a shrine of a saint has not been put in it, we know that for the consecration of any church the celebration of masses is sufficient. And therefore, if a basilica of the saints has been renovated from the foundations, without any doubt, when the solemnity of the mass will have been celebrated in it, the sanctification of consecration will be totally satisfied. But if the shrines, which you used to have, have been removed, on the other hand, this will take on the respect of sanctification with their replacement and the solemnity of the mass.\(^{22}\)

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\(^{22}\) Vigilius, *Epistula ad Profuturum episcopum Bracarensem* IV (PL 69:18): “De fabrica vero cujuslibet ecclesiae, si diruta fuerit, instauranda, et si in eo loco consecrationis solemnitas debeat iterari, in quo sanctuaria non fuerint, nihil judicamus officere, si per eam minime aqua exorcizata jacetur: quia consecrationem cujuslibet ecclesiae, in qua sanctum ara non ponitur, celebratem tantum scimus esse missarum. Et ideo, si qua sanctorum basilica a fundamentis etiam fuerit innovata, sine aliqua dubitatione, cum in ea missarum fuerit celebrata solemnitas, totius sanctificationis consecrationis implebitur. Si vero sanctuaria quae habebat ablata sunt, rursus eorum repositione et missarum solemnitate reverentiam sanctificationis accipet.”
From Pope Vigilius’s letter, it is also evident that there was not a set rite for the consecration of a church at this time. While there are a number of elements and factors involved in the rite of dedication mentioned in Vigilius’s letter, the celebration of Mass is still sufficient.\(^{23}\) J.D. Crichton emphasizes the lack of a fixed rite in Rome in this period; in fact, neither relics nor holy water are required.\(^{24}\) Vigilius’s letter shows that the presence or absence of relics in a church shaped the celebration of dedication.

**Gregory the Great**

Later in the 6\(^{th}\) century, Pope Gregory the Great (d. 604) describes the essential ritual elements of the rite of dedication of a church when discussing churches in England:

> After the dispersal of our congregation which is with you, we have been rendered very uncertain, since we have heard nothing connected with the success of your journey. But when Almighty God leads you to the most revered man, our brother Bishop Augustine, tell him what I, pondering the case of the Angles for a long time, have deliberated, that clearly the temples of idols in that place ought not to be destroyed but let the idols themselves, which are in them, be destroyed. Let holy water be made, and let it be sprinkled in the same sanctuaries, let altars be constructed and let relics be put in place, because, if the sanctuaries in question are well constructed, it is necessary that they should be changed over from the cult of demons to allegiance of the true God, so that while the same people do not see their own sanctuaries being destroyed, let them put aside the error from their heads, and knowing and adoring the true God, let them come together at places to which they are accustomed in a more familiar manner.\(^{25}\)

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From this letter, we can see that Gregory calls for sprinkling of holy water and the placement of relics in a formerly pagan temple in order for it to be converted to a Christian church. Gregory does not specify if it is expected that this practice would be used only in the conversion of formerly pagan temples or in the dedication of all churches. In this account, it is evident that holy water and relics have emerged as important elements of the dedication celebration.

Gregory dedicated a church in the name of St. Agatha the martyr which was formerly used by the Visigothic community in the Subura during 591 or 592. In his Dialogues, Gregory provides an account of the liturgical celebration. Gregory describes how specific relics, those of St. Sebastian and St. Agatha, were selected to rest in the church building. Then, a crowd of people participated in a procession to the church to be dedicated. The crowd was so immense that people were shoved close together, and not all could easily fit inside the church. A pig ran through the crowd as the Mass was being celebrated, and, when the pig finally found its way out of the building, the people believed that it was God demonstrating to them that unclean spirits had left church. Days later, after the sacristan had extinguished the lamps used at Mass, a sweet aroma was smelled in the church after a serene cloud had settled over the altar and the lamps had been relit. The primary ritual act in this account is the liturgy of the Eucharist, which likely

ipsa eadem fana sua non uident destruui, de corde errorem deponat et Deum uerum cognoscens ac adorans ad loca quae consueuit familiarius concurrat.”


included the deposition of relics of the two martyrs. This account shows that relics were used in Rome for dedications.

Ecclesial documents from this period demonstrate that the rite for the dedication of a church had expanded to include ritual elements other than the celebration of the Eucharist. Both the writings of Vigilius and Gregory the Great indicate that relics had taken on an important role in the celebration of the dedication of a new church, with a particular emphasis on their role in sanctifying the new sacred space. These two popes begin the framework for the first elements of a rite for the dedication of a church.

**Liturgical Sources: Ritual Expansion**

During the sixth through tenth centuries, there are two primary genres of liturgical sources: sacramentaries and the *Ordines Romani*. Sacramentaries include euchological texts used in the celebration of various rites, while the *Ordines Romani* provide the rubrical material and directions which surround the euchological texts. These two genres of sources complement each other in demonstrating the elements of the rites of dedication throughout the Roman world during this period.

**Sacramentaries**

Sacramentaries show the evolution of the rite from the celebration of the Eucharist to a more ornate and fixed ritual.

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Verona Sacramentary

The earliest sacramentary, known as the Leonine or Verona Sacramentary, dates to the late sixth century. It contains no precise ritual for the dedication of a church. In fact, the document contains nothing more than a reference to the celebration of Mass in the church to be dedicated.\textsuperscript{30} Entitled the “Item alia in dedicatione,” the dedication text is placed in the civil month of April, among masses for martyrs and confessors. It includes euchological texts for the dedication of a church to Saint Peter.\textsuperscript{31}

Gelasian Sacramentary

Slightly more than a century after the Verona Sacramentary, the Gelasianum Vetus\textsuperscript{32} (hereafter Gelasian) or Old Gelasian Sacramentary shows developments in the rite. The Gelasian represents a combination of Roman and Gallican liturgical practices. Cyrille Vogel writes, “The Reg. 316 was copied ca. 750…near Paris…It is a Frankish recension of a Roman book and is the only one of its kind.”\textsuperscript{33} The euchological texts in the Gelasian are compiled in three books within the manuscript. Vogel has concluded that the Roman document in which the Gelasian is rooted


must have been written between 628 and 715. The sacramentary was in use in Rome before it was taken to Gaul, but liturgical historians are not yet in agreement as to the extent of the Frankish additions to the document.

Found in the Liber Primus, the “Orationes in Dedicacione Basilicae Nouae” indicates a ritual preceding the celebration of Mass for the Dedication of a Church. The euchological texts of the celebration follow this basic outline:

- Opening Prayer
- Consecration of the Basilica (Consecracio Basilicae)
- Prayer over the Water and Wine to Consecrate the Altar (Oratio Super Aquam et Unum ad Consecracionem Altaris)
- Followed by Preface for the Consecration of the Altar (Rubrical material) (Sequitur Praefacio Consecracionis Altarum)
- Blessing of the Altar (Bendictio Altaris)
- Blessing or Consecration of the Altar (Benediccio Altaris Siue Consecracionem)
- Preface for the Linen Cloths (Praefacio Lentiaminum)
- To Consecrate the Paten (Ad Consecrandam Patenam)
- For Blessing the Chalice (Ad Calicem Benedicendum)
  - Another prayer (Item alia)
- A prayer for blessing to/all in use of the Basilica (Item Benedicció ad / omnia in Usum Basilice)
- Preface for Chrism (Praefacio Chrismalis)

Some of the rite’s elements, such as the blessing of water mixed with wine, the anointing of the altar with that mixture, seven aspersions, incense offered on the table of the altar, and a

34. Vogel, Medieval Liturgy, 69.
35. Ibid., 66.
37. GeV n. 689-702.
prayer of blessing, are considered to be Frankish elements.\(^{38}\) In the *Gelasian*, the euchological texts for the unique elements of the rite for the dedication of a new church are followed by the proper texts for the celebration of Mass.\(^{39}\)

The *Gelasian* represents a key shift in the theology of the rite of dedication. Crichton notes that the prayer of blessing the altar asks that the altar “may be blessed so that the offerings placed on it may be blessed, a complete reversal of the old idea that the offerings (the eucharist) blessed the altar.”\(^{40}\) This switch is especially relevant in the study of the altar and relics because it demonstrates a changing view away from the altar as the place of the sacrifice to the altar as an object which blesses other objects. This evolution is the beginning of expansion in the dedication celebration.

There is further expansion seen in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*. Whereas the *Verona Sacramentary* includes only reference to the celebration of Mass, the *Gelasian* contains euchological texts for blessing and consecration of specific elements of the church. The euchological formularies found in the *Gelasian* are used with the *ordines* of the same period, particularly *OR XLI*, to offer a complete ritual for the rite of dedication of a church.

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Gregorian Sacramentary

The *Hadrianum ex authentico*\(^ {41}\) or *Gregorian Sacramentary* was brought from Rome to the Frankish palaces of Charlemagne at some point between 784 and 791. It was later corrected and supplemented by Benedict of Aniane, because the original was a papal stational book and did not contain some of the rites and prayers that would have been necessary for local churches such as weekday Masses, votive Masses for special needs, and vigils for Easter. It includes prayers for the celebration of the dedication of a church. Michel Andrieu concludes that there is no doubt that the euchological texts for dedication were part of the original edition.\(^ {42}\)

Describing the arrangement of the prayers entitled *Oratio quando levantur reliquiae*, *Oratio post velatum altare*, and *Oratio in dedicatione ecclesiae*, Andrieu writes, “This arrangement suggests that the rites properly called the dedication, before the final Mass, began with the *elevatio* of the relics and ended with the dedication and clothing of the altar. Such an arrangement agrees with previously identified indices.…”\(^ {43}\) Andrieu also notes that this arrangement agrees with what is contained in *ordo romanus XLII*.

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\(^{43}\)Andrieu, “Cet arrangement suggère que les rites proprement dits de la dédicace, avant la mess finale, commençaient par l’*elevatio* des reliques et se terminaient par la consécration et l’habillement de l’autel. Un tel dispositif s’accorde avec les indices jusqu’ici relevés aussi bien qu’avec l’exposé détaillé que nos donnera l’*Ordo XLII*.”
**Ordines Romani**

The *ordines romani* (OR) provide descriptive and rubrical materials for many liturgical celebrations. They bring together eyewitness observations of the practices in Rome, elements of Gallican enhancement and the results of the efforts of Charlemagne and Pepin for liturgical uniformity. This combination parallels the mixture of elements seen in many of the sacramentaries noted above. A study of the *ordines romani* has been completed by Michel Andrieu. He compiled and ordered a critical edition of the *Ordines*, “in which he sorts, dates, and localizes the *OR* on the basis of the oldest manuscripts.”⁴⁴ Cassian Folsom writes of the *Ordines*, “A careful study of the texts enabled Andrieu to distinguish between the original Roman text of certain *ordines* (Collection A) and the Gallicanized adaptations of the same (Collection B).”⁴⁵ These distinctions are useful in determining the ritual traditions present in the areas where the rite originated and was celebrated. While the *ordines romani* contain valuable information about the rubrics for the dedication of a church, they contain only a few incipits of the Mass prayers to direct the celebrant to the appropriate prayer in the corresponding sacramentary.

There are three *ordines* which are particularly valuable for the study of relics in the Rite of Dedication, *ORs* XLI, XLII, and XLIII.

**Ordo XLI**

*Ordo* XLI, entitled “Denuntiatio cum reliquiae sanctorum martyrum ponendae sunt. Ordo quomodo ecclesia debeat dedicari,” provides a Frankish version of the rite, complete with the

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anointing of the altar, the deposition of the relics, and writing of the alphabet on the floor of the newly blessed church.\textsuperscript{46} This is believed to have been compiled between 750 and 775.\textsuperscript{47} According to Vogel, “the initial \textit{denuntiatio} does not belong here and has been borrowed from the Old Gelasian Sacramentary.”\textsuperscript{48} While this rite was likely influenced by the Roman tradition, it is also distinctly Gallican in its origins, as is seen in the rite’s use of symbolism, exorcistic ritual actions, and in its elaboration of ritual elements. The incipits listed generally correspond with the preces in the “Orationes in Dedicacione Basilicae Nouae” in the \textit{Gelasianum Vetus}.\textsuperscript{49} However, not all of the rubrics and incipits in the \textit{Gelasian} and \textit{OR XLI} directly correspond to one another. The ordo opens with two distinctly Roman prayers and then parallels a rite found in an eighth century \textit{Gelasian}.\textsuperscript{50} The ritual elements present in this \textit{ordo} laid the foundation for the celebration of the dedication of the church in the later pontificals.

\textit{Ordo XLI} begins with the lighting of twelve candles inside the church and moves to the bishop knocking on the main doors of the church and the singing of psalms.\textsuperscript{51} Among the ritual elements which reflect the Gallican roots of this rite is the \textit{abecedarium}. This practice involves the writing of the Greek and Latin alphabets on the floor in an “X” pattern. Crichton offers that this practice originated in the East and that the “form was a St. Andrew’s Cross suggesting the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Andrieu, \textit{Les Ordines Romani du haut moyen âge}, 339-349.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Palazzo, \textit{A History of Liturgical Books}, 181.
  \item \textsuperscript{48} Vogel, \textit{Medieval Liturgy}, 180.
  \item \textsuperscript{49} Leo Mohlberg, ed., \textit{Liber sacramentorum Romanæ aeclesiae ordinis anni circuli} (Rome: Casa Editrice Herder, 1960), n. 689-702, n. 693.
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Vogel, \textit{Medieval Liturgy}, 180.
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Ordo XLI, n. 2. The original text of the source will be included where the source addresses relics, the object of this study, directly.
\end{itemize}
Chi/Rho monogram which was written on the floor of the church to sanctify the foundations in the name of Christ."\textsuperscript{52} After this, the bishop then signed the altar with the cross using an exorcized mixture of water, salt, ashes, and wine.\textsuperscript{53} The altar was sprinkled with the mixture, and the walls of the church were marked with chrism in the sign of the cross made by the bishop’s thumb.\textsuperscript{54} The sign of the cross was made above the altar with incense.\textsuperscript{55} After two prayers and an antiphon, the \textit{ordo} then proceeds to the blessing of vestments which are held by the subdeacon or acolyte, and blessed by the bishop.\textsuperscript{56}

Then, the bishop and assisting ministers processed to the place where the relics have been stored overnight. The relics are then brought into the church in procession accompanied by candles, crosses, censers, and singing.\textsuperscript{57} When the bishop reaches the altar, a veil is extended between the bishop and the people so that he may put the relics in the place of the altar outside of the assembly’s view.\textsuperscript{58} The antiphon \textit{The Saints are Exalted in Glory (Exultabunt sancti in gloria)} is sung with a psalm.\textsuperscript{59} The \textit{ordo} makes no mention of a method for sealing the place reserved for the relics, as later rituals will, nor does it specify exactly where the relics will be

\textsuperscript{52} Crichton, \textit{The Dedication of a Church}, 22.
\textsuperscript{53} OR XLI, n. 5, 7-9. The mixture of water, salt, ashes, and wine was known as “Gregorian Water” since its use was attributed to Pope Gregory I. It was used for blessing, particularly in the dedication of a church.
\textsuperscript{54} OR XLI, n. 22.
\textsuperscript{55} OR XLI, n. 23.
\textsuperscript{56} OR XLI, n. 24-7.
\textsuperscript{57} OR XLI, n. 28. “Deinde vadunt ad locum in quo reliquiae praeterita nocte cum vigiliis fuerunt et elevant eas cum feretro cum honore et laudes decantando cum crucibus et turibulis et luminibus multis.”
\textsuperscript{58} OR XLI, n. 29. “Venientes ante altare, extenso velo inter eos et populum recondit ipse pontifex manu sua ipsas reliquias in locum altaris canentes: \textit{Exultabunt sancti in gloria}, cum ipso psalmo.”
\textsuperscript{59} OR XLI, n. 29. See footnote 58 above for source text.
placed in relation to the altar. Finally, Mass is celebrated by the bishop after the ministers have been vested in the appropriate garments.  

The ritual in OR XLI demonstrates expansion from the original celebration of Mass alone in the dedication of a church, such as the addition of the abecedarium. Further, following what was seen in the euchological texts of the Gelasian, OR XLI includes the celebration of Mass only after the other ritual elements for dedication, described above, have been completed.

Ordo XLII

Ordo Romanus XLII, entitled “Ordo quomodo in sancta romana ecclesia reliquiae conduntur,” provides rubrics for the deposition of relics while not specifically mentioning the dedication of a church.  

Andrieu’s Ordo XLII is the result of his consultation of multiple manuscripts, which he divided into three groups, Collection A or the Roman Collection; Collection B or the Gallican Collection; and, the two manuscripts which do not fit into either category.  

He believed that the prevalence of similarities among the fifteen manuscripts which he consulted demonstrated a purely Roman practice in use in Gallican, Germanic, and Roman lands in the eighth century.  

Ordo XLII contains several distinct liturgical actions which will become an ongoing part of the rite for the dedication of a church described next. Ordo XLII commences with the bishop

60. OR XLI, n. 30-31.
62. Ibid., 354.
going to the place where the relics were kept, where he sings a litany and offers a prayer. Then the relics are placed onto a paten, and the bishop hands the paten to a presbyter who covers them in a cloth wound on his neck. The presbyters and the bishop then leave the place where the relics have been kept in vigil, singing the antiphon *Cum iocunditate exibitis*. The bishop continues on to the church, where the relics will be deposited. He enters the church with two or three ministers and closes the door of the church. The bishop prays and exorcizes the water that is in the church. The bishop and his assisting ministers prepare the cement, water, chrism and lime mixture which would later be used to seal the relics into the *confessio*, the final resting place of those who had confessed their faith in Christ. The *confessio*, architecturally, would have been directly below the altar. After the altar has been “baptized” with exorcized water, the bishop and his assisting ministers return to the doors of the church so that the bishop may pray. Then, he brings the relics into the church where they are placed upon the new altar.

After he anoints the already prepared *confessio* with chrism, the bishop places the relics into their space in the *confessio* along with three pieces of a consecrated Host and three grains of

64. OR XLII n. 1. “Vadit episcopus in ecclesia ubi reliquiae sunt positae et facit laetaniam et dat orationem hanc: *Oremus. Aufer a nobis, domine, quaesumus, iniquitates nostras et ad sancta sanctorum puris mereamur mentibus introire. Per.*”

65. OR XLII n. 2. “Postea ponit reliquias in patena et porrigit eas presbitero in ulnas super sindonem quam habet in collo ligatum et cooperit ipsas et exeunt psallendo antifonam: *Cum iocunditate exibitis.*”

66. OR XLII n. 3. “Et pergit episcopus in ecclesia nova, ubi recludi debent reliquiae, et intrant in ecclesia cum eo ministri duo vel tres et cludit ostium ecclesiae.”

67. OR XLII nn. 4-5. The rite contains no specific details about how the water, chrism, cement or lime are brought into the church. Later rites, such as PR XII seen below, include rubrics for the advance preparation of these ritual elements.

68. OR XLII nn. 6-9. N.9, “Ipsa finita, suscipit ipsas reliquias a presbitero et portat eas cum laetania ad altare intus in ecclesia et ponit super altare novo.”
incense. Following a prayer and the singing of an antiphon, the confessio is sealed with the previously composed cement mixture and the sign of the cross with chrism. The sprinkling of the entire church follows. The water blessed at the beginning of the rite is used. The tabula is set over the relics in a series of ritual actions which are similar to initiatory prayers and actions. The altar is anointed in the four corners with chrism, and it is veiled. Then, all in the church are sprinkled with holy water. The tablet which is placed over the relics is also “confirmed with chrism.” The translation of the relics and their deposition concludes with a public Mass to be celebrated each day for a week.

Andrieu believes that Ordo XLII was used with the Mass for the dedication of a church in the Gregorian Sacramentary, described above. However, it is important to note that OR XLII is not a rite for the dedication of a church, per se; it is a ceremonial description of the deposition of relics. The difference in the sacramentary chosen for use in each ordo illuminates the

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69. OR XLII n. 10-11. “Et antequam recludantur, ponit chrisma intus in confessione per angulos quattor in cruce... Deinde ponit tres portiones corporis domni intus in confesione et tres de incenso et recluduntur reliquiae intus in confessione.”

70. OR XLII n. 13-16.

71. OR XLII n. 17.

72. OR XLII n. 18. “Ipsa namque tabula, quam super reliquias ponit, debet antea confirmare cum chrisma, faciens crucem dicendo ut supra.”

73. OR XLII n. 19-20.

74. Andrieu, Ordines Romani, 372.

75. Vogel, Medieval Liturgy, 181.
geographical differences between *Ordo* XLI and *Ordo* XLII; the former relies on a more Gallican *Gelasian* and the latter on the more Roman *Gregorian*.\textsuperscript{76}

This *ordo* demonstrates expansion of the ritual first described by Ambrose. The ritual contains liturgical elements of both baptismal and funerary celebrations. Baptistical elements include the wiping of the altar with the exorcised water. Funerary elements include the burial of the relics. Andrieu determined that the practices described in *Ordo* XLII seem to indicate that they go back to the time of Gregory the Great. Gregory wrote about the rite of a dedication of a church and of a pagan temple that has been transformed into a Christian church in his letters, as seen above.\textsuperscript{77}

This rite is the first source to entomb the consecrated Host, understood as a relic of Jesus, with the relics of saints.\textsuperscript{78} Andrieu cites the decree of the Council of Chelsea in July 816 and the mid-ninth century Sacramentary of Metz which mentions this same practice. He writes that this was not originally the practice in Rome, however, and does not consider it a papal practice until Pope Urban II in the eleventh century.\textsuperscript{79} *Ordo* XLII demonstrates the expansion of the practice of depositing relics below the altar and use of increased baptismal imagery, such as baptizing of the altar and marking it with chrism, in the rite of dedication.

\textsuperscript{76} Andrieu, *Ordines Romani*, 373-4.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 371.


\textsuperscript{79} Andrieu, *Ordines Romani*, 389-391.
OR XLIII

*Ordo* XLIII, titled “Incipit ad reliquias levandas sive deducendas seu condendas,” addresses specifically the role of relics in a dedication or consecration. It is the shortest of the three *ordines*. Most likely this *ordo* was a combination of the practices in the previous *ordines*, an attempt by the redactor of the *St. Amand Collection* to remove many of the Gallican practices. *Ordo* XLIII was compiled around 790.

*Ordo* XLIII opens with the antiphon “ecce populus custodiens iudicium” sung by the cantors; the psalm 87 (86), *Fundamenta eius*, makes reference to heavenly Jerusalem. At the conclusion of the antiphon, the bishop raises up in his hands the covered relics and paten, with the relics supported by two deacons, and prays the first prayer. After the prayer is completed, the procession with candles, incense, and a singer begins. Although no indication of where the procession begins is provided, there is a provision for the singing of a psalm with the antiphon should the procession need to be a long distance. When they reach the church, those in the

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82. Ibid.
84. OR XLIII n. 2. “Finita autem antiphona, levat episcopus in brachia sua linteo desuper patena et mittit ibi reliquias et desuper cooptaras olosyrico et sustentant duo diaconi brachi episcopi et tunc dat primam orationem.”
85. OR XLIII n. 3.
procession, singing the litany, stop as the bishop gives the relics to presbyters who remain outside the church while the bishop enters the church.\textsuperscript{86}

Inside, the bishop washes the altar with exorcized water.\textsuperscript{87} When he is finished, the bishop returns to the outside of the church, prays, and sprinkles the people with the remaining exorcized water.\textsuperscript{88} After all of the people have entered the church, the bishop prays the third prayer and an antiphon is sung by the cantor.\textsuperscript{89} Next, the bishop alone puts the relics in their place.\textsuperscript{90} While the bishop places the relics in their new resting spot, another antiphon with the psalm \textit{Blessed are the Immaculate} is sung until he is finished.\textsuperscript{91} The bishop then makes the sign of the cross with chrism on the corners of the place where the relics have been deposited, and then he prays.\textsuperscript{92} Similarly, the bishop anoints the four corners of the altar, and the altar is covered with the altar cloth for the Mass. After the prayer and consecration of the altar, candles are lit in the church and the Solemn Mass, as prescribed in the sacramentary is celebrated.\textsuperscript{93}

This short ordo offers rubrics solely for the transport and deposition of relics in the rite of dedication of a church, in a very simple, Roman manner. Andrieu notes that this \textit{ordo} addresses

\begin{verbatim}
86. OR XLIII n. 4. “Adpropinquantes autem proper ecclesia, faciunt laetaniam et commendat episcopus reliquias ad presbiteros foras ecclesia et remanent ibi cum cereis et turibula, facientes latetanim.”

87. OR XLIII n. 5.

88. OR XLIII n. 6-7.

89. OR XLIII n. 8-10. The text of the prayer is not included in the text of the ordo.

90. OR XLIII n. 11. “Et exuens se episcopus planitam suam et condit reliquias ipse solus.” The ordo does not detail where in relation to the altar the relics would have been placed.

91. OR XLIII n. 12.

92. OR XLIII n. 13: “Et accipit episcopus chrisma et tangit per quattuor angulos loci, ubi reliquiae positae fuerint, similutudinem crucis et dicit: In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Et respondit omnis populus: Et cum spiritu tuo.”

93. OR XLIII n. 14-18.
\end{verbatim}
only the transfer and deposition of relics, not the dedication itself. Andrieu argues that this *ordo* implies more than it actually describes.\footnote{Andrieu, *Ordines Romani*, 406.} Notably in this rite, some of the terminology has changed from the two previous *ordines*; the place where the relics are to rest is called “loqui ubi reliquiae posuitae fuerunt” rather than “loculus” or “confessio” as in the two earlier *ordines*.\footnote{Ibid.} The brevity of the rite, however, is its most notable characteristic.

The *ordines romani* for the dedication of a church or the transfer of relics provide three different rites which share common ritual elements. We can surmise that the transfer of relics occurred during the rite of dedication of a church. Dana Polanichka notes, “These rites share two central and constitutive acts: the deposition of relics and the aspersion with holy water. Although every text includes the ritual placement of the physical remains of martyrs or saints… this act appears most central to the *Ordo Romanus XLII…*”\footnote{Dana M. Polanichka, “Transforming Space (Per)forming Community: Church Consecration in Carolingian Europe,” *Viator* 43, no 1 (2012): 80. Interestingly, Polanichka suggests that the relics are placed within the altar, while the text states that the relics are placed beneath the altar.} OR XLIII only addresses the deposition of relics, and OR XLII is a rite for the transfer and deposition of relics but not necessarily a rite of dedication. Of the three *ordines*, it is only OR XLII which specifically uses the term *confessione* to describe the placement of the relics; the other two *ordines* do not detail where the relics are to be placed. The *confessio*, in its original use, would have been a burial place for a saint or martyr directly underneath the altar.\footnote{Enrico Mazza, *The Celebration of the Eucharist: The Origin of the Rite and the Development of Its Interpretation* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo, 1999), 225.} These *ordines* describe numerous ritual actions, including the
blessing of the altar and altar linens, as well as the cleaning of the church with exorcized water. These actions will be expanded in the next period.

This period of ecclesial documents, sacramentaries, and *ordines* saw relics become an integral part of the Rite of Dedication of Church, appearing in liturgical sources. Christian liturgical books began to include specific ritual actions and prayers for the rite of dedication. Sources were influenced by the local area in which they developed. As demonstrated above, these liturgical sources show a pattern of expansion in the celebration of dedication, particularly due to Gallican influences. In addition to the deposition of relics, the rites of this period include expanded ritual actions such as the *abecedarium* and various exorcisms and blessings.

**The Liturgical Developments of the Rite of Dedication in the Pontificals of the Middle Ages, 950-1300**

Sources for the rite of dedication in this next period are found in the pontifical, a new type of liturgical book. Pontificals contain liturgies that are celebrated by the bishop. Pontificals from this age frequently witness to hybrid rites that have been combined from more than one region into one document. These hybrid rites are the result of use on both sides of the Alps. Further, pontificals typically combined rubrics from the *ordines* with corresponding prayers found in the Sacramentary. These liturgical sources were frequently considered Roman, but often had undergone significant consolidation and conflation with northern European practices. There are four principal sources from this period: the *Romano-Germanic Pontifical of the Tenth Century*, the *Roman Pontifical of the Twelfth Century*, the *Pontifical of the Roman Curia of the Thirteenth Century*, and the *Pontifical of William Durandus*. These documents

comprise the major liturgical sources addressing the rite of dedication of a church and span the early and high Medieval periods.

**The Romano-Germanic Pontifical of the Tenth Century**

The *Romano-Germanic Pontifical of the Tenth Century* (PRG) represents a further synthesis and expansion of the rite of dedication of a church seen in the earlier *Ordines Romani*. The rite within the PRG is titled the *Ordo romanus ad dedicandam ecclesiam*, and it contains at least 25 liturgical actions.\(^99\) Assembled at the scriptorium of St. Albans at Mainz, the PRG was likely compiled between 950 and 962.\(^{100}\) However, the conflated *consecratio* may indicate earlier usage.\(^{101}\) The PRG clearly demonstrates strains of both the Roman practice and the Gallican practice as witnessed in the *ordines* described previously.

The rite in the PRG retains the structure seen in the earlier *ordines* while making some changes.\(^{102}\) The rite opens with the bishop proceeding to the church or the place where the relics were laid and there praying a litany.\(^{103}\) There is no indication of the distance between this first location and the church to be dedicated, or where the first station should be located in relation to the church to be dedicated. At the first station, following the prayers, the relics are placed on a

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102. See Appendix D for a comparative chart.

103. PRG, n. 1. “Primitus vadit episcopus indutus vestimentis sacris ad ecclesiam vel ad locum ubi reliquiae repositae sunt et facit letaniam et dat orationem hanc: *Aufer a nobis, domine, quesumus. Fac nos sanctorum tuorum domine.*”
paten in the bishop’s hands. The relics covered with a fine linen cloth, the bishop and the priests leave the place where the relics have been resting.\textsuperscript{104}

When they reach the new church where the relics will be deposited, the deacon goes inside before the bishop enters and lights twelve candles.\textsuperscript{105} Next, as the procession arrives at the doors of the church, the bishop knocks on the doors accompanied by the antiphon \textit{Tollite portas}. The deacon, who lit the candles inside the church, responds “Quis est iste rex gloriae?” This is repeated three times before the doors of the church are opened to the bishop with some ministers. The bishop, with two or three ministers, enters the church and the doors are again closed.\textsuperscript{106} It is evident here that the people will not witness the purificatory acts at the beginning of this rite.

Inside the church, the ministers with the bishop prostrate themselves before the altar followed by a prayer prayed by the bishop.\textsuperscript{107} Retaining the practice seen in the earlier \textit{ordines}, the bishop traces the Greek and Latin alphabets onto the floor of the church.\textsuperscript{108} Coming before the altar, the bishop prays and blesses the salt and water with ash mixture, as was done in \textit{OR XLI}. He prays for the exorcism of the water and the salt. When the exorcisms of the salt and water are completed, the bishop puts wine in the previously blessed water. Using the mixture, he

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{104. PRG, n. 2. “Postea ponit reliquias in patenam et porrigit eas presbitero in ulnas suas super sindonem quam habet in collo ligatam et cooperit ipsas, et exeunt psallendo antiphonam: \textit{Cum iocunditate exhibitis et cum gaudio}.”}

\footnote{105. PRG, n. 3a-3b. “Et pergunt ad ecclesiam novam ubi recludi debent reliquiae et antequam pontifex introeat in aecclesiam, diaconus recludatur in ipsa et illuminentur XII kandelae in circuitu aecclesiae et induat se vestimentis sacris.”}

\footnote{106. PRG, n. 4-5d.}

\footnote{107. PRG, n. 6-7.}

\footnote{108. PRG, n. 8.}
\end{footnotes}
makes the sign of the cross on the right side and on the four corners of the altar.\textsuperscript{109} With hyssop and the wine-water-ash-salt mixture, the bishop sprinkles around the altar seven times.\textsuperscript{110} He also sprinkles the interior walls of the church. The bishop goes out from the altar and sprinkles all the floor of the church, first sprinkling the floor in the sign of the cross and then in its length and width throughout the church. Two or three ministers and priests are sent to sprinkle the exterior walls of the church. These sprinklings are punctuated with psalms, antiphons and prayers, including \textit{Exurgat Deus et dissipentur} and \textit{Qui habitat}, and once they are completed, the \textit{Consecratio}.\textsuperscript{111}

Coming before the altar, the antiphon \textit{Introibo ad altare Dei} is sung with the psalm \textit{Iudica me Deus}.\textsuperscript{112} Afterwards, lime and cement are mixed together with holy water and placed at the base of the altar.\textsuperscript{113} Oil and incense are offered on the altar, and the cross is made in the four corners. After this, the bishop anoints the whole altar with his hands while a priest offers incense in a circle around the altar.\textsuperscript{114} Accompanied by additional psalms, the altar is chrismated and crosses are made with chrism in the places of the twelve candles around the walls of the church. Incense is offered in the sign of the cross on the altar. The prayers which accompany

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{109} PRG, n. 9-15.
\item \textsuperscript{110} PRG, n. 16.
\item \textsuperscript{111} PRG, n. 17-21.
\item \textsuperscript{112} PRG, n. 22-22a.
\item \textsuperscript{113} PRG, n. 22b-22c. “[Tunc] facit maltam de calce et tegula cum aqua benedicta et postea ipsam aquam quae remanet fundate ad basim altaris. Et extergatur altare de linteo.”
\item \textsuperscript{114} PRG, n. 23-24.
\end{enumerate}
these ritual actions ask for the sanctification of this temple in the name of the Holy Trinity as well as for God’s mercy.\footnote{PRG, n. 25-29.}

Following the anointings and the offering of incense, the bishop prays over the altar, referencing the sacrifice of the cross which was prefigured by the readiness of Jacob to sacrifice his son, Isaac, and asking that the people be able to humbly pour out their prayers to God.\footnote{PRG, n. 31. “Singulare per illud propiciatorium, uod se in altari crucis pro nobis redimendis obtulit immolandum, cuius figuratione patriarcha Iacob lapidem unxit et erexit in tumulum, quo fieret sacrificium et portae caeli desuper aperiretur oraculum, suppliciter tibi, domine, preces fundimus, ut metalli huius expolitam materiem, supernis sacrificis imbuendum, ipse suae dotare sanctificationis ubertate praecipiat, qui quondam lapideis legem scripsit in tabulis. Per.”}

After additional prayers the church is decorated with its sacred objects.\footnote{PRG, n. 34-36.}

Then, the bishop takes the relics from the priest and brings them into the church with great honor, accompanied by the cross and thurible. Many candles are carried. The relics are placed on the new altar.\footnote{PRG, n. 37a-37c. “Ipsa finita, suscipit ipsas reliquias a presbitero et portat eas cum honore, laudes decantand, cum cruce et turibulis et luminibus multis ad altare intus in aecclesiam et ponit super altare novum.”} Extending a veil between them and the assembly, the bishop takes the relics in his own hand and conceals them in the place of the altar while singing the antiphon, \textit{Exultabunt sancti in gloria} with the psalm, \textit{Cantate Domino}.\footnote{PRG, n. 38. “Et extenso velo inter eas et populum, recondit ipse pontifex manu sua ipsas reliquias in loco altaris, canendo antiphonam: \textit{Exultabunt sancti in gloria}, cum psalmo: \textit{Cantate Domino}.”}

The veil between the relics and the people was seen previously in \textit{OR} XLI and demonstrates how sacred this rite was considered.\footnote{Mazza, \textit{The Celebration of the Eucharist}, 228.} Before he reveals the relics, the bishop puts chrism into the \textit{confessio} in three corners in the shape of the cross, saying, “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy
Spirit.\(^{121}\) The bishop puts three pieces of the body of the Lord and three pieces of incense into the \textit{confessio} and opens the relics within the \textit{confessio}.\(^{122}\) While the \textit{confessio} is open, an antiphon asking for the intercession of those who rest under the altar, who have been chosen by the Lord, is sung.\(^{123}\) Next, the bishop takes the tablet which belongs on top of the relics and marks it with chrism, praying as above.\(^{124}\) The bishop places the tablet on top of the relics while praying to God.\(^{125}\) The tablet is sealed with the lime mixture prepared previously and then marked with chrism, using the prayer above.\(^{126}\) The four corners of the altar are marked with a cross of chrism, using the prayer above, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.\(^{127}\)

Once the relics have been deposited, the altar is covered. The bishop goes with the priests back into the sacristy where he vests for the celebration of Mass. Simultaneously, the altar is vested and all of the candles are lit. Mass is then celebrated, and a public mass is to be celebrated in that church for the next eight days, as in \textit{OR} XLII above.\(^{128}\)

\(^{121}\) PRG, n. 39. “Et antequam recluduntur, ponit chrisma intus in confessionem per angulos IIIor in crucem, ita dicendo: \textit{In nomine patris ete filii et spiritus sancti. Pax tibi. R. Et cum spiritu tuo.”}

\(^{122}\) PRG, n. 40. “Deinde ponit tres portiones corporis domini intus in confessionem et tres de incenso et recluduntur reliquie intus in confessione.”

\(^{123}\) PRG, n.41. “Et dum recluduntur, cantatur antiphona: \textit{Sub altare Dei sedes accepistis, intercedite pro nobis ad dominum qui vos elegit.”}

\(^{124}\) PRG, n. 42. “Et accipiens tabulam, quae super reliquias poni debet, antea confirmat eam subitus cum chrismate, dicendo ut supra: \textit{In nomine patris.”}

\(^{125}\) PRG, n. 43. “Et ponit tabulam super reliquias et dat orationem hanc: \textit{Deus, qui ex omni coaptatione sanctorum.”}

\(^{126}\) PRG, n. 44. “Deinde linit eam cum calce que ante fuerat praeparata et, postquam fuerit linita, facit crucem desuper cum crismate, dicendo ut supra.”

\(^{127}\) PRG, n. 45. “Et facit crucem similiter cum crismate per IIIIor angulos altaris desuper, dicendo ut supra.”

\(^{128}\) PRG, n. 46-49.
The rite in the PRG is significantly more complex than the earlier rituals, it combines and enhances the ritual elements of previous texts. As seen above, the rite is one of the most elaborate of the Carolingian liturgies which includes more than 150 individual ritual elements in four general parts.\textsuperscript{129} This opening ritual action has also been embellished to include a threefold knocking, rather than a single one. The ritual element builds on symbolism from the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.\textsuperscript{130} In the Gospel of Nicodemus there is a battle between the forces of good and evil which is echoed in the increased number of exorcisms in this rite. In addition to the threefold knocking, the rite of dedication in the PRG also includes several exorcisms and anointings. These duplications and additions demonstrate the expansion of the rite. The rite of dedication of a church in the PRG shows the complex character of the liturgy at the time. The PRG is clearly an episcopal liturgical book, and it demonstrates the increased prestige of the bishop.\textsuperscript{131} It served to return attention to the Roman roots of the liturgy and to consolidate the \textit{ordines}, along with other liturgical materials, into one source.\textsuperscript{132}

Not only is the rite itself available for analysis, but so too is an exposition from the PRG entitled, \textit{Quid significent duodecim candelae} (“What do the twelve candles mean?”).\textsuperscript{133} This document provides a liturgical, allegorical interpretation of the rite of dedication and its symbols

\textsuperscript{129} Repsher, \textit{The Rite of Church Dedication in the Early Medieval Era}, 44.


\textsuperscript{131} Palazzo, \textit{A History of Liturgical Books}, 203.

\textsuperscript{132} Ibid., 205-207.

\textsuperscript{133} PRG, XXXV. Authorship of this essay is attributed to Remigius of Auxerre (c. 841-908) by Vogel and Elze.
as it was seen in the mid-tenth century when the rite was celebrated. This expository document explains the deep symbolism of the rite and helps to interpret the meanings embedded in the euchological texts. Together, the Rite of Dedication of a Church in the PRG and the anonymous liturgical essay *Quid significent duodecim candelae* provide insight into the ritual structure of the Rite of Dedication of a Church as well as how the rite was understood at the time. The procession with the relics is referred to as the procession of the perfected, emphasizing the perceived importance of the saints. The deposition of relics is described in the same allegorical manner as the other elements of the rite, and its processional character is central. There is nothing distinctive about the practice with the relics in this essay.

Building on the precedent set by the earlier *ordinres*, the pontificals, particularly the PRG, pay great attention to the material and spatial aspects of early dedication rituals. The physical understanding of *church* as building has also taken on a more prominent role in this rite than in earlier rites. Polanichka shows the breadth of the architectural references in this text: “For example, God is called the ‘rationabilis artifex’ and asked to ‘be protector of this house.’ The opening prayers describe the church as ‘house’ and ‘royal hall’… the sung response references the first verses of Psalm 23: ‘The house of the Lord is founded upon the summit of the mountains.’ It concludes with the verse, ‘Bless, Lord, this house which I have built in your name.’” Polanichka’s analysis further notes that the bishop prays that God be the dedicator of

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135. Ibid.
the temple built for him. The allegorical association of physical elements of the church with theological beliefs was a key catechetical tool of the late Middle Ages.

The PRG is the first of the pontificals, and it became the basis for later liturgical sources. Notable in the Rite of Dedication of a Church in the PRG is the embellishment of earlier celebrations of dedication. The Eucharist is a central element of the dedication, as are relics. There is also a new theme of the construction of a sacred space, a sacred community, which is more pronounced than in earlier rites. The creation of the sacred community is seen in the initiatory model of the rite, in which the building is being baptized as the assembly has been. It is also seen in the euchological texts which mention the people who are gathered to make offerings to the Lord. Also, the PRG has added additional anointings and lustrations to the rites found in the ordines which it uses as its source.

In this rite, three pieces of the body of the Lord are included in the confessio with the relics, connecting the Mass which consecrates the Hosts to the deposition of the relics. In the PRG, a few ordos after the Ordo romanus ad dedicandam ecclesiam is Ordo XL: Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam. This ordo follows the same structure as the Ordo romanus ad dedicandam ecclesiam, with an abundance of ritual actions which are duplications of those actions seen above.

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138. PRG, n. 33-34.
**Roman Pontifical of the Twelfth Century**

As Rome returned its attention to the liturgy after the Gregorian reforms, a new pontifical, the Roman Pontifical of the Twelfth Century (PR XII), was developed. Vogel notes that the divergences between the PRG and the PR XII show that it is unlikely that there was a single archetypal document, but the PRG was the source common to all of the episcopal books of this period.  

This family of pontificals, then, represents a number of sources and an attempt to infuse the liturgical celebration with a Roman mentality and circumstances, ending the German influence on the liturgy. The PR XII demonstrates the removal of unnecessary elements and non-ritual material. Although much of PR XII shows an attempt to pare down the rituals, our examination will show that the dedication ritual does not undergo an abbreviation. The PR XII was spread throughout the Church by papal legates and the travel of the pope himself.

The dedication rite in the PR XII is called the *Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam*. This rite retains a structure similar to the one seen above in the PRG. The PR XII rite begins with the bishop and clergy going to either the old church or to the place where the relics have been kept. Here the names of all of the saints’ relics are written down one by one, sealed with the bishop’s seal and signature. A responsory is then sung, the saints are beseeched, and the night watch is ordered. The next day, the bishop returns to the church to be consecrated and begins the


141. Ibid., 249.

142. Ibid., 249-251.

preparation of the church with water, wine, salt and ashes.\textsuperscript{144} The rituals on the day of dedication begin with the lighting of twelve candles all around the inside of the church. All of the bishops and the priests are then expelled from the church until only one deacon remains inside.\textsuperscript{145} Among the preparatory rites celebrated by the bishop is the preparation of the water. This involved the exorcism and blessing of salt and water, followed by the mixing together of the salt and water and the blessing of the completed mixture.\textsuperscript{146}

Having completed the preparation of the water, the bishop, clergy, and people walk around the church. The bishop prays for God to help them in this place, this house of which God is the founder. The bishop strikes the door with his staff, asking that the gates be lifted up so that the King of glory may enter. The deacon who remained in the church responds, as seen in previous versions.\textsuperscript{147} This circling of the church is repeated by the bishop, clergy, and people, complete with the \textit{Tollite portas}, as above, collect, knocking, and response by the deacon. After a third walk around the church, the bishop, repeats his knock on the door with his staff; however, this time he adds the command to open the door.\textsuperscript{148}

\footnotesize{diligenter visis reliquis omnibus et singulatim nominibus scriptis, recondat eas episcopus in aliquo vase sigillo suo signatas et sic deferant ad tentorium, vel ad locum in quo vigilandae sunt, cantando responsorium Haec est vera fraternitas, vel aliud responsorium de sancta Maria. Quo finito, dicat episcopus hanc orationem: omnes sancti tui, quaesumus, domine. Deinde iubeat ibidem agi vigilias per noctem.”

\textsuperscript{144} PR XII, XVII, n. 1: “In crastinum autem, cum venerit praesul ad ecclesiam consecrandam, debent quaeque necessaria, id est hyposus, vas cum aqua, vinum, sal, et cinis, inibi praeparata inveniri.”

\textsuperscript{145} PR XII, XVII, n. 2.

\textsuperscript{146} PR XII, XVII, nn. 3-7.

\textsuperscript{147} PR XII, XVII, nn. 8-10.

\textsuperscript{148} PR XII, XVII, nn. 10-15.
Once the doors have been opened, the bishop enters with only the clergy. While everyone else is locked outside of the church, the clergy and bishop prostrate themselves and pray. As in the earlier versions, the bishop prays in the center of the church, and then ashes are sprinkled across the floor in the form of a cross. Using the ashes spread across the floor, the bishop writes the Greek and Latin alphabets. In an example of the oft repeated actions throughout the rite, the bishop then exorcizes and blesses salt and water. The bishop blesses ashes before mixing them with the salt. The bishop makes the sign of the cross over the water while asking that the commixture of salt and ashes be sanctified with the holy water for the consecration of the church and the altar. Repeating a prayer similar to the one for the mixture of water, salt, and ashes, wine is mixed with the holy water. The wine and holy water combination is blessed, as was also seen in the *Gelasian Sacramentary*.

The bishop consecrates the altar with the mixture by making the sign of the cross in the middle of the altar, then on the four corners. He sprinkles the altar three times with hyssop. Following the sprinkling of the walls and making the sign of the cross in the middle of the church with the water mixture, the bishop stands in the middle of the church and prays for the consecration of the basilica. In a lengthy preface, the bishop specifically mentions the holy martyrs who will be in the church and asks that God be present in the church to hear the prayers

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149. PR XII, XVII, n. 16.
150. PR XII, XVII, n. 17-20.
151. PR XII, XVII, n. 22-27.
152. PR XII, XVII, n. 28-31.
153. PR XII, XVII, n. 32-33.
of the people. After the bishop prays and pours the remaining water mixture at the base of the altar, the bishop with the clergy and the people go to the place where the relics had been kept for the vigil the night before. There, the bishop prays, the clergy sing an antiphon and then raise the relics up on the bier, and the procession goes out with the cross, incense, and candles. The use of the word feretro, which is typically a funerary term, shows the funeral imagery in this rite.

When they reach the new church, the procession with relics encircles the church before entering it. As the procession returns to the doors of the church, the bishop declares that this is the dedication of the church, speaks about tithing, and declares in whose honor the church is to be dedicated, mentioning the names of the saints who will rest there. The bishop announces that the church is ready to be the home of the Lord.

Then, the bishop proceeds to the altar where the relics are to be enshrined, and a veil is spread between him and the assembly in order to separate the relics from the congregation, and the bishop reverently places the relics in the box. The veil shields the relics from the people. The confessio, with the relics inside, is anointed with chrism in the sign of the cross in its the

154. PR XII, XVII, n. 34-39.

155. PR XII, XVII, n. 40-44. Use of funerary imagery is seen in n. 44, “Tunc elevent ipsas reliquias in feretro, praeparatis presbiteris portantibus eas cum honore et laudibus, cum cruce et turibulis incensatis ac luminaribus…”

156. PR XII, XVII, n. 45. “Tunc vero, antequem pontifex introeat ecclesiam, ipse et portantes feretrum cum reliquis circueant ecclesiam cum clero psallendo.”

157. PR XII, XVII, n. 46: “His ita per ordinem gestis, cum redierit pontifex ad ostium ecclesiae, facto silento, habeat verbum ad plebem de honore ecclesiastico et decimis et oblationibus ecclesiarum ac de anniversaria ipsius ecclesiae dedicatione. Et annuntiet tam clero quam populo in cuius honore constructa et dedicata sit ecclesia et nomina anctorum ibi requiescentium. Ipse autem dominus et constructor ipsius ecclesiae ammineatur de dote illius et qualem honorem ecclesiae et presbiteris debat exhibere.”

158. PR XII, XVII, n. 48: “…Et cum pervenerit episcopus ad locum vel titulum inquo reliquiae recondendae sunt, extenso velo inter populum et altare, recondat eas veneranter in capsae et qui circa eum sunt cantent antiphonam…”
middle and in the four corners. The prayer, “May this sepulcher be consecrated in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” is used.\textsuperscript{159} The bishop “confirms” the stone which is to close the \textit{confessio} by anointing it with chrism.\textsuperscript{160} Three pieces of incense are added to the relics, the stone is placed on top of the \textit{confessio}, and the edges are smeared with previously prepared lime. The antiphon \textit{Sub altare domini sedes accepistis; intercedit pro nobis ad domnium qui vos elegit} with the psalm \textit{Exultate Deo adiutori nostro} is sung by the clergy.\textsuperscript{161}

After a prayer and an antiphon have been completed, the altar table is blessed with incense. Then, using the holy oil of the catechumens, the bishop makes the cross in the middle and four corners of the table, as though he is preparing the altar for baptism. Using his own hands, the bishop spreads the sanctified oil across the table, while praying that the altar stone be consecrated and sanctified through the oil and the prayer.\textsuperscript{162} Throughout this, a priest has been constantly incensing in a circle around the altar with the thurible, continuing until the consecration of the altar has been finished. The altar is again anointed as before, and a series of twelve anointings throughout the church begin.\textsuperscript{163} When the church has been anointed, the bishop offers incense above the altar and then incenses the altar in the four corners and in the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{159} PR XII, XVII, n. 49. Euchological text: “Consecretur hoc sepulcrum, in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.” The \textit{confessio} is now considered the tomb in the altar, see Mazza, \textit{Celebration of the Eucharist}, 230.
\item \textsuperscript{160} PR XII, XVII, n. 51: “Et accipiens lapidem, quo claudenda est ipsa confessio, hoc est sepulcrum in quo recondendae sunt reliquiae, confirmet ipsum lapidem in medio et per quatuor angulos, crucem faciendo cum chrismate, a parte videlicet illa quae icere debet super reliquias, sic dicens per unamquamque crucem quam fecerit cum chrismate: \textit{In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti}. Resp.: \textit{Amen – Pax tibi}. Resp.: \textit{Et cum spiritu tuo.”}
\item \textsuperscript{161} PR XII, XVII, n. 52.
\item \textsuperscript{162} PR XII, XVII, n. 55. “Consecrare et sanctificare dignare, domine Deus, lapidem istum per istam unctionem et nostram benedictionem.”
\item \textsuperscript{163} PR XII, XVII, n. 57-58.
\end{itemize}
middle. After praying several prayers, the front of the altar stone is anointed by a priest. All of the linens and decorations of the church are blessed, and the altar is vested for the celebration of Mass. The bishop returns to the sacristy to prepare for Mass, which is celebrated. The prayer over the people at the end of the liturgy specifically references the relics which rest in the church and how they will be venerated with love.

The PR XII contains numerous elaborate steps throughout the rite of dedication of a church. One significant difference between the rite in the PRG, seen above, and the rite in the PR XII is that the PR XII rite does not include the deposition of the pieces of the Consecrated Host when the incense is placed with the relics. This is an interesting elimination, despite the many similarities between the two rituals. The elimination of the addition of Consecrated Host to the tomb demonstrates the efforts of Roman reformers to pare down the liturgy and remove unnecessary elements. Relics are now an integral part of the rite, including their elaborate procession, anointing, and burial. The prayer over the people at the conclusion of the Mass of Dedication demonstrates the ongoing relationship that will develop between the Christian faithful of the new church and the relics which now rest in the altar. PR XII offers a lengthy ritual with numerous of duplications of ritual actions which will influence the next set of liturgical texts.

164. PR XII, XVII, n. 59-65.
165. PR XII, XVII, n. 66-78.
166. PR XII, XVII, n. 79: “Concedatque propitius ut omnes, qui ad aedificationem huius basilicae devote convenistis, intercedente beato N. et caeteris sanctis, quorum reliquiae hic pio venerantur amore, vobiscum hinc veniam reportare peccatorum vestrorum valeatis.”
The Pontifical of the Roman Curia of the XIII Century

The Pontifical of the Roman Curia of the XIII Century (PR XIII) was likely the result of reforms and initiatives at the Lateran during the pontificate of Innocent III (1198-1216). Three recensions of the PR XIII exist. The first recension is thought to have served as an archetype for later recensions and was likely created during Innocent III’s reign. The second recension cannot be dated exactly, but includes the influence of PR XII as in the other two recensions. Vogel dates the third recension prior to the pontificate of Innocent V (1276) but likely before the time of Innocent IV (1243-1254). This recension has been expanded for use by the Roman curia. All three recensions co-existed, but it was the third recension which took hold in the fourteenth century and was used at Avignon. The move to Avignon spread this book throughout the south of France.

The order of dedication in the PR XIII is titled Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam and shows influence from the PR XII. PR XIII expands upon the previous tradition while retaining the essential ritual structure seen in the earlier pontificals. This rite highlights the ritual expansion over time as it contains numerous duplications of ritual actions.

The celebration of a vigil on the eve of the dedication opens the Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam, which continues the earlier tradition. The vigil was held in a separate space, with someone keeping watch over the relics. On the day of the dedication, when all of the necessary items for the dedication have been gathered, the ritual begins with the lighting of twelve candles.

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167. Vogel, Medieval Liturgy, 252.

168. Ibid.

around the inside of the church. Specific instructions for the preparation of the confessio are given, in addition to a procession around the church with the relics.\textsuperscript{170}

The opening rites in the PR XII and the PR XIII are similar, with a few small changes. The rite starts at the door of the church. Two large vases for the Gregorian water and the holy water, one to be placed before the doors of the church and the other before the altar, are prepared. Salt, ashes, and wine are also placed there, along with the wine and necessary masonry tools.

Prayers for exorcism and blessing of the salt follow the ritual structure of PR XII. The bishop begins a threefold procession around the church with the clergy and the people. The procession contains the same conversation between the deacon and the bishop as in the older rites, including the command to open after the final circuit around the church.\textsuperscript{171} Upon entering the church, the ritual elements, including the writing of the alphabets on the floor of the church, are the same as in PR XII.

There is a second preparation of holy water, as well as additional exorcisms and blessings of the water, salt, and ashes.\textsuperscript{172} The duplicated procession back to the place where the relics have been kept is retained in this ritual, as well as the procession around the new church with the

\textsuperscript{170} PR XIII, XXIII, n. 3: “Elevetur ab altari mensa in altum, ad distaniam duorum cubitorum, et ita suspendatur ut possit facile reponi super altare et non impediatur locus anterior nec circuitus altaris. In medio autem altaris, in eius videlicet superiori parte, fiat confessio sive sepulecrum, id est foremen ad magnitudinem palmi quadratum, muratum undique tabulis marmoreis vel lignaeis, in quo sunt recondende reliqui. Et habeatur alia tabula, que sigillum vocatur, ad formam dicti sepulcri, superponenda reliquis et sepulcro. Item expediatur circuitus ecclesie exterius, ita quod inde possit ecclesia undique circuiiri.”

\textsuperscript{171} PR XIII, XXIII, n. 5-19.

\textsuperscript{172} PR XIII, XXIII, nn. 26-33.
relics. This duplication is an important indicator of the changes to the perception of relics in the rite of dedication since duplicated processions add attention to the role of relics in the rite.

The bishop speaks to the gathered people at the doors of the church about the construction of the church and the saint for whom it will be named.

A different word for the space where the relics will be is used here, *capsella* rather than *confessio*, noted above. However, the ritual for anointing the relics and placing incense with them is identical to PR XII. The use of *capsella* here indicates an important shift in understanding. A *confessio* is an architectural term for the place under the altar where a martyr is buried. Enrico Mazza writes that in its original use *confessio* designated a sunken tomb which emerged from the ground underneath the altar and may have served as a base for the altar. The *confessio* tended to disappear because it merged with the altar, resulting in the altar-tomb. In contrast, a *capsella* is a little box that would have been placed in the altar and covered by a seal and the altar table. The change in word choice here demonstrates that the understanding of the role of relics in the rite has changed. The understanding is no longer that the martyr, the witness to Christ’s sacrifice, is being buried beneath the altar where Christ’s sacrifice is celebrated. This is notable because the understanding had been that the relics received honor due to their proximity to the place where Christ’s sacrifice is celebrated. The relics, instead, are now part of the altar itself. A *capsella* would not have held the entire body of a martyr or saint as in the original *confessio*, but only a small relic. This shows a shift in the type of relic that is being

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173. PR XIII, XXIII, nn. 47-51.
174. PR XIII, XXIII, n. 52.
175. PR XIII, XXIII, n. 56.
deposited. The rite of dedication follows the pattern set in the previous rites. It concludes with various anointings throughout the church and of the altar table, the blessing of the altar linens, and the celebration of Mass.

In PR XIII, the rubrics for the preparation of the rite of dedication of a church have grown in precision and detail since the previous pontifical. The rite has become more distinctly Roman in its practices, eliminating unnecessary gestures. The rite in PR XIII relies heavily upon the ritual pattern set in PR XII; repeated blessings and exorcisms highlight similarities between the two rites. The lengthiness of the rite and the vigil with the relics on the night before remain in PR XIII. Since PR XIII was taken to Avignon with the popes at the beginning of the fourteenth century, its influence spread throughout Europe, and it impacted the next pontifical.

**Pontifical of William Durandus**

The *Pontifical of William Durandus* (PGD) is a pontifical arranged in three books. Dated to the end of the thirteenth century (c. 1293-1295) by Vogel, the pontifical compiled by William Durandus, Bishop of Mende (c. 1237-1296) in the south of France, eventually replaced PR XIII after a period in which both texts were in use. Vogel argues that PGD grew in popularity because of its clarity of arrangement and its inclusion of rituals for all of the celebrations presided over by a bishop. This pontifical also influenced later liturgical books, such as the *Pontificale* compiled by Burchard of Strasbourg and A. P. Piccolomini in 1485. The foundation of Durandus’s work was the Roman liturgical practice, as seen in PRG, PR XII, and

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178. Ibid.
PR XIII, but he took into account the local usages of his diocese of Mende. Durandus also made some of his own contributions in the new pontifical. All three of the pontificals discussed earlier in this section served as sources for the PGD. Further, Durandus’s division of the pontifical into three separate books would become the standard for later pontificals. This book was specifically designed for liturgical use, not simply to preserve rites, which makes this book unique. In the PGD, the rite of dedication of a church is entitled *De ecclesie dedicatione* and is the second rite in the second book.

*De ecclesie dedicatione* follows the ritual structure set in the earlier pontificals, but also demonstrates some further developments. Notably, the rite for the dedication of a church is followed by a ritual for the consecration of an altar without the dedication of a church.

*De ecclesie dedicatione* begins with the direction that while consecrations of churches may be done any day, they are most fittingly celebrated on Sundays or on the solemn days of saints’ festivals. Fasting prior to the dedication is required, and it is to be celebrated as a solemnity. After the instructions on fasting, the PGD provides directions for the rite of dedication in the absence of relics. The rubrics specify that if relics are not available, the Body of the Lord may be used in their place. The instructions for the preparation of the relics and the


180. Ibid.


182. PGD, n. 1-2.

183. PGD, n. 3: “Sane precedenti sero ante diem dedicationis, pontifex paret reliquias in altari consecrado includendas, ponens eas in decenti et mundo vasculo vitreo, vel eneo, vel alio, cum tribus granis incensi, vel, deficientibus reliquis, ponat ibi corpus domini.”
type of box, glass or copper, into which they may be placed are more detailed than in the other pontificals studied in this chapter. Next, the rubrics precisely describe the information about the relics, the name of the church, and the indulgences, remission of temporal punishment for sins, to be offered, which the bishop is to write on leather and enclose with the relics.\textsuperscript{184} The relics are then placed in a suitable location on a bier.

During the night before the dedication, a vigil is to be kept in front of the relics. The vigil includes the singing of nocturns and lauds for several saints or the one whose relics are present.\textsuperscript{185}

PGD then proceeds through several preparatory rites similar to the earlier pontificals, including marking the walls with the twelve crosses and candles.\textsuperscript{186} In the midst of these liturgical rites, there is a note that the bishop should announce which saint will lend his name the church to the church and whose relics will be enshrined in the altar to the people.\textsuperscript{187}

Following some of the preparatory rites, the bishop, clergy and the people go to the place where the relics were the day before and pray seven psalms.\textsuperscript{188} Returning to the church to be

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{184. PGD, n. 4. For further information on indulgences, please see the \textit{United States Catholic Catechism for Adults}, 244, 516.}

\footnote{185. PGD, n. 5: “Celebrandeque sunt vigilie ante reliquias ipsas et canendi nocturni et matutine laudes, in honorem plurimorum sanctorum, vel eorum quorum reliquie sunt condende. Ymagines vero, cruces et corpus domini et alia ipsa nocte remaneant in ecclesia consecranda.”}

\footnote{186. PGD, n. 8.}

\footnote{187. PGD, n. 10: “Interim autem, dum premissa preparantur, pontifex debet annuntiare populo in cuius sancti honorem et nomen ecclesia est dedicanda et quorum sanctorum reliquie sunt in altari recondende.”}

\footnote{188. PGD, n. 13. The seven psalms are not specified in the text. The seven penitential psalms are used in a variety of liturgical celebrations and settings. The psalms are numbers: 6, 32, 38, 51,102,130, and 143.}
dedicated, the preparation of holy water follows. This includes the exorcism of salt and water and is followed by the blessing of the salt and the water.189

After sprinkling the whole church with the water, the threefold procession with the knocking on the doors of the church begins.190 Once inside the doors, the bishop now tells all phantoms (fantasmata) to leave the church.191 A litany including the saint for whom the church will be named or the name of the saint whose relics will be in the altar is sung.192

Following the litany, the bishop makes the sign of the cross three times over the altar and church to be consecrated. The abecedarium is retained here, using both the Greek and Latin alphabets.193 Numerous exorcisms and blessings of salt, ashes, wine, and water follow.194 Sprinklings throughout the church and markings in the sign of the cross, similar to those in the early pontificals, follow the blessing and mixing of the water.195

The consecration of the altar follows, beginning with a communal prayer of the psalm Iudica me, Deus with an antiphon. The bishop makes the sign of the cross in the middle of the tablet of the altar, prays for the sanctification of the altar, and marks the altar in the four corners. The bishop prays that the altar be worthy of being the place where the sacrifice is offered, and then leads those present in another psalm prayer while circling the altar seven times while

189. PGD, nn. 14-23.
190. PGD, nn. 25-36.
191. PGD, n. 37.
192. PGD, n. 42.
193. PGD, nn. 44-50.
194. PGD, n. 52-63.
195. PGD, n. 64-66.
sprinkling it.\textsuperscript{196} After this sprinkling of the altar, the bishop circles the whole church to the accompaniment of psalm verses sprinkling the walls of the church and the altar.\textsuperscript{197}

Standing in the middle of the church, the bishop invites the people to pray, and then he prays the prayer of consecration of the basilica.\textsuperscript{198} A preface and \textit{vere dignum} follow.\textsuperscript{199} At the conclusion of the preface, the bishop goes before the altar and blesses cement, as in the \textit{Consecration of an Altar Without the Dedication of a Church} found later in the pontifical.\textsuperscript{200}

The procession begins with the clergy singing the litany. It then proceeds to the place where the relics were kept for the night. Chrism is brought, and prayers and antiphons are prescribed for before and upon entering the place where the relics have been placed overnight.\textsuperscript{201} Priests lift the relics upon the bier prepared for them, and carrying them with honor and praise accompanied by the cross, candles, and thurible with incense, the procession leaves this location.\textsuperscript{202} As the procession returns to the church to be dedicated, four antiphons are provided for the schola, highlighting themes of walking with God and justice in the heavenly kingdom.\textsuperscript{203}

Before he enters the church to be consecrated, the bishop circles the church with the relics, the

\textsuperscript{196} PGD, nn. 67-72. The consecration of the altar specifically mentions the “tabulam altaris.”

\textsuperscript{197} PGD, nn. 73-78.

\textsuperscript{198} PGD, nn. 79-80.

\textsuperscript{199} PGD, n. 81.

\textsuperscript{200} PGD, n. 82. “Prephatione finita, inchoat ibidem iterum premissam antiphonam introibo ad altare. Et mox, scola illam prosequente, procedit coram altari et ibi cum premissa aqua benedicta facit maltam seu cementum et benedicit prout habeter infra, \textit{De altaris consecratione que fit sine ecclesie dedicatione}.”

\textsuperscript{201} PGD, nn. 83-85.

\textsuperscript{202} PGD, n. 87. “Et tunc presbiteri elevant ipsas reliquias super feretrum preparatas, portantes eas cum honore et laudibus, cruce, luminaribus et thurbulo cum incenso precedentibus, pontifice sequente.”

\textsuperscript{203} PGD, n. 88.
people following and praying the *Kyrie* and singing the prescribed antiphons. The bishop gives some brief words about the value and privilege of the dedication of a church, and he declares that the church will be for God, He who has constructed and consecrated it. The schola sings a responsory of offering. The bishop signs the door of the church with chrism and prays that the people gathered be blessed.

Next, the relics are then brought into the church on the bier by the priests while the bishop begins and the schola continues the antiphon *Ingredimini, sancti Dei, preparata est ... maiestatem domini. Alleluia.* When the relics reach the altar, the bishop begins the antiphon *Exultabunt.* The rubrics recommend that the rest of the celebration follow as in the *Rite of Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of a Church* of the PRXIII, providing a specific place within the ritual where the celebration continues, with the exception of the preface for

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204. PGD, n. 89. “Eus igitur ad ecclesie consecrando fores pervenientibus, priusquam ingrediantur, pontifex circueat illam cum ipsis reliquiis populo sequente et clamante Kyrie eleison, cantando premissa antiphonas, donec iterum perveniat ad fores ecclesie.”

205. PGD, n. 90.

206. PGD, n. 91. “Quibus profitentibus se iussa presulis impleturos et satisfieri precibus pro eo qui ecclesiam construxit et dotavit et pro eo qui illam consecrari iussit, concessaque eis parte in omnibus bonis, que ibi fieri continget, tunc, pre foribus ecclesie, scola cantat responsorium: Erit mihi dominus in Deum... offeram tibi. Vers. Si reversus fuero prospere ad domum patris mei. Decimas.”

207. PGD, n. 93.

208. PGD, n. 94. “Tunc presbiteri levent feretrum cum reliquis et, ingrediendo ecclesiam cum clero et populo, pontifex inchoat et scola prosequitur antiphonam: *Ingredimini, sancti Dei, preparata est ... maiestatem domini. Alleluia.*”

which this rite provides its own.²¹⁰ Here, the rite proceeds with the texts used for the celebration of Mass, including the prayer over the people and the possibility of consecrating a cemetery at the conclusion of Mass.²¹¹

*De altaris consecratione que fit sine ecclesie dedicatione*, referenced twice in the rite for dedicating a church in the PGD, is the next ritual in the pontifical. It includes specific instructions for the placement of the relics in the altar. In the *Rite of Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of a Church*, after the altar has been anointed, there is a procession with the relics to the altar to be consecrated. The place where the relics will rest is reverently opened.²¹²

After the relics have been venerated, they are incensed before they are put in the sepulcher, and the sign of the cross is made on the stone covering the sepulcher in chrism.²¹³ As soon as the stone has been fit into the opening covering the relics, ministers and masons smear a cement seal on the edges of the stone, and the bishop makes the sign of the cross on top of it.²¹⁴

The altar continues to be incensed until the offertory is finished. Next, various rubrics for when

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²¹⁰ PGD, n. 97. “Qua dicta, episcopus dicit: *Oremus*. Oratio. *Deus qui in omni loco dominationis tue clemens*. Prosequere hanc orationem et omnia que sequuntur; postea continue infra, in tractatu *De consecratione altaris que fit sine ecclesie dedicatione* usque ad missam, hoc salvo quod, loco illius prephationis que ibi dicitur *Domine sancte pater et clemens cuius nec initium*, cantatur hic prephatio ista, voce mediocri, iunctis manibus ante pectus.”

²¹¹ PGD, nn. 99-110.


²¹³ PGD, Liber Secundus, III, n. 32. “Post hec, thurificat ante reliquias inclusas. Quo facto, accipiens tabulam seu lapidem cum quo debet claudi formen seu sepulcrum, facit cum pollice crucem de crismate in medio eius desubtus...”

²¹⁴ PGD, Liber Secundus, III, n. 33-35.
and how the relics should be unsealed or when they should be placed in the altar are provided for different circumstances.\textsuperscript{215}

Relics are given great prominence and attention here, retaining the idea that they are essential to the dedication of the church, replaced only by the Body of the Lord if other relics are not available. After the relics have been deposited and lime has been smeared over the sepulcher, the altar is anointed and the sign of the cross is made on it with holy water.\textsuperscript{216} Other blessings of the altar take place and anointings are repeated several times. When everything has been completed, the bishop returns to the sacristy to vest for Mass, and Mass is celebrated. The \textit{Rite for the Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of a Church} contains details on the deposition of the relics which are referenced, rather than repeated, by the \textit{Rite of Dedication of a Church}.\textsuperscript{217}

The presence of a rite for dedicating a church and a separate rite for consecrating an altar without dedicating a church shows growth in both practice and ritual text. Many twentieth century commentators, such as Ignazio Calabuig, do not believe that consecrating an altar apart from the dedication of a new church, with only the optional celebration of the Eucharist, is ideal. Calabuig writes that this separate rite for the consecration of an altar without the dedication of a church is an unfortunate development: “Unfortunately, \textit{PGD} turns into a set rite what was envisaged simply as a hypothesis in \textit{PR XII}…This is a ‘concession’ inspired by practical reasons, but, with an essential part removed, the rite does not fully convey the symbolism of the church

\textsuperscript{215} PGD, Liber Secundus, III, n. 36-38.

\textsuperscript{216} PGD, Liber Secundus, III, n. 39-42.

\textsuperscript{217} See, for example, PGD, Liber Secundus, III, n. 6.
building as a sign of the mystery of Christ (the altar) and of the Church (the nave).” The separation demonstrates a loss of meaning in the celebration of dedication.

It seems likely that the references to the *Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of Church* have caused a disruption in the flow of the *Rite of Dedication of a Church*. However, it is difficult to evaluate any rite without participating in the celebrated liturgy. The deposition of relics in the *Consecration of an Altar* without repetition in the *Dedication* rite indicates that the deposition of relics was likely taking place more frequently outside of a celebration of dedication than within it. The deposition of relics outside of the dedication of a church is significant because it demonstrates that relics had an importance in the Christian community beyond the dedication of a new church. It is likely that relics were deposited in multiple altars within a single church, so the liturgy of dedication would not take place in those instances, as evidenced by the existence of a rite for the consecration of an altar.

The PGD rite of dedication of a church contains a few more explanatory rubrics about the relics than the previous pontificals. One such rubric is the detail that the name of the church in the PGD might not be the name of the saint whose relics are being deposited in the altar, since the bishop is told to give the name of the saint that the church will honor in addition to the names of the saints whose relics will be in the church. The rubrics in the PGD emphasize the function of the bishop, whose actions and attire receive close attention.

Durandus’s work shows the separation between the celebration of dedication and the celebration of Mass; the bishop returns to the sacristy to vest for Mass when everything is complete. This indicates a separation between the celebration of Mass and the rite of dedication.

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which is not evident in the earlier pontificals. In earliest rites, the flow into the celebration of Mass had been a natural part of the entire dedicatory action, but that is no longer the case. Ignazio Calabuig writes that this practice had been building however, “As in the Gallican rituals of the eighth century, so in the PGD the celebration of the Eucharist is seen no longer as the decisive consecratory rite but simply as a suitable complement…”\(^{219}\) The relegation of Mass to a concluding role contradicts the earlier belief that the sacrifice of Christ is essential to the rite of dedication. The PGD offers a detailed look at the rite of dedication of a church, preserving the earlier structure of the rite but showing changes in its theology and practice.

**Summary**

This period saw the rise of the pontifical and in it a well-developed ritual for the dedication of a church. This period also witnessed a move from a heavily German influenced liturgy to a more Roman based celebration. These rites of dedication of a church depict continuity in the tradition with small modifications and enhancements. Some trimming of repeated prayers is evident, but the lengthy and elaborate ritual was not significantly changed throughout the high Middle Ages. Relics came to be seen as the ritual elements necessary for the dedication of a church. There was a sense that the church building needed to be cleansed of evil spirits and then dedicated. Theologically, this period saw separation between the rite of dedication and the deposition of relics as well as between the celebration of dedication and the celebration of Mass.

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\(^{219}\) Calabuig, “The Rite of Dedication of a Church,” 357.
Developments in the Pontifical Tradition from the Council of Trent through the Seventeenth Century

The rites of dedication of a church in the Medieval pontifical were long and ornate rituals. This also continued in the Roman Catholic Church during the Reformation period. Although localized pontificals moved into more readily accessible, printed books, the rite itself did not undergo significant revision. The Council of Trent was primarily concerned with ecclesiastical practices and religious offices. The Council was also attentive to the idea of returning to the true Roman tradition. After the Council, the pope was given responsibility for carrying out the reform of the liturgical rites. While post-conciliar popes made important revisions, the highly elaborate ritual for the dedication of a church remained intact until the mid-twentieth century.

After the Pontifical of William Durandus, which was the last version of the pontifical in the late Middle Ages, the Roman Rite began to undergo a shift towards uniformity which built on Durandus’s work. This is particularly evident in the Liber Pontificalis of 1485. This first printed edition of the Roman Pontifical was ordered by Innocent VIII (1484-1492). This pontifical was not a new text, however. Calabuig argues that it is a critical edition of Durandus’s text which aimed to clean up mistakes and omissions of the earlier work. His research has shown that the changes to the Ordo dedicationis in 1485 were primarily stylistic.

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222. Ibid., 40.

The Council of Trent was called in response to the Protestant Reformation, and it sought to address the concerns which were being raised about the Church, its liturgy, its teaching, and its practices. Formally opened in 1545, the Council of Trent convened on and off for nearly twenty years in three different sessions. While the Council did not address all of the issues of the Reformers, Burkhard Neunheuser notes that the Council made significant progress for its time, “The Council did what was possible at the time; it has determined the broad outlines of the reform carried out then by the Popes: namely to continue the medieval form … but in a purified form.”

The Council of Trent itself did not specifically address changes to the liturgical books. As a result of the Council, a new pontifical was created incorporating the newly mandated liturgical reforms. In 1595-6, Clement VIII (1536-1605) promulgated the first post-conciliar, “Tridentine,” Pontificale Romanum. Essentially, this book was a revision of the earlier Pontificale secundum ritum Romanae Ecclesiae, which had been published in 1520. The Pontificale secundum ritum Romanae Ecclesiae, however, was predominantly an updated version of the 1485 Liber Pontificalis.

The rite for the dedication of a church in the 1595/6 Pontificale Romanum: Editio Princps is called De Ecclesiae dedicatione seu consecratione. De Ecclesiae dedicatione seu consecratione

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226. Pontificale Romanum: Editio Princps (1595-1596), Monumenta Liturgica Concilii Tridentini 1, edited by Manlio Sodi and Achille Maria Triacca (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997). The title of the rite is “De Ecclesiae dedicatione seu consecratione,” which is abbreviated in some places.

consecratione follows the ritual pattern seen in the PGD, including a vigil the night before the dedication, purificatory rites, a ritual moment at the doors of the new church, a procession with relics, and the celebration of Mass at the conclusion of the ritual. The rite remains a lengthy celebration which contains numerous blessings and exorcisms; no significant changes were made in the rubrics or incipits for the euchological texts. This rite includes the use of relics as in the PGD, codifying the inclusion of relics in the official liturgical celebration of the Roman Church.

The only notable changes were the inclusion of two decrees of the Council of Trent. One addressed those who usurp church possessions, and the other addressed those who refuse to tithe, neither of which made a notable change in the structure of the rite.\textsuperscript{228} The 1595/6 rite continues the separation between the act of dedication and the celebration of Mass; the act of dedication has not yet been situated within the celebration of Mass. The celebration of the Mass was not considered a focal point of the dedication of a church or the context of its celebration, even after the liturgical reforms called for by the Council of Trent.

The ritual for the dedication of a church that remained in effect until the middle of the twentieth century represented an evolution in the enactment of the dedication ritual: from a celebration of the Eucharist alone in Patristic references, to the development of an elaborate rite for dedication or consecration, seen in \textit{OR XLII} and then expanded upon in the \textit{PRG} with the Eucharist seen as a conclusion rather than as the central element. The post-Tridentine reform of the Pontifical formally codified the longstanding tradition and localized requirement that relics be used in the dedication of a church.

\textbf{Conclusions}

\textsuperscript{228} Ibid., 357-8.
The rite of dedication began as the celebration of Mass in a newly erected church building, and subsequently developed into an extensive, ornate celebration by the tenth century, which remained more or less unchanged into the twentieth century. New ritual elements were added to the rite and previous ones were duplicated. Despite small changes made by Clement VIII following the Council of Trent, the rite of dedication of a church retained the same structure and elaborateness that it had gained in the thirteenth century.

Although the celebration of the Mass was still part of the rite, the liturgical sources show the Mass following the dedicatory rite, rather than functioning as the dedicatory action itself. This idea is reinforced by the use of the consecrated Host as a relic in some rites of dedication of a church. The Host as relic and the celebration of Mass as the completion of the dedication rite gives the impression that the relics were seen as consecratory instead of the Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharistic celebration was seen as a complement to the rite of dedication rather than essential to it.\textsuperscript{229} Expansions of the ritual for the dedication of a church obstructed the original focus of the rite, the Eucharistic celebration.

\textsuperscript{229} Calabuig, “The Rite of Dedication of a Church,” 357.
Chapter Two: The Cult of Saints and Relics

Chapter One revealed that an essential element of the rite of dedication of a church was the use of relics of martyrs and saints. This chapter will outline the history of the veneration of saints and their relics throughout the history of the Church. This historical overview will become important when we consider the evolution of the liturgical celebration of the dedication of a church which included the use of relics.

Christian Antiquity

From the earliest days of the Church, Christians commemorated and honored their fellow faithful who had died as witnesses to their faith in Jesus or who had acted as leaders for the nascent Christian community. Peter Brown notes, “The cult of saints, as it emerged in late antiquity, became part and parcel of the succeeding millennium of Christian history to such an extent that we tend to take its elaboration for granted.”¹ The history of the cult of saints provides invaluable context for understanding the role of relics in the rite of dedication of a church. This section on Christian antiquity will demonstrate how the Roman, Greek, and Hebrew cultures influenced the development of the Christian cult of saints and relics.

There are two key threads of practice present in the developing cult of relics: the veneration of relics and the celebration of the Eucharist at martyrs’ graves. These two practices ran parallel to and influenced the liturgical practice of placing relics underneath altars in the rite of dedication of a church in Europe in the third and fourth centuries. The

development of these threads can be seen in the martyrdom of Polycarp, the role of cultural influences on the cult of saints and relics, the development of the practice of burial ad Sanctos, the emergence of Christian celebrations at the tomb, Christian understandings of saints and relics, and the growing relationship between relics and the altar.

**The Martyrdom of Polycarp**

Among the earliest Christian saints whose remains were collected was Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna, martyr of the early Church.² The earliest, explicit, non-biblical record of an annual memorial gathering at the tomb is at Polycarp’s resting place.³

Polycarp was martyred between the years 155 and 160AD for failing to honor Caesar as Lord and for professing his Christian faith.⁴ After capture and questioning by the Roman authorities, Polycarp was placed in the center of a pyre so that he would burn to death.⁵ Tied there, he prayed, “…I bless you because you have considered me worthy of this day and hour, that I might receive a place among the number of the martyrs in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection to eternal life, both of soul and of body, in the incorruptibility of the Holy Spirit. May I be received among them in your presence today, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice…”⁶ When the fire was lit, however, Polycarp’s body was not consumed by fire.

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⁵ Ibid., 237, nn. 13-14.

⁶ Ibid., 239, n. 14.
Instead, the fire surrounded him, and an executioner was sent to stab him with a dagger.  

After the execution, Polycarp’s followers tried to collect his body. However, Jews and Romans were afraid that his followers would worship Polycarp, so the body was cremated.

When the cremation was finished, the Christians in Smyrna collected Polycarp’s remains and held them in great esteem: “We took up his bones, which are more valuable than precious stones and purer than refined gold, and deposited them in a suitable place.”

The community continued to honor Polycarp even after his death. They gathered at the place for his burial where his bones had been deposited in hopes that “the Lord will permit us to celebrate the birthday of his martyrdom in commemoration of those who have already fought in the contest, and for the training and preparation of those who will do so in the future.”

Polycarp’s martyrdom highlights the importance of martyrs within the early Christian community and the explicit connection between their actions and the sacrifice of Christ.

The martyrdom of Polycarp, the first non-scriptural recorded martyrdom, shows the foundations of the cult of saints and their relics. John Crook, in studying the texts describing the martyrdom of Polycarp, notes, “Here, explicitly stated ... are two of the consistent features of the cult of saints: the value accorded to the mortal remains of one who had died as a witness for the Faith and whose grave was appropriated by the local Christian church, and the observance of the anniversary of his martyrdom at the place where those remains

8. Ibid., 241, nn. 17-18.
9. Ibid., 241, n. 18.
10. Ibid.
had been laid to rest.” Polycarp’s martyrdom marked the first recorded witness to the role of relics in the early Christian community. From the earliest days of the church, then, relics had become important to the Christian community in and of themselves, and annual celebrations at the gravesite on the anniversary of martyrdom began.

**Cultural Influences on the Cult of Saints and Relics**

The cult of saints and relics developed early in the Church’s history, manifesting Christian beliefs and in the context of other socio-religious practices of the time. Funerary practices in late antiquity offer a necessary background for understanding the development of the cult of saints and relics.

The cult of relics emerged from Christian religious-cultural funerary practices and beliefs in the earliest days of the Church. The cult developed in light of funerary customs of other social groups. The Jewish traditions which were prevalent in the communities where Christianity developed had clear opinions about dead bodies: “…in Jewish law the cadaver is a source of ritual pollution, a thing to be disposed of as quickly as possible, preferably before the sun begins another circle of the earth.” Greek burial practices were similar: “In a belief-system in which one passed from this life to the next, the absence of burial meant that the next stage of existence could not take place until the prior phase had been

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completed.”13 The Romans were also clear in their desire that the deceased be removed from living areas quickly.14

According to Jan Elsner, “Romans had built cities of the dead filled with tombs instead of houses… the sociology of Roman death closely mirrored that of Roman life, its double or counterpart… Around Rome itself (but later also in Naples and Sicily), a peculiar habit of digging large underground complexes for the burial of families and other social groups developed in early imperial times.”15 Derek Krueger adds to this idea, noting that there were different types of burial spaces for different social groups: “… many dead were laid to rest in underground chambers... Here the poor were interred in loculi, or shelves, lining long underground hallways. The prominent might lie in sarcophagi in hollowed-out niches (arcosolia), often grouped in private family burial chambers or cubicula.”16 Pietro Zander writes, “The practice of two different burial rites made it necessary to create both large arcosolia (large arched niches) for inhumation graves as well as semicircular or rectangular smaller niches for cremations in the upper part.”17 These two types of burial customs emerged from Roman traditions. Christians only chose the option for inhumation, in keeping with their beliefs about resurrection. Burial practices influenced how Christians

13. Wortley, Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204, 9.
could relate to those who had gone before them. The cities of the dead were the site of a funeral meal held by the family following the burial and acts of purification performed by all of those involved.

The earliest Christian funerary practices and the cult of saints and relics developed in opposition to many of the social and religious ideas of the period. The cult of saints and their relics were unique practices shaped by the Christian beliefs. These cults emerged as the manifestation of Christian belief in the resurrection which required a new way to treat the dead. Consequently, Christian funerary beliefs and practices prompted a new way of understanding the relationship between the living and the dead in the Late Antique Mediterranean world.

**Burial Ad Sanctos: An Ongoing Hope for Resurrection**

Christian funerary practices, while influenced by the culture from which they emerged, took on their own unique character. One such practice was the desire of Christians to be buried in close physical proximity to saints and holy people, burial *ad sanctos*. Christian veneration of saints in their tombs occurred throughout the life of the church; however, as Christians venerated saints in their final resting places, they remembered the empty tomb in Jerusalem, the sign of the Resurrection.

Burial *ad sanctos* began after Christian communities started gathering saints’ bones and items which had come into close contact with the holy person. Frederick Paxton notes

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that by the beginning of the third century, specifically Christian cemeteries began to emerge. These cemeteries typically had the tomb of a martyr or saint at their center. After the peace of the Church, more Christians were buried around the tomb of a holy person, *ad sanctos.* Burial *ad sanctos* quickly became a popular Christian desire, in the hopes the soul would derive spiritual benefits from the proximity to a saint.

Ambrose of Milan also bears witness to such a practice with the burial of his brother Satyrus near the body of St. Victor in the basilica. McLynn writes, “the epitaph that he wrote for his brother’s grave is a clear indication of the value of burial near a saint: To Uranus Satyrus, his brother Ambrose /Accorded the distinction of burial at the martyr’s side. This is the reward for his goodness, that the holy blood /should seep through and wash his remains, which lie beside.” Being buried *ad sanctos* was primarily for the rich, influential, or devout members of the community.

The practice of being buried near a saint and the increased devotion to saints and martyrs at their grave sites prompted significant shifts in the way Roman culture viewed burial space in late antiquity. Brown makes the case that in the late fourth and fifth centuries, a shift occurred in the “balance of importance accorded to the areas of the living

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and the areas of the dead in most late-antique towns.” Eventually, the tomb and the altar would become merged and boundaries would become further conflated.

**Christian Celebrations at the Tomb: Ritual Activity**

Liturgical sources from the early Christian Church, and particularly the Western Church, are rare. Alfred Rush indicates that there is a plethora of secular sources describing funeral practices from this period, but Christian writings from the earliest period are meager. He distinguishes between the periods before and after the peace of Constantine, noting that documents from the later period give an account of the events connected to the funeral, while earlier writings omit these details. Frederick Paxton notes that the ritual activity of commemorative services for the dead continued long after the dead person had been buried, at regular intervals.

Victor Saxer, in *Morts, Martyrs, Reliques*, describes the emergent cult of the dead as well as the development of the annual rituals at the tombs of the deceased. Saxer indicates, “At funerals, at the end of the mourning, on anniversaries, family banquets were celebrated at the tomb so that the dead were also supposed to take part.” Likewise, an inscription on a stone table from a catacomb in Northern Africa records that the family gathered together at

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the time, that cups were filled and that they healed their grief by sharing happy memories of their mother.\textsuperscript{26} The families and close friends of the deceased would gather around these graves to remember their loved ones.

As the celebrations expanded, they included the graves of public figures in the Church. Louis Duchesne writes:

> The faithful loved to hold meetings, either liturgical or otherwise, on the sites where the heroes of the faith reposed. In order to shelter such assemblies, and with the desire of honoring the memory of those who were the occasion of them, edifices of considerable size and grandeur were constructed over the tombs of martyrs and apostles. If for any reason the relics of the martyr were not already contained within the sacred precincts, they were transferred to their new resting-place with a solemn ceremonial.\textsuperscript{27}

Duchesne indicates the beginnings of two early trends in Christianity which would expand and greatly influence the practices of the Church for centuries to come: celebrations at the tomb of a martyr or a saint and the transfer of relics.

Christian celebrations at the tomb were also influenced by cultural ideas. Ambrose worked to make sure that Christian practices at the tomb contained a distinctly Christian element. Ambrose strove to Christianize the refrigerium practice of the pagans due to its popularity and the growing Christian devotion to the saints. Peter Brown describes Ambrose’s efforts to connect saints and martyrs to the communal liturgy. Brown wrote, “a few graves studiously linked to the episcopal eucharistic liturgy should ‘begin to stand out’

\textsuperscript{26} Mohrmann and van der Meer, \textit{Atlas of the Early Christian World}, 49.

in a graveyard where, previously, holy graves had existed but lacked that clear focus. At the same time, Ambrose restricted the random feasting which had been common at other memoriae, as too closely resembling pagan family anniversaries.” By working to Christianize some of the popular cultural practices of the time, Ambrose helped to shape Christian celebrations at the tomb.

Another key element of Christian celebrations was the expansion and inclusion of various elements of the cult of relics into the liturgical practices and calendar of the early church. This was closely connected to the Christian emphasis on the celebration of the day of martyrdom. Gunda Brüske notes, “In contrast to the ancient pagan remembrance, the specific characteristic of the Christian commemoration of the dead…is the shifting of the day of remembrance: Whereas the remembrance of the dead in pagan antiquity was celebrated on the birthday of the deceased, it was celebrated on the anniversary of their death in Christian antiquity.” Further, Brüske describes how the celebration on the martyr’s day of death received Christian meaning, “This interpretation assumes that the martyr is joined to the death of Christ and will therefore also be exalted with him… In its Christian reception dies natalis thus underwent a passiological reinterpretation.” Highlighting this passiological reinterpretation was essential to the Christian understanding of devotion to relics.


30. Ibid., 190.
The earliest Christian practices at the tomb were influenced by the cultural practices of the time, but became distinctly Christian. Eventually, celebrations at the tombs of fellow believers grew into larger celebrations in the Christian communities. When the celebrations at the tomb became connected with the liturgical life of the Church, a stronger connection between relics and the Eucharistic liturgy developed.

**Christian Understandings of Saints and Relics**

The cult of saints and relics was shaped by the Christian understanding of how martyrs and saints were connected to God and by their beliefs about life after death. Part of the importance of the discovery, translation, and deposition of relics was the healing and miracles which they could impart. Relics, at one time, were seen as more than simply bones; they were powerful objects through which one could beseech a saint to intercede to God for a desired outcome. Further, relics provided a direct connection with the saint and so with God; the “terminus of the cult is not the physical object, but the person to whom that object originally belonged; and even then, the object of the cult is not the human being, but rather God, who is honored through the medium of the person faithful to Him. The cult of relics finds its absolute terminus in God; it uses the relative agency of a material thing to show forth its reverence.”

The martyr herself was unique in her connection to the salvific action of Christ. The martyr’s own death, as a result of her faith in Christ, formed a special bond between the sacrifices of each. Relics of martyrs in the Christian tradition were similar to pagan devotion to the bodies of heroes.

The “bodies of martyrs, unlike those of heroes, would not remain dead forever. Early Christians took literally Christ’s promise of the resurrection and thus expected that on the last day the martyrs’ physical bodies would be taken up again by their owners.”\textsuperscript{32} The bodies of heroes who were honored after death had reached their end; relics represented Christians who had physically died, but would rise again with Christ. The presence of a relic in a community was a reminder of the life that they all hoped and worked for in Christ. Geary explains the belief: “The earthly presence of such a sacred body was thus a pledge or deposit left as a physical reminder of salvation to the faithful. Christians believed that physical proximity to these bodies was beneficial, and that those buried near a saint’s tomb would be raised up with the saint on the day of judgment.”\textsuperscript{33} Christians believed devotion to relics helped to bring about God’s mercy in their midst.

It is evident from the rather late appearance of liturgical sources on the role of saints that popular piety dictated the cult of relics in its earliest incarnations. Derek Krueger notes, “Popular piety about the holiness and efficacy of the bodies of saints surely preceded attempts to provide a theological explanation, and already in the fourth century the idea that the corpses of Christian holy men and women were infused with spiritual power – that they were able to perform miracles or could function as conduits for God’s power to heal – had become a matter of common sense.”\textsuperscript{34} Introduced here is another element of the nascent cult of relics which would come to be characteristic of it in centuries to come: the relics’ ability


\textsuperscript{33} Geary, \textit{Furta Sacra}, 30.

\textsuperscript{34} Krueger, “The Religion of Relics in Late Antiquity and Byzantium,” 7.
to bring about miracles, particularly healing. Relics’ role in effecting miracles contributed greatly to their popularity.

Arnold Angendt suggests that the early Christian practice had “an interpretive framework that would remain definitive from this point forward: the soul in heaven remains in contact with the earthly body, which shall renew itself at the Resurrection, but which is already filled with a heavenly dynamis/virtus, with a manna-like power. It was a miraculous double existence: the sacred power that the soul in heaven sends to the earthly body is transmitted through touching the body.”35 The cult of saints and relics developed from the collection of the physical remnants of those who the Christians believed to have a special connection with God.

A special connection to God held by the martyr or saint and the relics’ ability to bring about miracles shaped the cult of saints and relics. The cult emphasized Christian beliefs about life after death and the Resurrection while providing the living faithful a tangible connection to the divine.

**Relics and the Altar: Honoring the Saints**

Gradually, devotion to saints and their relics increased and tombs became popular places. Relics were moved from tombs and cemeteries into church buildings and placed in close proximity to the altar. Churches also came to be built over the tombs of saints, in such

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a way that Christians could go down to the crypt to venerate the saint.\textsuperscript{36} This development helped to highlight the Christian understanding about the connection between relics and beliefs about death and Resurrection. The placement of relics near the altar enabled the public worship of the Church to incorporate the relics and not be separate from them.\textsuperscript{37}

The actions of Ambrose offer a clear depiction of the consolidation of the cult of relics into the liturgical life of the Church. In Milan, at the time of Ambrose, there were a number of Christian cemetery sections with memorials to martyrs. Ambrose, while not responsible for bringing the cult of martyrs to Milan, helped to integrate the cult of saints and relics with the liturgy by placing relics in close physical proximity to where the liturgy was celebrated. He was prepared to bring the martyrs out of cemeteries or previous burial places so that he could deposit them under the altar of a new church which he constructed.\textsuperscript{38} Ambrose’s translation of relics connected them to the rite of dedication of a church. He brought the cult of relics into the liturgical celebration of dedication. For Ambrose, the relics made sense below the altar because they were witnesses to Christ’s sacrifice.

Soon the practice of depositing relics beneath altars became law. When the bishops met in synod in Carthage in 418-419, they read and ratified the canons of the previous councils at Carthage.

\textsuperscript{36} Bartlett, \textit{Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?}, 251-253.

\textsuperscript{37} Brown, \textit{Cult of Saints}, 4.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 37.
The ratification included a canon of the Fifth Council of Carthage held in 401. Canon 83 of the 418-419 synod states:

ITEM, it seemed good that the altars which have been set up here and there, in fields and by the wayside as Memories of Martyrs, in which no body nor relics of martyrs can be proved to have been laid up, should be overturned by the bishops who rule over such places, if such a thing can be done. But should this be impossible on account of the popular tumult it would arouse, the people should none the less be admonished not to frequent such places, and that those who believe rightly should be held bound by no superstition of the place. And no memory of martyrs should at all be accepted, unless where there is found the body or some relics, on which is declared traditionally and by good authority to have been originally his habitation, or possession, or the scene of his passion. For altars which have been erected anywhere on account of dreams or inane quasi-revelations of certain people, should be in every way disapproved of. 39

The desire to have relics of saints or martyrs in every church prompted the increasingly common practice of fragmentation of relics. By the early fifth century, due to the canons of the councils at Carthage, relics were required in altars, even as the practice was only slowly making an appearance in the liturgical texts seen in the previous chapter.

Summary

A cult of saints and relics had developed by the middle of the second century AD, as can be seen in the actions of the Christian community following the martyrdom of Polycarp. Devotion to the remains of saints may have originated from the pagan cult of heroes, but

even more so in the Christian belief in bodily resurrection, and it developed in light of Greco-Roman and Jewish cultural funerary practices. Emerging practices, such as burial near the tomb of a saint, highlighted the growth of the cult of saints and relics in the Patristic period. Increased devotion to saints and their relics influenced the burial practices of the time. Gradually, as devotion to saints and relics grew more widespread, relics were often moved from the tomb to a place of honor beneath the altar. This led to the incorporation of the saints into the liturgical life of the Church. The Christian idea that the saints could act as intercessors before God emerged and expanded. The cult of saints and relics was influenced by the culture of late antiquity, but quickly developed into a popular element of the devotional life of the Church.

The Cult of Saints and Relics in the Medieval Period

The cult of saints and relics in the Medieval period became increasingly connected to the liturgical life of the Church. Building on the understandings of saints and relics present in late antiquity, Christians viewed relics as a source of God’s mercy. As a result of their growing popularity, the cult of relics was also plagued by challenges, such as fragmentation, translations, and theft, during this period. This section will look at the growth of relics’ popularity in the Medieval period, how they were used as a sign of God’s power and will, and the difficulties which shaped devotion to relics.

Growing Popularity

The Medieval period saw a rise in the popularity of relics and an increase in the number of places in which they could be found. The growing popularity of relics was due in part to their widespread usage for numerous functions as well as the ongoing Christianization of Europe.

Patrick Geary describes the pervasiveness of relics in popular usage throughout this period: “From the church where they were a required equipment of altars, to the court of law where they were necessary for oath taking, to the battlefield where they helped bring victory in the hilt of Roland’s sword, relics were an indispensible part of daily life, accepted as unquestioningly, in fact, as life itself.” Further, relics came to be the predominant sign of God’s grace and mercy for a community. Regardless of how the relics arrived in the community, Christians believed that favor could be brought to them through the intervention of “their” relics or saint. Relics were often the economic lifeblood of a community, attracting pilgrims from throughout Europe to a specific city or abbey. All of these factors combined to create a need for a greater number of relics. Consequently, some communities resorted to theft to bring to their towns relics which would be the most attractive to pilgrims.

Church building came to take relics more and more into account. By the Middle Ages, the desire to house relics and to be a place of pilgrimage were often the reasons that churches were built. Stories about the saints which located them or major events in their lives in specific, albeit illogical, places became commonplace. These new stories connected

geographical places to the lives of saints and justified desires to build new basilicas throughout the Carolingian world.

A significant change occurred in the western world in the Medieval period: the Christianization of Gaul and the Germanic lands. Geary describes the connection to the greater prominence of relics, noting “before the ninth century most of Europe was insufficiently Christianized (or perhaps hagiosized) for relics to assume the immense importance we will be encountering…. After this period, they face increasingly stiff competition from other sources of mundane and celestial power.” This period was exceptionally important to the growth of relics in Europe because relics were seen as offering a connection to the previous religious understandings of the newly Christianized peoples, and there were no direct competitors in the claim of relics’ ability to bring about divine favor.

Geary’s research has highlighted the connection that saints offered to Christianity for the newly converted peoples. He writes, “It appears that the religion of the majority of the semibarbarian inheritors of the empire in the West was hagiocentric.” Through the saints, Christianity was communicated to new peoples. Consequently, the need for relics throughout Europe increased. Barbara Abou-El-Haj notes that this increased demand for relics did not always follow the appropriate channels; she notes that “relics were transferred

42. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 16.
43. Ibid., 31.
to new constituents as gifts, purchases, or as loot from ransacked Roman cemeteries.” The cult of relics grew rapidly and wildly throughout this period as devotion to relics increased exponentially.

For the newly converted peoples of northern Europe, relics were central to belief and often a key catechetical device. Eric Palazzo shows that relics played more than a theological and liturgical role in the life of the church; they were also an economic and political factor. He writes, “This liturgical and theological interpretation must be supplemented with a political reading of the role of relics in the Church. The iconographic program of certain buildings, based largely on hagiographic figures, as well as the spatial organization of relics and reliquaries within the leading churches of the Middle Ages, leads to a conception of the church building as the ‘image’ of the Christian community and its saints.” Relics brought people to churches in the Middle Ages and often significantly influenced the design of the church itself so it would highlight the presence of the relics.

The political power of relics was especially evident when the central government was weak, notably in the sixth and eleventh centuries. At those times, “relics were prized not simply for their thaumaturgic power, but also for their ability to substitute for public authority, protect and secure the community, determine the relative status of individuals and


churches, and provide for the community’s economic prosperity.” Christians believed that the relics would protect their community from physical dangers, such as invasion or the plague, and also help to provide for them economically, as long as they earned the saint’s favor. Notably, “saints… succeeded where other efforts failed or faltered. They alone provided not only a focus for religious devotion (something they had done all along) but just as importantly they gave whatever sense of identity, means of protection, and economic vitality religious institutions of Europe would know for centuries.” This sense of identity and community was especially important in times of weak central government.

The Christianization of the “barbarian” peoples was the context for the popularity of saints and relics. The success of saints in capturing devotional, political, and economic imaginations brought about a sense of local identity which hinged on the presence of God shown through the relics. Relics represented God’s presence because they were remnants of saints who could intercede to God on behalf of the people. Their presence was seen as a connection to those who had God’s favor and to God himself. Relics, then, were afforded great prestige in the Middle Ages because of their perceived broad expanse of influence.

### Canonical Legislation About Relics

Increased presence of relics brought about canonical reforms to ensure their proper use. The Carolingian reforms, which were “the program of social and religious, political and

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cultural reform promoted by the court…,”\textsuperscript{48} looked at how relics were incorporated into the life of the Church. Relics were part of the Rite of Dedication, and, as was seen already in the writings of Gregory the Great in Chapter One, they were part of what helped to transform a space from profane to sacred.

Relics were deemed essential for the dedication of a church by the Second Council of Nicaea in 787 which decreed, “If a church has been consecrated without the installation of holy relics, it is necessary to make good the defect.”\textsuperscript{49} The item from the Council continues, “therefore, we decree that in venerable churches consecrated without relics of the holy martyrs, the installation of relics should take place along with the usual prayers. And if in the future any bishop is found out consecrating a church without relics, let him be deposed as someone who has flouted the ecclesiastical traditions.”\textsuperscript{50} This decree of the Second Council of Nicaea was an evocation of the canon from the earlier council of Carthage (401), seen above.\textsuperscript{51} To address the canons of the council, “cavities were made beneath the altar stone to accommodate relics, and although there is evidence to suggest that some portable altars were already equipped with relics, from this point onward they began officially to serve two functions: that of altar and reliquary.”\textsuperscript{52} The law had a great impact on


\textsuperscript{49} Norman Tanner, ed., \textit{Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils} (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 144.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 145.

\textsuperscript{51} Geary, \textit{Furta Sacra}, 18.

\textsuperscript{52} James Robinson, “From Altar to Amulet Relics, Portability, and Devotion,” in \textit{Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe}, ed. Martina Bagnoli, Holger A. Klein, C. Griffith Mann, and James Robinson (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2010), 112.
the Carolingian empire, especially more focused “attention on the remains of saints in every altar” as well as increased “demand for more relics for new churches and chapels or for those lacking relics.” Relics took on an increased importance throughout the Carolingian empire. The law was taken seriously, and strictly enforced; according to Dooley, “it stated that bishops who consecrated altars without relics were to be deposed. But in spite of this, the Council of Chelsea in England about thirty years later (in 816) mitigated the severity of this former law. Some altars were consecrated with the placing of a consecrated Host in the cavity intended for relics.” Abou-El-Haj believes that Charlemagne tried to manage the cult of relics so as to increase standardization and centralization of liturgical practice; she shows that relics were one part of the large program of political, liturgical, and economic consolidation.

As seen in the *Ordines Romani* in Chapter One, relics were sometimes used by themselves and sometimes combined with incense or with pieces of the consecrated Host. Geary argues that the strictly enforced law added to the attention paid to rituals involving relics; he notes, “the solemnity of the rituals used during the transfer of relics to altars…indicates that importance was attached to these translations and depositions.” From 787 until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in the mid-twentieth century, all altars, whether portable or stationary, were required to have relics in them.

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Relics and God’s Mercy: Mediating God’s Love

Relics possessed widely ranging authority because they were seen as a sign of God’s favor and mercy. European Christians in the Middle Ages distinctly believed that “the preferred medium through which God used his saints to act was their bodies. Their corpses were seen as the pignora, literally, the security deposits left by the saints upon their deaths as guarantees of their continuing interest in the earthly community.”

Relics were proof that the body would be resurrected at the end of time. There was no doubt in the Medieval Christian mind that relics were the saints themselves.

For them, the physicality offered by relics provided a helpful connection to the Christian faith, a physical connection which offered a clearer relationship to God than the more abstract concepts of Christianity. Geary suggests that relics were a pathway to deeper understanding in this period; he writes, “…as physical remains of saints, relics were more easily understood and appreciated by ninth-century laymen and ecclesiastics than the more abstract elements of their Christian heritage. The relics were the saint; they had more than a mere mystical or spiritual connection with the eternality of God and his heavenly court.”

Geary emphasizes that it is the perception of the people, lay and clerical, which led to the popularity of relics and the increase in devotion to the saints. He says that the “perception of the operation of relics on the part of most people, lay and clerical, seems to have been much more immediate: relics were the saints, continuing to live among men. They were immediate sources of supernatural power for good or for ill, and close contact with them or possession

58. Geary, Furta Sacra, 34.
of them was a means of participating in that power.” The bodies of the saints were intermediaries of God’s mercy, helping to communicate His love and healing.

**Relics: Signs of Christ’s Presence and Divine Favor**

Beliefs about relics were shaped by the way that life after death and the Eucharist were seen in the Church. The continued life of the saints among the community reiterated belief in life after death and provided encouragement towards sanctity. The idea of the saint continuing to live in the community was comprehensible to many Christians, and also helped to communicate theologically challenging tenets of Christianity. For example, if relics were “symbols of divine favor continuing to operate on behalf of men, they were also the reality symbolized since they referred not beyond themselves but to themselves, as the saint residing among his followers. Hence they were most important in helping men understand more difficult and central aspects of Christianity such as the eucharist.” Thus, if the saint could continue to be present in the community through his relics, Christ could continue to be present in the Eucharist. The role of relics in portraying God’s favor and mercy, along with their ability to make comprehensible theological tenets of Christianity, promoted the growth of cults of relics in the Middle Ages.

Attitudes towards relics also underwent a shift in this period. In the early part of this period, relics were popular, and people would rush to see them. For example, in 1049, at the consecration of St. Remi in Reims, pilgrims rushed in a throng to see the relics, injuring

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60. Geary, *Furta Sacra*, 34.
several and suffocating others. However, by the end of the Middle Ages, a shift had begun to occur in the way relics were treated; fragmentation was frequent. The complete body of a saint was no longer deposited under the altar of a newly dedicated church, as Ambrose had in his basilica. Now, relics were split and divided throughout the Christian world. Abou-el-haj describes the situation in the later Middle Ages, as “…relics come to be treated in ways chillingly distinct from early medieval descriptions of whole bodies, incorrupt, perfuming the air, whose nails and hair are lovingly cut. Now there were new ways to handle bodies: They were broken into fragments, skulls crushed, and the pieces distributed.” This might be the reason for the appearance of the veil behind which relics were placed into the confessio in church dedications; relics were no longer clearly identifiable as human remains and would not have been visible to the faithful.

**Relic Translations: Crusades and Fragmentation**

Relic translations became more common in the Middle Ages, leading to the transport of relics throughout the Christian world. Relic translations, whether from an older church to a newer one or from one community into that of the saint’s new home, were popular events which happened frequently during this time. Relic translations could occur over long or short distances; some were moved out of non-Christian lands into newly Christianized territories and others were moved from outside city walls into the heart of the city.

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62. Ibid., 31.
Translations often meant that relics would be accessible to larger groups of people along the route to the new tomb.\textsuperscript{63}

The Crusades were yet another influential factor. Relics followed a path into the city of Constantinople until the year 1204 when the city was sacked during the Fourth Crusade. At that point, notable relics from the Holy Land and the East began to appear throughout Europe.\textsuperscript{64} This led to a number of translations as new relics arrived in western Europe. Victor and Edith Turner have commented on the impact of the crusades, which they believe “… opened Europe to a spate of relics from the Holy Land, with much reduplication — St. John the Baptist’s head, countless phials of Virgin’s milk…Shrines and waystations competed for the attention of pilgrims in the display of sensational relics…”\textsuperscript{65} Relics which had only been in the East began to make their way west. In some cases, full bodies of saints were translated from one place to another.

Translation was also connected to fragmentation in many cases. Adrian Bell and Richard Dale state: “Translation might also result in the saint’s body being separated from the head that would be encased in its own reliquary. This led to the multiplication of shrines in the form of the original (empty) tomb, which continued to be venerated, the new main shrine, and the head shrine (or ‘Corona’ as Becket’s head shrine was designated).”\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{63} Bartlett, \textit{Why Can the Dead Do Such Great Things?}, 282-295.

\textsuperscript{64} Wortley, \textit{Studies on the Cult of Relics in Byzantium up to 1204}, xvi.


Translations were responsible for new basilicas dotting the European landscape and for “new” relics residing in pre-existing communities.

Relics throughout this period were seen as “goods”. They could be gifted, used in processions, stolen, fragmented or translated. Relics were a popular commodity, not to be taken lightly.

**Relics in Medieval Theological Commentaries**

Relics were discussed in theological commentaries of this time, notably those of Sicard of Cremona, Thiofrid of Ecternach, and Guibert of Nogent. These three authors provide insight into the popular understanding of the cult of relics.

In discussing Sicard of Cremona’s (c. 1155-1215) liturgical commentary on the design on the Christian church, Palazzo notes that for Sicard the physical church building was a representation of the hierarchical Church and expressed elements of Catholic theology. He notes, “One finds a similar notion in the symbolic meaning of portable altars…, which, in addition to their liturgical function, were also treated in exegetical, liturgical, and canonical literature as miniature representations of the physical church, like the images that came to symbolize the institutional Church.”67 Palazzo argues that in this period relics defined a church or a portable altar as a place of worship and gave them symbolic significance.68

Similarly, Thiofrid of Ecternach (d. 1110) associated the veneration of relics with the incarnation of Christ, which made matter part of God’s instrument of salvation. In his *Flores*


68. Ibid.
epytaphii sanctorum (Flowers Strewn over the Tombs of the Saints) Thiofrid highlights the idea that relics are a way of commemorating those saints who had reached spiritual purity.⁶⁹

Perhaps the most prolific of the three on the topic relics, Guibert of Nogent (c. 1055-1124), was a monk in France in the late eleventh and early twelfth centuries. His treatise on relics *De pignoribus sanctorum* provides a critical description of the cult of relics at his time. Guibert attacked general superstitions about relics and their powers. Abel Lefranc writes, “He was the first who tried to provide a total view, systematic and rational, on the questions of the cult of the saints and their relics.”⁷⁰ Guibert’s writings looked to highlight those elements of the cult of relics which emphasized the teachings of the Church. His writings demonstrate the number of false relics and misguided veneration that was common in the late medieval period.⁷¹ Further, Guibert was “repelled by the idea of dismembering the human body. ‘All the evil of contention [over relics],’ he says, ‘comes from not permitting the saint to have the quiet of their proper and immutable burial.’ …he understandably urged that the dead be left in peace.”⁷² These three commentators offer an understanding of the theological perspectives on relics in the high Middle Ages, demonstrating how relics provided meaning to liturgical space and also prompted questions about salvation.

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⁷². Ibid., 29.
In the high Middle Ages, there were two primary schools of thought on the role of relics in the life of the Church. The first set of theologians believed that relics helped to educate Christians about the Incarnation of Christ and that relics played a valuable role in the structure of the church. The second group believed that the dead should be left intact. These two ways of thinking about relics represented growing tension surrounding the role of relics in the celebrations of dedication.

**Pilgrimage and Eucharistic Devotions**

The cult of relics in the Medieval period was influenced by two significant trends. First, the rise of pilgrimages as devotional and penitential practices prompted the growth of shrines and became the driving force of economies throughout Europe. Second, at the end of the period, the rise of Eucharistic devotions began to challenge the role of the consecrated Host as simply one more relic and to divert popular devotion away from saints’ bones and direct it towards the Eucharist. These two factors shaped the cult of relics throughout the Middle Ages.

**Pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage reached a high point of popularity as both a penitential and popular devotional practice in the late Middle Ages. Unlike other religions, Christianity did not have any one central unique place of pilgrimage; thus, pilgrims traveled to diverse tombs of saints. Pilgrims from all over Europe would travel on pilgrimage routes to venerate many different relics and to pray at numerous basilicas. Babara Abou-El-Haj describes the

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development of pilgrimage locations: “This striking emphasis on entombment as a site for veneration follows from necessity. The dead saint was the material embodiment of cult claims. To that was added the fantastic, the soul living on in heaven, capable of intercession and intervention. What pilgrims could not see had to be dramatically visualized, in architectural settings and in heavenly visions, as well as in acoustically and visually orchestrated liturgies.” Pilgrimage destinations became home to highly developed devotional practices and liturgies surrounding the cult of relics. Pilgrimage also situated the cult of relics fully in the public sphere; the aim of pilgrimage and the cult of relics at this time was not private spirituality but public assembly.

The various motives of pilgrims also impacted the destination of and activities during pilgrimages. Some embarked on pilgrimages in order to pray, some for the sake of travel, some for penitential reasons, some for healing, and others to venerate the saints. Relics and the indulgences granted drove many pilgrims to shrines throughout Europe. Nancy Frey notes that, “The Catholic church encouraged this belief [that physical contact with relics was connected to salvation] by instituting penitential pilgrimages and granting indulgences to those who visited sacred places.” Indulgences and penance helped pilgrimage, and many cities throughout Europe, to prosper. The institution of penitential pilgrimages built on the foundation of private pilgrimages which were already in place. The

75. Ibid., 15.
77. Nancy Louise Frey, Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 12.
Pilgrims that relics drew to a city were further proof of the saint working to help his community economically. Pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages spurred the growth of the cult of relics.

Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela epitomizes the rise and growth of relic pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages. Santiago de Compostela, with the rediscovery of the relics long after they had been buried there, its various stories of the powerful relics of St. James, and rise to a premier pilgrimage destination, highlights the economic impact that relics could have on a community and the number of people who came to venerate them. After the relics of St. James were rediscovered in Compostela, a shrine was built for them. Miracles, such as the defeat of the Moors in key battles, were attributed to the intervention of James’s relics. Gradually, pilgrimage to Compostela was encouraged as both a devotional and penitential practice. Christians throughout Europe flocked to Spain to pray in front of the relics of Saint James. Consequently, numerous cities developed along the pilgrimage routes which brought pilgrims from all parts of Europe to Spain.

Santiago de Compostela highlights the social, ritual, and theological prestige of relics in this period. Socially, pilgrimage was a popular activity and stories of one’s journeys could be shared for many years. Ritually, the practice of making a pilgrimage to a specific shrine as well as the ritual activities that the pilgrim participated in demonstrate how relics had entered into all aspects of the life of the Church. Theologically, the stories of the relics at Santiago demonstrate how the intercession of a saint could be requested and how God would respond to prayer and the saint’s intercession. Relics were a powerful force and spurred the growth of pilgrimage.
Devotion to relics began to experience decline in popularity by the eleventh century, due to a number of factors. Patrick Geary writes, “First, increased communication and mobility resulted in the widespread diffusion of the universal saints throughout Christendom… But in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries the cult of the Virgin expanded enormously across Europe.”

Universal saints are saints who are venerated by the whole Church, rather than by the Church in a particular area, such as the Apostles and early martyrs. Relics which had previously been found only in the Holy Land and Constantinople made their way throughout Europe. As the relics of the Apostles and early martyrs spread, they were duplicated so that they came to be venerated in places other than where their tombs where located. Unique relics and their central role in community development faced difficulties from the growing role of the universal saints. Relics and local saints were suppressed in relation to Jesus Christ and universal saints. Groups and guilds began to pick their own subjective saints to be their patrons, based on who they thought might have a connection to their trade. Further, communities had previously had as their patron the saint whose relics were in their local church and for whom the church had been named. This was no longer the case in every European town. The rise of veneration of universal saints and the cult of the Virgin Mary began to detract from the cult of relics as it had existed in previous centuries; no longer did Christians venerate only the relics which rested in their city.

79. Ibid., 24.
80. Ibid., 26.
Eucharistic Devotions

In the late Middle Ages, the biggest challenges to the cult of relics, however, were the rise of Eucharistic devotions and changing perspectives on the Eucharist. Early in the Middle Ages, the consecrated Host was seen as a relic of Christ, and it could be buried in an altar if no suitable relics were available or it was added to the relics and incense in other rites, as seen in the first chapter. However, by the thirteenth century, a shift had occurred; “…the eucharist was universally accorded an extraordinary, unique reverence. The practice of placing particles of the eucharist in altars disappeared and was finally condemned as a deformation of its purpose; since it was the food of the soul, it should not be used for other purposes.”81 When the perspective on the Eucharist changed, it became the dominant object of popular devotion. There was a shift from the role of the Eucharist as one relic among others, to a distinct sacred object that saw the practices of medieval devotion move from hagiocentric to christocentric.82

While the connection between Christ and the saints had been particularly clear in Ambrose’s time, it had become eclipsed in the early Middle Ages. The rise of the cult of Christ in the Eucharist returned the popular focus of the church back to Christ, but this return did not occur overnight. Part of what emerged in the West during the thirteenth century was physical relics of Jesus of Nazareth from his earthly life and death. Among these relics were drops of Christ’s blood collected during the agony, permeating Christ’s loincloth, derived from the True Cross, or filling the Grail. Marie-Madelein Gauthier argues

82. Ibid.
that the cult of relics of Christ’s earthly life was common in western Christianity at this time.\textsuperscript{83}

**Summary**

The Middle Ages saw an expansion of the cult of relics as relics took on political, economic, ritual and social characteristics. The cult of relics grew out of the popular practices of the previous age and similarities to the religious practices of the semi-barbarian peoples of Northern Europe. In the Middle Ages, the cult of relics began to cement its place in the Christian belief structure.

Ritually, popular actions of the previous age, such as the deposition of relics in the dedication of a church, made their way into the liturgical documents and practices of this period. Relic translations were popular communal events celebrating the arrival of a relic to a new location.

Politically, relics were a source of power because they were seen as mediators of God’s divine will through intercession of the saint whose relics they were. Geary asserts that the dominant reason for the success of the cult of relics in the Carolingian period was the direct connection with saints, which relics afforded to those who possessed them.\textsuperscript{84} Relics were important for taking political oaths as well as providing support in battle.\textsuperscript{85}

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Socially, relics blossomed in popularity because of the belief that they could bring about miracles and healings as well as the belief that they were the physical presence of the saint in a given community. Saints were seen as direct intercessors to God and a symbol of his mercy and favor. The cult of relics prospered in the Middle Ages because it provided a tangible witness to the Christian faith and satisfied the human desire to have a physical connection to the divine.

Economically, the impact of relics was just beginning to be felt, especially in Europe. Relics were now a valuable commodity which could be moved or stolen. As the cult of relics became part of the formal liturgical practices of the Church, it laid the foundation for an even larger cult of relics and pilgrimages. Relic collections, often housed in ornate reliquaries, were signs of wealth and prestige, both as art and as objects of veneration.86

Relics impacted many aspects of medieval life. Theological understandings about the role of relics in the mediation of God’s favor helped to guide their influence on the economic, social, political and ritual actions of the period. Underlying each of these areas was the strong belief that relics were a sign of God’s power and favor. This prompted relics to become powerful forces in many places. This period was an important one in the growth of relics in the life of the Church. The cult of relics expanded beyond the dedication of a church into pilgrimage practices, church building, and economic and political spheres.

Sixteenth Century Through the Early Twentieth Century

The cult of relics did not undergo significant change during the 450 years between the end of the Medieval period and the promulgation of the revised Roman Pontifical in 1961/2. However, popular devotion to the cult of relics declined throughout this time.

The role of relics in the rite of dedication of a church was further cemented during this period. The Pontificale Romanum 1595/6 had a clear policy on the role of relics in the liturgical celebration; it demanded “that relics be placed in all altars, under penalty of invalid consecration if they were not used and deposited therein.” Relics were important to the Christian faithful and essential to the proper celebration of dedication.

Relics and the Reformation

Relics, due to their prominent role in the dedication of a church and the numerous abuses to which they were connected, were seen as distasteful to many Protestants. Protestant leaders went after the cult of saints and relics with great energy. Some parodied relic processions to contest the importance of relics. Protestants focused on Scripture as the guiding force of their faith, which did not include the cult of relics. These groups, especially the Calvinists, referred to the hiding of bodies in the Old Testament in order to prevent idolatry.

Relics were a popular component of the devotional life of the Church, but their relationship to Christ’s sacrifice was not always evident. Relics were often prayed to in place of Christ, and their power was seen as more tangible than Christ’s. The understanding

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of their unique role as witnesses in relationship to Christ’s sacrifice lacked clarity. The aim of the Protestant Reformers was to ensure that Christians worshipped God rather than an object. Placing relics on or in an altar, they believed, would only prompt confusion as to who was being worshipped. 89

Relics and images of saints met with much disapproval from the Protestant Reformers. The Calvinist reformers were proud that “no saints had resisted when they destroyed the images of the saints or when they burned their relics.” 90 That the Calvinists expected a reaction from the saints shows the presence that the saints had in popular and religious culture at the time. Particularly upsetting to Calvin were relics of Christ’s life and the True Cross. 91 By the Reformation, relics were intricately related to numerous abuses in the life of church, including pilgrimages, indulgences and devotion to objects. The Protestant reformers called for an end to these abuses and increased attention on the Scriptures. As a result, many popular practices involving saints and relics, such as pilgrimages, liturgies, and processions, disappeared from the popular religious life in Protestant areas. 92


The Cult of Saints and Relics After the Reformation

In the twenty-fifth session of the Council of Trent, held in 1563, the bishops addressed the invocation, veneration, and relics, of saints as well as sacred images. The Council decreed that “the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, (and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Savior…”93 Further, Council documents note that “in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, and the sacred use of images, every superstition shall be removed, all filthy lucre be abolished… nor the celebration of the saints, and the visitation of relics be by any perverted into revellings and drunkenness; as if festivals are celebrated to the honor of the saints by luxury and wantonness.”94 By addressing concerns of the time, whereby the cult of saints and relics was detracting from the faith and causing celebrations in poor taste, the Council of Trent helped to eliminate detrimental elements of the cult. The bishops at Trent particularly addressed Calvin’s attack on relics of the True Cross, noting that images and pieces of the True Cross are “acceptable as cult objects.”95 Relics maintained their status in the Roman Catholic Church despite facing challenges from Protestant theologians.

The Council of Trent also addressed concerns about adding new saints and relics to those recognized by the church. The documents state, “no new miracles are to be


94. Ibid.

acknowledged, or new relics recognized, unless the said bishop has taken cognizance and approved thereof; who, as soon as he has obtained some certain information in regard to these matters, shall, after having taken the advice of theologians, and of other pious men, act therein as he shall judge to be consonant with truth and piety.”96 These reforms helped saints and their relics remain prominent throughout the Church.

The same tension between the role of relics in the church and the Eucharist surfaced in the centuries after the Council of Trent. As the reforms made by the Church as a result of the Council were implemented, emphasis still needed to be placed on the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration. Dooley describes the Church’s desire to direct the attention of the faithful to the Eucharist, noting “…the Provincial Council of Fermo (1726) reiterated the law of the Council of Trent, adding a prudent and wise instruction for the faithful to keep in mind that the main thing in the churches is the Sacrament of the Eucharist.”97 The cult of relics did not surpass the Eucharist in prominence in this period, nor did devotions to relics grow despite the concrete role that relics were given in the liturgical celebration of dedication.

As the Council of Trent addressed the “official” role of relics and saints in the life of the Church, relics retained their power in the political and social spheres of Europe in the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries. Increasing codification of Church rules and policies was a developing trend throughout the period following the Council of Trent. There was a move to create Congregations which oversaw various aspects of ecclesiastical life. Relics

96. Tanner, Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, 2:776.

97. Dooley, Church Law on Sacred Relics, 40.
were among the areas to be regulated by a Congregation, a topic which will be discussed in the next Part.

**Relics as a Catechetical Tool: Conveying God’s Presence**

Relics remained a key catechetical tool for the faith, especially in countries where relics substantiated political power. Relics could provide a tangible witness to God’s power. They demonstrated a connection with the larger Christian community and with the tradition of the Church. Speaking of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in Spain, Guy Lazure records the importance that relics held for transmitting the faith: “As a tangible link with the past, relics therefore provided an evocative, compelling means of reshaping the Spanish monarchy’s relationship to its history and of reweaving a coherent social fabric. As one chronicler puts it, relics had become all the more important since the written memory of Spain’s Christian antiquity had all but been lost with the ‘destruction’ wrought by the Moors.”

This use of relics to connect with the tradition and with Christian history helped Christianity to expand in post-Moorish Spain. Further, it helped the Spanish monarchy assert their political control by establishing their position in history. Spain was not the only nation which used relics as a source of power and prestige for its monarchy. In Bavaria during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, relics played a prominent role as propaganda tools. Relics were used to refute heresy and to foster a sense of common identity. Interestingly,

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99. Ibid., 70.
this continues a use of relics that Ambrose began: the presence of relics shows the presence of true faith.

Second, the use of relics to establish a local identity had developed in the Middle Ages, particularly in times when political authority was weak. Guilds or groups used devotion to a patron saint as a way to uniquely identify themselves. One of the ways in which the monarchs of Bavaria used relics and saints to foster a sense of identity and pride was by commissioning an encyclopedia of regional saints. This encyclopedia helped the growth of a local and specific Bavarian faith and connected the region to the large cult of saints. Spain and Bavaria, both of which were at one time part of the Hapsburg empire, demonstrate just two of the nations of this time which used relics to centralize authority and bolster their national identity.

Saints, through the relics they left behind, could help to create a Christian identity, too. Widespread devotion to saints helped to form a Christian community. While the lives of the saints reflected each saint’s class and culture, the cult of saints through relics could form a community despite divisive circumstances. Sometimes the cult of relics was used to create a national identity, as in Spain and Bavaria. In other instances, relic cults fostered faith communities or special work communities. However, the dominant influence of a cult of relics was in the community in which the relics resided or the saint had lived and worked.

100. Lazure, “Possessing the Sacred,” 70.

The strongest boundary to increased influence of the cult of relics was spatial. The spatial boundary of relic cults meant that the cult of a specific saint was typically closely related to the physical place in which the saint had lived and worked. Universal cults of saints, aside from devotion to Mary, the disciples and relics of the True Cross, were not prominent at this time.

Relics and Piety

The cult of relics was a strong component of the piety of the faithful especially in this period. Arnold Angendt describes the connection between the devotional practices that developed and Christian archeology. He writes that the “…ultramontane piety of the nineteenth century brought about a renewal, even believing it possible to establish through further research in the catacombs that saints and relics were venerated there by the early Christians, and to find new material for an affirmation of the Catholic veneration of saints.” The Catholic veneration of saints, then, looked to various sources for affirmation following the Protestant denigration of images and relics, eventually finding inspiration to continue archeological work in the catacombs of Rome.

Despite numerous challenges to saints and relics, they remained an integral part of Catholic faith after the Council of Trent. Even as liturgical and devotional practices declined in many instances, the cult of saints remained strong. This included general interest in saints, iconography, processions, and pilgrimage. These devotions retained their common appeal.

102. Weinstein and Bell, Saints and Society, 166-7.

between the Council of Trent and the mid-twentieth century. Although it faced challenges presented by the Reformation and other devotional activities, the cult of relics remained an active devotional activity.

**Conclusions**

The cult of relics provided a way for Christians to recognize the sacrifices made by those in their community. The sacrifice of martyrs was inherently connected to the sacrifice of Christ celebrated in the Eucharist, because those who had given their lives for Christ were redeemed by Christ who had given his life for them. Consequently, it naturally followed that the Christian people would build altars to celebrate the Eucharist over the tombs of martyrs and bishops. In addition to the connection with Christ’s sacrifice, the practices of gathering at the tomb and celebrating the life of the dead as a community were common in the early Church.

Relics were a tangible way to communicate elements of the faith to people who were often illiterate in both Latin and the vernacular. Telling stories of the great deeds of faith exercised by the saints was a compelling way to captivate believers and make new converts. In the Late Antique Church, bodies of saints and martyrs were kept intact and were preserved in their entirety. To early Christians, this demonstrated the belief in the bodily resurrection which was for all through Christ’s sacrifice. The physical bodies that the saints left behind on earth were a symbol of God’s promise to raise the dead. As a result,

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Christians sought burial near the graves of saints and martyrs to help obtain spiritual benefits for their souls or those of their loved ones.

Further, relics were helpful in the conversion of peoples in northern Europe. Relics provided tangible objects which were believed to demonstrate God’s presence. For those who converted to Christianity from Germanic and Gallic belief systems, relics were a way of experiencing God’s power through a physical object. This was useful for their transition from their former belief structure which centered on numerous gods present in earthly objects to the Christian belief of one heavenly God.

Relics represented God’s love for a community, and they were greatly desired throughout Christendom. Eventually, particularly as the age of martyrs ended, fragmentation of saints’ remains became commonplace. The saint was believed to be fully present in even the tiniest pieces of relics.

The cult of relics was a popular devotional practice from the time of Polycarp into the twentieth century. It contributed to the development of pilgrimage as a penitential and devotional practice, and it was often seen as responsible for the economic success of a community. However, at times, the cult of relics detracted from the central Christian belief in the importance of the Eucharistic celebration and worship of God alone. The rise of Eucharistic devotions in the late Medieval period began to redirect popular devotional focus from relics to the Eucharist, but the cult of relics remains an active part of the contemporary Roman Catholic culture to this day.
Chapter Three: Context of Reform and the Rite in the Pontificale Romanum 1961/2

The historical overview of the rite of dedication of a church presented in Chapter One, above, demonstrated that there was great continuity in the rite from the time of the Pontifical of William Durandus (d. 1296) into the early twentieth century. By the middle of the twentieth century, however, there were voices calling for renewal of the rite of dedication of a church.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Europe and later in the United States, a movement toward deeper understanding of liturgical history was developing. This movement, fueled by intensive study of the liturgical sources, became known as the Liturgical Movement. The development of the Liturgical Movement brought renewed focus on the active participation of the people, the theology of the Body of Christ, and on the need for Christians, transformed by participation in the Eucharistic celebration, to transform the world.

The principles underlying the Liturgical Movement opened the way to reform of the rites of the Church. After the promulgation of Pope Pius XII’s encyclical on the liturgy, Mediator Dei, he established a commission (known later as the Pian Commission) to rework many of the liturgical rites of the Church, including the celebration of Holy Week. Part of the Commission’s agenda was a new Pontificale Romanum. This revised liturgical book contained a modified rite of dedication of a church and was promulgated in 1961 and published in 1962. The rite of dedication of a church in the Pontificale Romanum 1961/2 (hereafter PR 1961/2) serves as a key starting point for later revisions after the Second Vatican Council. The Liturgical Movement, the Pian reform commission, and the promulgated PR 1961/2 comprise the twentieth century foundation for the present Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris.
This chapter will briefly describe the aims and key themes of the Liturgical Movement. By presenting a clear understanding of the goals of this movement, the Pian Commission’s recommendations will be better understood. Next, we will analyze the reforms which were made to the rite of dedication of a church in the PR 1961/2, including subsequent criticisms of the reformed rite.

**Liturgical Movement**

The Liturgical Movement emerged in Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, eventually spreading throughout the world.¹ This period saw the rediscovery of ancient liturgical sources, which led to a desire to return to the kind of pattern found in the sources.

A brief history of the Liturgical Movement presented below will demonstrate how the return to ancient sources influenced pastoral practices. From the revival of Benedictine monasteries to the pastoral implementation, the development of the Liturgical Movement highlights how ancient patterns became part of liturgical reforms.

In order to understand the influence of the Liturgical Movement on the establishment of the subsequent reforms to the *Pontifical* in general and to the Rite of Dedication of a Church in particular, it is necessary to examine its central themes. These themes include the Body of Christ,

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active participation, the transformation of society, and the primacy of the Eucharistic celebration over adoration.

The development of the Liturgical Movement and its central themes became the framework for the reform of the liturgy. The Rite of Dedication of a Church and the role of relics in the revised rite present in the PR 1961/2 as well as in the later editio typica promulgated by Pope Paul VI were influenced by the Liturgical Movement.

A Brief History of the Liturgical Movement

The history of the Liturgical Movement is influenced by its many components which overlapped and guided the themes discussed below. Virgil Funk highlights four primary components of the Liturgical Movement. They are: the Benedictine or monastic movement, research and scholarship, attention to the pastoral element, and legislation (liturgical reform).² Many of these elements, particularly research and scholarship, overlapped with the emergence of the monastic movement at the various abbeys which fostered the Liturgical Movement throughout the world. Papal encyclicals of the twentieth century, notably Divino afflatu (1911) and Mediator Dei (1947), reflected the hope for church renewal through liturgical renewal.

The Monastic Movement

Benedictine abbeys developed and fostered the Liturgical Movement before it achieved a widespread popularity in the mid-twentieth century. The Monastic movement began with Prosper Guéranger (+1875), who re-established the abbey at Solesmes, France, in the 1830s. Guéranger believed that the Mass according to the Roman rite should be the center of monastic liturgy, that

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monastic life should focus on the liturgical year, and that Gregorian chant should play a central role in the monastic liturgical life.³

**Research and Scholarship**

Research and scholarship were important components of the Liturgical Movement because they brought about increased appreciation for the ritual patterns in liturgical sources. Study of the sources led to a desire to reincorporate ancient principles of worship into the contemporary celebration.⁴ The liturgical year was again seen as the basis of the liturgical life of the church and as a source for Christian living.⁵ Scholarship at that time returned attention to the Mysteries of Christ as the center of the liturgical year, with the saints as the “concrete realization of this mystery.”⁶ Liturgical journals were an important tool for sharing research, scholarship, and reflection on the sources.⁷ These works aimed to help Christians develop their understandings of the liturgical life of the church.

**The Pastoral Element**

The pastoral element of the Liturgical Movement stressed the importance of participation in the liturgy as well as the social transformation of Christians and society. Dom Prosper Guéranger emphasized the central role of the liturgy in fostering social cohesion and in giving people a sense of participation in something larger than themselves. The universal Church,

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instead of local churches, was primary. Guéranger saw the formal liturgical rites as a way to engage Christians and help them to become “part of God’s work in history”. Dom Lambert Beauduin (+1960) stressed full and active Eucharistic participation and that liturgy was the only thing capable of grounding Christian social activism.

In the United States, Dom Virgil Michel (+1938) introduced the Liturgical Movement in the 1920s. Paul Marx, in describing Michel’s unceasing arguments for an increased role for the faithful in the celebration of the Eucharist notes, “Active contact with the living sources of life in Christ, or active participation in the liturgy, entails contact and participation as rational creatures…” Through Christian initiation, all Christians are called to active participation. The liturgy is a way to learn Christian truths and life through active participation.

**The Legislative Component**

The first significant canonical reform came in November of 1911 with the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Divino afflatu*. Although brief, this document called for the reform of the *Roman Breviary*, in order that it better reflect the ancient ideal of the weekly

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10. Ibid., 11.
recitation of the psalter by the clergy. In November of 1947, Pope Pius XII issued the encyclical *Mediator Dei* to “put the seal of his supreme authority on this movement, which by now was to be found everywhere in the Church. The liturgy had entered upon its true course, that of pastoral concern, and was thus returning to the ideal it had had in the beginning.” This encyclical inaugurated a period of liturgical reforms which took the pastoral aspect of the liturgy into serious consideration and fostered the participation of the people. It brought about the establishment of the Pian Commission, discussed below. There was a movement from appreciation of the sources to reform of the liturgical texts in use at that time. After study of the sources and reflection on the research, the goal of the Liturgical Movement looked to incorporate the spirit of the ancient texts into contemporary worship.

**Conclusion**

Benedictine monasteries were the first homes of the liturgical movement. There, ancient liturgical sources were rediscovered and studied. The monks then sought to incorporate the rearticulated ideals into the pastoral life of the Church. Their scholarship in this area often took the form of scholarly journals on the liturgy. Annibale Bugnini stresses that the Liturgical Movement aimed to reconnect the prayers and liturgical rites with participation by the assembly. The Liturgical Movement emphasized that Christian life could not be disparate from the celebration of the liturgy. There was a deep appreciation for the theological and social

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implications of participation in the liturgy. Study of the liturgical sources and their pastoral implications prompted a desire for liturgical renewal. Attentive to the widespread return to the liturgical sources, Pius XII released the encyclical *Mediator Dei* in 1947. This highlighted how the tenets of the Liturgical Movement might impact liturgical reform and renewal. Pius XII created the Pian Commission, discussed below, to examine the liturgical rites in light of the rediscovery of ancient liturgical sources and eventually Pope John XXIII promulgated the *PR 1961/2* emerging from their work.

**Central Themes**

Several key theological themes express the goals and hopes of the Liturgical Movement. These ideas include: (1) the renewal of the theology of the Body of Christ, (2) active participation in the liturgy, and (3) a focus on Christians who can transform the world, once they have been transformed by participation in the Eucharistic celebration.

**Body of Christ**

The Liturgical Movement recovered the Pauline notion that all Christians participate in the Body of Christ through baptism. The Eucharist is the bond between members of the Body of Christ as seen in Paul’s letters. The Body of Christ is the union of Christians on earth and in

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heaven with Christ.\textsuperscript{20} According to Keith Pecklers, “Despite the controversial nature of the doctrine of the Mystical Body, the liturgical pioneers did not tire of promoting it, convinced as they were of its intrinsic relationship to the liturgy."\textsuperscript{21} The Eucharistic celebration strengthens and nourishes the bond among all members of the Body of Christ.

Scholars had shown that relationships between all aspects of the Christian community existed. However, the Liturgical Movement encountered some resistance because the idea of the Body of Christ could be understood to undermine the hierarchy. Pius XII expressed a particular vision of the Mystical Body of Christ when he issued the encyclical \textit{Mystici Corporis Christi} in 1943. His encyclical taught in detail about the hierarchically ordered Mystical Body of Christ. It expresses a specific ecclesiology in which there is a bond among the members of the Body of Christ that is hierarchically ordered. The encyclical stated that all members of the Church are part of the Mystical Body of Christ. Sacraments, beginning with baptism, are ways of incorporating members into Mystical Body of Christ.\textsuperscript{22} Further, sacraments develop unity among the members of the Church by incorporating them into the Body of Christ in baptism. This unity

\textsuperscript{20} The Liturgical Movement renewed attention to the Pauline notion of the Body of Christ as seen in Romans 12 and 1 Cor 10. The recovery of this theological notion was part of the larger reappropriation of Biblical and Patristic sources. The word \textit{mystical} was attached to the description of the Body of Christ following the work of Henri de Lubac, \textit{Corpus Mysticum}. The theology of the mystical body of Christ emphasized the bond among the members rather than the hierarchical Church which raised some concerns. See Henri de Lubac, \textit{Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages}, trans. Gemma Simmonds, CJ, Richard Price, and Christopher Stepehns, ed. Laurence Paul Hemming and Susan Frank Parsons (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

\textsuperscript{21} Pecklers, \textit{Unread Vision}, 32.

is renewed by the Eucharist so that the mission of the Church can be carried out. The liturgy is the source of Christian spirit and the center of the Christian life.

This concentration on the hierarchically ordered Body of Christ also brought attention to the arrangement of worship space. Specifically, worship space had to allow for active participation of the assembly. Scholars argued for the restoration of the altar to a central position in the sanctuary. This would allow for the gathered community to see the altar during the Eucharistic celebration and would retain the image of Christ the head of the Church. R. W. Franklin and Robert L. Spaeth describe necessary changes to worship space: “The new-found unity of the Eucharistic space would focus on the oneness and wholeness of the Body of Christ gathered in the church.” Worship space would then reflect the nature of the Christian community.

The Liturgical Movement focused on the Mass instead of devotions, such as those to saints or the Sacred Heart. By highlighting the celebration of the Eucharist, the sacrifice of Christ on the altar would be the focal point of the liturgy and life of the Christian community. The goal was for Christians to participate in the public worship life of the Church, rather than in devotions because some devotions did not focus on the central mysteries of the faith. The Eucharist called the faithful to live more Christian lives. In contrast to devotional activities, the celebration of the Eucharist formed a bond between the members of the Body of Christ in order that they could focus on the needs of the larger society, rather than directing their attention to

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26. Ibid., 5-6.
private needs. Further, active participation in the liturgy, in the communal worship of the Church, helped to increase social cohesion and thereby counter non-Christian influences in the culture.  

Active Participation in the Liturgy

Liturgy, which requires full and active participation, is the true source of Christian spirit, as detailed by Pope Pius X in his *motu proprio, Tra le sollecitudini.* The Liturgical Movement encouraged the faithful to participate in these ways: in silent prayer; by receiving Holy Communion; by participating in the dialog Mass (which required permission of the local bishop); and by singing along with the choir at the Mass. Internal participation was cultivated in various ways, such as knowledge of the liturgical texts, integration of the liturgy into one’s Christian life, and active engagement with the liturgical celebration.

Once the ideas of the Liturgical Movement grew in popularity, prominence, and support, reforms began to be seen in the way that liturgy was celebrated and experienced. Participation by the people was growing, whether through following along in a Missal printed in the vernacular or being allowed to respond to some of the prayers of the Mass.

Even as the idea of the Body of Christ was stressed worldwide, devotional activities and private prayer dominated the faith lives of most Roman Catholics. Popular religiosity consisted

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27. Searle, *Called to Participate*, 5-6.


30. Ibid. 32-34, 45-46, 79.
of devotions to the Blessed Sacrament and Mary, which were mostly unconnected to the liturgical year, in the vernacular, mainly lay-organized (although usually led by the clergy), and focused on individual needs rather than communal spirituality.\(^{31}\) Devotions tended to have an individual spirituality, rather than an ecclesial one, and, in most cases, they ignored the celebrated liturgy. Although the sacrament of the Eucharist itself received devotional attention, participation in the Mass did not. One of the struggles of the Liturgical Movement was that, although the importance of participation in the Eucharistic liturgy resonated with the Christian people, reception of sacramental communion was not common.

Advocates of the Liturgical Movement hoped to move away from devotional practices to active participation in the celebration of the liturgy itself. The goal was that increased participation in the liturgical life of the church would increase the transformation of the faithful. This participation would help the faithful recognize themselves as members of the Body of Christ.\(^ {32}\)

**Transforming Society**

The impact of active participation of the people was not limited to the Mass alone; the faithful as members of the Body of Christ needed to take responsibility for their own society. The Liturgical Movement intended to develop the true Christian spirit within all the faithful. Transformed by their participation in the liturgy, Christians were to transform the society. Pecklers summarizes the movement: “The call to renewal was to be a return to the sources, ‘to active contact with the living sources of life in Christ,’ to full and active participation in the body

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\(^{31}\) Pecklers, *Unread Vision*, 42.

\(^{32}\) Ibid., 45-46.
of Christ which expresses itself and rediscover its mission in the liturgy. The liturgical movement contributed to overall ecclesial renewal by leading people back to the liturgy as the ‘primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit.’”

Active, conscious participation in the liturgy was intended to foster a fuller sense of the Christian mission. Connecting the celebrated liturgy to Christian life, Paul Marx discusses Virgil Michel’s ideas, “Spurred on by an apostolic vision of society and living individually and communally a renewed spiritual life, Christians could hope gradually to reform their social institutions. In this way liturgical life could regenerate all of Christian society and, through it, eventually all of human society.”

Membership in the Body of Christ was the starting point for Christians to transform society.

Conclusions

The Liturgical Movement consisted of four main components: monastic efforts, research and scholarship, pastoral concern, and legislative reform. The Liturgical Movement advocated better understanding by Christians that they had been incorporated into the Body of Christ by baptism. Further, it deepened understandings that full and active participation in the liturgy by the faithful expressed their role in the Body of Christ and led to the transformation of society by Christians.

The Liturgical Movement laid the basis for later reforms to all of the liturgical celebrations of the Church, including the rite of dedication of a church. Reforms of the rites inspired by the Liturgical Movement utilized the research and scholarship. Further, those who recommended reforms to the rite did so with an appreciation of the ancient ritual patterns and


34. Marx, Virgil Michel and the Liturgical Movement, 179.
ritual elements. Reforms would also include efforts to invite the full and active participation of the people.

Practical liturgical reform followed the historical and pastoral work. Appreciation for the ritual patterns in the ancient liturgical sources, also seen in the reform of the Roman Breviary, formed the foundation for the review of other liturgical celebrations. Further reform began to take shape after Mediator Dei in 1947\(^3\) and was continued by the work of the Pian Commission throughout the late 1940s and 1950s.

The restoration of ancient liturgical patterns and the active participation of the people guided the reform of the Rite of Dedication. The renewal of attention to the centrality of Christ’s sacrifice and the Eucharistic celebration in the life of Christian people emphasized the importance of Mass in the dedication of a church. Finally, the redirection of Christian spirituality to the mysteries of Christ shifted popular focus away from devotion to the saints and relics.

**The Pian Commission**

Reform of the liturgical rites of the Church gathered speed with Pius XII in his 1947 encyclical Mediator Dei. Pius XII had established a commission for historical study and to reform part of the Pontificale Romanum in 1948. Known as the “Pian Commission,” the group reformed a number of the rites with a pastoral focus, as mentioned above. The commission worked for twelve years in complete secrecy, holding eighty-two meetings.\(^3\) They made recommendations for restoring the Easter Vigil in the early 1950s, reforming the rites of Holy

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35. Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 6.
36. Ibid., 8-9.
Week in 1955, and reforming the whole liturgy and Divine Office through the new Code of Rubrics in 1960. Other topics were to follow, among which was the reform of the rite of dedication of a church.\textsuperscript{37} In the early 1960s, a revised \textit{Pontificale Romanum} was ready for promulgation by the pope.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Pontificale Romanum 1961/2}

Although Pope John XXIII had already announced the upcoming Second Vatican Council, he promulgated the revised pontifical in 1961. It was made available for use following its publication in 1962. The \textit{PR 1961/2} made important progress in revising the rite of dedication of a church so that it could truly be a celebration of the Church with the people present, but their participation was primarily through silent prayer.

By the 1960s, the rite of dedication of a church had come to be experienced as so burdensome that it was rarely being fully celebrated, and few of the faithful attended it.\textsuperscript{39} Fr. Löw describes the ritual for dedicating a church before the reforms of 1961/2 as “far too lengthy and overloaded.”\textsuperscript{40} The rite was in need of simplification and revision. According to Löw: “[the reform has as] its principal purpose to make the solemn ceremony more simple and more

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{37} Bugnini, \textit{Reform of the Liturgy}, 7.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 10.
\textsuperscript{39} Aimé-Georges Martimort, “Le rituel de la consécration des églises,” \textit{La Maison-Dieu} 63 (1960): 86.
\end{flushleft}
intelligible, so that the faithful can more readily follow the sacred action and understand its significance.” The aims of the Liturgical Movement are seen in this comment.

The *Ordo ad ecclesiam dedicandam et consecrandam* eliminated duplicated gestures; some of the preparatory actions, such as the blessing of the water, were moved so that they could be celebrated before the dedication began. Unlike the earlier rites, the text of the rite in the *PR* 1961/2 includes some *Praenotanda*.

Among the elements mentioned in the opening paragraphs is the preparation of the relics. A parchment that identifies the relics and the plenary indulgences resulting from the deposition as well as the anniversary of dedication is included with the relics. This demonstrates the retention of an older practice. In addition to the parchment, three grains of incense are to be included with the relics. The vessel containing the relics is reverently sealed. On the day before the dedication, the consecrating bishop, the clergy, and the faithful are to keep the fast as is fitting. In the evening of that day at Vespers, the relics are to be conducted in a solemn ceremony through the streets near the church. The relics are appropriately kept in a fitting place outside of the church to be dedicated.


43. PR 1961/2, n. 571. Die, qui dedicationem praecedit, tam Pontificem consecrantem, quam clerum et fideles, quibus pertinet ecclesia, ieiunare decet. Ad vesperam diei, qui dedicationem praecedit, sacras reliquias solemni pompa per viciniores ecclesia vicos deduci convenit, modo et forma in Rituali romano, tit. X, cap. XIV,
The Praenotanda includes further instructions about the celebration of the Divine Office on the day of dedication. The celebration of the Office should follow the prescribed liturgy of the day until Nones at which time the Office of Dedication should be used. Then, there is a vigil celebrated in honor of the relics of the saints and martyrs which are to be sealed within the altar of the church to be consecrated, if possible.\textsuperscript{44} Instructions about the consecration of minor altars by other bishops who have been assigned to these tasks are provided.

The first part of the rite is called the lustration and dedication of the church. The rite begins with the sprinkling of the exterior of the church. In preparation, the doors of the church have been closed. One vested deacon is inside. The bishop, unvested, then approaches the place where the relics have been kept and vests there. Next, the bishop prays that God will bless the prayer and work of the people. The bishops who will consecrate the minor altars approach the place where the relics have been in preparation for the rite and take their place among the clergy. The bishop processes to the doors of the church to be dedicated, with the clergy. At the doors of the church, the bishop asks for God to come to the assistance of the people outside. If it has not been prepared in advance, an option which this rite allows for the first time, the Gregorian water (the familiar mixture of water, salt, wine, and ashes) is now prepared.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{44}. PR 1961/2, n. 572. “In die dedicationis ecclesiae, dicitur Officium de die liturgico currenti usque ad Nonam. Ante reliquias Sanctorum, in altari ecclesiae consecrandae includendas, si commode fieri potest, celebratur Vigilia et cantetur vel dicatur Matutinum, cum tribus Nocturnis, honorem Sanctorum Martyrum, quorum reliquiae sunt recondendae. Invitentur quoque fideles ut his Vigilis participent. A Vesperis ipsius diei dedicationis, dicitur Officium de Dedicacione ecclesiae, quod protrahitur usque ad Completorium diei sequentis; et dicitur ad modum Officii festi I classis.”

\textsuperscript{45}. PR 1961/2, nn. 576-582.
This is followed by a procession during which there is a sprinkling rite. The sprinkling rite is performed with Gregorian water. The bishop says nothing as he sprinkles the exterior walls of the church; however, the schola sings Psalm 86 (87) with the antiphon, “The house of the Lord is well founded upon firm rock.” The procession begins at the right of the church, proceeds around, and leads back to the main doors of the church. The bishop prays that God protect this house which He has founded and that service and devotion to Him may be carried out in this place.\(^{46}\)

At this point, the bishop demands that the doors of the church be opened, in word and by knocking on the door three times with the crosier. The bishop says, “Lift up your gates, princes, and be lifted up, eternal doors, and the King of glory will come in.” The deacon inside the church responds to the bishop’s knock with the question, “Who is this King of glory?” After the doors have been opened, the bishop makes a cross on the threshold with the end of the crosier, saying: “Behold the sign of the cross: let all phantasms flee.” The procession, preceded by the cross, then enters the church. Once all the people and the clergy have entered, the Litany of the Saints is sung.\(^{47}\) In this rite, the saint to whom the church is to be dedicated and the saint whose relics are present may be different, as indicated in some of the late Medieval pontificals. However, both saints receive special attention in the singing of the Litany of the Saints: “The saint to whom the church is dedicated is invoked three times, while the saints whose relics will be entombed are invoked twice.”\(^{48}\) Then, the interior of the church is sprinkled with the Gregorian water while

\(^{46}\) PR 1961/2, nn. 583-587.

\(^{47}\) PR 1961/2, nn. 588-594.

Psalms 121 (122) and 83 (84) are sung, with the antiphons “This is the house of God, firmly built: well founded upon a sure rock” and “This is none other than the house of God and gate of heaven.”50 Next the altar is blessed with the Gregorian water and the sign of the cross. Meanwhile, the schola sings Psalm 42 (43) with the antiphon, “Go to the altar of God; to God who giveth joy to my youth.” The Greek and Latin alphabets are inscribed in ashes or sand on the floor, before the chancel rail or in the middle of the church depending on the size of the gathering of the faithful. The bishop takes possession of the church and prays for its dedication to God.50

Next, the entombment of the relics begins. The bishop and the ministers change vestments from violet to white, and with the congregation process to the place where the relics were housed for the vigil. There, the bishop prays.51 Deacons in red dalmatics take up and carry the bier with the relics. The procession back to the church is accompanied by psalms and antiphons, especially Psalm 149 (150) with the antiphon, “For theirs is the kingdom of heaven who love not their lives in this world, and have attained unto the reward of the kingdom, and have washed their robes only in the blood of the Lamb.”52 Once the relics have been incensed and the procession has returned to the door of the church, Psalm 150 is sung with the antiphon

49. PR 1961/2, nn. 595-598.

50. PR 1961/2, nn. 599-612.


52. PR 1961/2, n. 629.
“Go in, you Saints of God,” or a similar one.\footnote{PR 1961/2, nn. 630-633.} When the procession comes before the altar, the bier with the vessel of relics is placed near the altar with candles. The antiphon of Psalm 150 is then repeated. Then the bishop, putting down the crosier, incenses the relics. Then, without the miter, the bishop takes the container with the relics and reverently places it into the sepulcher in the altar which has been prepared. After the bishop has taken the vessel with relics for the main altar off of the bier, each of the other assisting bishops accepts the vessel with the relics and goes to the appropriate minor altar with the assistants and clergy. At each altar, the vessel containing the relics is reverently deposited in the sepulcher.\footnote{PR 1961/2, n. 634.}

While the above is happening, the choir sings the following antiphons: “You saints of God who have received a throne under the altar of God, intercede for us to the Lord Jesus Christ,” “I heard the voices of those that are slain under the altar of God, saying: Why do you not avenge our blood? And it was said: There is yet for a little season, until the number of your own brethren, Alleluia”, and “The bodies of the saints are buried in peace: their names shall live forever.”\footnote{PR 1961/2, nn. 635-637.} A mason is present who makes cement utilizing Gregorian water; meanwhile, each bishop blesses the altar in which he deposited relics and prays in a low voice. The cement is then blessed. The mason helps the bishop smear the sepulcher with the cement. A stone is set on top of the sepulcher to seal it. This sequence is repeated at each of the other altars. Then the
consecrating bishop alone says, “The Lord be with you,” and all of the other bishops, standing before the altars they consecrated, reply, “And with your spirit.” The deposition of the relics concludes with a prayer derived from the *Gelasian Sacramentary*. This prayer asks that God help the church which is the resting place of these saints and that the people be helped by their merits.

In contrast to older rites, the consecration and cleansing of the building in this rite precedes the consecration of the altar. Ignazio Calabuig notes, “In the intention of the editors, the third part, the consecration of the church and the altar, is intended specifically for consecrations. It consists of an extensive anointing of the new church, a ‘strengthening’ as it were, and has two sections: *consecration of the church … consecration of the altar.*” The walls of the church are anointed by the bishop with chrism in twelve places marked with crosses and candles. Then, the prayer of consecration is prayed. Next, the altar is anointed, in a manner simplified from the *PR 1595/6*. Psalm 44 (45) is sung, with the antiphon “God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellow man,” while the altar is anointed and incense is burned on it. Löw concisely summarizes the conclusion of the rite by noting its ritual elements and key themes: “There follows the conclusion of the entire consecration: prayer, invitation to kneel, silent prayer, summarizing ‘collect,’ and the grand ancient Roman consecratory preface of the dedication. In the best tradition of the Middle Ages, it recalls the sacrifice of Abraham, Isaac and

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Jacob, whereupon the abundance of blessings which have become a reality in the New Testament Sacrifice are celebrated.\textsuperscript{60} These elements connect the present and future celebrations at the altar being consecrated to biblical sacrifices and altars.

Next, any items to be used in the church are blessed, the altar is prepared, and the bishop and ministers go to the sacristy to vest for Mass. This version of the ritual makes no provision for someone other than the consecratory bishop to lead the celebration of Mass, as there had been in the \textit{editio princeps} 1595/6. The celebration of the Mass constitutes the conclusion to the rite of dedication. Löw writes, “the celebration of Mass is an essential constituent of the church and altar consecration. The whole purpose of the latter, after all, is to prepare a fitting place for the Sacrifice which is the center of Catholic worship.”\textsuperscript{61} The proper prayers for the Dedication of a Church are always to be prayed in this Mass.

In this rite, the ecclesial community was situated inside the church building during the Litany of the Saints, so that they could be a part of the ritual actions, such as the tracing of the alphabets on the floor and the lustrations of the altar. Previously, the assembly had not been permitted in the church during this rite.\textsuperscript{62}

The new rite, however, did not meet with instant popularity or success. Calabuig describes the difficulties it encountered, noting that it was not received well because of matters of detail and “less felicitous structural choices.”\textsuperscript{63} He writes that the pontifical faced critics due to two new changes, “… the distinction made between \textit{dedicatio} (first part) and \textit{consecratio}
(third part), which is not justifiable either in the light of history or in virtue of the texts themselves; and the structuring of the rite of dedication of a church on the model of the sacraments of Christian initiations (baptism, chrismation, Eucharist), which is to be regarded as erroneous and the result of an unacceptable allegorism.\textsuperscript{64} Separation of the actions of \textit{dedicatio} and \textit{consecratio} artificially segment the ritual and detract from the integrity of the liturgical celebration as a whole being essential to the dedication of the Church. Further, separation of these two actions does not integrate the role of the Eucharistic celebration as the dedicatory action of the new place of the Christian community’s worship.

Ritual actions, such as aspersions of the church and the anointing of various elements of the church building, are not new to this liturgical text. As we saw in Chapter One, above, in the liturgical essay which accompanied the PRG, the idea was expressed that the Christian community was being initiated as the building was being initiated. However, the Pian Commission attempted to have this rite parallel the structure of the initiatory rites. Calabuig feels strongly that the reform fails in this instance. The attempt by the Pian Commission to structure the rite as an act of initiation complicated the meaning of dedication. As we see in Calabuig’s continued critique, “Despite some progress as compared with \textit{PR 1596}, the editors have not succeeded in the fourth part, the Mass, in bringing out the consecratory value of the eucharistic celebration for the dedication of the church. All things considered, in \textit{PR 1961/2} the celebration of the Eucharist appears to be part of the entire rite of consecration but not the principal consecratory action.”\textsuperscript{65} The \textit{PR 1961/2} made significant progress in eliminating duplicated ritual

\textsuperscript{64} Calabuig, “The Rite of Dedication of a Church,” 363.

\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 362-363.
elements and in allowing for the assembly to take part in the rite. However, the rite tended to confuse the consecratory action without highlighting the role of the Eucharist in this rite.

*PR 1961/2* was a clarification of the rite found in the *Pontifical of William Durandus*. Reform of the rite was approached with a desire to shorten it, but also with reverence for the tradition. Löw describes why the Rite of Dedication of a Church has elaborate components. He writes, “The reason for this is clear: the church is the ‘house of God,’ it is the space reserved for the holy Mysteries, the sacrifice of the Mass, the administration of the sacraments, public prayer. It is therefore dedicated in an eminent way to divine worship, to God Himself.”66 The reformers sought a rite whose grandeur made clear the presence of God.

However, *PR 1961/2* was not destined to be a long-used ritual. Calabuig is aware that even as the pontifical was being published, its short lifespan was anticipated: “…the promulgation of these liturgical books just before the opening of Vatican II inevitably made them stopgaps: it was unthinkable that an ecumenical council which intended to discuss the state of the liturgy should feel its path blocked by the diligent work of a Roman congregation.”67 The paring down of the medieval ritual as evidenced in *PR 1961/2* provided a foundation for the reformers after the Second Vatican Council.

The rite of dedication remained largely the same from the reform of the pontifical by Clement VIII following the Council of Trent until the days immediately preceding the Second Vatican Council. The reforms following the Council of Trent codified the centuries-old custom of the role of relics in the rite of dedication of a church, and relics remained important in the *PR

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However, the principles of the Liturgical Movement, which guided the reformers of PR 1961/2, were the same ones which would appear in the opening document of Vatican II. Calabuig enumerated similarities between the principles of the liturgical movement and those advocated by *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. These included the need for simplification of ritual structure and action, the participation of the faithful, finding the essential in the rite, and clear symbolism.  

**Conclusion**

The principles of the Liturgical Movement influenced the Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by revitalizing the concept of active participation of the people in the liturgy. Scholarly study of liturgical sources guided pastoral application of ancient liturgical principles. The Liturgical Movement was the catalyst for substantial liturgical reforms.  

The work done by the Pian Commission was immense and sweeping. By the end of the 1950s, several liturgical rites had been adapted to meet the needs of the modern era. The *Ordo ad ecclesiam dedicandam et consecrandam* in the PR 1961/2 includes detailed instructions preceding the rite. Relics have a well-defined role in the rite and are considered to be an essential part of the dedication. While many elements of the Rite of Dedication of a Church have changed in the PR 1961/2, the use of relics continues in the same way and in the same place within the rite that it has occupied for more than a thousand years.

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Chapter Four: Vatican II and Post Conciliar Reform

Shortly after the promulgation of the revised Pontificale Romanum 1961/2, the Second Vatican Council convened in Rome. The Second Vatican Council, among its many concerns, defined principles for the reform of the liturgy, along with identifying some specific areas which needed to be reformed. Any new liturgical rites would need to take into consideration not only the liturgical reforms outlined in Sacrosanctum Concilium, but also the various types of reforms specified by other Constitutions from the Council. The rites needed to clearly express the entirety of the theological vision emerging from Vatican II.

As there was a preparatory commission appointed by Pope John XXIII to prepare for the Council, so too was there a post-conciliar commission appointed by Pope Paul VI to implement the principles in Sacrosanctum Concilium. This latter commission was called the “Council for the Implementation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy,” more commonly referred to as the Consilium.¹

This chapter will first present an overview of two of the pertinent main documents produced as a result of the Second Vatican Council that touch on issues relevant to the rite of dedication, relics, and altars. Then, it will examine the work of the Consilium and how it implemented the reforms called for by the Council. Understanding who the members were and how they worked will provide a fuller perspective of the changes made to the Rite of Dedication of a Church. This chapter will also provide a study of the schemata of the Consilium addressing

the Rite of Dedication of a Church available in the archives of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy (ICEL) in Washington, DC.²

**Second Vatican Council**

Announced on January 25, 1959, by Pope John XXIII, the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council was to gather bishops from around the world with the aim of reviewing all aspects of the life of the Church.³ The Second Vatican Council consisted of three stages: antepreparatoria, when information was gathered, preparatoria when the information was used to write documents, and conciliaria when the Council met. It was followed by post-conciliaria when the Consilium and the Congregation for Divine Worship revised the rites.

**Antepreparatoria and Preparatory Periods**

The antepreparatoria period begin in 1959 under the direction of the Antepreparatory Commission. This commission solicited ideas from bishops throughout the world and collated their responses into materials provided to each of the sixteen preparatory commissions.⁴

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2. Although there are additional schemata which discuss the Rite of Dedication of a Church, these schemata are not available from the ICEL offices in Washington, DC. The author was not able to consult all of the schemata.


Before the first session of Vatican II opened, significant work was done by the preparatory commission on the liturgy. The aim of establishing the commission was to create a diverse group of experts who would be attentive to the pastoral concerns that were being expressed worldwide. The commission was composed of sixty-five members and consultors, thirty advisors, and Cardinal Gaetano Cicognani’s secretariat staff at the Congregation of Rites. Cardinal Cicognani served as chair until his death in 1962 when he was replaced by Cardinal Arcadio M. Larraona; Annibale Bugnini served as secretary. It was designed to represent every nationality in which there was a prosperous liturgical movement. Further, the commission was composed of experts in a number of fields. Finally, monastic orders were represented.

**Conciliar Period**

The Council began on October 11, 1962. At the third general congregation of the Council, held on October 20, 1962, the members of the liturgical conciliar commission were appointed. This commission was charged with revising what was proposed by the preparatory commission according to the amendments and changes offered by the Council Fathers. On November 14, 1962, the bishops voted to approve the guiding norms of the schema and to begin the creation of a definitive text based on the vote on specific amendments. The vote was 2162-46 in favor of the norms, with seven members abstaining.

That the norms of the schema passed the vote did not mean that the schema was to be without changes. Annibale Bugnini notes that there were 625 interventions made by the Fathers

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7. Ibid., 30-31.
in the General Congregations. Among these were eighty-six proposed amendments to the text. Throughout 1962 and in the second session in the fall of 1963, votes were taken on the emendations and the minor revisions.⁸

*Sacrosanctum Concilium*

On December 4, 1963, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, came up for its final vote. The Constitution was approved with 2147 voters in favor, and 4 against. It was then promulgated by Pope Paul VI. The *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* expressed the Council’s fundamental principles of the liturgy.⁹ Among the guiding principles of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* are the liturgy is an expression of theology in the form of prayer, “an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus” (SC n. 7); liturgy is the “summit and font” of the church’s life (SC n. 5, 10); liturgy requires “full, conscious, active participation” (SC n. 14); liturgy is the “manifestation of the Church” (SC n. 26); liturgy looks for “substantial unity” rather than “rigid uniformity” (SC n. 38); and, liturgy should represent “sound tradition” as well as “legitimate progress” (SC n. 23).¹⁰ The Constitution affirms the importance of the local bishop and the community gathering to worship together (SC n. 41-2). These guiding principles would come to influence all of the liturgical celebrations of the Church, including the Rite of Dedication of a Church.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* emphasizes that the liturgical celebration is the source of the Church’s power. The Constitution states, “Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which

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⁹ Ibid., 39.
¹⁰ Ibid., 39-45.
the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows. For the aim and object of apostolic works is that all who are made sons of God by faith and baptism should come together to praise God in the midst of His Church, to take part in the sacrifice, and to eat the Lord's supper.”¹¹ The document emphasizes that the liturgy is at the center of the Church’s life and that it helps to build the Church.

The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy offered principles that shaped the later reform of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Specifically, Sacrosanctum Concilium notes, “In the earthly liturgy we take part in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, a minister of the holies and of the true tabernacle.”¹² Here the Constitution makes it clear that the earthly liturgy is connected with the heavenly liturgy, as well as emphasizing the importance of Christ above all else. The document quickly continues to detail the difference between how Christ and the saints are praised: “we sing a hymn to the Lord's glory with all the warriors of the heavenly army; venerating the memory of the saints, we hope for some part and fellowship with them; we eagerly await the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, until He, our life, shall appear and we too will appear with Him in glory.”¹³ Christ is the Head of the Mystical Body and is the one for whom the Church waits. Saints are part of the Church and join in the worship. This idea is the foundation for a change in perception as to what the central ritual action of the Rite of Dedication of a Church should be.

¹¹. Sacrosanctum Concilium (DOL 1:10). Hereafter, SC.

¹². SC, n. 8.

¹³. SC, n. 8.
Irwin argues that three main points can be made about Sacrosanctum Concilium. First, the theological value of the liturgy is affirmed by the Constitution. Irwin emphasizes that this “emphasis happily transcends the comparatively juridical and rubrical assertions which preceded it.”¹⁴ Second, the Constitution views the liturgy as a central part of the Church’s life. Third, Sacrosanctum Concilium is also highly ecclesiological and aims towards full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful.¹⁵ These three points name the central factors of the Constitution which later impacted the reform of the Rite of Dedication of a Church.

Sacrosanctum Concilium included a way of thinking about the saints that had been developed during the previous centuries, fueled by scholars like the Bollandists. The Constitution emphasized the importance of combining tradition with historical truthfulness. This focus on historicity called for the accounts of the lives of saints to be reviewed for historicity. Sacrosanctum Concilium, in describing the role of the lives of the saints in the Divine Office, reads, “The accounts of martyrdom or the lives of the saints are to accord with the facts of history.”¹⁶ The renewed emphasis on historicity will be later echoed in the decree promulgating the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Relics must be historically verifiable, as well. The Church would continue its veneration of saints and relics throughout the liturgical year. The Constitution lays out principles for the relationship between saints and relics and the liturgical year: “The saints have been traditionally honored in the Church and their authentic relics and images held in veneration. For the feasts of the saints proclaim the wonderful works of Christ in His servants,

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¹⁵. Ibid., 29.

¹⁶. SC, n. 92 c.
and display to the faithful fitting examples for their imitation.”\(^{17}\) The relationship between the saints and Christ is clarified. The role of saints and relics is to highlight what has been achieved through Christ.

**Lumen Gentium**

The fruits of the Liturgical Movement could also be seen in *Lumen Gentium*, promulgated in 1964. Irwin notes that the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, stresses the connection between ecclesiology and the liturgy, “The Constitution on the Church emphasizes the interrelationship between the sacraments and the building up of the body of Christ generally speaking (par. 7) and of the interrelationship between Eucharist and the building up of the local Church in particular (par. 26).”\(^{18}\) This Constitution added to the theological understandings of the Church and its people which needed to be expressed in the Rite of Dedication of a Church.

*Lumen Gentium*, through its statements on the life of Christians, Christ, and the relationships created by the Eucharist, not only echoes the themes addressed by the Liturgical Movement, but also prepared the foundation for changes to the Rite of Dedication of a Church. For example, the Constitution on the Church defines how the saints help bring Christians closer to Christ: “… For just as Christian communion among wayfarers brings us closer to Christ, so our companionship with the saints joins us to Christ, from Whom as from its Fountain and Head

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17. SC, n. 111.

issues every grace and the very life of the people of God.”  

The Constitution on the Church defines Christ as the source of the devotion to the saints. This Constitution, by laying out the appropriate way to view saints, states, “It is supremely fitting, therefore, that we love those friends and coheirs of Jesus Christ, who are also our brothers and extraordinary benefactors, that we render due thanks to God for them and ‘suppliantly invoke them and have recourse to their prayers, their power and help in obtaining benefits from God through His Son, Jesus Christ, who is our Redeemer and Savior.’”

*Lumen Gentium* picks up the biblical and Patristic understanding that the saints help the Church to magnify the goodness of God. Further, the Constitution makes clear that all things are directed to Christ, who is the head, and that his greatness is highlighted through the lives of the saints.

*Lumen Gentium* also notes that the liturgy helps Christians connect with saints. It says, “Our union with the Church in heaven is put into effect in its noblest manner especially in the sacred Liturgy…Then, with combined rejoicing we celebrate together the praise of the divine majesty; then all those from every tribe and tongue and people and nation who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and gathered together into one Church, with one song of praise magnify the one and triune God.”

*Lumen Gentium,* perhaps even more clearly than *Sacrosanctum Concilium,* defined the liturgical relationship between the saints, other Christians, and Jesus Christ.

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20. LG. n. 50.

21. LG cites 2 Thes 1:10 and Rv 5:12-13, and echoes the thinking of Ambrose of Milan, detailed above in Part I.

22. LG, n. 50.
The Constitution on the Church states that the tradition regarding saints is to be protected, updated, and reformed. This is later seen in the reform of the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The Constitution describes the cult of saints passed down through the life of the Church, “This Sacred Council accepts with great devotion this venerable faith of our ancestors regarding this vital fellowship with our brethren who are in heavenly glory or who having died are still being purified; …we urge all concerned, if any abuses, excesses or defects have crept in here or there, to do what is in their power to remove or correct them, and to restore all things to a fuller praise of Christ and of God.”\textsuperscript{23} Then, \textit{Lumen Gentium} provides explicit guidelines for the contemporary cult of the saints, “Let them therefore teach the faithful that the authentic cult of the saints consists not so much in the multiplying of external acts, but rather in the greater intensity of our love, whereby, for our own greater good and that of the whole Church, we seek from the saints ‘example in their way of life, fellowship in their communion, and aid by their intercession.’”\textsuperscript{24} Finally, the Constitution on the Church concludes its section on the cult of saints by specifying that the faithful should be taught that communion with the saints in heaven is to be understood in such a way that even greater glory is given to God, through Christ, in the Spirit.

\textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium} and \textit{Lumen Gentium} offered new perspectives on the way in which the cult of saints and the Eucharistic celebration were to be understood by the Christian community. By highlighting worship of God through Christ and the importance of the Eucharist, these two Constitutions prepared the groundwork for a revised Rite of Dedication of a Church.

\textsuperscript{23} LG, n. 51.

\textsuperscript{24} LG, n. 51.
The Consilium

Work on the reform of the liturgy began just a month after the Council Fathers approved the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Pope Paul VI established the Consilium to work on the reform of the liturgy in January 1964. The principles described in Sacrosanctum Concilium and Lumen Gentium were to be employed by a group of bishops and experts from a number of backgrounds to reform the rites. The work would span over the next decade: the Consilium (1964-1969), the Congregation of Divine Worship (1969-1975), and finally the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments (from 1975 on) looked at each liturgical celebration and then reformed it according to the principles of the Second Vatican Council.

Annibale Bugnini records that he was told on January 3, 1964, by Cardinal Amleto Cicognani, the Vatican Secretary of State, that Bugnini would be the secretary to a new commission formed by Pope Paul VI to implement Sacrosanctum Concilium. Three members, Cardinals Giacomo Lercaro, Paolo Gibbe, and Arcadio Larraona, were known as the “constituent assembly” of this new group.

The group was officially created in the motu proprio Sacram Liturgiam on January 25, 1964. Sacram Liturgiam established the importance of the liturgical reform and the intense study it required, noting, “it seems evident that many prescriptions of the Constitution cannot be applied in a short period of time, especially since some rites must first be revised and new liturgical books prepared. In order that this work may be carried out with the necessary wisdom


and prudence, we are establishing a special commission whose principal task will be to implement in the best possible way the prescriptions of the Constitution...”¹²⁷ This statement formed the Consilium and was the springboard for immense changes to the liturgical life of the Church. Bugnini describes the intended diversity in the membership of the Consilium, “It had forty-two members: Cardinals, archbishops and bishops, a Benedictine abbot, three priests. Later on the number was increased, to a maximum of fifty-one, in order to allow for better representation of countries, situations, and problems.”¹²⁸ Twenty-six nations were represented by the original forty-two members.²⁹

By March of 1964, a clear plan for the work of the reform had been established. Committees for the study of the Pontifical and the Ritual were to be established, but the work on the Breviary and Missal would come first.³⁰ The work would be done through various subcommissions. Once experts assigned to a particular liturgical book had a schema and a structure that they thought best, the schema would be given to the subcommissions on theology, pastoral needs, style, and music for review. Then, it would proceed to a supercommission of experts and eventually to the Consilium itself. From there, the schema would be presented to the Pope and, with his approval, sent to the episcopal conferences.³¹

The work of the Consilium proceeded and progressed in the way established by Inter oecumenici, the first “Instruction for the Right Application of the Constitution on the Sacred

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27. SL, n 278.
29. Marini, A Challenging Reform, 35.
31. Ibid., 62.
Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council.” This instruction was given by the Sacred Congregation of Rites and the Consilium on September 26, 1964. A second instruction, Tres Abhinc Annos, was issued on May 4, 1967. A change came to the Consilium in 1969. On April 28, 1969, Pope Paul VI split the Congregation of Rites into the Congregation of Divine Worship and the Congregation for the Causes of Saints. The Consilium was to be reduced in authority and brought into the new Congregation of Divine Worship, which Bugnini would serve as secretary. By 1970, the new Congregation was at work on the rites of the Church again.

The Congregation of Divine Worship held its first plenary meeting from November 3-6, 1970, and discussed the Rite of Dedication of a Church at this initial meeting. The Rite of Dedication of a Church had not been discussed until this point since it had been reformed immediately prior to the Council. A second plenary meeting was held from March 7-11, 1972, and a third from November 21-24, 1972, which included discussion of the Ceremonial of Bishops and its rites.

In 1975, great changes came to Congregation of Divine Worship, just as many of the revised rites were being implemented. Bugnini was removed from his position in the Congregation of Divine Worship and appointed apostolic nuncio to Iran. The Congregation of Divine Worship was merged with the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments to form the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. It was under this new Congregation, with a significantly reduced section for Divine Worship, that the Rite of

32. Marini, A Challenging Reform, 141.
33. Ibid., 141-144.
34. Ibid., 145.
35. Ibid., 149.
Dedication of a Church and Altar was published on May 29, 1977. However, the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar had lacked only finishing touches for publication since 1975.\footnote{36}{Marini, A Challenging Reform, 150.}

During the period of the Consilium, the Study Groups were able to work cooperatively to offer revised versions of the liturgical celebrations. Each Study Group consisted of scholars in the field, and each group had a theologian, an exegete, and a patrologist in addition to liturgists.\footnote{37}{Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 67.}

When a document was completed, it was thoroughly reviewed by pastors, bishops, and experts at the general meetings of the consultors. The finalized version of each rite was influenced by the Latinists in the Vatican Secretariat of State.\footnote{38}{Ibid.}

Of the Study Groups, four were assigned to the Pontifical. Within that group of four, Group XXI was assigned to Books II and III of the Pontifical. Eventually, Study Group XXIbis was formed because work on the rites, including the Dedication of Church and Altar, had not begun.\footnote{39}{Ibid., 64.} Bugnini notes that the work on the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae was not without challenges, “Since the group charged with revising Books II and III of the Pontifical had for various reasons been unable even to begin the work in any systematic way, a special study group, XXIbis, was appointed in 1970. It was asked to turn first to the rites of dedication of a church and an altar, and only then to move its attention to the other rites of the Pontifical.”\footnote{40}{Ibid., 792.} Piero Marini’s description of Study Group XXI is brief, “Group XXI dealt with books II and III of the Roman Pontifical (Consecration of Churches and Special Celebrations). This group had made
some contribution to the draft for the reform of the rite of the blessing of oils on Holy Thursday, contained in the booklet introducing the changes in the Holy Week rites.”41 However, Study Group XXIbis was appointed to continue work on these areas of the Pontifical.

A study group was composed of a relator, a secretary and five or six members.42 The members of study group XXIbis were Pierre Jounel, Relator, Ignazio Calabuig, A. Rose, and D. Sartore. Bugnini writes, “In the beginning D. Sartore served as secretary; the office was subsequently filled by I. Calabuig, who both in this area and in the rites of religious life was chiefly responsible for the work accomplished and for the new texts. By arrangement with the secretariat of the SCDW, Father Calabuig was actively aided by Professor Rosella Barbieri.”43 This group prepared a number of schemata on the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar which provide insight into how the rite was reformed.

Schemata on the Rite of Dedication of a Church

The schemata were the documents presented by the Consilium Study Groups for review, discussion, and analysis by the members and experts. They can be used to see the evolution of the Rite of Dedication of a Church as the Consilium members worked to implement the changes promulgated as a result of the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the importance of the Eucharistic sacrifice and participation in that sacrifice by the Christian people. This vision was carried over into the

42. Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 65.
43. Ibid., 792.
revisions of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Describing some of the decisions made by the Consilium in reforming the dedication of a church, Bugnini writes, “The most important decision reached was agreement that the proper liturgical locus for the dedication is the celebration of the Eucharist. It is this last that had to receive the greatest emphasis; within it there should be a discreet presence of the traditional elements of the rite: sprinkling with holy water, rite of incense, and rite of illumination.”44 It is evident that the Eucharist is more than a completing ritual action in which the participation of the bishop was optional. This continues the shift already incorporated in the 1961/2 Pontificale Romanum. The Eucharist is to be the context for the entire celebration of the dedication of a church and an altar. The entire rite is situated within the context of Mass, no longer a rite with the celebration of Mass at its end. The revised Rite of Dedication of a Church would take into consideration both the ancient traditions of the Church, such as the celebration of the Eucharist as the primary dedicatory action, and those traditions which developed throughout the life of the Church.

**Schema n. 370, 8 October 1970**

On October 8, 1970, Study Group XXIbis began to examine Schema n. 370, the Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae. The relatio began by calling the rite of dedication used until this period the richest, largest, and most symbolic of all the rites in the Roman ritual.45 The relatio continues by noting that the bishops had asked Pius XII for a more expedient revised rite, and this had been promulgated by John XXIII. The report concludes by noting that the principles of the liturgy had

44. Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 793.

45. Schema n. 370, 8 October 1970, p. 2 “Ritus dedicationis ecclesiae ad aetam fere nostram amplissimus et symbolorum ditissimus omnium Romanorum ritum extitit.” Hereafter, Schema n. 370. The Latin text will be provided when it is specifically relevant to a shift in the rite or the role of relics.
been established by Vatican II. The Consilium groups had particular tasks and were committed to the work of renewing and perfecting the particular rites. The Second Vatican Council had decided not only that the rites should be simplified but also that they should be restored. The work of the Study Groups began with a preliminary assessment of the value of each rite. Rites which fostered the participation of the people were restored, old formulas were renewed, and new ones were introduced. The Consilium Study Group had significant work to do in the restoration of the Rite of Dedication of a Church so that the rite would be in line with the principles of Vatican II. They set out to evaluate each ritual element and to make sure that the renewed rite of dedication of a church reflected the new ideas. Citing Sacrosanctum Concilium no. 23, the schema noted that the object and duty of the reformers is to investigate the theological, historical, and pastoral aspects of a rite.

To begin its theological investigation, the coetus, or Study Group, examined the biblical notion of the Temple in Jerusalem as a foundation for understanding the dedication of a ritual space. The schema notes that the Church is also the People of God, as Vatican II teaches, and that buildings of stones were, first of all, meeting places for the Christian faithful to celebrate the Eucharist and hear the word of God. The theological investigation concludes with the statement that the idea of the dedication of a worship space or the consecration of an altar isbiblically

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47. Schema n. 370, p. 2 “Ecclesia est quoque Populus Dei, ut saepe ac mirae Concilium Vaticanum II nos docet. Ecclesiae, ex lapidibus aedificatae, sunt in primis loca ubi Christi fideles congregantur ad audiendum Dei verbum et Eucharistiam celebrandum...”
based, especially from New Testament sources such as the letters of Peter and Paul and the Book of Revelation.⁴⁸

The historical study of the Rite of Dedication of a Church starts with laying out the differing Roman and Gallican rites. The Roman tradition for the dedication of a church was primarily the celebration of Eucharist in the new place. This celebration of the Eucharist, the *coetus* says by referring to the work of A.G. Martimort, served to dedicate the church and to consecrate the altar in the moment in which the Eucharist was offered. Historical study notes that from the fourth century, the new, but not necessary, practice of depositing the relics of martyrs below the altar is added to the ceremony. Further, when formerly pagan buildings were converted to Christian churches, an aspersion with water was introduced as a purification ritual.⁴⁹ The historical study concludes by noting that the Gallican practice joined together the soberness of the Roman rituals with the amplified rites of the Gallican tradition.⁵⁰

The pastoral investigation opens with the concern for expressing both the sacred nature of the space as well as its role in worship.⁵¹ It moves on to discuss the importance of the rite of dedication in touching the hearts and minds of people today. Of utmost importance for the preparation for this rite was establishing the essential and most meaningful symbols of the rite.

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⁴⁸ *Schema n. 370*, p. 3. “Oportet igitur liturgia dedicationis ex Novo Testamento praesertim sumatur; formulae autem magis ad Evangelium, Pauli et Petri Epistulas, Apocalypsem referantur, quam ad consecrationes altaris aut dedicationem templi Antiqui Testamenti.”

⁴⁹ *Schema n. 370*, p. 3. “Quarto autem saeculo exeunte aliquid novum, non necessarium tamen, ritui adiectum est: Martyrum reliquiarum sub altari depositio. Cum denique deorum aedes coeptae sunt in christianas ecclesias mutari, purificatio quaedam initialis ritui inducta est: aquae exorcizatae aspersio.”

⁵⁰ *Schema n. 370*, p. 3. “Ex sobrio ritu Romano, rei stricte adherenti, ac ampio ritu Gallicano, symbolis nimis indulgenti, una conjunctis, ortus est ritus dedicationis ecclesiae usque ad nostram aetatem vigens.”

⁵¹ *Schema n. 370*, p. 3. “Apud omnes constat quam acriter nostris temporibus disceptetur, quibusdam locis, de sacri natura et de modis ad eam exprimendam aptis, nec non de aedibus ad cultum adsignatis.”
for the contemporary age. Thereby, the new rite carefully addresses criticism that it was
negligent of symbols and too intellectual. The results of the Study Group led to the conclusion
that three elements were of great importance for the Rite of Dedication of a Church, in this order:
the celebration of the Eucharist, the signs of water and light, and the signs of incense and
anointing with oil. The Study Group concluded that in the present day the translation and
deposition of relics, along with exorcisms, do not hold the symbolic value for the faithful that
they once did.\footnote{Schema n. 370, p. 4. “Quibus omnibus investigatis atque consideratis haec adfirmare possumus: in
dedicatHonica maximi momenti sunt-celebratio eucharistica -signa aquae et luminis, -signa uctionis olei et
incensi; nostris temporibus minoris esse videntur translatio et depositio Reliquiarum; item a nostraetatis
hominibus haud facile intelligi potest sensus exorcizationis rerum.” The theological and symbolic value of the
deposition of relics will be explored further in Part IV. Emphasis is original.}

Therefore, the Study Group simplified the rite and reduced ritual actions which
did not continue to show symbolic meaning.

The schema continues by outlining the basic structure which composes the Rite of
Dedication of a Church, beginning with the celebration of Mass in the place to be dedicated.
Before the celebration of Mass, many of the preparatory rites are celebrated; if not, they may be
performed between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.\footnote{Schema n. 370, p. 4.}
The schema is
careful to note that all of the symbols of the old rite are preserved, although there have been
some changes. The schema proceeds to address some of the changes which are proposed for the
new rite. It names some of the key ritual elements and how they will be addressed in the new
celebration. The dual meanings of the word \textit{church} as shown in the blessing of the water,
whether baptismal or not, and the aspersions of the people are highlighted. They demonstrate that
the Church is built of people, while the worship space is a church built of stone.

\footnote{52. Schema n. 370, p. 4. “Quibus omnibus investigatis atque consideratis haec adfirmare possumus: in
dedicatHonica maximi momenti sunt-celebratio eucharistica -signa aquae et luminis, -signa uctionis olei et
incensi; nostris temporibus minoris esse videntur translatio et depositio Reliquiarum; item a nostraetatis
hominibus haud facile intelligi potest sensus exorcizationis rerum.” The theological and symbolic value of the
deposition of relics will be explored further in Part IV. Emphasis is original.}

\footnote{53. Schema n. 370, p. 4.}
The outline of the rite lists the translation and deposition of relics as a minor moment, rather than the major ritual moment it had been in the older rite. Referring to the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal* (*GIRM*), however, the schema notes that the deposition of relics, whether of saints or of martyrs, is retained.\(^{54}\) The anointings of the walls of the church and the altar, part of the ancient order, are retained. Some changes to the rite of incensation were introduced, but generally the practice remains similar to ritual action in the older rite.\(^{55}\) Next, three of the elements of the new rite are outlined. Notably, the schema suggests that the new church be presented to the bishop, that the Word of God be proclaimed first by the bishop in the new church, and that the Blessed Sacrament be translated in a procession similar to that used in the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper on Holy Thursday.\(^{56}\)

The schema then moves on to address the verbal formulas used in the rite. It prescribes that there should be three readings in the Mass of Dedication, as would be the case in the celebration of a Sunday Mass or of a feast day. Specific readings are provided in the lectionary for the Mass of Dedication. The Study Group recommended that the first reading should be from Nehemiah 8:1-10. The second reading would have three options: First Corinthians 3:9b-13, 16-17, the First Letter of Peter 2:4-9, or the Book of Revelation 21:1-5a.\(^{57}\) The reading could be

\(^{54}\) *Schema n. 370*, p. 5. “Translatio et depositio Reliquiarum in novo ritu minoris momenti sunt quam in vetere. Nam secundum Institutionem generalem Missalis Romani ‘usus includendi in altari consecrando, vel deponendi sub altari, reliquias Sanctorum, etsi non Martyrum’ pro opportunitate tantum servatur (n. 266).”

\(^{55}\) *Schema n. 370*, p. 5. “Ritus incensationis in antiquo Ordine paulatim mutatus erat in ritum incensationis et ignis; nam incensum, quod urebatur in altari flammam gignebat. In novo Ordine ritus incensationis et ignis separati sunt: ecclesia illuminatur cereis et omnibus lampadibus; super altari, populo, parietibusque ecclesiae effunditur thus.”

\(^{56}\) *Schema n. 370*, p. 5.

\(^{57}\) *Schema n. 370*, p. 5. “Proponitur tamen ut primo loco legatur Nehmia 8, 1-10 qui populum ad audiendum Dei verbum congregatum describit. Secunda lectio deligi potest e claris pericopis s. Pauli (ex. gr. 1 Cor
selected either John 2:13-22, the cleansing of the Temple, or John 4:19-24, worshiping God in spirit and truth.\textsuperscript{58} Detailed instructions are also provided for selecting the appropriate songs and psalms. The schema notes that the older euchological texts chiefly looked to the Old Testament and rarely signified Christ. Consequently, prayer texts in the new ritual are particularly based on the New Testament.\textsuperscript{59}

The next section is entitled “Questions” and outlines three specific questions to be asked of the Fathers of the Sacred Congregation. The first question is whether or not it is agreeable to have the blessing of water and the aspersions of the people which commemorates baptism at the beginning of the Rite of Dedication of a Church.\textsuperscript{60} The second question asks: could the preface take the place of the prayer of consecration?\textsuperscript{61} The final question addresses what elements of the rite, provided that the celebration of Eucharist is retained, may be open for adaptation by conferences of bishops while ensuring that the celebration of Mass is essential.\textsuperscript{62}

\textsuperscript{3, 9b-13, 16-17: “Templum Dei estis”), s. Petri (1 Pt 2, 4-9: “Tamquam lapides vivi...”) et Apocalypsis (21, 1-5a: Ecce tabernaculum Dei cum hominibus).”


\textsuperscript{60. Schema n. 370, p. 6. “Placetne in principio dedicationis esse ritum benedictionis aquae et populi aspersionis qui baptismum commemoret pro lustrationibus internis et externis ecclesiae?”}

\textsuperscript{61. Schema n. 370, p. 6. “Placetne Praefationem Missae locum habere precis consecratoria; precem autem consecratoriam omitti.”}

\textsuperscript{62. Schema n. 370, p. 6, “Placetne facultates quam amplissimas ritus aptandi Episcoporum Conferentiis dari, cum retineatur tamen Missae celebrationem principectm locum in ritu habere.”}
The schema provides the prospective rite, which it has broken into four parts: the introductory rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Deposition of Relics and the Anointings, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The introductory rites in the proposed text start with the entrance into the church to be dedicated; three possible options are offered for this. The first option is in the form of a procession in which the people gather in a convenient location apart from the church to be dedicated. The schema emphasizes the value of this form of entrance especially if relics are to be deposited under the altar. Specific instructions are provided for the use, or rather lack thereof, of candles and incense in the procession to the new church and for the treatment of relics.\textsuperscript{63} Psalms and antiphons are provided for use during the procession, including Psalm 121 (122) with the antiphon “We shall go rejoicing into the house of the Lord” and Psalm 23 (24) with the antiphon “Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors.”\textsuperscript{64}

The entrance procession described in the schema builds on the idea of \textit{processio} and \textit{statio} by combining the act of procession and the act of pausing in prayer. The procession begins at a convenient location nearby the church to be dedicated. The threshold of the church is the first station in this procession. At the threshold of the new church, the bishop speaks to representatives of the church, specifically to the faithful, to those who have helped fund the new church, and to those who have physically helped build the church, such as the workers and artisans. The church is symbolically turned over to the bishop through the presentation of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{63} Schema n. 370, p. 8, n.5. “Expleta admonitone, incipit processio ad ecclesiam dedicandam. Non adhibentur candelae, praeter eas quae Reliquias circumdant. Thus non uritur neque in processione neque in Missa ante ritum illuminationis et incensationis altaris et ecclesiae.”
\item \textsuperscript{64} Schema n. 370, p. 9, nn. 6-8.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
documents and keys. Then the bishop asks the pastor of the parish to open the door of the church. Psalm 23 (24) is sung at the door of the church and the bishop invites the people to enter. No longer is the medieval ritual of knocking on the door of the church three times part of the rite. This option for entrance concludes with additional instructions about the placement of relics and where the concelebrating priests should go when the procession moves inside the church.

A second option for entrance is provided. This option is called the solemn entrance and is simpler than the processional entrance. The solemn entrance, the schema states, is for situations in which a procession is not possible. In this option, the faithful gather at the doors of the new church, where the relics have been separately located. The celebrating clergy proceed to where the people have gathered, and the rite provides instructions on how the doors of the church are to be handled depending on the route of the bishop and the other ministers. The bishop greets the people in a manner similar to that described in the first option, and the church is likewise handed over to the bishop by representatives of the faith community and those who built the church. Psalm choices are provided, identical to those described above. This second option concludes when the relics are again placed in a suitable location in the sanctuary.

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65. *Schema n. 370*, p. 9, n. 7. “…Legati eorum qui ecclesiae aedificandae operam dederunt (paroeciae aut dioceses fideles, largitores, architecti, opifices…) aedificium Episcopo tradunt ei dantes vel claves vel formam aedis vel, pro opportunitate, librum in quo iter operis descriptum est et opificum nomina indicata sunt. Episcopus legatos breviter alloquitur, deinde rogat presbyterum, cui munus pastorale ecclesiae commissum est, ut ecclesiae portam aperiatur.”

66. *Schema n. 370*, p. 9, n. 10. “Si processio fieri non potest vel haud opportuna videtur, fideles congregantur ad portam ecclesiae, ubi reliquiae sanctorum, si casus fert, privatim collocatae sunt.”

The final form of entrance is the simple entrance. This entrance is to be used if a solemn entrance is not possible or if the celebration of the Eucharist has already taken place inside the new church. Here, the people are gathered in the church as they typically would be, and the bishop and other ministers enter.\footnote{68. \textit{Schema} n. 370, p. 10.} An \textit{introit} or Psalm 121 (122) is sung. If relics are to be laid under the altar, they are to be carried in the entrance procession by the ministers from the chapel where they were kept for the vigil the previous night.\footnote{69. \textit{Schema} n. 370, p. 11. “Reliquiae Sanctorum, cum sub altari deponendae sunt, in ipsa processione introitali ad presbyterium afferuntur sive ex secretario sive ex sacello, ubi usque a vigilia ad venerationem fidelium sunt expositae. Iusta tamen de causa parari possunt, ante ritus initium, in apto presbyterii loco, facibus circum ardentibus.”} This mode of entrance includes a shorter greeting of the people by the bishop. Also, the ritual of handing the church over to the bishop by the people involved in its life and construction is incorporated into this entrance.

After describing the various forms of entrance, the rite picks up where all three possible entrances lead to, namely, the blessing of the water and remembrance of baptism. Water is blessed and the people are sprinkled with it. Two formulas are provided for the blessing of the water, depending on whether or not it is baptismal water, having already been consecrated. Each prayer text reflects the type of water which is being used. Antiphons are provided, depending on the liturgical season.\footnote{70. \textit{Schema} n. 370, p. 12.} The euchological formularies throughout the celebration of the Rite of Dedication of a Church help to recall the occasion being celebrated. The prospective rite continues with the Mass as it is usually celebrated with the Liturgy of Word. The sprinkling rite takes the place of the penitential rite. Two notable differences are the elimination of the Prayer of
the Faithful and the inclusion of the Creed only when the liturgy of the day calls for it. The litany takes the place of the Prayer of the Faithful.\textsuperscript{71}

Part Three of the proposed rite begins at the conclusion of the homily. The bishop invites the people to pray that the saints support those who are dedicating the church to God.\textsuperscript{72} Then, the Litany is sung with the people standing during Easter and on Sundays, while kneeling on other days.\textsuperscript{73} It is sung by two cantors with all of those gathered responding. The Litany specifically invokes the Titular Saint of the church who serves as the patron of the place, and the saint whose relics will be deposited there, should that be the case.\textsuperscript{74} The text refers to the Roman Calendar here for saints to be incorporated into the Litany. At the conclusion of the invocation of Mary, the relics are to be brought forward to the bishop by the priest or deacon who carried them in the entrance procession. The bishop will deposit them in their final resting place below the altar (\textit{sub altari}). The tomb (\textit{sepulchrum}) which has been prepared for the relics below the altar is then promptly sealed with cement by a mason, and the bishop returns to his seat. A starred note in the middle of these rubrics highlights a key part of the reformed deposition of relics: relics are never to be placed in the table (\textit{mensa}) of the altar.\textsuperscript{75}


\textsuperscript{73}\textit{Schema n. 370}, p. 14.


\textsuperscript{75}\textit{Schema n. 370}, p. 14. “Si Martyrum vel aliorum Sanctorum reliquiae sub altari deponendae sunt, post invocationem Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis,diaconi aut presbyteri, qui eas in processione tulerunt,
Since the relics have already been brought into the church in the entrance procession, the second procession back to the place where the relics were kept for vigil is eliminated in this rite, as well as the procession within the church with the relics. Further, the deposition of relics, should it be part of the rite, is now entirely visible to the congregation, not hidden behind a veil as it was in the earlier rites. When the singing of the Litany is completed, the bishop rises and prays that the Lord will accept the intercession of the saints and prayers of the people to make the new church His home and to increase His people. The people then stand and prepare for the anointing of the altar.

The anointing of the altar and the walls of the church, in this version, is an action utilizing many ministers. Once the Litany is completed, two or four of the concelebrating priests go with the bishop and one or two deacons or other ministers in order that the designated priests might anoint the walls of the church. Each designated priest begins to smear the walls with Sacred Chrism. Then the bishop goes to the altar, leaving behind, if necessary, his chasuble. Standing before the altar, the bishop prays that the mystery of Christ and the Church may be visible, and that the altar be blessed with the ability to sanctify. The bishop then marks the altar in the middle and in the four corners with the Sacred Chrism that has been poured out across the

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Reliquias Episcopo afferunt, qui in sepulcro sub altari aut in eius basi parato ** eae collocat. Mox faber caementarius sepulcrum claudit, Episcopus autem ad sedem revertit.** Ideoque numquam in mensa.” The underlining is present in the source document.

76. *Schema n. 370*, p. 15. “Preces nostras, Domine, intercessione Sancotrum tuorum propitiatus admitte, ut hic locus tua fiat habitatione sublimis et populus tuus nova semper accepit incrementa.” In the copy of the schema present in the records of International Commission on English in the Liturgy in their offices in Washington, DC, this prayer is marked by question marks and the middle two lines are underlined.

77. *Schema n. 370*, p. 15. “Altare ac domum, quae nostro liminus ministerio, Dominus sua virtute sanctificet, ut Christi et Ecclesiae mysterium visibili exprimant signo.”
table. The chrism is applied to both the walls and the altar in the form of crosses. On the altar twelve or four crosses are suitably spread across the mensa of the altar.

Psalm 86 (87) is sung with its antiphon, and then the illumination of the altar and the church begins. The bishop prays for the light of Christ to be present in the church, and all of the festive candles along with those needed for the celebration of Mass are lit. When the illumination rite is complete, incensing the altar and the church begins with a prayer by the bishop. A minister then incenses the people and the body of the church. As in the celebration of Mass, the bishop incenses the altar and the cross before returning to his chair. The minister incenses the lectionary, the walls of the church and the people, walking throughout the church hall. When the rite of incensation is finished, completed by an antiphon and collect, the offertory procession takes place and the celebration of Liturgy of the Eucharist begins.

Part Four of this version is the Liturgy of the Eucharist which begins with the vesting of the altar. A linen sheet is placed on the Sacred Chrism on the altar. A cloth and flowers are carried forward by the faithful in the offertory procession, followed by the bread and wine for the celebration of the Eucharist. The altar is then prepared for the celebration of the Eucharist in the usual way. When the altar is prepared, the bishop comes to the altar, and Mass proceeds as it typically would. The proposed rite dictates that Eucharistic Prayer I or III should be used with the Preface proper to the rite of dedication of a church. It also provides euchological texts proper

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78. *Schema n. 370*, p. 16.


80. *Schema n. 370*, p. 17. “Processio offertorialis ad altare procedit per aulam ecclesiae. Nonnuli fideles afferunt primum crucem altaris, si iam apud hoc collocata non est processione introitus expleta; tum tobaleam et flores, qui circum aut supra altari ponuntur; deinde panem et vinum ad Sacrificum dominicum celebrandum. Episcopus accipit dona ad sedem; postea diaconi et ministri altare praeparant more solito.”
to the *Hanc igitur* in Eucharistic Prayer I and in the intercessions of Eucharistic Prayer III.

Following communion, the Blessed Sacrament is translated to the tabernacle in an elaborate procession. Then, Mass finishes with a concluding prayer proper to the Rite of Dedication of a Church, and all are dismissed giving thanks to God.

**Addendum to Schema n. 370, 21 October 1970**

An addendum to *Schema n. 370, De Pontificio*, n. 24, follows. This schema, dated October 21, 1970, is a proposed text of the Praenotanda of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae*. It opens with a section titled “The Nature and Dignity of the Church.” This section briefly details the development of the church after the death and resurrection of Christ. It describes the growth of the house church, and the actions of the people who gathered there, particularly praise of God and the celebration of the Eucharist. Following the delineation of the development of the celebration of the Mass, the *Praenotanda* describe the role of the altar within the community. The *schema* notes that the building must be dedicated by a solemn rite since it is made for the gathering of the people of God and performing sacred things, and even more so if the altar in it is fixed.

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84. *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 2, n. 4. “Aedificium cum factum est ad plebem Dei congregandam et sacra peragenda maximeque si altare fixum in eo est, decet sollemni ritu Domino dicari.”
Section Two of the *Praenotanda* bears the title “Quae ad ritum dedicationis ecclesiae pergendum postulentur.” This section addresses how the rite of dedication of a church will proceed. It begins by describing the need for new churches in a diocese so that the Sunday gathering of the Christian faithful is available to all. It is the bishop’s responsibility to guarantee this, and to ensure that the church is dedicated to God.\(^{85}\) Further, it is the bishop’s duty to ascertain that the sacred hall is truly fit for the celebration of the Eucharist and the worship of God prior to celebrating the rite of dedication; the church must be built according to the guidelines in the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, replete with all of the objects needed for communal worship.\(^{86}\) A solemnly given title for the church is required, and the rite refers to *De Calendariis particularibus* for further clarification on possible titles for the church.\(^{87}\)

The *Praenotanda* move to a discussion of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. It notes that placing relics in the base of the altar or below the altar has been the custom since ancient times, and that it can be retained in this rite.\(^{88}\) Some specific instructions for the fitting retention of this ritual element are given. First, and foremost, the relics of the saint or martyr must be identifiable as human remains. Members of the *coetus* determined that a small, unidentifiable relic should not be used.\(^{89}\) Second, the remains of a saint or martyr to be used in

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88. *Schema n. 370 addendum*, p. 4, n. 8. “Ex antiquo more, qui pro opportunitate servandus videtur, in altaris basi aut sub altari consecrando Martyrum aliorumve Sanctorum reliquiae conduntur. Qua in re haec servanda sunt.”

89. *Schema n. 370 addendum*, p. 4, n. 8a. “Reliquiae deponendae eius sint magnitudinis ex qua intellexi possit humanorum corporum eas esse (sic: should be *esse*) reliquias. Melius est unius Sancti maiores reliquias deponere, ut antiquis temporibus fieri solebat, quam parva complurium Sanctorum corporum condere.”
the dedication must be authentic and verifiable as the relics of a saint or martyr of the Church. There must be no doubt as to their authenticity. The *Praenotanda* state that it is better to dedicate a church without relics than to use relics which may not be authentic.90 Finally, the instructions detail where relics may be placed in relation to the altar. Relics must never be in the table of the altar; they are to be placed underneath it or on the base.91 After the discussion of the use and placement of relics, the *Praenotanda* detail days on which the celebration of the dedication of a church may or may not take place.

Section Three of the *Praenotanda* is called the Celebration of Dedication. It begins by describing the Mass of Dedication. Relying on John Chrysostom, the instruction states that the church building is constructed to celebrate the Eucharist, but that the altar is sanctified because it receives the Body of Christ.92 The restoration of concelebration is also mentioned here, and it is deemed fitting that the priests of the church to be dedicated should celebrate alongside the bishop. The rite is properly celebrated by the bishop, but the *Praenotanda* specify that other priests or bishops can also participate. The three forms of entrance into the church and the

90. *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 4, n. 8b. “Inspiciatur autem maxima cum diligentia num reliquiae deponendae authenticae sint; quae de earum authenticitate superioribus saeculis dicta sunt, ex novo sunt probanda, cum olim minor adhibita sit cura in reliquis veris a falsis secernendis. Praestat enim altare sine reliquis consecrare quam dubiae fidei reliquias in eo condere.”

91. *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 4, n. 8c. “Cavea in qua reliquiarum capsae deponetur, sive sub altari sive in eius basi, numquam vero in mensa fodietur. Si autem altare lapideum non est, reliquiae sub eo tantum deponi possunt.”

92. *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 4, n. 10. “Ecclesiae enim ad Eucharistiam celebrandam eriguntur; altare autem, ut apud actum Ioannem Chrysostomum legitimus - propter hoc sanctificatur, quod Corpus Christi recipit...” The quote is from John Chrysostom: “For this altar is admirable because of the sacrifice that is laid upon it: but that, the merciful man’s, not only on this account, but also because it is even composed of the very sacrifice which maketh the other to be admired. Again, this is but a stone by nature; but become holy because it receiveth Christ’s Body: but that is holy because it is itself Christ’s Body.” John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians*, Homilies on II Corinthians, Homily XX, ed. and trans. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, vol. 12 of *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994), 12:374.
blessing of the water are described next with the aspersions of the people which follow. The Liturgy of the Word follows and the *Praenotanda* give a brief description of the themes which are expressed by the readings chosen for the Mass of Dedication.\(^{93}\) As seen in the prospective rite detailed above, the instructions specify that the Creed and the Prayer of the Faithful are to be omitted in place of the sung Litany of the Saints.\(^{94}\)

The instructions then address relics for the second time, this time specifically detailing the ritual action of depositing them. The *Praenotanda* state that the deposition of relics of martyrs or other saints demonstrates the connection between Christ who sacrificed himself, and martyrs and confessors, who died for their faith in Him. The sacrifice of Christ is shown to be the greatest sacrifice. Those who confessed belief in Christ are hallowed by their association with his sacrifice.\(^{95}\) Then, the *Praenotanda* cite the passage from the Book of Revelation in which the author states that he saw under the altar the souls of those who were slain for the word of God and their testimony to it.\(^{96}\) The section concludes with the thought that, although all those who witness to Christ are rightfully called holy, there is a special character to those who have given up their lives for him.\(^{97}\)

\(^{93}\) *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 5, nn. 11-12.

\(^{94}\) *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 6, n. 12.

\(^{95}\) *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 6, n. 13. “Depositio reliquiarum Martyrum vel aliorum Sanctorum, quae fit dum Litaniae canuntur, clare ostendit sacrificium confessorum Christi cum ipso Christi sacrificio esse consociatum.”


\(^{97}\) *Schema n. 370* addendum, p. 6, n. 13. “Quamquam enim omnes Sancti Christi testes merito appellari possint, tamen sanguinis testimonio peculiaris vis inest, quam Martyrum tantum reliquiarum depositio totam atque integram exprimit.”
Following the deposition of relics, the rites of anointing, illumination, and incensation are described. The schema note that these three actions of anointing, illuminating, and incensing the altar and the walls show the renewal of God’s perfect sacrifice. The schema notes the Old Testament antecedents to the anointing of the walls and the altar, particularly citing Jacob and Moses who built altars to God and used oil in consecration. These Old Testament exemplars are connected with Christ as altar who was the one anointed by the Father. Further, the illumination of the altar and the church demonstrates the connection between the earthly liturgy and the heavenly liturgy. Incense is among the first offerings to God and has a role throughout the Old and New Testaments.

The Liturgy of the Eucharist comes next. The Introduction specifies that the celebration of Mass is most important for the bishop to preside over in the dedication of a church and an altar. The prayers of the Eucharist are the ones proper to the celebration of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. In the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the celebration of the Eucharist serves as a way to call the faithful to God, as a sign of unity and a bond of charity among the people of God.

Section Four of the Praenotanda addresses various elements and ministers of the ritual. Here, the Introduction describes how the ministers of the celebration of the rite and the bishop should prepare the entrance and how the church will be handed over to the bishop. Praenotanda

98. Schema n. 370 addendum, p. 6, n. 14. “Unctio altaris et parietum ecclesiae, illuminatio et incensatio modo intellegibili opus significat quod Dominus sacrificii sui renovatione perficit. A) Unctio altaris et parietum est in Antiquo Testamento: Episcopus enim idem facit ac Iacob, qui altare Domino erexit, oleum in lapidem in quo requieverat effundens (cf Gn 28:18), ac Moyses, qui oleo unctionis domum et omnia quae erant in ea consecravit (Lev 8:10); sed altare, Episcopi unctione, fit in primis symbolum Christi qui per excellentiam Unctus Patris est. Item parietes ecclesiae liniuntur… ut signam existant caelestis Ierusalem, super duodecim Apostolorum fundamentum aedificiatae.”

99. Schema n. 370 addendum, p. 6, n. 15.
n. 8 notes that care should be taken for the spiritual good of the faithful in making decisions about the use of relics.\textsuperscript{100}

The Introduction then moves on to the discussion of what parts of the rite should be left up to the decisions of local conferences of bishops. It lays out four specific ways in which the rite might be adapted to incorporate local customs.\textsuperscript{101} Pastoral preparations of the faith community whose new church is to be dedicated are then outlined. The \textit{Praenotanda} provide three specific theological ideas which the parish should understand: addressing this community with its connection to the wider Church, the missionary activity of the Church, and the ritual about to be celebrated. Further, the schema highlights the role of the bishop in demonstrating that the church extends beyond one parish and that there is an apostolic connection throughout the diocese.\textsuperscript{102}

Next, the \textit{Praenotanda} provide basic instructions for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours on the day of dedication. This celebration provides a connection to the deposition of relics, should that rite take place. If the relics of a martyr or saint are to be deposited during the dedication, the vigil office connected to that saint or martyr should be the one used.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} \textit{Schema n. 370} addendum, p. 7, n. 16. “Ad Episcopum et ad eos qui ritum celebrandum curant statuere spectat quomodo introitus peragatur et nova ecclesia Episcopo tradatur. Item ad eos de reliquis deponendis decernere spectat. Quibus in rebus bonum spirituale fidelium semper prospiciendum est et ea quae n. 8 praecipiuntur servanda sunt.”

\textsuperscript{101} \textit{Schema n. 370} addendum, p. 7, n. 17.

\textsuperscript{102} \textit{Schema n. 370} addendum, p. 8, n. 18.

\textsuperscript{103} \textit{Schema n. 370} addendum, p. 8, n. 19.
Praenotanda conclude with a list of the items needed in the various locations used in the Rite of Dedication of a Church.\textsuperscript{104}

This version of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the accompanying Praenotanda were the result of the early rounds of study and examination by Study Group XXIbis. Study Group XXIbis presented its first report on the Rite of Dedication of a Church to the first plenary session of the Congregation for Divine Worship in November 1970. It was determined that more work was required after this initial session and the changes would lead to another version of the rite.\textsuperscript{105}

\textit{Schema n. 375, 25 March 1971}

A letter from Annibale Bugnini dated April 16, 1971, to Frederick McManus, accompanied the draft (schema) of Ordinis Dedicationis ecclesiae, which were the results of the work of the coetus, approved in plenary session the previous November.\textsuperscript{106} The letter notes that the draft is the result of the observations by the Consulters and the Fathers of the Congregation of Divine Worship.\textsuperscript{107} It concludes by asking for any comments or changes that have been missed to be promptly submitted to the congregation.\textsuperscript{108} Dated March 25, 1971, Schema n. 375 was attached to Bugnini’s letter. This schema is entitled “Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae.” Here,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Schema n. 370 addendum, p. 8-9, nn. 20-21.
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Bugnini, Reform of the Liturgy, 793.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Prot. n. 951/71, Schema n. 375, A. Bugnini, 16 April 1971, “Honori mihi est, de mandato Em.mi Cardinalis Praefecti, ad Te transmitterre schema Ordinis Dedicationis ecclesiae, a Coetu a studiis XXIbis apparatum et in sessione plenaria mensis novembris anni elapsi approbatum.”
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Prot. n. 951/71, Schema n. 375,
  \item \textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the two separate pieces of *Schema n. 370* have been combined, and an additional appendix has been included. The Rite of Dedication is still presented in four principal parts.\(^{109}\)

Changes were made to the wording in the *Praenotanda* of *Schema n. 375* from the previous edition (n. 370a). Alterations in word choice and order can be particularly seen in no. 1 and no. 3; these changes tend to move away from Old Testament imagery, such as the Temple in Jerusalem, and move to New Testament ideas, such as the Church based in Christ’s death and resurrection. In-text citations have been moved into footnotes. The language in Part C of no. 8, the section on the deposition of relics has been slightly altered, using different words to clarify where the relics should be deposited.\(^{110}\) However, the requirement that the relics should never be part of the *mensa* remains throughout, as will be discussed further in Part IV of this dissertation.

Minor wording changes and small additions can be found throughout the revised text. For example, the 1971 *Praenotanda* include an additional number specifying the color of vestments for the day of dedication.\(^{111}\) Most of the minor changes update the vocabulary for additional clarity.\(^{112}\) A specific element of the rite for the vesting of the altar has been added.\(^{113}\)

The Introduction’s description of the deposition of the relics is slightly different from *Schema n. 370*. The revised text has been updated to specify that the deposition takes place after the Litany of the Saints. Further, the 1971 text has been slightly modified in its description of the

\(^{109}\) *Schema n. 375*, p. 4.

\(^{110}\) *Schema n. 375*, p. 7, n. 8. The text here reads, “Cavea in qua reliquiarum capsa deponitur, aut sub altari aut in eius basi fodienda est, non vero in mensa. Si autem altare lapideum non est, reliquiae sub eo tantum deponi possunt.”

\(^{111}\) *Schema n. 375*, p. 8, n. 11.

\(^{112}\) See *Schema n. 375*, n. 13 “sollemnitatibus” as opposed to *Schema n. 370*, n. 12 “festis”.

\(^{113}\) *Schema n. 375*, p. 9-10, n. 16d.
difference between martyrs and all other saints. This change highlights the special sacrifice made by martyrs who died as witnesses to Christ. It is the relics of such witnesses that should be used in the deposition of relics. The *Praenotanda*’s description of the Eucharistic liturgy remains almost identical to the older text, with the exception of a few minor wording changes. The *Praenotanda* in *Schema n. 375* include no significant changes from the earlier version.

The Rite of Dedication detailed in the 1971 schema begins in a similar manner to *Schema n. 370*. The description of the liturgical color for the celebration has been moved to the *Praenotanda*. The Solemn and Simple Entrances are also similar to those described in the older Rite. The newer schema includes Psalms 121 (122) and 23 (24) in their respective places. In the later schema, the description of the ritual action involving the relics when the procession enters the church has been written more succinctly.

Following a description of the entrance rite, the rubrics for the blessing of the baptismal water were slightly altered in the newer schema. However, the structure of the rite and the sprinkling of all of the concelebrants, the other ministers, the people, and the walls of the church remain the same. Rubrics for blessing baptismal water and for blessing non-baptismal water are comparable in both versions. The rite continues in a similar manner through the Liturgy of


the Word, with the exception of the text of Psalm 118 (119) which is provided more explicitly in \textit{Schema n. 375}.\footnote{118}

Part Three of the schema includes the deposition of relics. The prayer text at the beginning of this ritual element is different in the two schemata. The euchological text in \textit{Schema n. 375} includes the phrase “Deum Patrem omnipotentem” where the older text does not. Further, the newer text highlights the spiritual temples in the hearts of the faithful in addition to the church building.\footnote{119} The 1971 schema has combined some of the steps in the earlier rite while repositioning certain descriptive elements. The Litany of Saints is fully specified in \textit{Schema n. 375}, while it is simply described in the earlier rite. The full text of the litany helps the reader to understand the various parts of it. The direction states that the names of the local patron saints, the titular name of the church, and the names of any saints whose relics are to be deposited below the altar are to be included in the Litany of Saints remains part of the new rite.\footnote{120} Further, the newer schema makes a provision to shorten the names of the saints when the Litany of the Saints is sung in Latin.\footnote{121}

The newer version provides some changes to the order of the deposition of the relics. While the older text notes that the procession to where the relics were placed the night before begins within the Litany of the Saints following the invocation of Mary, the Mother of God, the newer version places the procession following the prayer after the Litany. The 1971 version

\footnote{118. \textit{Schema n. 375}, p. 20, n. 30.}

\footnote{119. \textit{Schema n. 375}, p. 20-21, n. 34. “Oremus, dilectissimi nobis, Deum Patrem omnipotentem, qui fidelium corda spiritualia sibi efficit templum; nostrisque vocibus fraterna societur Sanctorum supplicatio.”}

\footnote{120. \textit{Schema n. 375}, p. 21-22, n. 36.}

\footnote{121. \textit{Schema n. 375}, p. 21-22, n. 36.}
contains a longer euchological text directly following the Litany. The new prayer asks for the
intercession of the saints, so that God might make this new temple dedicated in his name a place
for fitting worship where the Christian people are built up with love. After the people have
stood, the deacons or priests who carried the relics in the entrance procession bring them to the
bishop who puts them in the sepulcher prepared below the altar or in the base of the altar.
Meanwhile, Psalm 14 (15) is sung, which is a new addition to the 1971 schema. When the
relics have been deposited, the sepulcher is sealed by a mason and the bishop returns to his seat.
In Schema n. 375, the order in which the relics are deposited, in relation to the singing of the
Litany of the Saints, has shifted. These changes to the deposition of the relics are some of the
most substantial changes in the new schemata.

Next, the anointing of the altar and the walls of the church takes place. The euchological
texts and the rubrics are similar between the two schemata. The altar is anointed by the bishop
and the walls of the church are marked with four or twelve crosses. Both versions include Psalm
86 (87), although following its usual pattern, Schema n. 375 provides a fuller text of the Psalm.
The psalm should end as soon as the anointings are complete. The illumination of the altar and
the church is the same in both rites. The Canticle of Tobias or a canticle in honor of Christ, the

admitte, ut haec aedes tuo nomini dicanda domus fiat salutis et gratiae, ubi christianorum plebs, in unum conveniens,
te adoret in spiritu et veritate et aedificet se in caritate. Per Christum.”

deponendae sunt, diaconi aut presbyteri, qui eas in processione tulerunt, Episcopo afferunt, qui sepulcro sub altari
aut in eius basi parato eas condit. Interea cantitur Psalmus 14 cum antiphona.” The relics are deposited in a suitable
aperture built below the altar or within the base of the altar. The mensa should be unbroken.

light of the world, should be sung during the illumination.\textsuperscript{125} The incensation of the altar and the church follows the illumination in both schemata. The rubrics in the 1971 version provide a more detailed description of the action of the bishop in the lighting of the incense above the altar.\textsuperscript{126} The antiphons remain the same in both schemata. In \textit{Schema n. 375}, the altar cloth is then placed on the altar. In \textit{Schema n. 370}, the vesting of the altar was its own ritual element. The 1971 version places the prayer by the bishop after the vesting, while the 1970 text places the prayer before the vesting of the altar.\textsuperscript{127} In the earlier version, the vesting of the altar falls within the Mass. In the later text, it is incorporated into the Third Part, called Deposition of the Relics and Anointings.

The Mass follows in both versions. The rubrics and euchological texts in both editions do not have substantial differences. The newer version provides the entire Psalm text for use during Communion while the older schema simply provides the two possible antiphons.\textsuperscript{128} There are some differences in the post-communion rituals in the two rites. The newer schema places the Eucharist in the hands of a priest or deacon to be placed in the tabernacle while Psalm 147 (148) is sung. When this is complete, the bishop prays the post-communion prayer at his seat. A second version of the placement of the Eucharist in the tabernacle, including a procession to the

\textsuperscript{125} \textit{Schema n. 375, p. 23-24, nn. 43-44.}

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Schema n. 375, p. 24, n. 45.} “Ritu illuminationis peracto, prope altare vel super eo ponitur foculus ad urenda aromata, aut, si placet, fit super altari acervus incensi candelis mixti, quo facilius comburatur et acriores edat flammas. Episcopus immittit incensum in foculum aut parvo cero a ministro sibi tradito, acervum incensi succedit, dicens...”

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Schema n. 375, p. 25, n. 48-49.}

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Schema n. 375, p. 27, n. 56.}
tabernacle by the ministers and the bishop, is described. Both versions conclude with the bishop’s blessing of the people. At the end of the 1971 schema, there are two appendices. One is a list of biblical readings for use in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and on the Anniversary of Dedication. The second is a list of changes to be made to the Rite of Dedication of a Church when it is to be joined to the celebration of Baptism.

**Schema n. 378, 6 January 1972**

In *Schema n. 378* of January 6, 1972, Study Group XXIbis addressed the ordo for the Rite of Dedication of an Altar for the first time. This rite also includes the deposition of relics as an option. This schema begins with *Praenotanda* and then moves into the rite itself. This version is divided into the four major parts as the Rite of Dedication of a Church seen in previous schemata. The First Part is the Introductory Rites, the Second Part is the Liturgy of the Word, the Third Part is the Deposition of Relics and Anointings, and the Fourth Part is the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The rite of dedication of an altar is situated within the celebration of Mass, as is the rite of dedication of a church. The *Praenotanda* open with a discussion of the nature and dignity of the altar, similar to that in the *Praenotanda* of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The Introduction speaks of the new and old Covenants, and of the Paschal sacrifice.

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129. *Schema n. 375*, p. 27-29, n. 57-64.


In discussing the need for the consecration of the altar, the proposed *Praenotanda* state that the *mensa* of the altar is consecrated through the celebration of Christ’s paschal sacrifice.\(^{132}\) The *Praenotanda* further note that altars must customarily be made of stone, as Christ was the rock.\(^{133}\)

Christ is affirmed as the true altar, calling his disciples a spiritual altar on which they offer their holy lives.\(^{134}\) Relying on the tradition of Ambrose of Milan that those redeemed by Christ’s Passion lie beneath the altar, while he who suffered on behalf of all is on the altar, the members of the *coetus* include an important statement that says that whenever it can be done, the bodies of martyrs and saints are to be in graves under the altar. Christ the Head and altar further honors the saint or martyr through the continued celebration of the Eucharist.\(^{135}\) The document relies on the account in the Book of Revelation in which the bodies of those who have lived, witnessed, and professed the Word of God are seen under the altar. The bodies of martyrs have a particular place under altars to help express the sacrifice on the altar.\(^{136}\)
The *Praenotanda* state that the altar derives its purpose and reason for being from the celebration of the Eucharist which is the summit of the worship of the Christian people.\footnote{137} There is a clear emphasis that the altar is to be dedicated to God, rather than a saint. Also, relying on the teachings of St. Augustine, the Introduction calls attention to the fact that images and relics are not to detract from the true role of the altar by placing them on the altar.\footnote{138}

The *Praenotanda* for the Rite of Dedication of an Altar contain the same guidelines as those for the Rite of Dedication of a Church regarding relics. If relics are to be used in the dedication, they must be recognizable as parts of the human body, and they must be authentically verified as the remains of a major saint. It is better to have an altar without relics than to dedicate an altar using relics of dubious quality. Finally, relics are never to be part of the *mensa*; they are to be placed below the altar or in the base.\footnote{139}

*Schema n. 378* describes how the Rite of Dedication of an Altar is situated within the Eucharistic liturgy, and it notes that the Mass for the Dedication of an Altar should be used.\footnote{140}

\footnote{137. *Schema n. 378*, n. 7. “Altare erigitur in primis et proprie ad sacrificium eucharisticum celebrandum, quod est culmen christiani cultus.”}

\footnote{138. *Schema n. 378*, n. 10. “Eadem de causa in novis ecclesiis simulacra vel imagines Sanctorum ne collocentur supra altaribus. Item ne deponantur in altaris mensa Sanctorum reliquiae, cum ad populi venerationem exhibentur.”}

\footnote{139. *Schema n. 378*, n. 13. “Ex antiquo more, qui opportune servatur, in altaris basi aut sub altari dedicando Martyrum aliorumve Sanctorum reliquiae conduntur. Qua in re haec servanda sunt: a) Reliquiae deponendae eius sint magnitudinis ex qua intellegi possit humanorum corporum eas esse reliquias. Melius est unius Sancti maiores reliquias, quam parva complurium Sanctorum condere. b) Inspectatur autem maxima cum diligentia num reliquiae deponendae authenticae sint; quae de earum authenticitate superioribus saeculis dicta sunt, ex novo sunt probanda, cum olim minor cura adhibita sit in reliquis veris a falsis secernendis. Praestate enim altare sine reliquis dedicare quam dubiae fidei reliquiae in eo condere. c) Cavea in qua reliquiarum capsas deponitur, aut sub altari aut in eius basi fodienda est, non vero in mensa. Si autem altare lapideum non est, reliquiae sub eo tantum deponi possunt.”}

\footnote{140. *Schema n. 378*, nn. 15-16.}
The deposition of relics follows the Litany of Saints in this version as well. In the deposition of relics, a special emphasis is put on the use of the relics of martyrs who have shed their blood as witnesses to the sacrifice of Christ.\textsuperscript{141} The theological emphasis, here and above in n. 6, is that martyrs have a deeper connection to the sacrifice which is celebrated on the altar than other saints. Throughout the Praenotanda, it is evident that the rite should be celebrated in such a way that highlights Christ’s paschal sacrifice, with relics given honor by their placement in close proximity to the ongoing Eucharistic celebration.

The rites of anointing, illuminating, incensing, and vesting the altar follow here, which are connected to the ritual actions used in the Old and New Testaments for worship.\textsuperscript{142} After the altar is vested, the Liturgy of the Eucharist is celebrated. As in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, certain ritual elements are left to the decision of the local Conferences of Bishops, and pastoral preparation for the people is prescribed.\textsuperscript{143}

The proposed text for the rite follows the Praenotanda, and it parallels that of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Only one form of entrance is provided, and relics, if they are to be deposited, should be carried in the procession surrounded by candles. On the night before the dedication, the relics should be exposed for the veneration of the faithful.\textsuperscript{144} After the entrance

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[141.] Schema n. 378, n. 19. “Deinde, si casus fert, reliquiae Martyrum aliorumve Sanctorum sub altari deponuntur ut significetur omnes qui in morte Christi sunt baptizati, sed in primis illos qui sanguinem pro Domino fuderunt, Sacrificium Christi participare (cf. quod supra dictum est n. 6).”
\item[142.] Schema n. 378, n. 20.
\item[143.] Schema n. 378, nn. 22-24.
\item[144.] Schema n. 378, p. 10, n. 2. “Reliquiae Sanctorum, si deponendae sunt, in ipsa processione introitus feruntur sive ex secretario sive ex sacello, ubi iam inde a vigilia ad venerationem fidelium sunt exposita. Iusta tamen de causa parari possunt, ante ritus initium apto presbyterii loco, facibus circum ardentibus.”
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
rite, water is blessed as in the Dedication of a Church. The Liturgy of the Word, without the Creed, follows.\textsuperscript{145}

Part Three, the Deposition of Relics and the Anointings, begins with an invitation to prayer by the bishop. Then, the Litany of the Saints is sung by the cantors, with the response by the faithful. Again, the local patron saints, the titular saint of the church, and the names of any saints whose relics will be deposited should be included in the Litany. When the Litany of the Saints has been completed, the bishop then prays in a similar manner to the prayer in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Here, however, intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary is specifically requested and there is less emphasis on the creation of a church and more on the mysteries of salvation which take place on the altar.\textsuperscript{146} Then, the relics, if they are to be used, are brought to the bishop by the priest or deacon who carried them in the procession while Psalm 14 (15) is sung. The relics are deposited by the bishop and sealed by the mason as they are in the Rite of Dedication of the Church.\textsuperscript{147} These ritual actions enact the ideas seen in the Praenotanda, such as preserving the unbroken mensa of the altar.

When the relics, if they are to be used, have been deposited, the bishop proceeds to anoint the altar with chrism, and then candles are lit on the altar for the celebration of Mass.\textsuperscript{148}

Following the conclusion of the rite of illumination, incensation of the altar begins in a manner similar to that in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, except that the walls of the church are not

\textsuperscript{145} Schema n. 378, p. 13, nn. 10-11.

\textsuperscript{146} Schema n. 378, p. 15, n. 15. “Supplicationes nostras, quaesumus, Domine, intercessione beatae Mariae Virginis et omnium Sanctorum, propitiatus admitte, ut hoc altare, ubi maxima salutis perficientur mysteria, locus fiat plebi tuae quo vota dirigat omnesque religionis ac pietatis referat sensus. Per Dominum.

\textsuperscript{147} Schema n. 378, p. 15-16, n. 16.

\textsuperscript{148} Schema n. 378, p. 17-19, nn. 17-20.
incensed. Next, the Eucharistic liturgy begins, with Psalm 50 (51) sung during the preparation of the gifts. Specific euchological texts are provided for use with Eucharistic Prayers I or III. After communion, the liturgy concludes with a solemn blessing which highlights Christ’s sacrifice.

Schema n. 378, adnexus, 1 March 1972

On March 1, 1972, a revised and updated version of the Praenotanda for the Rite of Dedication of an Altar was circulated. In this version, a paragraph was added entitled, “the disciples of Christ, spiritual altars.” Various headers have been added throughout the introduction. Paragraph no. 5 from the older schemata has been removed, and some small changes to structure and vocabulary have been made throughout the second section. The paragraph on relics within this section remains the same as the previous version. In the section on the Mass of Dedication of an Altar, a paragraph about the proper euchological texts to use has been added. No changes have been made to the use of relics. The communion of the faithful with the angels and saints is reiterated. The paragraph on how the Liturgy of the Eucharist dedicates the altar was modified to further evoke the idea of the Eucharistic celebration as the

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memorial of the redemption achieved by Christ’s sacrifice. Following the section on the pastoral preparation, the March edition of the *Praenotanda* includes a new paragraph on how to show proper reverence for the altar. This new section addresses the role of the altar in Christian worship.

**Experiments with the Rite and Consultation**

The Rite of Dedication of a Church was provided to numerous bishops for experimental use, as was the case for many of the rites at the time. Bugnini describes its distribution: “This allowed for confirmation of the proposed rite and, at the same time, answered a much felt pastoral need – a dedication that can be celebrated with the full understanding and participation of the Christian community because it displays the same simplicity of ritual that marks the other reformed liturgical actions.”

Bugnini’s comment demonstrated that the Rite of Dedication of a Church reflected the aims of the Second Vatican Council, as interpreted by the Congregation for Divine Worship.

After the experimental use and the approval of the rites by the second plenary session of the Congregation for Divine Worship in March 1972, the rites were circulated to liturgical experts and bishops’ conferences for examination. Responses were requested by November

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1973. The Rite of Dedication of a Church was not the only rite provided for examination. Along with it were rites for: dedication of an altar, blessing of a church, blessing of a movable altar, inauguration of a place intended for liturgical celebrations and other uses, blessing of a chalice and paten, blessing of a new cross to be displayed for the veneration of the faithful, blessing of a bell, blessing of a cemetery, public supplication when a church has been the place of a serious offense; and the crowning of a statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary.¹⁵⁸

Two later schemata address the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar, notably Schema n. 425 from August 3, 1973, and Schema n. 431 from January of 1975. Schema n. 425 includes sections on not only the Rite of Dedication of a Church, but also on the rite of blessing a movable altar, the rite of blessing a cemetery, the period of public prayer after the desecration of a church, and the rite of blessing a new cross to be displayed for public veneration.

Schema n. 431 contains two parts. The first part is entitled “Sanctifying places and objects.” This section includes the rite of laying a foundation stone, the rite of dedication of a church, the rite of dedication of a church in which Mass is already being celebrated regularly, the rite of dedication of an altar, the rite of blessing a church, the rite of blessing a movable altar, the rite of opening a place intended for liturgical celebrations and other sacred foundations, the rite for consecrating a chalice and a paten, the rite for blessing bells, the rite for blessing a cemetery, and the period of public prayer after desecration of a church. Part Two is called “Images displayed for the faithful’s public veneration”. This section contains the Rite of blessing a new

cross to be displayed for public veneration and the Rite for the crowning of an image of Mary. Unfortunately, these two schemata were not available for consultation.\textsuperscript{159}

The various schemata on the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar show that many of the traditional ritual elements of the rite have been retained, while modifications, such as three possible entrance rites, have been made in order to foster a rite which better lends itself to the active participation of the faithful. Further, the faithful are now invited to participate in the entire Rite of Dedication, rather than remaining outside for much of the rite. Elements which had lost their relevance, such as the writing of the alphabet on the floor of the church, have been eliminated. The use of relics in both the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the Rite of Dedication of an Altar has become optional, which will be discussed in greater detail in Part IV of this dissertation. Strict criteria for the role of relics in the rite have been provided in order to help foster proper devotions. Overall, the Rite of Dedication of a Church has been greatly simplified.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The Second Vatican Council offered principles that changed the liturgical life of the Church. By stating the importance of the Eucharistic celebration and by stressing the need for the Christian faithful to fully, consciously, and actively participate in the liturgy of the Church, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy established several liturgical foundations. The role of the liturgy as the source and summit of the life of the Church meant that it would need to reflect the Church’s theology. Further, through the principles defined in \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium} and

*Lumen Gentium*, the Church’s organic relationship as part of Christ was reaffirmed. Although no specific items in either Constitution address specifically the role of relics in the Church or the Rite of Dedication, the post-Conciliar *coetus* would change the Rite of Dedication of a Church in important ways. Vatican II’s documents so revised liturgical principles that a second reworking of the Rite of Dedication of a Church in fifteen years was necessary.

Shortly after the promulgation of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the Consilium was formed to implement the principles of reform. The reform of the liturgy, under the guidance of the Consilium and subsequently the Congregation for Divine Worship and the eventual approval of the pope, incorporated pastoral, biblical, liturgical, and theological reforms into the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar.

One of the last rites to be analyzed, the Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar benefited from the study of all of the elements which influence the liturgical celebration by the Consilium and the Congregation for Divine Worship. By examining the rite described in the various schemata, it is possible to trace the changes in the structure of the revised rite and the role of relics from its medieval form to its reworking in 1961/2 to its final shape in 1977. The Mass is the context for the entire celebration of dedication; the rite is no longer concluded with the celebration of Mass. Retaining both historical traditions and developing a rite which is geared towards the full, conscious, and active participation of the faithful was the goal. The foundation was set for deeper study of the revised rite and the optional use of relics.
Chapter Five: Decree and Praenotanda of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris

The Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris was promulgated on May 29, 1977, by Pope Paul VI. One of the last rituals to be revised as a result of the Second Vatican Council, the release of the revised Rite of Dedication of a Church and Altar provided a significantly transformed rite for use throughout the world. The rite contained numerous revisions which aimed to incorporate the principles of the Council.

The Decree and the Praenotanda of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae provide key insights into the major changes to the rite. This is especially true of the role of relics in the rite. Each chapter within the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris has its own Praenotanda which serve to highlight elements of the rite, to explain each chapter and to provide additional information.

From the Decree and the Praenotanda, it is evident that the use of relics in the 1977 editio typica is now optional. Comparison of the editio typica with the texts of the available schemata highlights the changes that were made. A study of these changes shows which areas of the new rite were emphasized in the reform. The structure of the rite, particularly the placement of the rite of dedication within the context of the Eucharistic celebration, offers a strong foundation for analyzing the theological meaning of relics within the Rite of Dedication of a Church. This chapter will begin with a description of the structure of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris. It will then look at the Decree which promulgated the rite. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the Praenotanda for the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae, specifically highlighting the descriptions of role of relics provided in the rite.
Structure of the 1977 Ordo

The Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris contains several different rites. Together, these rites provide a comprehensive description of the elements of a church building and their role in the liturgical celebrations of the Church. The Ordo is prefaced by the Decree that promulgated it; we will consider the key points of the decree ahead.

The first chapter, for the blessing of the construction site and for the blessing and laying of the foundation stone of the church building, contains the ritual elements of processio and statio, procession and station, which recur in the celebration of dedication. This rite takes place with a Liturgy of the Word and does not specifically require the celebration of Mass. Chapter One will not be studied in this dissertation since it does not relate to the use of relics within the dedication of a church.

The second chapter of the Ordo is of primary interest since it contains the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Beginning with an entrance procession, this rite situates the Prayer of Dedication and the Anointings between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. The Praenotanda of this chapter also provides guidelines for the future celebrations of the Anniversary of Dedication.

The third chapter of the rite is the Rite of Dedication of a Church Already in Use for Sacred Celebrations. This rite is an abbreviated version of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The ritual elements are similar, and the rite is contextualized within the celebration of Mass, but the initial entrance processions are eliminated.

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1. Within the Ordo, each chapter restarts its numbering at 1, unlike many other ordos. This ordo offers ritual celebrations for each phase of the renovation or construction of a worship space.
The fourth chapter in the *Ordo* is the Rite of Dedication of an Altar. Again, this rite is integrated into the celebration of the Mass. The general structure of the rite is similar to the Rite of Dedication of a Church, without the options for the extended entrance into the church.

Following the Rite of Dedication of an Altar are chapters which describe the Blessing of a Church, the Blessing of an Altar, and the Blessing of a Chalice and a Paten. The first two of these brief rites are to be used for places which are only temporarily set aside for use as sacred spaces. The final chapter of the *Ordo* contains only the Litany of the Saints which is used in several of the preceding rites.

The structure of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* demonstrates the attention the reformers gave to the many different pastoral circumstances which local churches might encounter. By providing various ritual celebrations for different situations, the rite allows the theology of the dedication of a church and an altar to be celebrated in the appropriate circumstances.

**Decree of Promulgation**

The Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship issued the decree of promulgation of the *Ordo* on Pentecost Sunday, May 29, 1977. The decree notes that the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* is considered to be one of the most solemn liturgical celebrations in the life of the Church.² A brief description of the role of the church is provided: it is to be a place in which the People of God gather to hear His word, to offer intercession, to celebrate the sacred mysteries, and for the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. The decree states that the

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altar stands as a sign of Christ himself. A church building is a sign of the Church, built of living stones. The decree recognizes the revision of the rite in the second book of the 1961 *Pontificale Romanum*, but notes that the Second Vatican Council, along with the conditions of the contemporary age, called for the rite to be revised again.

Albeit brief, the decree of promulgation of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* gives the reason for additional reforms of the rite within two decades of the last revision. It also describes the central elements of the revised rite: the functions and nature of the church and the altar as Christ. These themes are the guiding forces throughout the *Praenotanda* and the rite.

**Praenotanda of Chapter 2: Understanding the Rite of Dedication of a Church**

**Nature and Dignity of Churches**

The *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae* begins with twenty-seven paragraphs of context and explicatory material. The *Praenotanda* open by describing Christ’s saving action through which he established the New Covenant and gathered a people. In the opening lines of the *Praenotanda* of Chapter 2, it is evident that the Mass is the proper context for celebrating the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The first section notes that the temple of the Triune God is one built of living stones. The holy people are God’s church. The word *church* has two meanings throughout the Introduction and the Rite. Stephen Wilbricht highlights these dual meanings in the 1977 Rite noting the differences in *Church* with capital “C” and *church* with a lowercase “c”.

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4. RDC, n. 1.
He states, “perhaps the most meaningful contribution of the new rite is the way in which it weaves together the dual understanding of ‘Church’ as both people and place.” The combined meaning of Church as a people and church as a place for worship is a central element in the *Praenotanda*. When a church has been constructed for assembling the people of God and sacred functions, “it is fitting that it be dedicated to God with a solemn rite, in accordance with the ancient custom of the Church.” The *Praenotanda* state the need for a ritual celebration of dedication.

The opening paragraphs of the *Praenotanda* connect the present ritual celebration to both past and future liturgical celebrations, as well as the church building with the Church composed of God’s people. This is seen where the *Praenotanda* state that the physical church building reflects the Church in heaven and is a sign of the pilgrim Church on earth. The role that the church will play in future sacramental celebrations, such as baptism and the Eucharist, is shown in the first paragraphs as well. The Christian community whose home will be in this church, along with the wider Church, are the central foci of the opening section of the Introduction.

**Of the Titular of the Church and the Relics to be Placed In It**

Instructions for determining the titular of the church follow. The titular of the church is the name of the church. All churches to be dedicated must have a titular which comes from one of the following: the Blessed Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ invoked through a mystery of his life

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6. RDC, n. 2.

7. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 2.

or a name which is part of the sacred liturgy, the Holy Spirit, the Blessed Virgin Mary in one of the titles she has been given in the liturgy, the Holy Angels, or a Saint in the Roman Martyrology or in an accepted appendix. These instructions are nearly identical to the 1961/2 Rite, except that the text now specifies that a church is to be named after only one saint, unless saints are listed together in the calendar. Canon 1218 of the Code of Canon Law notes that the title of the church cannot be changed after the dedication.

The Praenotanda then detail the role of relics in the rite. The tradition of the deposition of relics of martyrs or saints below the altar should be preserved, if appropriate and possible. This portion of the Introduction includes a footnote from the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, just as Schema n. 378 did in describing this element of the rite. The wording describing the reasons for retaining the translation and deposition of the relics slightly differs here from that in Schemata n. 370 and n. 375. Here, the “tradition of the Roman liturgy” is referred to, whereas Schemata n. 370 and n. 375 made reference to “ex antiquo more.” The traditional practices of the Church are to be retained when possible. Further, the directions in Schema n. 375 emphasized that relics belong only below the altar or in the base of the altar. This direction has been moved in the 1977 rite.

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9. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 4.
10. ODE-Praenotanda, nn.4-5.
12. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 5. “Liturgiae Romanae traditio Martyrum aliorumve Sanctorum reliquias sub altari condendi, opportune servabitur.”
The *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae* now gives three specific rules to govern the use of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. First, the relics must be of a size that makes it possible to recognize them as parts of a human body. Relics too small to identify as human body parts should not be utilized. The text here is almost identical to that used in the final schema version of the *Praenotanda*.

Second, care must be taken to ensure that any relic which is to be placed underneath an altar is authentic. Renewed attention to historical study raised the concern for the historicity of relics and accounts of the lives of saints. While the practice of depositing relics beneath the altar is part of the historical tradition, the 1977 rite addresses some of the abuses that developed throughout Church history. The *Praenotanda* are clear that it is better not to have relics buried below the altar than to have relics which are of questionable historical authenticity. These criteria demonstrate that there are certain standards which must be met in order to maintain the tradition of the deposition of relics below the altar. The instructions in this section have been changed since *Schema* n. 375. In the promulgated rite, the *Praenotanda* contain a simple instruction that great care must be given to determine whether the relic is authentic. *Schemata* n. 370 and n. 375 provided a large context for the instruction, noting that care was not always given in the past to the authenticity of relics. The intent of the two instructions is the same.

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15. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 5b. “Maxima cum diligentia inspiciatur num reliquiae deponendae authenticae sint. Praestat altare sine reliquis dedicari quam dubiae fidei reliquias sub eo deponi.”

16. *Schema* n. 370, addendum, p. 4, n. 8b. “Inspiciatur autem maxima cum diligentia num reliquiae deponendae authenticae sint; quae de earum authenticitate superioribus saeculis dicta sunt, ex novo sunt probanda,
The third criterion in the Praenotanda is that any reliquary used for the deposition of relics must not be placed on the altar or into the mensa, the altar table. The only acceptable place for relics to be deposited is beneath the table of the altar, as the form of the altar permits. The wording here demonstrates a change since Schema n. 375 and since Schema n. 378. These two schemata, for the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the Rite of Dedication of an Altar, used identical language which is different from the promulgated ordo. The schemata provided more specific instructions about the deposition of relics in the base of the altar, while the promulgated rite speaks only of relics being placed beneath the table of the altar. However, both the schemata and the promulgated rite emphasize that relics do not belong in the mensa of the altar. This changes the way that relics are used in the rite from several of the earlier liturgical books, particularly the medieval practice of placing relics in the altar.

The Praenotanda do not specify whether or not relics should be used in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Supporting the inclusion of relics in the celebration, the Praenotanda state that the ancient custom of the Church is to be preserved. Specific and strict guidelines for the type of relics which might be used have also been added to the Praenotanda. Ultimately, the

\[\text{cum olim minor adhibita sit cura in reliquis veris a falsis secernendis. Praestat enim altare sine reliquis consecrare quam dubiae fidei reliquias in eo condere.}^{17}\]

\[17. \text{ODE-Praenotanda, n. 5c. “Reliquarium capsam neque super altare neque in altaris mensa est collocanda sed, attenta altaris forma, sub altaris mensa condenda.”}\]

decision to include or omit relics in the celebration rests with the local bishop whose central criterion for deciding is to be the faith of the Christian community.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{On the Celebration}

After providing the criteria for the use of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the \textit{Praenotanda} detail the celebration of dedication. The text begins by stating that the bishop is the proper minister of the rite as the shepherd of the local community.\textsuperscript{20} Thomas Simons notes that while the role of the bishop is specified, numerous ministers will be involved throughout the rite of dedication. Showing a principle of Vatican II, the assembly is also a vital part of the celebration.\textsuperscript{21} Next, the days for the celebration of dedication and which days should not be used for the celebration are detailed. Preference is given to Sundays.\textsuperscript{22} Specific instructions for the use of the appropriate liturgical texts follow, stipulating that the Common for the Dedication of a Church, in the lectionary and the sacramentary, should be utilized.\textsuperscript{23} The call for Mass to be concelebrated with the priests who are associated with the church being dedicated or the community reflects other liturgical reforms from Vatican II, which revived the practice of concelebration.\textsuperscript{24} Concelebration not only increases the presence of those associated with the

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church in the rite, but also helps to keep the numerous ritual actions from becoming too much for the bishop.

Directions for the celebration of the Office of Dedication indicate that the dedication is a solemnity in the place where the church is to be dedicated. The celebration of dedication should begin on the vigil of the dedication with the celebration of Evening Prayer. The Liturgy of the Hours for the Common of the Dedication of a Church begins with Evening Prayer I. The celebration of the Office with a vigil consisting of the Office of Readings is particularly fitting if relics will be deposited below the altar. The readings for the Office should be taken from the Common or Proper as fitting. In *Schema* n. 375, the discussion of the celebration of the Divine Office on the Day of Dedication was located near the end of the *Praenotanda*, following the description of the pastoral preparation of the people. Using different language, *Schema* n. 375 provided the same details for connecting the use of relics in the rite to the celebration of the Office as in the 1977 rite.

**On the Parts (of the Rite)**

The parts of the rite are outlined next. The celebration begins with the entrance into the church, for which three models are provided. Two elements of the entrance into the church, the handing over of the church to the bishop and the aspersion of the church, are especially

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highlighted.²⁷ The Liturgy of the Word follows, and the readings are to be selected from the
Lectionary for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Following the homily, the Creed is recited.²⁸
This is a switch from Schema n. 375 in which the Praenotanda stated that the Creed is not said
unless the rubrics for the liturgy of the day prescribe it.²⁹ The day of dedication is a solemnity, so
the Creed would be recited. The Litany of the Saints is sung in place of the Prayer of the
Faithful.³⁰

Following the Litany of the Saints, the deposition of the relics takes place, if it is to be
part of the ritual celebration.³¹ The discussion of the deposition of relics occurs in the section on
the prayer of dedication and the anointing of the altar.³² The description of the deposition of the
relics is brief, noting that the deposition of the relics links their sacrifice to Christ’s. If there are
not relics of martyrs, relics of a saint may be used.³³ The Litany of the Saints is sung regardless
of whether relics are to be deposited below the altar. Singing the Litany of the Saints helps to
situate this celebration within the heavenly liturgy of the Church. The instructions here are
shorter than those in Schema n. 375, providing a less explicit connection between the sacrifice of

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²⁷ ODE-Praenotanda, n. 11.
²⁸ ODE-Praenotanda, n. 13.
³⁰ ODE-Praenotanda, n. 13.
³¹ This dissertation follows the pattern set by the rite in noting that relics are used “si casus fert”, as the
case may be, in each instance that the text does.
³² ODE-Praenotanda, n. 14.
³³ ODE-Praenotanda, n. 14. “Post Litaniarum cantum, si casus fert, deponuntur reliquiae alicuius
Martyrius ad significandum sacrificium membrorum de Capitis sacrificio sumpsisse principium. Ubi tamen Martyris
reliquiae non habentur, tunc in altari includi possunt reliquiae alius Sancti.”
Christ and the sacrifice of the martyrs who gave their lives in witness to Christ. The citation from the Book of Revelation is omitted.\textsuperscript{34}

The Prayer of Dedication follows the deposition of the relics. This section has been added to the text since Schema n. 375. Noting that the celebration of the Eucharist is necessary for the dedication of a church, the Introduction relies again on the oldest tradition of the Church. In addition to the Eucharistic celebration, a Prayer of Dedication, in which the church was dedicated to God, was part of the tradition of the Church in both the East and the West.\textsuperscript{35} It is evident that Mass is the central dedicatory action in this ritual, but the connection to other traditional ritual elements has been maintained.

The Prayer of Dedication leads to the rites of anointing, incensing, covering, and illuminating the altar. The order of the ritual actions has been changed between the text of earlier schemata and the 1977 Praenotanda. In the final schema, the ritual elements were anointing, illuminating, incensing, and vesting. In the 1977 rite, incensing follows the anointing, and illuminating is the final ritual element.\textsuperscript{36} Also, the word \textit{vestitionis} from the \textit{schema} has been changed to \textit{velationis} in the 1977 rite, from vesting to covering the altar.\textsuperscript{37}

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\textsuperscript{34} Schema n. 375, p. 9, n. 15. “Depositio reliquiarum Martyrum vel aliorum Sanctorum, quae fit post Litaniarum cantum, clare ostendit sacrificium confessorum Christi cum ipso Christi sacrificio esse consociatum. Hoc in ritu visio Apocalypsis exprimitur: ‘Vidi subitus altare animas interfectorum propter verbum Dei et proper testimonium quod habebant.’ Quamquam enim omnes Sancti Christi testes merito appellari possint, tamen sanguinis testimonio peculiari vis inest, quam Martyrum tantum reliquiarum depositio totam atque integram exprimit.”

\textsuperscript{35} ODE-Praenotanda, n. 15. “Celebratio Eucharistiae maximus est ritus isque unus necessarius ad ecclesiam dedicandam; attamen, secundum communem traditionem Ecclesiae, cum Orientis tum Occidentis, dicitur etiam peculiaris Prex dedicationis, qua propositum significatur ecclesiam in perpetuum Domino dicandi eiusmodi benedictio exposcitur.”

\textsuperscript{36} ODE-Praenotanda, n. 16.

\textsuperscript{37} Schema n. 375, p. 9, n. 16.
The purpose of these rites, demonstrating the work that Christ does through the Church, especially his perfect sacrifice, is similar in each of the texts. The 1977 Praenotanda do not contain the Old Testament imagery of Jacob and Moses that was included in Schema n. 375 during the anointing of the walls of the church and the altar. Anointing the altar highlights the altar as a symbol of Christ. Both texts highlight Christ as the one who is called Anointed and who has been anointed with the Holy Spirit by the Father. Twelve (or four) anointings are still part of the rite, respecting the liturgical tradition. The schema and the 1977 Praenotanda both express the connection to the holy city of Jerusalem.

The incensation follows the anointing of the altar and the walls of the church. Incense is offered on the altar in order to signify the sacrifice of Christ and “as a sign that the prayers of the people rise up pleasing and acceptable reaching the throne of God”. Both the people and the nave are incensed, but the people are incensed first “because they are the living temple in which each faithful member is a spiritual altar”. The Old Testament imagery has been removed from the text in the 1977 Praenotanda. Two New Testament references remain as footnotes.

Covering the altar follows the rite of incensation in the 1977 Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae. Additional descriptions of this ritual element have been added since Schema n. 375. In this section, the importance of the mensa of the altar is emphasized. It is mentioned several times in connection with the place where the Christian sacrifice of the Eucharist will be. References to the

38. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 16a.
40. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 16b.
41. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 16b.
42. ODE-Praenotanda, n. 16b.
covering or vesting of the altar as an invitation to the faithful to come forward and be refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ are in both the *Schema* n. 375 and the *Praenotanda*. The 1977 *Praenotanda* clearly highlight the role of the faithful who gather around the table with the priests, all bringing different gifts, to joyfully celebrate the memorial of the death and resurrection of Christ.\(^{43}\)

Illuminating the altar concludes this ritual element. The reasons for the illumination of the altar and the church have been slightly changed between *Schema* n. 375 and the promulgated text. The older form referenced the Book of Revelation and God illuminating the world. The illumination in the schema was a connection to the world to come, especially seen in references to the heavenly liturgy and the earthly liturgy.\(^{44}\) The promulgated rite, building on the writings of Pope Vigilius, focuses on Christ as the light of the peoples, bringing clarity and revelation to the human family.\(^{45}\)

The Eucharistic celebration follows the rite of illumination of the church and the altar. A notable difference between the promulgated rite and the last available schema is in the title of this section. In the older text, the section was entitled “De liturgia eucharistica qua fit dedicatio.” Here, the heading is simply “De Eucharistiae celebratione”. The explicit reference to the Eucharistic celebration as the dedicatory action has been removed.

The celebration of the Eucharist is the end for which the church was built. Building on the writings of John Chrysostom, the newer rite highlights the celebration of the Eucharist not

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43. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 16c.

44. *Schema* n. 375. p. 9, n. 16b.

45. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 16d.
only as sanctifying the hearts of those who partake, but also sanctifying the altar itself.\textsuperscript{46} The 1977 \textit{Praenotanda} emphasize the use of proper parts of the Mass of Dedication for the celebration. The text does not mention here the translation of the Blessed Sacrament to the tabernacle at the conclusion of communion. The celebration of the Eucharist is the central element of the Rite of Dedication, and it is the action through which the altar is consecrated.

\textit{Adaptation of the Rite}

After detailing the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration, the \textit{Praenotanda} discuss the areas of the rite which may be adapted by the competent Conference of Bishops in various regions.\textsuperscript{47} Among the areas of the rite which are open to local influence are the ways in which various ministers are involved in the rite and the way in which the church is handed over to the bishop.\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Schema} n. 375 follows a similar pattern in detailing the decisions to be made by the competent ministers and the decisions which are left to the local competent Conference of Bishops.\textsuperscript{49} In both the 1977 \textit{editio typica} and \textit{Schema} n. 375, there are specific elements of the celebration which cannot be changed or eliminated. These ritual elements protect the structural integrity of the rite as it is celebrated throughout the world and ensure the centrality of the celebration of Mass as the dedicatory action.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{ODE-Praenotanda}, n. 17. “Praeterea Eucharistia, quae sumentium corda sanctificat, altare et celebrationis locum quodammodo consecrat, ut antiqui ecclesiae Patres haud semel affirmarunt: ‘hoc altare admirandum est, quia natura quidem lapis est, sanctum autem efficitur, postquam Christi Corpus excepit.’”

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{ODE-Praenotanda}, n. 18.

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{ODE-Praenotanda}, n.19.

\textsuperscript{49} \textit{Schema} n. 375. p. 10-11, nn. 18-19.
The use of relics in the dedication is mentioned under this heading. The local competent ministers, especially the bishop, must decide whether or not it is opportune for relics to be deposited as part of the rite. The *Praenotanda* are clear that the spiritual good of the faithful must be the primary concern in making this decision. The guidelines set forth early in the *Praenotanda* must be followed if relics are part of the rite.\(^5^0\)

Above all, the participation of the faithful of the church to be dedicated needs to be the utmost concern of the rector of the church to be dedicated. The active role of the congregation should characterize the entire rite. Simons writes of the importance of the active role of the assembly in the Mass. The celebration of the Eucharist is never to be omitted from the Rite of Dedication, and the rites with special meaning must be retained, even if the words of the prayers are suitably adapted.\(^5^1\) The active role of the congregation in the dedication emphasizes the Church as the people of God.

**Pastoral Preparation**

The section on the pastoral preparation of the local Christian community follows the decisions made by the local competent ministers in the *Praenotanda*. Here, the rector of the church to be dedicated is again responsible for the preparation of the people. Through the work of experts, the faithful must be educated on the spiritual, ecclesial, and missionary aspects of the life of the community.\(^5^2\) Catechesis is strongly urged in this part of the *Praenotanda*, so that the

\(^{50}\) *ODE*-*Praenotanda*, n.19. “…de opportunitate reliquias Sanctorum deponendi decernere; qua in re bonum spirituale fidelium in primis est prospiciendum et ea quae n. 5 praecipiuntur sunt servanda.”

\(^{51}\) Simons, *Holy People Holy Place*, 34.

\(^{52}\) *ODE*-*Praenotanda*, n. 20.
faithful will know the significance of the various parts of the church and be cognizant of the liturgical symbols which will be used in the rite of dedication.\textsuperscript{53} Simons suggests that the biblical symbolism used during the rite and its history should be part of the preparation before the liturgy in order that the richness of the symbols can be fully appreciated.\textsuperscript{54} Liturgical catechesis does not end with the celebration of the rite, but continues after the liturgical event has taken place.

Comparing the section on the pastoral preparation in \textit{Schema} n. 375 to the Introduction shows that the section has been shortened in the promulgated rite. The \textit{editio typica} more specifically emphasizes preparing the people for active participation in the celebration. The succinct description of the pastoral preparation details the role of the rector of the church in ensuring that the Christian community be aware of the virtues of the spirituality and the mission of the Church which are evident in the celebrated rite. Further, the ecclesial aspects of the Rite of Dedication of a Church are also to be communicated. Unlike \textit{Schema} n. 375 which delineated the role of the bishop and the prayer over the people prayed at the end of the liturgy, the promulgated \textit{Praenotanda} do not specifically mention a role for the bishop in the pastoral preparation of the people.\textsuperscript{55}

\textbf{Requisites for the Dedication of a Church}

Detailed instructions about the items needed for the liturgical celebration of the dedication of a church are provided in the \textit{Praenotanda}. The list in the promulgated rite is more

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{ODE-Praenotanda}, n. 20.

\textsuperscript{54} Simons, \textit{Holy People Holy Place}, 35.

\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Schema} n. 375. p. 11, n. 20.
extensive than that found in *Schema n. 375*. These details help ensure a smooth celebration and amplify the various ritual symbols used throughout the liturgy. Relics are included in the preparation for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. If relics are to be used, they should be set in the place where the entrance procession will begin, along with the *Pontificale Romanum* and a cross. The relics are to be in a container, surrounded by flowers and candles. Specific instructions for the items necessary for the deposition of relics below the altar are provided. If the simple entrance is to be used, the vessel containing the relics can be placed in the sanctuary before the beginning of the rite. If the relics are to be carried by a deacon, he should wear an alb, a stole, in red if the relics are those of a martyr or white in other cases, and, if it is available, a dalmatic. If the relics are to be carried by priests, a chasuble should be prepared for them. However, the relics may also be carried by other ministers, who wear albs or other permitted vestments.

In the sanctuary, there should be a small table for the vessel containing the relics to rest upon during the first part of the dedication liturgy. In the sacristy, there should be cement for


58. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 24a. “…capsa cum reliquis, floribus et facibus circumdata. Si fit introitus simplex, capsam apto presbyterii loco, ante ritus initium, collocari potest;…”

59. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 24a. “…pro diaconis, qui reliquias deponendas portabant: alba, stola coloris rubri, si de reliquias Martyris agitur, vel coloris albi in ceteris casibus, et, si praesto sunt, dalmatae. Si vero reliquiae a presbyteris deferuntur, loco dalmatica, pro ipsis planetae praeparentur.”

60. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 24a. “…Reliquiae tamen deferri possunt etiam ab aliis ministris, albis vel vestibus legitime probatis indutis.”

61. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 24b. “…parva mensa in qua deponitur capsam reliquarium dum prima pars ritus dedicationis peragitur.”
the closing of the lid of the sepulchrum in which the container bearing the relics will be deposited beneath the altar. Further, a stonemason should also be present so that he may seal the cover of the sepulchrum at the appropriate time.62 Throughout the dedication liturgy, honor and care should be given to the relics to be deposited. These steps ensure that the relics will be properly cared for throughout the liturgy and sealed in such a way that they cannot be desecrated in the future. Care for the altar and the relics is demonstrated throughout the *Praenotanda*.

Relics are also part of the final section of the *Praenotanda* addressing the Rite of Dedication of a Church itself. This section has been added since *Schema* n. 375 and highlights the changes in the 1977 Introduction to ensure clarity. Two copies of the record of the dedication of the church are to be drawn up, one for the bishop of the diocese and another to be placed in the archives of the church to be dedicated. However, where there is to be the deposition of a reliquary, a third copy of the record of dedication is to be composed so that it can be buried in the box where the relics are deposited.63 Further, the record must include the day, month, and year of the dedication of the church, the name of the bishop who celebrated the rite, the Titular of the church, and, as the case may be, the name of martyrs or saints whose relics can be found below the altar.64 These records emphasize the importance of the relics deposited beneath the altar since they are among the few key details which must be part of the writings. Including the

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62. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 24c. “… maltha seu arenatum quo cavae operculum claudatur; adsit quoque faber caementarius, qui suo tempore claudat sepulcrum reliquierum.”

63. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 25. “Actorum dedicationis ecclesiae duo conficientur exemplaria, episcopo, ecclesiae rectori legatisque communitatis localis subsignanda, quorum unum in dioeceseos, alterum in ecclesiae dedicatae tabulario servetur. Ubi vero fit depositio reliquiarum, tertium actorum exemplar conficiatur, opportune in ipsa reliquierum capsa condendum.”

64. *ODE-Praenotanda*, n. 25. “In actis mentio fiat anni, mensis, diei dedicationis ecclesiae, nominis Episcopi ritum celebrantis, Tituli ecclesiae necnon, si casus fert, nominum Martyrum vel Sanctorum, quorum reliquiae sub altari condenda sunt.”
names of the saints whose relics rest in the church not only incorporates them in the history of the church, but also provides a historical record of the relics which matches the desire for authenticity stated earlier in the *Praenotanda*.

The final elements of the *Praenotanda* discuss the celebrations which should occur on the anniversary of the dedication of the cathedral and of the local church. These elements round out the celebration of dedication, marking it not only as a single day’s event, but rather a milestone in the Christian community which should be recognized and celebrated. This section has also been added since the *Praenotanda* described in *Schema* n. 375. Simons suggests that the importance of the anniversary of the dedication is enhanced when the bishop celebrates on that day with the congregation.

The *Praenotanda* provide a glimpse into the theological framework for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. In addition to outlining the key elements and the rubrics for celebrating the rite, the *Praenotanda* offer a theological explanation of the rite. Overall, the rite highlights the Christian community and the Eucharistic celebration as the source and summit of the worship space. Relics fit into this context by connecting each celebration of the Eucharist with the communion of saints, represented by the relics.

**Conclusion**

The schemata studied in the previous section offered a first understanding of the reforms seen in the Rite of Dedication of a Church promulgated in 1977. However, it is evident that


deeper reflection took place between *Schema* n. 375 (1971) on the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the 1977 *editio typica*. These changes resulted from additional attention to the principles of reform as well as attention to clarity and brevity within the rite. Key components of the rite are the role of the altar and the Eucharistic celebration of the faithful which will take place there. These elements are emphasized further in each edition of the *Praenotanda* in the schemata. The reforms of the Second Vatican Council are evident in the Introduction to the 1977 *editio typica*, not only in the focus on the Eucharist as the central dedicatory act, but in the consideration given to all aspects of the faith of the Christian community. Attention to the faith of the community is seen in the need for solemn rites to mark the construction of the church, in structuring the church so that it reflects the image of the gathered assembly, in depositing only authentic relics, and in the liturgical catechesis provided to the Christian community.

Relics play an interesting role in the descriptions provided in the *Praenotanda* of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae*, and their use demonstrates the aims of the reformers of the Second Vatican Council. The Introduction forms the basis to examine the role of relics in the rite itself. Relics, although optional, should be used in the rite when possible according to the tradition of the Church. This emphasizes the importance of continuing the many traditions that had become part of the rite of dedication of a church throughout history. The role of relics is a key example of *ressourcement* and *aggiornamento*. Not only does the revised role of relics in the rite reflect a return to the earliest use of relics in the tradition, the role of relics also demonstrates a renewal of the Church’s thinking about Christ and the altar in the Eucharistic celebration.

First, relics are discussed in the Introduction only after Christ’s sacrifice has been detailed. This centers all of the actions detailed in the *Praenotanda* firmly in the context of
Christ’s paschal sacrifice. Also, there is a clear concern for attention to the *mensa* of the altar. The directions in the *Praenotanda* call for the table of the altar to be left intact while relics may only be deposited beneath, and not in, the altar. Placement of the relics below the altar also brings the ritual action into alignment with the earliest practices of constructing altars over the tombs of martyrs or, in the case of Ambrose, constructing tombs below the altar in the church. Although there are differences between the language used in the schemata and in the 1977 *editio typica*, the intent throughout the process of reform was the same: the altar table is not to be disturbed or broken in any way.

Second, there is an overarching concern for the faith of the Christian people. This concern is repeated each time that the possibility of depositing relics as part of the rite is mentioned. It is clear that no element of the Rite of Dedication of a Church should be done in such a way that the faith of the Christian community would be shaken. Relics should not be deposited if they are of dubious authenticity. The need for authentic relics emphasizes that relics help the Christian faithful connect to the communion of saints and the heavenly celebration of the liturgy. In the revised *Praenotanda*, it is evident that relics themselves do not consecrate the altar. Reviving the ancient tradition first seen in the writings of Ambrose, the *Praenotanda* are clear that relics help to demonstrate the connection between those who have given their lives in witness to Christ and Christ’s saving actions. It is relics which are honored by their placement in proximity to the altar, not the altar which is honored by serving as a final resting place for relics. By emphasizing the proper role of relics in the life of the Church, the *Praenotanda* demonstrate how relics are an intrinsic part of the Rite of Dedication of a Church.
Relics are connected to a number of different parts of the rite, including the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours. The celebration of the office of readings, extending from a vigil celebration before the dedication of a church, may help the faithful of the church come to a deeper understanding of the actions of the martyr or saint whose relics will be deposited beneath the altar. The use of readings from the proper of the saint can demonstrate the connection between the saint’s life and the sacrifice of Christ. Further, relics are connected to the written record of the church which preserves the history of the day of the dedication. Notably, the *Praenotanda* are silent on the topic of the source of authentic relics. No directions are provided here on how the local community would obtain authentic relics or whose responsibility it would be to acquire relics for the dedication ritual.

The *Praenotanda* evidence the idea of altar as a symbol of Christ, as seen in number 16. Also, the *Praenotanda* present the role of the altar as the gathering place of the faithful. The emphasis on New Testament imagery and the sacrifice of Christ depicts the centrality of the Paschal sacrifice in the dedication of a church. This celebration offers an ideal opportunity for liturgical catechesis of the Christian community. The dedication of a church only happens once in the life of a particular church, so the pastoral preparation of the people and for the rite should be comprehensive. Along with the role of relics in the *Praenotanda*, these themes help to express the theology of the *editio typica* which centers on Christ’s saving actions.
Chapter Six: Ordo Dedicationis Ecclesiae

The Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae contains the text of the ritual celebration for the dedication of a church, contextualized within the celebration of the Eucharist. The Praenotanda express and explain the theology of the rite. Significant changes were made to the role of relics in the editio typica compared to the 1961/2 rite and the schemata.

This chapter will examine each of the ritual elements in which relics could be included in the Rite of Dedication in the revised rite. The text of the rite shows how the liturgy will be enacted if relics are present or if they are absent. The ritual elements directly impacted by the role of relics include: the preparation of the relics, the procession into the Church involving relics, the placement of the relics in the sanctuary throughout the Liturgy of the Word, the position of the deposition of the relics in the overall rite, the placement of the relics underneath the altar, the use of psalmody during these ritual actions, the dedication, lighting and incensing of the altar (now with relics placed beneath it) which follow the deposition of relics, as well as the celebration of the Eucharist. As seen in the previous chapter, the option of using relics, which should be retained according to the tradition when possible, is to be part of the rite which helps to express the faith of the Christian community.

This chapter will focus on the ritual elements of the rite of dedication and their relationship to the deposition of relics. The euchology of the rite will be examined in Part IV of this dissertation, on the theology of the rite. This chapter will offer a brief comparison of the rite in the Pontificale Romanum 1961/2, Schema n. 375, and the present rite. Briefly noting the similarities and differences between these texts will show the numerous revisions which were
made to the role of relics in the rite. Finally, the chapter will conclude with a brief analysis of the role of relics as sign and symbol within the Rite of Dedication of Church and an Altar.

**Rite of Dedication of a Church**

**Part One: Introductory Rites and Entrance into the Church**

**First Option: Procession**

The Rite of Dedication of a Church includes three possible variations on the entrance rite, each of which should be used under varying circumstances.

1 The entrance into the church provides the initial sense of the character and meanings which are inherently part of the dedication.

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A. Primus modus: Processio

29. Porta ecclesiae dedicandae clausa esse debet. Hora competenti populus congregatur in vicinam ecclesiam vel alium aptum locum ex quo incedat processio ad ecclesiam. Martyrum vel Sanctorum reliquiae, si deponendae sunt sub altari, in loco ubi populus congregatur, parantur.

A. First form: Procession

29. The door of the church to be dedicated should be closed. At a convenient hour the people assemble in a neighboring church or other suitable place from which the procession may proceed to the church. The relics of the martyrs or saints, if they are to be placed beneath the altar, are prepared in the place where the people assemble.

30. Episcopus et presbyteri concelebrantes, diaconi et ministri, suæ quisque veste induti, accedunt ad locum ubi populus est congregatus. Episcopus, depositis baculo et mitra, salutat populum dicens:

Gratia et pax sit omnibus vobis in ecclesia sancta Dei vel alia apta verba e sacra Scriptura praesertim deprompta.

Populus respondet: Et cum spiritu tuo vel alia apta verba.

30. The bishop and the concelebrating priests, the deacons and ministers, each in appropriate vestments, proceed to the place where the people are assembled. Putting aside the pastoral staff and miter, the bishop greets the people, saying, “The grace and peace of God be with all of you in his holy Church” Or other suitable words taken preferably from sacred Scripture may be used. The people respond: And also with you or other suitable words.

The stational characteristic of the ancient Roman liturgy is present in the first option for the entrance in the 1977 ordo. The rite presumes a local church or an older church building which can serve as the starting point of the procession. If they are to be used, the relics are prepared in the place where the procession begins.¹ In the greeting given by the bishop, the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration is emphasized as he says, “…we have come together to

¹ ODEA 1977, n. 29.
dedicate this church by offering within it the sacrifice of Christ.”

The bishop references the physical church building which is to be dedicated and delineates the ritual actions of God’s holy people, His Church, praying that those actions help the community to “become the one temple of his Spirit,” which is sustained at the table of Lord. The opening elements of the rite are very similar to those in *Schema n. 375*, but omit the instructions for the method of entrance if the church has already housed the celebration of the Eucharist.

The differences between the opening elements of the rite found in the 1961/2 *Pontificale Romanum* and the 1977 Rite of Dedication of a Church highlight the work of the Consilium and Congregation to implement the principles of Vatican II. For example, the third instruction in the 1961/2 rite addresses the role of relics in the rite. While the 1961/2 rite offered detailed instructions on the clean case in which the relics should be placed with three grains of incense, the *editio typica* eliminates that rubric and begins with the entrance into the church to be dedicated. In both rites, however, there is an instruction which calls for information about the relics of the martyrs to be placed on parchment with the relics. In the *editio typica*, relics are optional and there are no fasts or indulgences described.

Other changes between the opening elements in the 1961/2 rite and the 1977 *editio typica* are also evident. For example, the 1961/2 rite begins with a sprinkling of the external walls of the

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church. Only after sprinkling the building and prayer does the entrance into the church begin. The Litany of the Saints is part of the entrance into the church in the 1961/2 rite. In the 1977 text, the Litany of the Saints follows the Liturgy of the Word. In both the 1961/2 rite and the 1977 *editio typica*, the name of any saints whose relics may be present in the church and the saint whom the church honors are to be included in the Litany.

In the 1977 *editio typica*, after the bishop and the people have gathered, the bishop addresses the people and shows that the whole rite is within the context of the Mass. The prayer says that the community gathers to dedicate the church by celebrating the sacrifice of the Lord. The allocution also highlights the altar as the focus of the church building around which the community gathers for worship and the baptismal font as the source of entrance into the community of believers. The imagery here calls attention to the importance of community, sustained at the “one table of the Lord” and the people of God who “become the one temple of his Spirit.” These images highlight key elements of the Christian community and how it is shaped by this liturgical celebration. It is evident that the Eucharist is the dedicatory act rather than the deposition of relics or another ritual element. This is a key difference between the two rites, as the 1961/2 rite does not have a similar allocution. Relics, however, are given honor in the entrance procession, as they are the only items surrounded by candles.

7. PR 1961/2, n. 580.
8. PR 1961/2, nn. 585-591.
31. Expleta admonitione, Episcopus resumit mitram et baculum et incipit processio ad ecclesiam dedicandam. Non adhibentur candelae, praeter eas quae reliquias Sanctorum circumdant. Tus non uritur neque in processione neque in Missa ante ritum incensationis et illuminationis altaris et ecclesiae. Praecedit crucifer; sequuntur primum ministri; deinde diaconi aut presbyteri cum reliquis Sanctorum, ministris vel fidelibus cum facibus hinc et inde comitantibus; postea presbyteri concelebrantes; tum Episcopus duobus diaconis retro sequentibus; denique fideles.

31. When he has finished addressing the people, the bishop receives the mitre and pastoral staff and the procession to the church to be dedicated begins. No lights are used apart from those which surround the relics of the Saints, nor is incense used either in the procession or in the Mass before the rite of incensation and the lighting of the altar and the church. The crossbearer leads the procession; the ministers follow first; then the deacons or the priests with the relics of the Saints, ministers or the faithful accompanying them on either side with lighted torches; after that the concelebrating priests; then the bishop with two deacons follows next; and finally the faithful.

If relics are part of the procession, the rite continues the tradition of a processional translation that characterized the early Roman rites of dedication. A multitude of ministers is involved in the entrance procession, which is almost identical to the entrance procession described in Schema n. 375. The entrance procession offers one way of actively involving the faithful in the celebration of the rite. The procession, which is accompanied by Psalm 121 (122), stops at the threshold of the church to be dedicated.

There, the church is ritually handed over to the bishop by various representatives of the parish community and those who worked to build the church. One person might offer to the bishop and to the congregation a brief reflection on the art and design of the new church. If the door to the church was closed, it is then opened by the priest who will be entrusted with the care

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of the church. This is a sharp contrast to the 1961 *Ordo ad e

culesiam dedicandam et consecransdam* which involved a lengthy dialogue at the doors of the new church similar to the *Tollite Portis* ritual of the older rites. In the 1977 *editio typica*, Psalm 24 is sung after the bishop has welcomed the congregation into the new church. No longer does this psalm precede the entrance into the church. The congregation enters the church to be dedicated immediately following the bishop, as Psalm 24 is sung. Psalm 86, part of the 1961/2 rite, does not appear in the 1977 *editio typica*.

35. Episcopus, omissa altaris osculo, pergit ad cathedram; concelebrantes, diaconi, ministri ad loca sibi in presbyterii assignata. Reliquiae Sanctorum, apto presbyterii loco inter faces ponuntur. Deinde benedictur aqua, ritu qui infra nn. 48-50 describitur.

35. The bishop, without kissing the altar, goes to the chair; the concelebrants, deacons, and ministers go to the places assigned to them in the sanctuary. The relics of the saints are placed in a suitable part of the sanctuary between lighted torches. Water is then blessed in the rite described below, nos. 48-50.

The relics are placed in their interim resting spot for the Liturgy of the Word. They will remain in this place until their deposition. This is a marked change from the 1961/2 liturgical celebration when the Liturgy of the Word would have been celebrated in the Mass, following the rite of dedication. The 1977 *editio typica* shows that the deposition of the relics has been placed within the context of the Eucharistic celebration. The relics are still to be surrounded by the only lighted candles in the church. This concludes the Processional form of entrance for the dedication.


15. *ODEA* 1977, n. 34.
Second Option: Solemn Entrance

In the second form of entrance, the Solemn Entrance, relics are prepared in advance and placed near the doors of the church. The assembly and the clergy gather at the doors of the church and process inside from there. This version offers a shorter form than a procession from statio to statio seen in the first possible form of entrance.\textsuperscript{16} The procession of ministers, in the same order as described above, approaches the doors of the church, where the opening greeting and prayer are identical to those used in the Processional Entrance.\textsuperscript{17} The rest of the Solemn Entrance is identical to the previous form, including the handing over of the church to the bishop and the placement of the relics in the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{18} The rubrics and prayer texts here are similar to those in \textit{Schema n. 375}.\textsuperscript{19}

Third Option: Simple Entrance

In the Simple Entrance, or third form, there is no exterior station, and the assembly is seated before any of the ritual is celebrated. The only processional element is that of the ministers from the sacristy, through the body of the church, to the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{20} If relics are part of the dedication, they are brought in from the doors of the church as part of the entrance procession with the bishop and other ministers. If there is “just cause” the relics can be placed in the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{ODEA 1977}, n. 36. \\
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{ODEA 1977}, nn. 37-38. \\
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ODEA 1977}, nn. 39-41. \\
\textsuperscript{19} Schema n. 375, n. 26, n. 9-15. \\
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{ODEA 1977}, n. 43.
\end{flushleft}
sanctuary before the entrance procession as long as they are between lighted torches. 21 This is a different rubric from the previous two forms of entrance.

44. Reliquiae Sanctorum, si sub altari deponendae sunt, in ipsa processione introitus ad presbyterium afferuntur sive e secretario sive e sacello, ubi iam inde a vigilia ad venerationem fidelium sunt expositae. Iusta tamen de causa parari possunt ante ritus initium, apto presbyterii loco, facibus circum ardentibus.

If there are relics of the saints to be placed beneath the altar, these are brought in the entrance procession to the sanctuary from the sacristy or chapel where since the vigil they have been exposed for the veneration of the people. For a just cause, before the celebration begins, the relics may be placed between lighted torches in a suitable part of the sanctuary.

Here, the first indication emerges in the rite that the relics had been available for veneration by the people in the night preceding. Notable in the editio typica as compared to the 1961/2 Pontifical, the relics are part of a single entrance procession regardless of which form of entrance is used. In the 1961/2 rite, as seen in Chapter Three above, the relics were part of a second procession of faithful and ministers after the initial entrance procession and some of the preparatory rites had been celebrated; this second procession included its own prayers and psalms, along with incensing of the relics when the procession reached the place where the relics had been kept. 22 The 1961/2 rite begins the second part of the rite, the deposition of the relics, only after the sprinkling of the interior of the church, the lustration of the altar, the writing of the Greek and Latin alphabets on the floor of the church, and several prayers and psalms. Clearly, the role of relics in the 1977 Rite of Dedication of a Church has been abbreviated by the elimination of a procession which solely involved the relics and their delayed entrance into the new church.

21. ODEA 1977, n. 44.

22. PR 1961/2, n. 619.
This demonstrates an important change as a result of the theology of Vatican II: no longer does the church to be dedicated need to be purified before relics can enter it. The 1977 *Ordo* focuses on the joyful celebration of the dedication of a new place of worship and on the Christian community as Church rather than on the banishing of evil from a profane space in order that it might become sacred. The placement of relics within the entrance procession highlights their non-consecratory action within the rite. The remainder of the Simple Entrance follows a pattern similar to the previous two forms of entrance and calls for the same euchological texts. All three of the entrance forms have a similar structure. Relics have been incorporated into the entrance procession in each of the three possible modes. There is no change among the euchological texts in each form. If relics are to be used, they are part of the entrance procession, regardless of the form used. All of the options would bring relics, if they are to be used, into the church to be dedicated for the entire length of the celebration, a marked contrast from the separate procession involving relics in the middle of the liturgical celebration in the 1961/2 rite.

**Blessing of Water**

Following the entrance procession, the Blessing and Sprinkling of Water takes place. The order of the blessing of the water has changed since *Schema n. 375*, in which the blessing of baptismal water came before the blessing of water for the sprinkling of the people. A marked change is seen here from the pre-Vatican II rite of dedication. The 1961/2 rite included the lustration and purification of the altar among the initial actions of the bishop in the new church, following the aspersion of the inside of the building. The 1961/2 rite specified that the water to

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be used must be “Gregorian” water, continuing with the medieval tradition of the rite. The 1977 editio typica focuses on baptismal water.

The bishop then sprinkles the altar, the people, and the walls of the church. After the sprinkling rite, the Gloria is sung and the Opening Prayer is prayed. This ritual pattern follows Schema n. 375.

**Part II: Liturgy of the Word**

The Liturgy of the Word follows the Gloria and the Opening Prayer. The only lighted candles in the church continue to be those surrounding the relics. The Liturgy of the Word opens with readings from the selections in The Lectionary for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Following the scriptural readings and the homily. The general intercessions are replaced by the Litany of the Saints.

This is the pattern for the rite that was seen in Schema n. 375. Many of the elements of the schema and the editio typica are the same. However, Psalm 118 is suggested by the schema,

25. PR 1961/2, n. 582.

26. ODEA 1977, n. 49.

27. ODEA 1977, nn. 50-52.


29. The Lectionary provides the Reading I and Psalm selections for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. It then refers to the Common for the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church for selections for the other parts of the Liturgy of the Word. Word and Euchology are discussed further in Chapter Nine, below.

30. ODEA 1977, nn. 54-56.
but the *editio typica* of the 1977 rite states that Psalm 18 be used instead. The recommended response is also different, though both are focused on the importance of the Word of God.\(^{31}\)

**Part III: Prayer of Dedication and Anointings**

Part Three of the celebration, the Prayer of Dedication and the Anointings, begins with an invitation to prayer by the bishop. Here, the role of saints is incorporated into the liturgical celebration.

> 57. Deinde Episcopus populum ad orandum invitat his vel similibius verbis: *Orémus, dilectíssimi nobis, Deum Patrem omnipoténtem, qui fidélium corda spiritália sibi éfficit templa, nostris autem vócibus fratérna sociétur Sanctórum supplicátio.*

> 57. Then all stand, and the bishop, without his miter, invites the people to pray in these or similar words: *Let us ask the saints to support our prayers to God the Father almighty, who has made the hearts of his people faithful temples of his Spirit.*

The invitation to prayer at the beginning of the Litany of the Saints after which the deposition of relics occurs shows the importance of the communion of saints in the Rite of Dedication. This section of the rite especially highlights the connection between relics, the earthly church and the communion of saints. By developing this connection, the presence of the saints within the community and as intercessors for the gathered community becomes more explicit. The title of this section has changed from *Schema n. 375* where it was “Depositio Reliquiarum et Unctiones,” although the introduction given here has not. Since relics have been made an optional element of the rite, the title of this section now focuses on the Prayer of Dedication rather than on the deposition of relics.\(^{32}\)

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\(^{31}\) *Schema n. 375*, nn. 29-32.

\(^{32}\) *Schema n. 375*, n. 34.
The Litany of the Saints invokes the intercession of the saints. The prayer asks that the saints help the worshippers in the community. The congregation has a role in the litany, too. Singing the Litany of the Saints expresses the relationship between the earthly and heavenly members of the communion of saints; it provides the gathered assembly a method of participation in the communion of saints. This litany illuminates the communion among members of the Church as well as both the local and universal character of the Church. In singing the responses to the cantors at the appropriate times, the assembly petitions the saints for mediation on their behalf.33

At the conclusion of the Litany of the Saints, the relics of the saints, whose names were mentioned in the litany, are deposited below the altar. Through the relics, the presence of a saintly intercessor is visible. In the Latin *editio typica*, the Litany of the Saints immediately follows the instructions on when the people should be standing or when the people should be kneeling.34


The saints whose relics are to be deposited underneath the altar are added to the litany, and they are specifically asked to intercede on behalf of the gathered community. This helps to connect

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34. In the version approved for use in English speaking countries, the Litany of the Saints is its own appendix at the end of the Rite of Dedication of Church.
the relics which are being deposited and the assembly to the larger communion of saints and the heavenly liturgy. The Litany of the Saints was moved into the position directly before the deposition of relics in *Schema n. 375*; in contrast, as seen above, the Litany of the Saints was detached from the deposition of relics in the 1961/2 rite.\(^35\) However, a prayer of consecration and blessing over the altar and the church, noting the saint in whose honor the church is named, was prayed by the bishop within the context of the Litany of the Saints in the 1961/2 rite.

\(^{35}\) PR 1961/2, nn. 590-592.
**Depositing of the Relics**

After this prayer, the bishop receives his miter, and the people are asked to stand. There are two options for the ritual action that follows: either the bishop will deposit no relics and proceed directly to the Prayer of Dedication, or the bishop will deposit relics beneath the altar before beginning the Prayer of Dedication. The deposition of relics involves several ministers, including the bishop.


(The text of Psalm 14 follows here.) Interea faber caementarius sepulcrum claudit, Episcopus autem ad cathedram reveritur.

The relics are brought to the bishop by a priest or deacon; no mention is made here about any lay or other minister who may have carried the relics in the entrance procession bringing them to the bishop. The relics are deposited into their resting place beneath the altar. No reference is made to what is transpiring during the movement of the relics from where they have been resting in the sanctuary to the altar. No mention is made of whether or not the candles surrounding the relics,

the only ones lighted in the church at that moment, are brought to the altar or if they are extinguished.

When the relics are brought to the bishop, the rite does not describe the ways in which the relics may be placed beneath the altar, only noting that the aperture must be suitable. Psalm 14 (15) presents characteristics about the type of person who may abide with the Lord and depicts the traits of those who are godly. The antiphon options accompanying Psalm 14 (15) highlight either the connection between the saints and God or the community’s continual remembrance of the saint. The first antiphon choice prays, “Saints of God, you have been enthroned at the foot of God’s altar; pray for us to the Lord Jesus Christ.”37 This antiphon emphasizes the connection between saints and Jesus Christ, as well as the location of the relics beneath the altar. A second option, “The bodies of the saints lie buried in peace, but their names will live on for ever (alleluia),” is provided.38 The second antiphon option highlights that the Christian community actively remembers the saints.

The bishop himself, continuing the ancient tradition, is the one who places the relics into their resting place. Then, a stone mason closes the aperture which is beneath the altar and the bishop returns to his chair. There is no particular prayer said over the altar or the newly sealed aperture at this moment. The rite emphasizes that the relics are to be placed beneath the altar. Within the text of the rite, no reference is made to how this may be done; some further details have already been described in the “Requisites for the Dedication of a Church” section of the Praenotanda. Perhaps the biggest change from the tradition is the lack of anointings and prayers.

37. ODEA 1977, n. 61.
38. ODEA 1977, n. 61.
said over the stone used to close the aperture and the aperture itself once the relics have been deposited in it. Further, there are no other elements added to the reliquary; the three grains of incense used in the 1961/2 rite are not used here.

The rite here is essentially identical to the structure and euchological texts offered in the schemata, including the emphasis in both the *editio typica* and schemata on the possibility, rather than the necessity, of relics being deposited and then only beneath the altar. However, more details are provided in the schemata about the abbreviation of the psalm text when the aperture has been sealed and the removal of the *Gloria Patri* at the end of the psalm.\(^3\) *Schema n. 375* uses the phrase *sepulcro sub altari aut in eius basi* to describe the location of the relics in proximity to the altar while the *editio typica* says *sepulcro opportune parato*.

In addition to the order in which the deposition of relics takes place and the ritual proximity of the deposition of relics to the Litany of the Saints, there are other differences between the 1977 *Ordo* and the 1961/2 rite. The 1961/2 *Ordo* does not specify where in the altar the relics should be deposited; it uses the phrase *in sepulcro altaris* rather than *sepulcro opportune parato* as in the 1977 rite. In the 1961/2 *Ordo*, the schola sings a special song during the deposition of the relics, while Psalm (14) 15 is used in the *editio typica*. The blessing of the cement to seal the sepulcher with Gregorian water has been removed from this rite. The 1961/2 rite also includes a euchological text which makes specific reference to the relics, rather than flowing directly into the anointing of the altar and the walls of the church. These changes show the simplification of the Rite of Dedication of a Church overall. In the *editio typica*, the role of

\(^{3}\) *Schema n. 375*, n. 38.
relics has been contextualized within the Eucharistic celebration. The deposition of relics no longer proceeds the celebration of Mass, but is situated within that celebration.

The brief attention given to the deposition of relics in the revised rite raises questions about the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication. Relics are no longer the means by which the profane space or altar stone are made sacred. Rather, the actions of Ambrose, putting relics below the altar where the sacrifice of Christ takes place, are recalled in the new celebration of dedication. Ignazio Calabuig succinctly describes how relics are incorporated into the revised rite:

The placing of the relics of martyrs is not intended to “sanctify” the new space for worship or, much less, the altar. It has its place in the ongoing rite of dedication: the “presence” of the relics of the martyrs increases the joy of the community, which is already gladdened by the inauguration of a new church building; the altar with the relics, that is, Christ with his most outstanding witnesses, brings to completion the symbolic meaning of the church as building. Relics, then do not sanctify the altar or the worship space. Instead, the relics offer a connection to the communion of saints and highlight the role of saints as witnesses to the sacrifice of Christ. This is emphasized in the placement of the Litany of the Saints directly before the deposition of the relics.

The changes to the ritual elements surrounding relics, if they are present, help to clarify their role in the rite as an additional element of joy for the community. The absence of the deposition of relics at this point would omit from the celebration a Psalm about those who live with the Lord and antiphons about the role of saints in the Christian community. While these themes occur in other ritual elements, such as in the Litany of the Saints and the opening prayer,

the tangible connection to those who have given their life for Christ is missing without the deposition of relics.

**Prayer of Dedication**

From the deposition of the relics or the conclusion of the Litany of the Saints, the rite moves to the lengthy Prayer of Dedication. Here, the bishop prays for the dedication of the church and the altar together.

The Prayer of Dedication develops the importance of the Paschal sacrifice as the reason for the church building and the central action of the Christian community. It is clear that it is God’s action which brings about the dedication of the church and makes ready the altar for the Eucharist. The Prayer of Dedication also states that the prayers of the saints should be part of the life of the Church on earth. The Prayer of Dedication introduces a change from *Schema n. 375*, which includes no dedicatory prayer and moved from the deposition of relics into the anointing of the altar and walls of the church.

**Anointing of the Altar and Walls**

When the Prayer of Dedication of the church has concluded, the walls of the church and the altar are anointed. This begins with the bishop vesting in a linen gremial and then going to the altar with various other ministers; one holds the chrism. This element of the rite also provides an opportunity for concelebrating priests to participate in the rite. Here, we note an interesting

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development: this first anointing of the altar is separated from the deposition of the relics by the Prayer of Dedication; while in the medieval rites, the altar would have been covered in chrism while the tablet sealing the sepulcher containing the relics was anointed and blessed in the four corners.

Standing before the altar, the bishop prays that the altar and the church building may be signs of the mysteries of Christ and the Church.44 Then, following the ritual pattern described in the medieval rites, the bishop pours chrism in the center of the altar and then on each of its four corners. The rubrics suggest, “It is recommended that he anoint the entire table of the altar with this.”45 The entire mensa should be smeared with the sacred chrism to emphasize the anointing of the whole table, not merely sections of it. This connects to the idea of the altar as a sign of Christ and highlights the mensa as a single, complete stone which is not to be broken. A similar anointing of the entire mensa was a ritual element of the third part of the 1961/2 Ordo in which the altar was also marked in the sign of the cross in the four corners and in the center.46 In both rites, this anointing is done after the relics have been deposited.

After the altar has been anointed, the bishop, possibly with the assistance of two or four priests, anoints the walls of the church with twelve (or four) crosses which are spread around the church on its walls. While the walls are being anointed, one of two antiphons is sung along with Psalm 83 (84) which emphasizes the presence of God in His sacred space. Both antiphons evoke images of the earthly temple of God; the first particularly highlights the presence of God among

44. ODEA 1977, n. 64.
45. DCA 1977, n. 64.
46. PR 1961/2 n. 657.
his people who are the temple. This rite, retained from the tradition of dedication liturgies, shows the importance of the physical church building for the worship of God.

**Incensation**

After the bishop has washed his hands and donned his chasuble, the incensation of the altar and the church begins. This is the first use of incense in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The altar is the central focus of this ritual element, and incense may be placed directly on it. The rite provides several options for how the incense is to be burned. The euchological text here references both meanings of the word *church*, praying “Lord, may our prayer ascend as incense in your sight. As this building is filled with fragrance so may your Church fill the world with the fragrance of Christ.”

When the bishop is finished lighting incense on the top of the altar, he incenses the altar. Then, returning to the chair, he is incensed. Ministers then walk throughout the church incensing the people and the walls of the church while Psalm 137 (138) is sung with an appropriate antiphon.

**Lighting of the Church**

Similar to the rite of incensation, the first lighting of candles, other than those used in the entrance procession if relics are included, follows. The lighting is prepared for by several acts. It is only after the rite of incensation of the altar and the church that the altar is wiped down

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47. *ODEA 1977*, n. 64.


following the anointing. Then, the altar is covered and, if opportune, decorated with flowers for
the celebration of Mass. When this has been accomplished, the candles and the cross needed for
Mass are arranged by the altar. The bishop hands a lighted candle to the deacon with a brief
prayer. The bishop then returns to his chair as the deacon proceeds to the altar to light the
candles needed for Mass. After the lighting of the altar, the festive lighting of the whole church
takes place. While the canticle of Tobias is sung with an antiphon, candles marking the places in
which the walls of the church were anointed are lit. Other candles or lamps are lit to show the
community’s joy. This ritual element focuses on Christ the light of the world. Illuminating the
church and the altar is the final act before the beginning of the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

**Part IV: The Celebration of the Eucharist**

The structure of the *editio typica* explicitly places the dedication of the church within the
context of Eucharist. Previously, rites such as depositing relics, anointing, incensing, and lighting
the altar and the church had been part of a celebration of dedication which was followed by the
celebration of Mass. Now, these rites are set within the Eucharistic celebration. This
contextualization shows that the celebration of the Eucharist is the dedicatory action; all of the
other ritual elements are part of that larger celebration.

When the whole church has been illuminated and the altar has been covered for Mass, the
Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the preparation of the altar. Mass continues in the usual way
until the Eucharistic Prayer. Either Eucharistic Prayer I or III is prayed, along with the proper

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52. *ODEA* 1977, n. 70.
preface for the day of dedication of a church. The rite notes that this preface "is an integral part of the rite of dedication of a church." The preface develops themes of building God’s temple on Earth and the creation of His Church. The Communion Rite continues in the usual manner.

Immediately following the reception of communion is an optional ritual element, the inauguration of a Blessed Sacrament Chapel. The pyx holding the Blessed Sacrament is placed on the altar while there is a brief period of prayer. Then, in the Prayer after Communion, the bishop prays that God’s truth will be increased in the minds of the people who have partaken of the Eucharist. The bishop also prays that the people will worship God in his temple and rejoice in His presence with all of God’s saints. The bishop returns to the altar and incenses the Blessed Sacrament. A procession is formed around the bishop who wears the humeral veil with which he has covered the pyx. The cross bearer along with ministers carrying candles and incense process through the body of the church to the chapel of reservation.

Reaching the chapel of reservation, the bishop places the pyx on the altar or into the tabernacle and incenses it with the door open. After prayer, if the pyx was on the altar it is placed in the tabernacle. Then the door to the tabernacle is closed and a lamp is lighted next to it. Notably, if the chapel is clearly visible by the entire congregation, the final blessing takes place

54. ODEA 1977, n. 75. DCA, n. 75.
55. ODEA 1977, n. 75. This euchological text will be further examined in Part IV.
56. This element warrants a detailed examination here, as the deposition of relics is the only other optional element in the Rite of Dedication.
57. ODEA 1977, n. 79.
58. ODEA 1977, n. 80.
59. ODEA 1977, n. 81.
from the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. If it is not visible, then the procession takes a shorter route back to the sanctuary and the bishop gives the blessing from the altar or the chair.\textsuperscript{60} In contrast to the optional element of the deposition of relics, this ritual element is detailed extensively. Notably, there is not a separate euchological text for this ritual action, either.

As the Rite of Dedication of a Church concludes, this closing prayer helps to connect the Christian community to the role of relics when it prays that the people will “live with him forever in the company of all his saints”.\textsuperscript{61} If relics are present in the church, the connection is evident because the Christian community on earth has the relics of an intercessor in its midst. Relics serve as reminders of the role of saints as support for the faithful on earth. They also serve as a witness and example of people who have lived their lives according to God’s will. The witness of the saints, through their relics, is a physical reminder of eternal life with God.

**Summary**

The presence of relics affects each ritual element before and after their deposition. Relics impact the entrance procession in numerous ways. They require additional ministers to be part of the procession. Candles are lit in the entrance procession only if relics are to be deposited. Carrying relics in the entrance procession symbolizes the pilgrim church that is journeying closer to God. When relics are present in the sanctuary during the Liturgy of the Word and the blessing of the baptismal waters, they are visible reminders of those who have been saved through their baptism in Christ, and those who have given their lives in witness to the salvation achieved by Christ.

\textsuperscript{60} ODEA 1977, n. 82.

\textsuperscript{61} ODEA 1977, n. 84.
Since relics are a physical reminder of the communion of saints and of the Body of Christ, the presence of relics highlights the eschatological nature of the Christian faith. The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar looks to create not only a new worship space devoted to God, but also to shape the Church, the people of God. Through its ritual actions and euchological texts, to be examined in Part IV of this dissertation, the 1977 editio typica demonstrates how the Christian community is formed into the Church. First, the Church is shaped by the celebration of the Eucharist that unites it and gives it mission. Second, the Prayer of Dedication describes who the Church should be and how it should act as God’s people. Third, the Litany of the Saints reminds the community that the Church is part of the communion of saints. Finally, relics are demonstrative signs of those who have lived the faith of the Church and continue to praise God in the heavenly liturgy. There is a ritual bond between the deposition of the relics beneath the altar and the mysteries celebrated on the altar in each and every Eucharistic celebration. The placement of relics beneath the altar is not intended to distract from the sacrifice celebrated on the altar, but rather reminds those gathered of the heavenly liturgy and the communion of saints of which they are a part. The ritual enacts how the Christian community participates in the communion of saints. It incorporates this particular building and people into salvation history while forming them to carry God’s love into the world. The Rite of Dedication of a Church signifies the participation of a specific Christian community and a specific building into the past, present and future of the universal Church.

Although relics are not a mandatory part of the rite any longer, the rite itself and the Praenotanda urge that the tradition of the Church, namely, the deposition of relics in the rite of dedication, be maintained whenever possible. The decision to include relics rests with the bishop
who is entrusted to protect and increase the faith of the people. Relics must be available, identifiable, and historically verifiable. After the age of martyrs, relics were difficult to acquire in many parts of the Christian world. This prompted the splintering of relics, thefts, and a shift in the understanding of relics and their connection to the altar. By ensuring the veracity and integrity of the relics, which may be more easily accessible after the age of modern martyrs discussed below in Chapter Eight, the abuses that characterized the cult of relics can be minimized. This continuation of the tradition helps to demonstrate that relics enhance the symbols present in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar. Throughout the rite, then, rubrics and euchological texts urge the inclusion of the relics.

The optional status of relics means that the connection to the ongoing faith and tradition of the Church represented by relics may not always have a physical reminder in the rite of dedication. Without relics, the importance of the Eucharistic celebration as the act of dedication and the worship of the community remains, but there is a less clear connection between those who have witnessed heroically to Christ’s salvific act and the Christian community living out God’s will in the present day. When relics are not part of the rite, the entrance procession is visibly simpler. Further, if relics are absent from the sanctuary during the Liturgy of the Word, the only connection to the Church of the past is the readings themselves. Relics provide an ongoing physical bond between the Church in the past, the Church today and the eschatological hope for the future. Relics, present or absent, influence each ritual element of the rite, from the flow of the Litany of the Saints into the Prayer of Dedication if relics are not to be deposited to the visible presence of saints and martyrs in the Body of Christ when relics are present. Relics
are valuable signs and symbols in each moment of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar, as will be discussed further in Part IV.

**An Excursus on Relics as Sign and Symbol**

The *Praenotanda* and the text of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar express the importance of signs and symbols in the celebration of the rite. In the *Praenotanda*, this is especially evident in the explanation of the various ritual elements, such as the rites of anointing and incensing, as well as in the call for extensive pastoral preparation throughout the construction of the church and before the liturgical celebration of dedication. Signs and symbols are present in both the ritual actions and the euchological texts. In the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar, relics play an important role as sign and symbol for the Christian community.

Mary Collins writes, “Symbols, verbal and non-verbal, are elusive vehicles of meaning…Liturgical rites bring many such symbols together into relationship, creating a veritable thicket of possible meanings.”62 Relics are a non-verbal symbol in the liturgical celebration of dedication, whether or not they are utilized. Relics of saints are deposited beneath the altar, no longer in the altar. This shifts the meanings which the relics and the altar might convey.

As relics rest in the sanctuary throughout the liturgy, their presence symbolizes the relationship between heaven and earth in each ritual element. Since relics serve as a sign of the saints and martyrs who are in heaven, they demonstrate a connection to the heavenly liturgy. The

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presence of relics also symbolizes the role of saints and martyrs as intercessors for the Christian community, among other meanings.

The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar without the deposition of relics is also a sign. Here, the bishop’s decision to forego the deposition of relics sharpens the focus on the Christological themes of the rite. It also places a greater emphasis on the relationship between God and his Church. These relationships may be symbolized in the church through artistic works and in the rite of dedication through the Litany of the Saints. By their absence, the rite has one less ritual element, and the Litany of the Saints flows into the Prayer of Dedication. This signifies the supplication to the saints before the dedication, but does not show the ongoing presence of saints in the life of the community.

Relics, when used in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, become part of the worship environment which shapes and houses the community every time it gathers together. J. Philip Horrigan writes, “the liturgical space constitutes as it were a quasi-sacramental crystallization of the whole of the value system specific to Christianity. The whole ecclesial tradition is presented here, in other words, the tradition which presents itself as a traditioned tradition (traditio tradita) and is lived as a ‘traditioning’ tradition (traditio sese tradens).” Relics can be an important symbol in the worship space and help to express the faith of the Church in each age. When relics are incorporated into the worship space, they remain part of the community’s life even after the rite of dedication. Relics are a way of communicating both the theological beliefs of the church and its historical traditions.

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Perhaps one of the biggest challenges facing the symbolic role of relics is how to highlight their active role as a symbol of the communion of saints, the eschatological hope of the Church and the heavenly liturgy after the altar has been vested and the rite of dedication has ended. No images of saints belong on or above the altar, so how does the church allow the symbol of the relics to be a vibrant one in the life of the church? Relics as symbol must be cultivated in the life of the community in the new church, not only on the anniversary of dedication.

Relics are only one of the many possible symbols and signs in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The presence of relics symbolizes the Church’s many relationships and the ongoing faith of the Church; the living and the dead are united in the Body of Christ. The hope for eternal life with Christ is remembered in the lives of the saints. All of the Body of Christ joins in singing the hymn of praise to Him. The absence of relics shifts the rite’s focus to other symbols and that necessitates the meaning relics can convey be presented through other means. Relics, present or absent, interact or do not interact with other signs and symbols in the liturgy of dedication. On their own, they symbolize the faith of the Church and the carrying on of tradition.

*The Rite of Dedication of a Church in the 1989 Ceremonial of Bishops*

The *Ceremonial of Bishops* offers additional insight into the celebration of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. This liturgical book emphasizes the need for a rite of dedication which is contextualized within the Eucharistic celebration.

The *Ceremonial* notes, “When a church is erected as a building destined solely and permanently for assembling the people of God and for carrying out sacred functions, it is fitting
that it be dedicated to God with a solemn rite, in accordance with the ancient custom of the
Church. But if the church is not to be dedicated it is at least to be blessed...”

It is clear in the *Ceremonial* that worship spaces used for liturgical celebrations should be marked by a special
celebration. It is preferable that the dedication of a church should follow the ancient customs.

That celebration of dedication, as seen in the *editio typica*, is centered in the celebration of Mass.
The *Ceremonial* notes, “The celebration of the eucharist is inseparably bound up with the rite of
dedication of a church; when a church is dedicated, therefore, the liturgical texts of the day are
omitted, and texts proper to the rite are used...” The dedication of a church requires the use of
proper liturgical texts which help explicate the signs and symbols used in the rite. Further, the
*Ceremonial* also encourages concelebration of the Mass with the priests of the parish and other
bishops.

**Conclusion**

Giuseppe Ferraro describes the *editio typica* by highlighting the single liturgical action
which dedicates both the church and the altar. He notes that the rite of dedication of a church is
not celebrated without the rite of dedication of an altar while an altar can be dedicated without a
new church. The liturgical celebration for the dedication of a church or the celebration for the

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64. *Ceremonial of Bishops*, prepared by the International Commission on English in the Liturgy


Dedication of an altar is inherently connected to the Eucharistic celebration proper to it.\textsuperscript{67} Ferraro’s comments reflect the popular Vatican II statement that “the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the font from which all her power flows” and that the Eucharist renews the covenant between God and man.\textsuperscript{68}

The centrality of the Eucharist as the key dedicatory action is the most notable reform in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. While the Mass was historically part of the dedication of a church, its relationship to the rite changed over time. The celebration of the Eucharist, initially, was the sole dedicatory action and ritual elements, such as the deposition of relics, were added to it. However, in the Middle Ages, Mass began to be seen as the concluding element of the dedication rite, rather than the dedicatory action. Our study of liturgical sources, above in Chapter One, showed that the Mass which concluded the rite of dedication may not have been celebrated by the consecratory bishop. Even the 1961/2 rite did not situate the celebration of dedication within the context of Mass, instead leaving the Mass as the last element of the rite.

The primacy of the Eucharistic celebration, along with the attention given to the full, conscious and active participation of the people in the liturgy at the Second Vatican Council, demonstrates the importance of the Mass in relationship to the dedication of a church.

In many instances, the revised Rite of Dedication of a Church makes a provision for the participation of concelebrating priests or other ministers. This helps to address one of the problems with the earlier rites in which the bishop was often too tired from all of the elements of


\textsuperscript{68} SC, n. 10.
the rite of dedication to celebrate Mass. Further, this allows those who will be actively participating in the daily life of the church being dedicated to take part in the celebration of dedication. Wilbricht stresses the importance of the handing over of the building by those who were part of the construction project to the bishop as demonstrating the community’s participation and ownership of its worship space.\textsuperscript{69} The \textit{editio typica} embodies the idea that the people are not prohibited from participating in any part of the rite as they had been in earlier rites when the congregation waited outside for some of the purification and preparatory rites to be celebrated. The further pairing down of many of the ritual elements present in the 1961/2 \textit{Ordo} helps to make the rite one in which the community can continuously actively participate.

Relics play a unique role in the revised Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar. While they were previously considered as mandatory among the consecratory elements of the dedication celebration, the new rite has made them optional. This optional inclusion of relics clarifies the Medieval conception that relics sanctified the altar, showing that it is the Eucharist which is sanctifying. The desire to highlight the primacy of the celebrated Eucharist may have been one of the reasons in which the deposition of relics was made optional. Throughout the rite, there is no question that the Eucharistic celebration is both the primary reason for the church building being built and the action by which the church is dedicated. The Paschal sacrifice is emphasized in numerous elements of the rite. This is a direct change from the medieval conception in which relics were thought to be the reason to construct a church and the method of consecration of the altar, because saints acted with power through miracles. It eliminates confusion as to who is being worshiped when the Christian community gathers. The redefined

\textsuperscript{69} Stephen Wilbricht, “An Ecclesiological Interpretation of the Rite of Church Dedication,” \textit{Worship} 80, no. 4 (Jul 2006): 344.
centrality of the altar in the Eucharistic celebration radically shifts the role of relics in the revised Rite of Dedication of a Church.

The role of relics in the rite was made optional in the earliest schemata during the reform. The Praenotanda highlighted some of the factors in deciding whether or not to include relics, especially concern for the faith of the assembly on one hand and a desire to remain in line with the traditions of the Church on the other. While it is fitting that the reasons for including or eliminating relics in the liturgical celebration are part of the Praenotanda, every time relics are mentioned in the text of the rite itself there is a clause, such as *si deponendae sunt sub altari* or *si casus fert*, noting that relics might not be used in every celebration of dedication. These clauses are a constant reminder that relics are not necessary for the celebration. It seems that their newly optional status is overemphasized throughout the rite. Perhaps this is because the optional role of relics is a great change from the structure of the rite for the previous millennium.

Neither the text of the rite itself nor the Praenotanda give detailed guidelines about the type of reliquary which should be used to hold the relics if they are to be placed below the altar. The description of the position of the relics is that they are to be *sub altari*, but further instructions are not provided. The clear shift here is that the deposition of relics is not essential to the role of the altar table.

The changes between the 1961/2 Ordo and the editio typica are apparent. The three principal parts of the earlier text have been changed to represent the theology of the Second Vatican Council, as discussed above in Chapter Four. There is no longer a delineation between the dedication of the church and the consecration of the church and the altar. Several changes have been made to the role of relics in the editio typica. First, relics play a more specific and
limited role in the revised rite. This is seen in the elimination of the procession from the new church to the place where the relics rested overnight and back to the new church. The grains of incense in the reliquary are no longer part of the rite. And, although relics are carried in a procession in the new rite, they are not incensed. The position of the translation of relics in the rite has also shifted. Now, relics are translated during the entrance procession to a temporary table in the sanctuary. The deposition of relics then precedes many of the other traditional ritual elements, such as the anointing of the altar and the walls of the church and the lighting of the church, rather than occurring after the lustration but before the consecration of the altar as in the pre-Vatican II practice.

While the inclusion of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church has changed from a requisite part to an optional element, relics still play an important role in the dedication liturgy by their inclusion or exclusion. The optional role of relics raises important questions of liturgical theology for those who will be working on the pastoral preparation of the community and the celebration of the rite, which will discussed in Part IV. Further, the presence of the relics, if they are to be used, in the sanctuary during other prayers and ritual elements impacts the liturgical theology of those ritual moments. Deep shifts in the understanding of the relationship between the altar table and relics have occurred. In order to fully study the theological implications of the optional role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the reforms to the theology of the altar must now be examined.
Chapter Seven: Altars after the Second Vatican Council

The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar underwent extensive change following the Second Vatican Council. As seen above, the rite was significantly reorganized, highlighting the Eucharistic celebration as the dedicatory action. The theological and canonical understanding of the altar was revived and refreshed as a result of the Council.

The role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar, especially the optional role of relics in the editio typica, is inherently affected by the theology of the altar. This chapter will examine the conciliar and post-conciliar documents in this regard, pertinent sections of canon law on altars, and the architectural and liturgical importance of the altar. In addition, this chapter will examine the Ordo dedicationis altaris, Chapter 4 of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris. This chapter will provide a foundation for a deeper study of the revised context of the use of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the changes made to the role of relics.

Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents

Although the Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council made very few specific statements about altars, they did offer a concern that the altar should be well made. Referring to canon law and ecclesiastical statutes, Sacrosanctum Concilium states, “This applies in particular to the worthy and well-planned construction of places of worship, the design and construction of altars, the nobility, placing, and security of the eucharistic tabernacle, the practicality and dignity of the baptistery, the appropriate arrangement of sacred images and church decorations and
appointments.”¹ Thus, the shape and material out of which the altar is constructed are important concerns in the liturgy constitution.

_Sacrosanctum Concilium_ addresses the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist in nos. 5-7. The Constitution highlights Christ as “the Word made flesh” and “the Mediator between God and man.”² Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, which achieved our reconciliation, gave to us the “wondrous sacrament of the whole Church” and “the fullness of divine worship.”³ _Sacrosanctum Concilium_ describes Christ’s purpose in sending the Apostles to spread the Gospel, “Their mission was, first, by preaching the Gospel to every creature, to proclaim that by his death and resurrection Christ has freed us from Satan’s grip and brought us into the Father’s kingdom. But the work they preached they were also to bring into effect through the sacrifice and the sacraments, the center of the whole liturgical life.”⁴ This highlights that participation in the saving actions of Christ is the central part of the Christian faith. The Church continuously celebrates the Paschal mystery, the victory and triumph of Christ’s death, until He comes again.⁵

_Sacrosanctum Concilium_ emphasizes that Christ is especially present in the liturgical celebrations of the Church, in the Word, and in the sacraments.⁶ The liturgy is an action of the whole Church in which “human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to

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¹ _Sacrosanctum Concilium_ (DOL 1:10), n. 128. Hereafter, SC
² SC, n. 5.
³ SC, n. 5.
⁴ SC, n. 6.
⁵ SC, n. 6.
⁶ SC, n. 7.
each of these signs; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and His members.” Sacrosanctum Concilium calls for the gathered assembly to participate in the sacred action. Referring to the Christian people, it states, “They should be instructed by God's word and be nourished at the table of the Lord’s body; they should give thanks to God; by offering the immaculate Victim, not only through the hands of the priest, but also with him, they should learn also to offer themselves; through Christ the Mediator, they should be formed day by day into ever more perfect unity with God and with each other...” Sacrosanctum Concilium thus describes the presence of Christ in the liturgical celebrations of the Church and how the liturgy can draw them closer to God and one another.

Lumen Gentium states, “As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which Christ our Passover was sacrificed, is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.” The altar, then, is properly the place of both the eucharistic gathering and the altar of sacrifice.

The General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) provides a number of explicit directions for the role of the altar in the worship space. A fixed altar is called for in every church since it more fully calls to mind Jesus, the Living Stone, and it is on the altar that the celebration

7. SC, n. 7.
8. SC, n. 48.
9. Lumen Gentium (DOL 4:50), n. 3. Hereafter, LG.
of the Eucharist is to take place. Within the worship space, the altar is “the table of the Lord to which the People of God is convoked to participate in the Mass, and it is also the center of the thanksgiving that is accomplished through the Eucharist.” The GIRM also states the need for worship space to facilitate full, conscious, and active participation, specifying that the altar be built away from walls, facing the people, and in a place where the attention of the congregation is easily directed. Positioning the altar in an easily visible and accessible position enhances its role as the Eucharistic table. Here, the dedication of the fixed altar is highly recommended.

For the construction of the altar itself, the GIRM requires a solid mensa of natural stone. A special allowance is made for wood in the Dioceses of the United States of America. The instructions regarding the deposition of relics are brief, a repetition of the admonition found in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar. The GIRM states, “The practice of the


11. GIRM, n. 296.

12. GIRM, n. 299.

13. GIRM, n. 300.

14. GIRM, n. 301. The GIRM includes in its texts adaptations special to the United States, while the IGMR includes only the text of the Latin editio typica. “In keeping with the Church’s traditional practice and with what the altar signifies, the table of a fixed altar should be of stone and indeed of natural stone. In the Dioceses of the United States of America, wood which is dignified, solid, and well-crafted may be used, provided that the altar is structurally immobile. As to the supports or base for supporting the table, these may be made of any material, provided it is dignified and solid. A movable altar may be constructed of any noble and solid material suited to liturgical use, according to the traditions and usages of the different regions.” The editio typica tertia (2002) notes that other suitable materials may be determined by conferences of bishops. “301. Iuxta traditum Ecclesiæ morem et significationem, mensa altaris fixi sit lapidea, et quidem ex lapide naturali. Attamen etiam alia materia digna, solida et affiabe effecta, de iudicio Conferentiae Episcoporum, adhiberi potest. Stipites vero aut basis ad mensam sustentandam ex qualibet materia, dummodo sit digna et solida, confici possunt. Altare mobile ex quibuslibet materiis nobilibus et solidis atque usui liturgico, iuxta diversarum regionum tradiciones et mores, convenientibus, exstrui potest.” The Latin text is from Manlio Sodi and Alessandro Toniolo, eds., Praenotanda Missalis Romanì: textus, concordantia, appendices, Monumenta studia instrumenta liturgica 24 (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003), 55.
deposition of relics of Saints, even those not Martyrs, under the altar to be dedicated is fittingly retained. However, care should be taken to ensure the authenticity of such relics.”¹⁵ There is an emphasis on a single altar within new churches, signifying the one Christ and the one Eucharist of the Church.¹⁶ A white cloth is always necessary to cover the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist, and the altar should not be cluttered with items which are not essential to the celebration of Mass.¹⁷ Finally, the altar should always have on it or near it a cross, calling to mind the Passion of the Lord.¹⁸

The GIRM also calls for special incensation of relics, should they be present, during the liturgy: “Two swings of the thurible are used to incense relics and images of the Saints exposed for public veneration; this should be done, however, only at the beginning of the celebration, following the incensation of the altar.”¹⁹ Any veneration afforded to relics follows, and is secondary to, the veneration given to the altar.

Finally, the GIRM differentiates between the Eucharistic celebration and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament. Precedence is given to the Eucharistic celebration, with a desire to separate the tabernacle from the altar table. The GIRM states, “It is more appropriate as a sign that on an altar on which Mass is celebrated there not be a tabernacle in which the Most Holy

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¹⁵ GIRM, n. 302.
¹⁶ GIRM, n. 303.
¹⁷ GIRM, nn. 304-306.
¹⁸ GIRM, n. 308.
¹⁹ GIRM, n. 277.
Eucharist is reserved.”20 The altar, then, is reserved for the celebration of Mass, the gathering
and worship of the Christian people who celebrate the sacrifice of Christ. In contrast, the
reservation of the Blessed Sacrament is an act of devotion different from, though related to, the
Eucharistic celebration.

Sacrosanctum Concilium, the GIRM, and other documents following the principles of
reform instituted at the Second Vatican Council express the importance of the altar within the
church building and the inherent connection between the altar and Christ. The altar is to be
reserved for the Eucharistic celebration, and nothing is to detract from the altar’s central role in
the liturgical life of the Church.

Altars and Relics in the 1983 Code of Canon Law

The Code of Canon Law was revised following the Second Vatican Council, and
promulgated in 1983. The revised Code addresses a number of aspects of the construction and
use of altars as well as the role of relics in an altar. Throughout the Code, various canons
demonstrate the ways in which the altar maybe constructed and dedicated. Of particular interest
for this dissertation are canons 1235-1237 and 1239 in Book IV, Part III, Chapter IV.

Canon 1235 §1 states, “An altar, or a table upon which the eucharistic sacrifice is
celebrated, is called fixed if it is so constructed that it adheres to the floor and thus cannot be
moved; it is called movable if it can be removed.”21 Canon 1235 §2 continues, “It is desirable to
have a fixed altar in every church, but a fixed or movable altar in other places designated for

20. GIRM, n. 315.

Canon 1235 §1. “Altare, seu mens super quam Sacrificium eucharisticum celebratur, fixum dicitur, si ita exstruatur ut
cum pavimento cohaeret ideoque amoveri nequeat; mobile vero, si transferri possit.” (Hereafter, CCL).
sacred celebrations.”

22. CCL, Canon 1235 §2. “Expedit in omni ecclesia altare fixum inesse; ceteris vero in locis, sacris celebrationibus destinatis, altare fixum vel mobile.”


24. CCL, Canon 1236 §1. “Iuxta traditum Ecclesiae morem mensa altaris fixi sit lapidea, et quidem ex unico lapide naturali; attamen etiam alia materia digna et solida, de iudicio Episcoporum conferentiae, adhiberi potest. Stipites vero seu basis ex qualibet materia confici possunt.”
constructed from any liturgically appropriate solid material.” 25 Stuart demonstrates that there is flexibility in the material used for the construction of the mensa of the altar, while simultaneously noting the respect for the traditional materials. Huels writes that “stone conveys a sense of solidity and permanence and is thus appropriate for symbolizing Christ’s presence in a sacred place.” 26 The emphasis on the construction of the altar is that it is a solid table around which the community can gather to celebrate the Eucharist. The mensa is the central focus of the construction of the altar.

The sources for Canon 1236 include the 1917 Code of Canon Law, the Ordo dedicationis altaris, the GIRM n. 263, and statements of the Congregation of Sacred Rites. In both the canon and the commentary, significantly less attention is paid to the material for movable altars. This canon focuses on the construction of the fixed altar in each church, encouraging the use of stone while also allowing for local adaptations approved by the conference of bishops.

The Code of Canon Law also helps differentiate between the dedication and consecration of an altar that were part of the 1961/2 Ordo and the rite promulgated in 1977. Canon 1237 §1 states, “Fixed altars must be dedicated, and movable altars must be dedicated or blessed, according to the rites prescribed in the liturgical books.” 27 The emphasis in this part of the code is on the dedication of an altar within the set worship space of the Christian community. A fixed altar is the central focus of the liturgical space. Canon 1237 §2 addresses the role of relics in the


27. CCL, Canon 1237 §1, “Altaria fixa dedicanda sunt, mobilia vero dedicanda aut benedicenda, iuxta ritus in liturgicis libris praescriptos.”
dedication of an altar: “The ancient tradition of placing relics of martyrs or other saints under a fixed altar is to be preserved, according to the norms given in the liturgical books.” 28 Stuart describes the transition to the optional role of relics in an altar, writing, “The extensive 1917 code legislation on the authentication of relics has been supplanted by the general requirement in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris that great care be taken to ensure the authenticity of the relics.” 29 The 1917 code, referring to liturgical law, maintained the solid stone nature of the immovable altar as well as the deposition of relics in a sepulchrum in the altar. 30 In Canon 1237, the 1983 code continues the tradition followed in the GIRM and in the 1977 Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris on the topic of relics, suggesting that the ancient tradition be preserved.

Canon 1239 §1 states, “An altar, whether fixed or movable, must be reserved for divine worship alone, to the absolute exclusion of any profane use.” 31 This canon stresses that the altar is to be reserved for the celebration of the Eucharist and should not be used for non-liturgical celebrations. Canon 1239 §2 notes, “A body is not to be buried beneath an altar; otherwise, it is not permitted to celebrate Mass on the altar.” 32 An altar is no longer to be constructed over a burial place, as Ambrose had constructed in Milan (see Chapter One, above). The deposition of

28. CCL, Canon 1237 §2. “Antiqua traditio Martyrum aliorumve Sanctorum reliquias sub altari fixo condendi servetur, iuxta normas in libris liturgicis traditas.”


31. CCL, Canon 1239 §1. “Altare tum fixum tum mobile divino dumtaxat cultui reservandum est, quolibet profano usu prorsus excluso.”

32. CCL, Canon 1239 §2. “Subtus altare nullum sit reconditum cadaver; secus Missam super illud celebrare non licet.”
relics, instead of an entire corpse, focuses attention on the relationship between the saint and Christ rather than on the burial place of the holy person. Maintaining the faith of the community is stressed over and above continuing the tradition of depositing relics. Stuart suggests that the new rite’s call for relics to be identifiable human body parts, and therefore larger than many relics which had been previously used, might be part of the reason why relics are to be deposited in one of the supports of the altar or beneath it, rather than in a sepulchrum in the mensa of the altar.33 This canon builds upon the 1917 Code and responses from the Congregation of Sacred Rites. The body of a saint or martyr may be buried beneath an altar because it is considered a relic.34

The role of the Mass as the dedicatory action highlights a conflict of opinions between canonists and liturgists about dedication. Despite the revisions to the rite, both of the words, consecration and dedication, are still present in the revised text. Stuart writes that this “demonstrates the conflict between liturgical and canonical notions of what it is to be sacred. When it is asserted that ‘a place becomes blessed primarily by its designated function,’ the function being divine worship, the canonist wants to know precisely how and when this status comes into effect, since it imposes certain important responsibilities on the community.”35 For churches, the Code states that they are to be dedicated “by the solemn rite” and are to be

dedicated or at least blessed as soon as possible. The *Code of Canon Law* notes that liturgical laws are to be observed.\(^{36}\)

Stuart notes that while it “…may be liturgically appropriate that a Mass should not be celebrated on an altar that has not been dedicated, but to say that its sacred character comes ‘principally’ from the celebration of the Eucharist, and that the Eucharist ‘in a sense consecrates’ is canonically problematical.”\(^{37}\) The Code calls for the celebration of the rite of dedication to occur before the altar is considered consecrated. The Code also states that the “eucharistic sacrifice must be carried out on a dedicated or blessed altar.”\(^{38}\) This dichotomy shows that while the Code follows liturgical law in many places, there are still differences in how the Code and liturgical texts regard an altar before the rite of dedication of an altar has been celebrated. The *Code of Canon Law* seems to limit the idea that the celebration of Mass is the dedicatory action.

These changes to role of the altar and relics in the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* are also described in the (US) Bishops’ Committee on Liturgy Newsletter. The April/May 1984 issue of the Newsletter included an “unofficial translation” of a question which appeared in *Notitiae* the previous month, addressing whether or not relics of saints and martyrs should be placed under an altar. The response quotes the *Code of Canon Law* which notes, “The ancient tradition of keeping the relics of martyrs or other saints under a fixed altar is to be observed, according to the norms given in the liturgical books.”\(^{39}\) The decree states that the tradition should be preserved, if

\(^{36}\) CCL, Canons 1216-1217.


\(^{38}\) CCL, Canon 932 §1.

possible. The conditions imposed by the decree are on the placement of the relics in relation to the *mensa* of the altar and their authenticity and size. A community’s desire to include relics does not come before the liturgical laws.\(^{40}\)

The Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter from January/February 1996 highlights changes in the Vatican’s procedures for distributing relics and references the changes to the requirement of relics underneath the altar stone. It notes, “The liturgical guidelines after the Council and the 1983 *Code of Canon Law* for the Latin rite modified the practice of placing the relics of martyrs in the altar stone. The 1983 Code no longer contains the requirement that permanent altars not built over the tomb of a martyr have relics placed in a small space in the altar stone….The new norms reinforce the original connection between the martyr’s relics and the altar.”\(^{41}\) The *BCL* recalls the ancient connection between relics and the altar. Interestingly, the Eastern Catholic practices did not change: “The new norms do not affect practices in the Eastern Catholic Churches such as the distribution of relics for use in the Byzantine Rite’s antimENSION (the altar cloth into which a packet of relics are sewn) upon which the Divine Liturgy is always celebrated.”\(^{42}\) Relics have been made optional in the Roman Catholic Code of Canon Law, but remain a requirement in the Eastern Catholic practice.

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40. BCL, *Thirty Five Years of the BCL Newsletter*, 911.

41. Ibid., 1480.

42. Ibid.
**Altars in the Ordo dedicationis altaris**

The altar has traditionally been a central element of the worship space, a place for the Christian community to gather around. Calabuig explains that as early as the fifth century, “...there were signs of regression from the New Testament ideal:...The altar, made now of stone and consecrated by anointing, came to be thought of not as the eucharistic table but as the altar of sacrifice, reserved to the sacred ministers alone, untouchable by the laity, inaccessible to women.”43 In the Middle Ages, the sacrificial character of the altar became predominant. Restoring the ancient tradition, the editio typica balances both the place for communal gathering and sacrificial aspects of the altar. The rite expresses the belief that the eucharistic gathering is the central element of dedication. The altar took on a new character within the Christian community, no longer primarily focused on the act of gathering as a community to break bread.

Within the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* is Chapter 4: *Ordo dedicationis altaris*. The Rite of Dedication of an Altar is part of the larger *ordo*, but it is used independently of the Rite of Dedication of a Church.44 There are many similarities between the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae* and the *Ordo dedicationis altaris*, including structural and euchological ones. However, there are also important differences and a more nuanced interpretation of the role of

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relics and the altar which make an examination of the *Ordo dedicationis altaris* fruitful. The *Praenotanda* of the Rite of Dedication of an Altar express a theology of the altar.

The Rite of Dedication of an Altar affirms that Christ is the true altar, the head and the teacher, and the altar is Christ. Christ is the High Priest and the living altar of the heavenly temple. Since Christ is the true altar, his members and disciples are also spiritual altars, who become the living stones of the Church’s altar. The theology presented here is Christological and eschatological, Christ’s sacrifice has made holy the communal table and his offering is taken up to the altar in heaven. The Eucharist, the memorial of the sacrifice Christ offered to the Father on the altar, is the one loaf that, through their partaking in it, unites the many members into a single Body. The theology of the Body of Christ, unified through the Eucharist, is apparent in the beginning of the *Praenotanda*.

The Rites of Anointing, Incensing, Covering, and Lighting the Altar increase the visible connection between Christ and the altar. The *Praenotanda* note that the anointing of the altar “makes the altar a symbol of Christ, who, before all others, is and is called ‘The Anointed One’; for the Father anointed him with the Holy Spirit and constituted him the High Priest so that on the altar of his body he might offer the sacrifice of his life for the salvation of all.” The altar, anointed like the Son of God, symbolizes Christ. The burning of incense shows that “Christ’s

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45. See *ODA 1977*, nn. 1-2, “Christ, Head and Teacher, is the true altar, and his members and disciples are also spiritual altars” and *ODA 1977*, n. 4. “This is the basis for saying: ‘The altar is Christ.’” See also, *ODA 1977* n. 48, “Make it the center of our praise and thanksgiving until we arrive at the eternal tabernacle, where together with Christ, high priest and living altar, we will offer you an everlasting sacrifice of praise.”

46. *ODA 1977*, n. 2 and n. 4.

47. *ODA 1977*, n. 3.

sacrifice, there perpetuated in mystery, ascends to God as an odor of sweetness, and also to signify that the people’s prayers rise up pleasing and acceptable, reaching the throne of God.”

The altar is the place in which Christ’s sacrifice is continued.

In the rite of covering the altar, the gathered community sees “that the Christian altar is the altar of the eucharistic sacrifice and the table of the Lord; around it priests and people, by one and the same rite but with a difference of function, celebrate the memorial of Christ’s death and resurrection and partake of his supper. For this reason the altar is prepared as the table of the sacrificial banquet and adorned as for a feast.” As the editio typica shows dual meanings of the word church, so it also shows multiple meanings in the purpose and nature of the altar. The altar is both the sacrificial table and the table where Christian people gather. The Rite notes the importance of the Eucharistic celebration, not only because it is the most ancient part of the rite, but because, “the eucharist, which sanctifies the hearts of those who receive it, in a sense consecrates the altar and the place of celebration, as the ancient Fathers of the Church often assert: ‘This altar should be an object of awe: by its nature stone, but it is made holy when it receives the body of Christ.’” The altar is the place where Christ’s sacrifice is recalled by the priests and assembly gathered around it.

The Rite of Dedication of an Altar provides additional images of the altar as Christ and as a sign of Christ. The custom of calling Christ an altar derives from the writings of the Fathers of

49. ODA 1977, n. 22b.
50. ODA 1977, n. 22c.
51. ODA 1977, n. 23.
Church who stated “Christ is the victim, priest, and altar of his own sacrifice.” The *Praenotanda* assert that the individual Christian is a spiritual altar. Christ’s members and disciples are “spiritual altars on which the sacrifice of a holy life is offered to God.” Christians who live holy lives filled with prayer to God and supplication are part of the Church’s altar built by Christ; this is a direction for how Christians should live their lives. Here, the rite cites the *GIRM* and notes that in every church “the altar ‘is the center of the thanksgiving that the eucharist accomplishes’ and around which the Church’s other rites are, in a certain manner, arrayed.” The altar is the central object in the liturgical space, because Christ made holy the table of the sacrifice through his own sacrifice.

In a more direct manner than the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the Rite of Dedication of an Altar delineates the relationship between relics and the altar. The *Praenotanda* state, “All the dignity of the altar rests on its being the Lord’s table. Thus the martyr’s body does not bring honor to the altar; rather the altar does honor to the martyr’s tomb.” The relationship alluded to in the Rite of Dedication of a Church is explicitly detailed here: the altar is not made sacred by the presence of relics; rather, relics are given honor through deposition beneath the altar. The *Praenotanda* continue to note that “…it is altogether proper to erect altars over the burial place of martyrs and other saints or to deposit their relics beneath altars as a mark of respect and as a

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55. *ODA* 1977, n. 4.

56. *ODA* 1977, n. 5. The *ordo* quotes Ambrose of Milan and Maximus of Turin.
symbol of the truth that the sacrifice of the members has its source in the sacrifice of the Head.”

The altar as sign Christ and the Paschal sacrifice celebrated on it afford honor to the relics of martyrs who have given their lives in witness to Christ’s own sacrifice. The relationship between the Christ, the Head, and the Church, the Body is seen here; the sacrifice of the Body stems from that of the Head.

Describing the role of relics beneath an altar, the Praenotanda of the Rite of Dedication of an Altar cites the Book of Revelation 6:9. The text recalls the presence of the souls of those under the altar who have given their life for the Word. And, the rite notes, “His [the Apostle John’s] meaning is that although all the saints are rightly called Christ’s witnesses, the witness of blood has a special significance that only the relics of the martyrs beneath the altar express in its entirety.”

Relics of martyrs, then, play a special role in connection to the altar. Clear preference for the relics of martyrs is seen here, due to the witness which they express in its entirety. Relics call to mind those who have given their own blood as a witness to Christ’s sacrifice. Relics physically depict the ultimate witness to Christ. Placing the relics of those who have sacrificed their lives for the faith beneath the table where the Eucharist is celebrated enhances the congregation’s understanding of witnesses to Christ. In stating a preference for the relics of martyrs, the Praenotanda draws attention back to the sacrifice of Christ.

The Rite of Dedication of an Altar includes descriptions about the role of the altar within the church building that relate to the material we saw earlier from the Code of Canon Law and the GIRM. Notably, there is to be one single fixed altar in the body of the Church. And, while a

57. ODA 1977, n. 5.
58. ODA 1977, n. 5.
A separate altar may be erected in a chapel where the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament takes place, it is preferable that this altar be separate from the body of the church. The *Praenotanda* are clear to state that the age of purely decorative additional altars in a church has ended.\(^{59}\) The text also details to whom the altar is to be dedicated: “The altar is of its very nature dedicated to the one God, for the eucharistic sacrifice is offered to the one God. This is the sense in which the Church’s practice of dedicating altars to God in honor of the saints must be understood.”\(^{60}\) Altars are never dedicated to anyone other than God. Later, the *Praenotanda* note that the deposition of relics signifies that “all who have been baptized in the death of Christ, especially those who have shed their blood for the Lord, share in Christ’s passion.”\(^{61}\) Clearly, the role of the altar is as a place to give honor and sacrifice to the Lord, for whom earthly martyrs have given their lives as witnesses. The theology presented here is eschatological and soteriological; the relics witness to the eschatological hope of the church which is saved through Christ’s passion.

The Introduction notes that statues and pictures of the saints are to be separate from the altar so as to avoid confusion about the altar’s purpose. The guideline for the deposition of relics beneath the altar, in which the *mensa* is left in one solid piece, is repeated here.\(^{62}\) The Introduction also repeats the suggestion that a vigil should be held when relics of saints or martyrs are to be deposited beneath the altar, as in the Rite of Dedication of a Church.\(^{63}\) A small difference between the *Praenotanda* of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and that of the Rite of

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60. *ODA* 1977, n. 10.


63. *ODA* 1977, n. 11.
Dedication of an Altar is present in the section “Adaptations within the Competence of the Ministers.” The *Praenotanda* of the Rite of Dedication of a Church note that the bishop and those in charge of the celebration make the decision about including the deposition of relics in light of the spiritual good of the community. The Rite of Dedication of an Altar repeats this statement, but also notes that they should give consideration to “a proper sense of the liturgy.”

The deposition of relics in the *Ordo dedicationis altaris* follows the rubrical pattern seen in the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae*. The psalm choice is also identical. However, the Prayer of Dedication for the altar is different. This prayer contextualizes the altar being dedicated in the larger context of the “many altars of old” and “the mystery of the one true altar.” The euchological text references the Old Testament altars of Noah, Abraham, and Moses which prefigured the altar of the cross. Christ’s perfect sacrifice sealed the new covenant. The prayer asks that the new altar be “reserved for the sacrifice of Christ. And stand for ever as the Lord’s table.” The prayer invokes God to make the new altar “a sign of Christ,” “a table of joy,” “a place of communion and peace,” “a source of unity and friendship,” and “the center of our praise and thanksgiving until we arrive at the eternal tabernacle.” The prayer concludes by describing Christ as “high priest and living altar,” with whom we offer the Lord “an everlasting sacrifice of

64. RDC, n. 19.
65. RDA, n. 25.
66. RDA, n. 48.
67. RDA, n. 48.
praise.” The Prayer of Dedication situates the new altar within salvation history and highlights the centrality of the altar in the Christian life.

The Rite of Dedication of an Altar enunciates the role of the altar in the post-Vatican II Church. The altar, dedicated only to God, symbolizes Christ. It is both the place for the people of God to gather and the table of sacrifice. Further developing the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration highlighted by the Council Fathers, the Rite of Dedication of an Altar emphasizes the need for one altar within the church building. This rite expresses a Christological theology and the theology of Body of Christ, especially in the deposition of relics.

**Ceremonial of Bishops**

The *Ceremonial of Bishops*, building on the *Ordo dedicationis altaris* and the *GIRM*, provides some additional considerations for the dedication of altars. These ideas emphasize the reforms of the Second Vatican Council seen in the revised rite of dedication.

The *Ceremonial of Bishops* also offers a framework for understanding the importance of the dedication of an altar and the role of the altar in the liturgical celebration. It states, “At the altar, the sacrifice of the cross is made present under sacramental signs. It is also the table of the Lord, and the people of God are called together to share in it.” The altar is the focal point of the congregation’s attention and the place on which Christ’s sacrifice is celebrated.

Altars are dedicated to God, although saints or martyrs may be honored through the deposition of their relics beneath the altar. The *Ceremonial* states, “The altar is of its very nature

68. RDA, n. 48.

dedicated to the one God, for the eucharistic sacrifice is offered to the one God. This is the sense in which the Church’s practice of dedicating altars to God in honor of the saints must be understood. St. Augustine expresses it well: “It is not to any of the martyrs, but to the God of the martyrs, though in memory of the martyrs, that we raise our altars.”70 This statement makes it clear that it is God to whom the altar is dedicated, not saints or martyrs. In order to express this idea, new churches should not place pictures or statues of saints above the altar.71 Likewise, the *Ceremonial* notes, “…a reliquary must not be placed upon the altar or set into the table of the altar; it must be placed beneath the table of the altar as the design of the altar permits.”72 The altar is dedicated to God, and the Church must be careful not to detract from it.

The *Ceremonial* advises that the Mass should not be celebrated on an altar until the celebration of dedication. It reads, “Since an altar becomes sacred principally by the celebration of the eucharist, in conformity with this truth the celebration of Mass on a new altar before it has been dedicated should be carefully avoided, so that the Mass of dedication may also be the first eucharist celebrated on the altar.”73 The dedication of the altar is an important moment in the life of the local church, and it should incorporate the first eucharistic celebration on the new altar. This distinction echoes the one made in the *Code of Canon Law*.

The *Ceremonial of Bishops* is in continuity with the theological and liturgical ideas seen in the *Ordo dedicationis altaris* as well as in the *GIRM*. The *Ceremonial* helps to express the centrality of the altar and its dedication to God in a clear and concise manner.

70. CB1989, n. 921. See also ODA, n. 10 and Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 20, 21: PL 42, 384.
71. CB1989, n. 921.
72. CB1989, n. 866.
73. CB1989, n. 922.
**Particular Guidelines for the United States**

In addition to the guidance for the construction and dedication of altars provided to the universal Church through documents such as the *Ordo dedicationis altaris*, the *General Instruction on the Roman Missal*, the *1983 Code of Canon Law*, and the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, the local conference of bishops in the United States has provided additional guidelines. In 1978, the Bishops’ Conference released *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, addressing principles for those designing liturgical space. At the end of the twentieth century, the USCCB decided to revisit the topic of liturgical environment and voted in 2000 as a full body to approve a replacement to *Environment and Art*, called *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture and Worship*. These two documents build on the powers given to local conferences of bishops in Article 22 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* to adapt norms for the liturgical environment to local needs.

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, although now superseded, addresses the various components necessary for the worship of God, including the altar. These guidelines offer insight into how the Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy in the United States first understood the influence of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and the reform of the liturgy on worship space.

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship (EACW)* begins its section on the altar by noting that the altar should be “the most noble, the most beautifully designed and constructed table the community can provide.” 74 The altar is a table for the assembly and a symbol of Christ.

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*EACW* states, “It is holy and sacred to this assembly’s action and sharing, so it is never used as a table of convenience or as a resting place for papers, notes, cruets, or anything else. It stands free, approachable from every side, capable of being encircled.” The guidelines are clear that access to the altar and movement around it should not be impeded by any form of decoration. *EACW* emphasizes the dual role of the altar as symbol of Christ and table for the community, aiming to ensure that that altar is not cluttered or blocked.

*EACW* also provides specific guidelines for the construction of the altar and encourages the presence of a single altar in a church. The document states, “The altar is designed and constructed for the action of a community and the functioning of a single priest -- not for concelebrants. The holy table, therefore, should not be elongated, but square or highly rectangular, an attractive, impressive, dignified, noble table, constructed with solid and beautiful materials, in pure and simple proportions.” This relates back to the idea that the altar should be the central focus of the congregation and that it should be as noble as possible. Unlike the *GIRM*, this document makes no reference to the type of building materials which may be used in the construction of the altar. The admonition for a single altar is strong in *EACW*, essential because the altar is a symbol of Christ. The symbolic function of the altar “is rendered negligible when there are other altars in sight. The liturgical space has room for but one.” *EACW* is clear that

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75. *EACW*, n. 71.
76. *EACW*, n. 71.
77. *EACW*, n. 72.
78. *EACW*, n. 72.
the altar is to be constructed with the action of the community in mind and that there should be a single altar.

Building on the idea that the altar is the central component and focus of the community’s liturgical action, *EACW* offers suggestions on its optimal positioning. Speaking of the centrality of the altar *EACW* suggests, “…this does not mean it must be spatially in the center or on a central axis. In fact, an off-center location may be a good solution in many cases. Focus and importance in any celebration move with the movement of the rite. Placement and elevation must take into account the necessity of visibility and audibility for all.”  

The emphasis here is on the gathering of the community around the Eucharistic table in order that they may be active participants in the celebration. *EACW* also highlights the importance of the Eucharistic gathering, noting, “The *celebration* of the eucharist is the focus of the normal Sunday assembly. As such, the major space of a church is designed for this action… A room or chapel [for Eucharistic reservation] specifically designed and separate from the major space is important so that no confusion can take place between the celebration of the eucharist and reservation.”  

Throughout *EACW* the importance of the Eucharistic celebration is clear.

*Built of Living Stones*

*Built of Living Stones*, the more recent document on liturgical space approved by the USCCB, is longer and more detailed than its predecessor. *Built of Living Stones* not only addresses theological ideas as in *EACW*, it also provides guidelines for the church building and

79. *EACW*, n. 73.
80. *EACW*, n. 78.
the rites celebrated there. The document incorporates the *Ordo dedicationis altaris* as well as the *GIRM*, particularly in describing the altar.

*Built of Living Stones* (BOLS) begins its section on the altar by describing the Eucharistic celebration as “the ritual sacrificial meal that recalls and makes present Christ’s life, death and resurrection…”81 This description sets the tone for how the document situates the altar within the worship space. In addition to being at the center of the Eucharistic celebration, the altar is “the point around which the other rites are in some manner arrayed,” and “the altar is Christ.”82 The altar plays a central role in all of the rites of the church. *BOLS* also encourages builders to create an altar which reflects the nobility, beauty and strength of Christ.83 *BOLS* reflects the idea that the altar is both place of ritual sacrifice and community table.

The altar should be freestanding and the focal point of the sanctuary. It is preferable that the altar be fixed, secured to the floor. *BOLS* makes the specific suggestion that the *mensa* be made of stone, in order to help with the symbolism of the altar as Christ the Living Stone (see 1Pt 2:4).84 The document is clear that the diocesan bishop should be consulted in the construction of an altar for the type chosen and the materials.85 *BOLS* is attentive to the ways in which the materials used for the altar can help convey the symbolism.

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82. *BOLS*, n. 56.

83. *BOLS*, n. 56.

84. *BOLS*, n. 57.

85. *BOLS*, n. 57.
Similar to the materials used to construct the altar, *BOLS* also offers guidelines on the size and shape of the altar. It notes, “the shape and size should reflect the nature of the altar as the place of sacrifice and the table around which Christ gathers the community to nourish them.” The altar must be accessible to the Christian community. The altar should be large enough to hold the items necessary for the liturgical celebration. The worthily constructed altar should be centrally located and be the center of attention. Further, the altar should be in harmony with the other major furnishings in the sanctuary. *BOLS* emphasizes the relationship between the altar and the other objects used in the celebration of the liturgy. The construction of the altar can also help develop the symbolism and unity present in the liturgical celebration.

The centrality of the altar in the sanctuary is stressed several times throughout *BOLS*. The document states, “During the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the altar must be visible from all parts of the church but not so elevated that it causes visual or symbolic division from the liturgical assembly.” *BOLS* also encourages the altar to be designed in such a way that it is accessible to all members of the community, including those who have disabilities. The guidelines show the importance of the altar in the eucharistic celebration and in the design of the worship space.

*BOLS* provides specific ideas on the deposition of relics in the altar. It states, “The presence of relics of saints in the altar provides a witness to the Church’s belief that the Eucharist celebrated on the altar is the source of the grace that won sanctity for the saints.” The connection between Christ and the saints here is clear; it is Christ’s saving action which has

86. *BOLS*, n. 58.

87. *BOLS*, n. 58.

88. *BOLS*, n. 59.

89. *BOLS*, n. 60.
brought salvation for all, including the saints. BOLS continues by describing how the deposition of relics has changed: “The custom of placing small relics of martyrs or other saints in an altar stone and setting this in the mensa has changed since the Second Vatican Council. Relics of martyrs or other saints may be placed beneath the altar… Relics are no longer placed on the altar or set into the mensa in an altar stone.”90 The requirements for the size and authenticity of the relics are also repeated.

BOLS also develops the idea seen in the GIRM that the tabernacle should not be located on the altar on which Mass is celebrated. The decision about the placement of the tabernacle is left to the diocesan bishop who will give direction on its location in a new church.91 BOLS suggests that the bishop “will consider the importance of the assembly’s ability to focus on the eucharistic action, the piety of the people, and the custom of the area” in determining the location of the tabernacle.92 The placement of the tabernacle apart from the altar on which Mass is celebrated helps to distinguish between the celebration of the eucharist and the reservation of the eucharist while also allowing for the longstanding traditions of the Church to be continued.

Throughout its description of the altar, BOLS clearly expresses the symbolism of the altar as Christ. The primacy of the eucharistic celebration can be seen throughout the descriptions of the construction and placement of the altar. The altar is not only the place of celebration of Christ’s sacrifice, but also the table around which the Christian community gathers to be nourished. The document focuses on the importance of harmony and unity among the altar and

90. BOLS, n. 60.
91. BOLS, n. 74.
92. BOLS, n. 74.
the other ritual furnishings necessary for the liturgy. *Built of Living Stones* provides a cohesive set of guidelines for the arrangement and construction of an altar in the United States, bringing together the law found in the *GIRM* and the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*.

**Summary**

*Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* and *Built of Living Stones* both offer guidance on the role of the altar within the worship space. Each document is slightly different in its perspective, but both are clear on the centrality of the altar. The earlier *EACW* emphasizes the role of the altar as the gathering place of the community so that they may actively participate in the normal Sunday celebration of the Eucharist. *BOLS* highlights more specifically the sacrificial character of the altar and the practical details of its construction. In each of the documents, it is clear that the altar is a multivalent symbol which calls Christians to gather around it to celebrate the Paschal Mystery. Both documents demonstrate the importance of the altar in the worship space and present the idea that the altar is a symbol of Christ.

**Conclusion**

The reforms following the Second Vatican Council show the centrality of the altar in the Eucharistic celebration and in the worship space. The altar signifies Christ, and its construction must depict this symbol. Conciliar and post-conciliar documents highlight the renewed emphasis on the Eucharistic celebration as the axis of Christian liturgical life. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, *Lumen Gentium*, the *Code of Canon Law*, the *Ceremonial of Bishops*, the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, and *Built of Living Stones* all contain these ideas.
The restoration of this theology demonstrates the importance of contextualizing the dedication of a new church or altar within the Eucharistic celebration. These changes are important in understanding the optional role of relics in the Ordo dedicationis altaris. They show that the celebration of the Eucharist on the altar dedicates the church, instead of the presence of relics. Understanding the centrality of the unbroken altar table and the need to focus on Christ’s sacrifice demonstrates that relics can serve as valuable symbols in the dedication of a church, but that they are not essential elements.
Chapter Eight: Changes in the Understandings of Saints and Relics

Cults of saints and their relics have a distinct role in the Church. Throughout history, cults of saints and their relics have interacted in a variety of ways with the liturgical life of the Church. From the construction of altars over the tombs of saints in the early Church to revisions to the Calendar in light of historical research in the modern period, the liturgy and the saints have historically been intertwined in the Church. Before the Second Vatican Council, relics were a central element of many devotional and liturgical practices.

Vatican II brought about a significant change in the role of relics in the life of the Church. Saints and relics, once among the most popular devotional objects, faced challenges from two sources: (1) growing devotion to the Eucharist and (2) increasing concerns about historicity. Clarifications in understanding the relationship between the saints and the Eucharistic celebration fostered a renewed theological perspective on the liturgical role of saints. The changes in how the cult of saints and relics are viewed by the Christian faithful and in Church teachings help demonstrate how the saints and relics are intertwined with the liturgical life of the Church, especially the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church.

This chapter begins by tracing the reversal of the perceived relationship between relics and the Eucharistic celebration in the rite for the dedication of a church. It then shows how understandings about the relationship among saints, the liturgy, and the devotional life of Christians were realigned towards the ancient patterns in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. These theological understandings build upon the historical evolution of the rite described in Parts I and II of this dissertation.
From the Rise of the Cult of Relics through the Medieval Period

When Ambrose translated and deposited relics beneath the altar of the Basilica Ambrosiana in Milan, he was doing so to give honor to the relics. Because the relics were those of martyrs, who had given their lives in witness to Christ, he brought them to the altar where the sacrifice of Christ occurs: their sacrifice finds ultimate meaning in Christ’s sacrifice. Relics were given honor by their proximity to the place of Christ’s sacrifice; relics did not give honor to or dedicate the altar.

Gradually, this understanding of the altar as sacred because it is the table of the Eucharistic sacrifice became obscured. In the place of this understanding emerged the idea that the altar was made sacred by the deposition of the bones of the holy ones in its table. This is a striking reversal of the original meaning behind the deposition of relics. As the cult of relics grew in prominence and popularity, the power attributed to relics also increased. The ongoing presence of the saint through her relics provided continuity of presence and power. Since saints performed miracles, relics of saints could therefore perform miracles. Now, relics were seen as the source of sanctification, the opposite of Ambrose’s idea that relics were honored by being placed in close proximity to where the sacrifice of Christ is celebrated. This following section traces the relationship between relics and the Eucharistic celebration in the early Church and in the medieval period.
Relics Enter the Rite for Dedication

In the early Church, the cult of relics began as a devotional practice distinct from the liturgy, and it prospered despite not having a connection to the Eucharistic celebration. Although the desire to honor saints influenced the celebration of Mass during the week, relics were not a set part of the rite of dedication of a church in the first recorded celebrations. Eventually, the role of relics transformed from a popular practice of piety to become part of the liturgical life of the church.

First, relics became intertwined with the rite for the dedication of a church. As seen above in Chapter One, the people in Milan called for Ambrose to deposit relics as part of the dedication of a new basilica there. Likewise, the writings of Gregory the Great, as seen in Chapter One and below, demonstrate that relics were believed to be useful for converting a building to a Catholic worship space. Pope Vigilius’s writings also reflect the growing role of relics in the dedication rite.


relics in the dedication of a church. The tradition of including relics in the rite for the dedication of a church continued from these source texts.

The use of relics helped to express the true Catholic faith because relics were the remains of those who had given their lives in witness to the true faith. The actions of Gregory the Great, described in the first chapter and again below, show how the deposition of relics in a new church gave the Church authority over the cult, meaning that the cult was part of the life of the Church and could be moderated by it. Gregory’s actions helped to clarify the theological meaning of relics. Reflecting on Gregory’s retelling of the dedication of St. Agatha, Arthur Urbano writes, “The deposition of relics communicates both Gregory’s own control over the martyrs (as custodian and patron of their cults) and the martyrs’ ‘divine’ support of Gregory…Gregory marched into conquered territory triumphantly accompanied by the martyrs, soldiers of orthodoxy, claiming the space for the Catholic church of Rome and liberating it from subjugation to demonic possession.”

Relics helped to mark a worship space as Catholic because they were the remains of martyrs to the true faith.

In Gregory’s recounting, the relics play an essential role, similar to that seen in the dedication of the Ambrosiana in Chapter One, above. Relics were specially selected for use in the dedication of this church in Subura. At the celebration of dedication, a pig ran through the gathered crowd; the pig was believed to be the unclean spirits leaving the church. Days later, after the lamps used during the dedication had been extinguished, a sweet aroma was smelled in


the church and the lamps were relit. Gregory understood that the efficacy of the liturgy and the martyrs’ relics were clear signs from God that he should continue his condemnation of Arianism. Further, the liturgy and the presence of relics help to re-identify this building with orthodoxy and show that the building has been taken over by Gregory’s authority. The story of the Gregorian liturgy and its use of relics provide a foundation not only for the idea that relics should be used in the rite of dedication, but also for the idea that the presence or discovery of relics was a clearly manifested sign of God’s approval. Gregory the Great utilized the role of relics in the rite of dedication to express the theology of the Church by honoring martyrs who had given their lives for the true faith.

From House for the Eucharist to Shrine of the Saint

The practice of the Eucharistic celebration as the fundamental consecratory act of the rite of dedication would change during the Middle Ages. By the time of the Ordines Romani, three ordos involving the deposition of relics are included, demonstrating the widespread use of relics in the dedication of a church. In the Medieval period, the liturgy and the cult of relics developed simultaneously and influenced each other. As devotion to saints through their relics became more popular, the deposition of relics was seen more frequently as the consecratory action in the celebration of dedication. The Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy summarizes, “While


always most vigilant with regard to interior conditions and the prerequisites for a dignified celebration of the sacred mysteries (cf. 1 Cor 11, 17-32), the Church has never hesitated in incorporating into the liturgical rites forms drawn from individual, domestic and community piety. Relics represent the incorporation of a form of community piety into the dedication of a church. A shift has occurred in the rite of dedication. In the earliest recorded dedication celebrations, the Eucharist was the act which consecrated the church building. The Eucharist festively caps the consecration of the church and there is a diminished sense of the Paschal mystery.

When we see the emergence of churches and altars designed specifically to give honor to saints through their relics, we know that we have entered a new era. Saints’ shrines play a role in demonstrating God’s saving power in history. In the early days of the church, altars were constructed over the tombs of saints, such as at St. Peter’s in Rome and St. Paul’s in Rome, particularly following the legalization of Christianity in the fourth century. Gradually, the architectural configuration of the altar including the confessio, in which it was possible to go beneath the altar into the crypt below, developed. The fifth century relocation of the relics of St. Martin of Tours to behind the altar in a new church demonstrates the desire to place relics within close proximity to the altar. By the seventh century, corporal relics, either whole bodies

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or parts of bodies, were in demand.\textsuperscript{12} Popular demand for relics and their veneration brought about the gradual inclusion of relics in the altar itself by the time of Gregory the Great’s letter to Bishop Mellitus, discussed in Chapter One.\textsuperscript{13} The inclusion of relics in the altar is seen in the \textit{Ordines Romani} and the \textit{pontificals} studied in Chapter One.\textsuperscript{14} This practice continued to the point where relics were viewed as necessary for the consecration of the altar, with the Consecrated Host being used if relics were not available.\textsuperscript{15} The rise of Eucharistic devotions in the thirteenth century seems also to have led to hesitation about the simultaneous deposition of relics, incense, and the Consecrated Host in the rite for the dedication of a church. The beginning of the end of the deposition of the Consecrated Host in the \textit{sepulcrum} can be seen in the \textit{Pontifical of William Durandus}.\textsuperscript{16} However, the practice of depositing relics within the altar, with the deposition of the Consecrated Host as the exception, continued. Originally, altars were constructed over the tombs of saints; however, the tomb and the altar were gradually conflated as veneration of saints and their relics increased.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Godefridus Snoek, \textit{Medieval Piety from Relics to the Eucharist} (Brill: Leiden, 1995), 178.
\item Snoek, \textit{Medieval Piety}, 187-190.
\item Ibid., 191 and PGD, n. 3.
\end{enumerate}
The twelfth century Benedictine abbot Rupert of Deutz (d. 1129) taught that the association of Christ with stone was reflected in the construction of the altar, in that the altar stone is the only part which is consecrated. He “expressed the relationship in the following terms: ‘Altare significat Christum.’” 17 James Robinson suggests that “Rupert’s forthright definition was the product of a long established understanding of the altar’s sacred nature that had its basis in ancient Judaic and classical traditions. The supreme importance of the altar stone ensured that it was the most vital component of portable altars used to celebrate the liturgy in unconsecrated spaces…” 18 The altar remained at the center of Christian worship; relics added to the sacred nature of the altar understood from scriptural details. These actions show that the altar was an important element of the worship space.

Liturgical sources from this period reflect the attention given to the altar as the center of the church. Describing Ordo XLII, Andrieu notes, “No doubt the presence of the relics was now making the whole building a holy house, a sacred place, but it is scarcely indicated.” 19 Andrieu shows that the exact placement of the relics in the building had not been specified at this time. 20

Altars were created primarily to house the relics, rather than for the Eucharistic celebration once saints’ shrines became popular. Eric Palazzo describes the role of the altar and

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19. Andrieu, Ordines Romani, 392. “Sans doute la présence des reliques faisait-elle désormais de tout l’édifice une maison sainte, un lieu sacré, mais cela est à peine indiqué.”

20. Ibid., 373-4.
relics in the construction of churches at this time: “In… the Middle Ages, churches were constructed around the altar and the relics that it contained. The decision to erect an altar and then a church in one place or another coincided with the emergence of a saint’s cult. The church was erected around the saint’s relics, contained in the altar, and it was there that the congregation met to animate the local Church, viewed as part of the body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{21} An increase in the number of new church buildings and an expansion of the ritual used for the dedication of a church characterized this period.

**Summary**

Relics took on a central role in the rite of dedication of a church as social, ritual, and theological understandings about them changed. These shifts influenced the structure of the rite of dedication, as well as the popular understandings about what was essential in the church. In the Middle Ages, liturgy and popular devotions had a complex relationship and influenced one another. According to the *Directory on Popular Piety and the Liturgy*, “A dualism, however, prevailed between Liturgy and popular piety… Because of the collapse of cultic unity, secondary elements in the Liturgy acquired an excessive relevance to the detriment of its central elements. In popular piety, because of the lack of adequate catechesis, deviations and exaggerations threatened the correct expressions of Christian worship.”\textsuperscript{22} This dynamic captures the shifting role of relics in the liturgy in the Medieval period.


\textsuperscript{22} *Directory*, n. 33.
Rituals, the role of relics changed. Initially, relics were included in the dedication when they were available or when requested by the community. By the time of the ordines romani, relics were serving as the central ritual action in the dedication. Initially, the connection between relics and the altar was clear: bringing relics of martyrs to the altar gave these witnesses to Christ additional honor. However, the rise of the medieval preoccupation with the dichotomy between the profane and the sacred shifted popular and theological understanding away from its original foundations. The addition of numerous exorcistic ritual actions, including the expulsion of the phantoms seen in the opening actions of the PGD, shows the desire to cleanse the church before consecrating it. Soon, relics became a consecratory element, holy objects eradicating evil spirits. The Eucharist was a completion to the consecration which was effected by the relics themselves. With some modifications, such as the use of the Eucharistic species with relics, this central role of relics would remain in place until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council.

Socially, relics were a prominent part of the life of the Church and the popular culture of the Middle Ages. Relics drew people to the churches which were being dedicated, whether from the local community or as a result of pilgrimages because of the connection between saints and miracles. Saints have power to help in concrete ways, such as healing, and were a sign of God’s grace. After their deposition in the rite of dedication of a church, relics were also a symbol of the community’s power since saints could intercede to God on behalf of a particular community. Stories of the lives of saints and tales of how the relics came to rest in a specific place were important cultural elements. The popularity of relics and the devotion to them is seen in the relic translations and pilgrimages of this time. They served as a tangible symbol of God’s love and

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23. PGD, n. 37.
favor. The popularity and cultural importance of relics were influenced by the idea that relics brought power to a community.

Theologically, relics shifted from gaining honor from their deposition near the altar to being the source of honor for the altar, as demonstrated in *OR XLI* when the celebration of Mass concludes the ritual of dedication. This shift in theological understanding transpired as the cult of relics interacted with the liturgical life of the Church. Relics were understood to have unique power. Although this power stems from the closeness of the saints to Christ, this relationship was not always understood. The rise of the idea that the Eucharist is a relic of Christ and the development of Eucharistic devotions redirected some popular attention away from the prominence of relics; however, there was a lack of reception of communion and relics were seen as a way in which Christians could connect with God and the saints. Although the Eucharist and eucharistic theology again dominated the theological sphere in the late medieval period, no significant changes to the liturgical theology expressed by the rite of dedication of a church would occur until the twentieth century.

**Papal Oversight of Liturgy and Relics**

Papal oversight of the relics, saints, and the liturgy began as part of the reforms following the Council of Trent. This section explores the evolution of the Vatican congregations which oversaw these areas.

Pope Sixtus V created the Congregation of Sacred Rites and Ceremonies in 1588 as a part of the curial reforms following the Council of Trent. The primary functions of the new congregation were to examine the rites of the Church as reformed after Trent as well as the
processes of beatification and canonization. Despite some moderate restructuring, the functions and responsibilities of the Congregation remained largely the same until 1948. At that time, Pope Pius XII created the Pontifical Commission for the General Restoration of the Liturgy, the Pian Commission, and attached it to the Congregation. This group was instrumental in the reforms of the Roman liturgy which occurred before Vatican II, including the reform of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar in the 1961/2 Pontificale Romanum, as was seen above in Chapter Three.

In 1969, Paul VI split the Congregation of Rites into two congregations, Divine Worship and the Causes of the Saints, in his apostolic constitution Sacra Rituum Congregatio of May 8, 1969. In 1975, Pope Paul VI created the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship which had the responsibilities of the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments and the Congregation for Divine Worship. In an letter dated April 5, 1984, Pope John Paul II split the Congregation for Sacraments and Divine Worship into two separate congregations. The two new congregations were the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and the Sacred Congregation for Divine Worship.

The two congregations did not remain separate for long, however. The decree Pastor Bonus, promulgated by Pope John Paul II on June 28, 1988, reformed various congregations and offices of the Roman Curia. The Congregation for Divine Worship was joined with the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments to form one congregation: the Congregation


25. Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy Newsletter 20, 905.
for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments. This newly combined congregation was to oversee proper practices for the veneration of relics and in bestowing the title “minor basilica.” This Congregation has guided the cult of saints and relics in the life of the church since then.

Papal oversight of relics looked to guide the relationship between the liturgy and relics in order that devotion to relics and the saints would not overshadow the importance of the Eucharistic celebration in Christian life.

**Relics and Saints in the Twentieth and Twenty First Centuries**

**The Liturgical Movement and the Body of Christ**

The Liturgical Movement presented a challenge to the cult of relics due to the revival of attention to the theology of the Body of Christ. As shown above in Chapter Three, the Liturgical Movement brought attention to ideas which had been prominent in the early church, such as the Body of Christ and the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration. Paul Marx notes that the Liturgical Movement had a vision of how the saints and the liturgy were intertwined. He writes, “Through the liturgy the Church dispenses the gifts of God out of the common treasury of the merits of Christ and the saints. In the liturgical prayers she is constantly giving expression to the solidarity existing between the three-fold divisions of the communion of saints. In view of this, therefore, the liturgical movement may be termed a spiritual-social movement *par excellence.*”

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With its social and spiritual components, the Liturgical Movement laid the foundation for changes to the cult of relics in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. None of the theological underpinnings of the cult of relics had undergone critical theological study in almost a millennium.

The cult of relics continued to exist alongside Eucharistic devotions. Eucharistic devotions were often more popular than the celebration of the Mass for Roman Catholics in the early twentieth century. The centrality of the Mass in Christian life needed to be revived in popular perceptions. By the mid-twentieth century, the Liturgical Movement had fostered a religious culture that became highly critical of many forms of devotions. The aim of the Liturgical Movement, discussed above in Chapter Three, was to focus on the celebration of the Mass, the theology of the Body of Christ, ecclesiological understandings, and the active participation of the faithful. All “extra” forms of piety were diminished in favor of the more Christological sacramental liturgy. Further, the study of liturgical sources that was part of the Liturgical Movement influenced the desire to have only historically verifiable saints and relics as part of the life of the Church. This coincided with the goal the Bollandists, who studied hagiographical sources and had been working to historically verify lives of the saints since the seventeenth century. The overarching principle was attention to the historicity of saints’ lives and relics.


The theology of the Body of Christ was connected to the theology of the communion of saints, the idea that all Christians, living and dead, are part of a single body. Paul Marx highlights the theological understanding that the communion of saints and the relationship among the parts of the Body of Christ are active in the lives of Christians. He writes, “To each member of Christ the Church bestows what is needed and deserved, and the member of Christ is ever dependent on the accumulated merits gathered by the Church through the ages.”

Saints participating in the heavenly liturgy and the faithful participating in the earthly liturgy are inherently connected in their praise of God and in carrying out the mission of the Church. As the Church consists of both the living and the dead, so too must the Church care for the living and the dead.

Concerns about how the cult of relics might detract from full, conscious, and active participation in the liturgy were prominent in the period before the Second Vatican Council. Catholics venerated saints and relics for a number of reasons, but not always with a clear understanding of the relationship between the saints and the sacrifice of Christ. Relics, even the smallest fragments, were seen as having miraculous powers. This led to “the difference between devotion and magic [becoming] obscured. When saints and their relics were assumed to work miracles, the distinction between worship and veneration was obliterated. If the life of the saint was the antithesis of vicarious religion, the cult of saints was its most fertile medium.”

Although theologians insisted that saints were intercessors to God, acting as mediators, not providers, the practice was not overcome in this period. As mediators, saints interceded to God


for the needs of the Christians, but it is God who gives all good things. When relics were seen as an alternative source of blessings and God’s mercy, the need to participate in the celebration of the Eucharist was not clear. The fear that a magical mindset and the veneration of the saints would surpass the celebration of the Eucharist was a cause of concern in the period before the Second Vatican Council.

The Second Vatican Council, Devotions, and the Paschal Mystery

At the time of the Second Vatican Council and immediately preceding it, many theologians offered ideas about how the cult of saints might be incorporated into the life of a church as to enhance the celebration of the Paschal Mystery of Christ. Pierre Jounel writes of the changes to the understandings of saints that began before the Second Vatican Council. He highlights the reforms of Pope John XXIII, noting that the liturgy of the saints in the sanctoral has been shaped so that each saint is contextualized in the Christian mystery. With prayers directed to God, the saint’s memory is constantly present in the celebration.32 Prior to Vatican II, Pius X tried to restore the preeminence of Sundays by reworking the ranks of various liturgical days.33 These ideas, present before the Council, were continued and enhanced in the work of the Consilium and promulgated by Pope Paul VI.


During and after the Second Vatican Council, attention was given to saints and relics in the life of the Church. One of the ways in which the relationship between saints and the Church was addressed was in the reform of the Calendar of Saints. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* clearly envisions a role for saints in the liturgical celebration. The Constitution includes a description of the role of saints in the liturgical year, noting, “The Church has also included in the annual cycle days devoted to the memory of the martyrs and the other saints. Raised up to perfection by the manifold grace of God, and already in possession of eternal salvation, they sing God’s perfect praise in heaven and offer prayers for us.”

Further, the Christian people are to celebrate the lives of the saints and to understand them in relationship to Christ’s paschal sacrifice. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* states, “By celebrating the passage of these saints from earth to heaven the Church proclaims the paschal mystery achieved in the saints who have suffered and been glorified with Christ; she proposes them to the faithful as examples drawing all to the Father through Christ, and through their merits she pleads for God's favors.” The saints, then, are the ultimate examples of how to live the Christian life. They are not to be worshipped themselves, but rather provide a witness to how to follow God’s will.

The Second Vatican Council called for a reform and gave principles for the reform of the role of saints in the church. These principles were incorporated into the life of the Church through the work of the Consilium and were promulgated by Pope Paul VI. Among those were revisions to the Sanctoral so as to ensure that the Paschal Mystery is the preeminent celebration of the Church. In his *motu proprio Mysterii paschalis* (February 14, 1969), Paul VI wrote,

34. SC, n. 104.

35. SC, n. 104.
“Celebration of the paschal mystery is of supreme importance in Christian worship and the cycle of days, weeks, and the whole year unfold its meaning…it is essential that Christ’s paschal mystery receive greater prominence in the reform of the liturgical year…”

André Haquin writes that the liturgical reform of the sanctoral following Vatican II wanted to retrieve the essential purpose of the Christian cult, the meeting place of God working in the heart of man, making it communicate with the paschal mystery of Christ. Christ was to be at the center of the life of the Church. The liturgical revisions included changes to how saints were incorporated into Eucharistic Prayers, in order to ensure that the prayer was clearly addressed to the Father. Haquin describes the changed placement of any mention of the saint whose feast is being celebrated in the Missal Romanum (editio 1970) noting that in the revision, any mention of the saints has been relegated to the final part of the prayer, in the intercessions which evoke the eschatological nature of the liturgy. It must be clear that the prayer is not addressed to the saints. Prayers used in celebrating the witness of saints and martyrs were revised to highlight the Christian mystery of Christ’s paschal action.

Theological understandings about saints have shifted so that their lives are utilized to reflect the Christian mysteries. Not only was the calendar itself revised, but so too were the formularies used on feast days. The euchological texts for feast days clearly demonstrate the


connection between the feast and Christ or his saving action while making clear that saints are asked to pray for the faithful and are not prayed to themselves. This reform emphasizes Paul VI’s statement that “the Catholic Church has always firmly and securely held that the feasts of saints proclaim and renew Christ’s paschal mystery.” The reforms of the Calendar promulgated by Paul VI reflect the role of Christ’s salvific action as the center of the Church’s life.

The aim of ensuring that the mysteries of Christ were the primary focus of the life of the Church is clearly demonstrated by the principles enumerated in Sacrosanctum Concilium for the reform of the liturgical calendar. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy includes this admonition: “Lest the feasts of the saints should take precedence over the feasts which commemorate the very mysteries of salvation, many of them should be left to be celebrated by a particular Church or nation or family of religious; only those should be extended to the universal Church which commemorate saints who are truly of universal importance.” This focus on the local nature of the cult of saints recalls the earliest practices of the Church, in which cults of relics developed around the grave of a local martyr or bishop. Changes to the Roman calendar were inspired by the earlier practices of the Church when saints’ cults were locally important before they influenced the wider Church.

Saints and relics retained an active role in the life of the Church because saints help to remind Christians that they have a role in the Body of Christ and in the eschatological component of the liturgy. Richard Vosko explains, “In the Catholic religion it is understood that when the living organic Church gathers to worship God it is, in some mysterious manner,

39. MP, DOL 440:3756.

40. SC n. 111.
enjoined by the entire Church including the dead. Thus, the presence of the sainthood, surrounding the assembly, makes good sense, not for the purpose of private devotion (although this is inevitable) but to complete the assembly of worshipers as it praises and blesses its God.41

The reforms of the Second Vatican Council did not diminish the cult of relics, but instead looked to contextualize devotional activities within the community. These reforms enhanced the importance of relics as witnesses to the communion of saints.

The cult of relics following the Second Vatican Council was different from the one that had existed before it. The change was not because of specific legislation on the cult of relics, but rather because of the increased focus on the Paschal mystery. Although the cult of relics and the fascination with saints was replaced in many places by a renewed Eucharistic theology, relics and saints remain an active component of the devotional life of the Church. Relics continue to help the faithful connect with the presence of God because of their tangible nature.

**Pope Benedict XVI and Relics**

Pope Benedict XVI reiterated the importance of relics in the contemporary world in 2005, telling those at World Youth Day that relics are a sign of the lives that Christian saints and martyrs have lived throughout the history of the Church. Relics are to redirect the believer’s attention to God who gives humans the power to bear witness to his love and goodness in the world. He noted that relics are merely bones, but that they are bones which belonged to people

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whose lives were touched by the power of God.42 The pope also said, “The relics of the saints are traces of that invisible but real presence which sheds light upon the shadows of the world and reveals the Kingdom of Heaven in our midst. They cry out with us and for us: ‘Maranatha!’ – ‘Come, Lord Jesus!’”43 Relics remain an important reminder in the twenty-first century of the Real Presence of Jesus in the world through the witness of holy men and women. Benedict’s statement notes the importance of the communion of saints, the idea that the Christian people on earth are connected to the saints in heaven.

Martina Bagnoli believes that Pope Benedict XVI’s speech reflects an ongoing theological question about the cult of relics. She writes, “Pope Benedict’s statement touches on an important aspect of the cult of relics that has preoccupied theologians since Late Antiquity: how can human remains transmit the power of God, who is not matter but spirit? This paradox worried both critics and supporters of the cult of relics, which emerged periodically as a matter of controversy provoked by unregulated popular devotion.”44 Bagnoli’s statement highlights ongoing theological questions regarding the cult of relics.


43. Benedict XVI speech.

Marching Forward: Continuing the Role of Saints and Relics in the Church

An important dialogue about the ongoing role of saints and relics in the life of the Church exists. Many scholars and pastoral experts have demonstrated that the cult of saints and relics, when properly venerated, can play a key role in the popular piety of the Church.

Philippe Rouillard outlines the three ways in which the church approaches dialogue with the saints. First, the church addresses prayers to God with the saints, such as in the Sanctus. The second is to pray to God, asking for the saints’ intercession; this is common in the collects used for saints’ feasts. Third, saints might be directly addressed; this practice is often seen in chapels devoted to saints or among groups who propose a specific prayer to a specific saint.\(^{45}\) Every Sunday, Catholics, through the Creed and the Eucharistic Prayer, affirm their belief in the communion of the saints and in the resurrection of the body. Then, the church may gather around the altar and join with the saints and the choirs of heaven in the hymn of praise, celebrating the Eucharistic banquet which extends beyond death.\(^{46}\) Saints and relics provide an example of those who have gone before and who have listened to the call of Christ in order to fully live out their faith.

Thomas Dubay suggests that saints play a crucial role in contemporary society. Dubay highlights their role as models of the four marks of Jesus’ community: apostolicity, unity,


universality, and holiness.\textsuperscript{47} Venerating the relics of saints who epitomize these traits can be a valuable reminder for today’s Christians to allow themselves to be shaped by God’s will. The twentieth century saw a revival in the local connection to saints. Lawrence Cunningham suggests that perhaps the twentieth century is also an age of new martyrs and that it is possible that more Christians died because of their faith in the twentieth century than during all of the Roman persecutions of the early Church.\textsuperscript{48} Michael Walsh also indicates that martyrdom is a characteristic of the Church in this age, noting groups of martyrs in China, Vietnam, Korea and Mexico.\textsuperscript{49} The canonization process returned the burden of investigation of a saint back onto the local church to look into the life of the person to be beatified and to develop a biography of the person.\textsuperscript{50} This process helps local communities to again feel a connection to saints and martyrs from their own area as well as to have a hand in who is recognized as a saint by the Church.

Similarly, pilgrimage to a place where sacred relics are kept on a path that others have trod can help contemporary Christians feel more intensely their connection to the larger Church, of which Christ is the head. There is renewed popularity of the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela, as seen in the 2010 film \textit{The Way}. In many ways, saints offer a connection to the Church and to living a Christian life. Pilgrimage can help the pilgrim become one with those

\begin{footnotes}
\item[48] Lawrence S. Cunningham, \textit{A Brief History of Saints} (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 115.
\item[50] Cunningham, \textit{A Brief History of Saints}, 120-121.
\end{footnotes}
who have gone before and with those who will come in the future.\textsuperscript{51} This demonstrates the important role that saints and relics play in understanding the eschatological nature of the Church.

Despite challenges from the reforms of the twentieth century, saints and relics remain important in contemporary Catholic life. Philippe Rouillard notes, “The liturgical cult of saints and devotion to the saints are alive and well in our time….The cult of saints unceasingly nourishes the Church with its own history, viewed under the angle of holiness, and it gives thanks to God for God’s love of humankind.”\textsuperscript{52} Rouillard proposes two different aspects of the cult of saints in the contemporary Church. First, he notes the universal cult which is played out in popular devotions worldwide. Second, he describes local cults of saints which represent the need for \textit{particularity}. This local saint is often very highly regarded by a specific community and in return intercedes for the requested graces.\textsuperscript{53}

Devotions to saints and relics, through feast days, processions, and veneration of relics in altars or reliquaries have maintained their place in the life of the Church. Rouillard proposes that this is because devotional activities respond to different needs of the faithful than the celebration of the Mass does. He writes, “The liturgical celebration of saints is not sufficient to answer the desires and the needs of the Christian people in their relation to those God has chosen and who

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53. Ibid., 312.
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can and must intercede in favor of human beings.”

The cult of saints and relics remains active in both the liturgical and devotional aspects of the Church’s life.

The ongoing popularity of the cult of relics and the important theological ideas that it expresses support the inclusion of relics beneath the altar of a church. Including relics in an altar can help to elucidate images of the communion of saints in the community. The actions of the faithful today are part of a bigger community which relics represent. Relics are an important physical reminder of Christians who have gone before as well as a sign of what is to come, physical resurrection of the body. Describing a threefold purpose of relics in an altar, Steven Schloeder writes, “First, it is a way of honoring the faithful who have died and have been given the crown of eternal life (cf. Rev. 2:10). Second, the association of the altar with a particular saint is an expression of belief in the communion of saints. And third, it is also an expression of belief in the Resurrection of the Lord and of his people (cf. 2 Tim 2:11).” Relics and saints, when properly situated in the context of Christ’s saving action, remain a valuable example of the universal nature of the Church and in the Christian belief in the resurrection of the dead.

Conclusion

Relics and saints in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries were recontextualized by the reforms of the liturgy. And, although guidelines for the veneration of relics have changed in


56. For example, the proper incensation of relics, as seen in the GIRM, and the direction in the Praenotanda of the Ordo dedicationis altaris that relics should not be displayed on or placed in the mensa of the altar.
order to promote the celebration of the Eucharist as the primary activity of the Christian community, saints and relics have retained their unique and important position in the life of the Church. The Code of Canon Law (1983) is clear to note that relics must be used in such a way as to promote the faith of the Church and that abuses of relics will not be tolerated. Relics and saints, through revision of the devotional practices to ensure the centrality of Christ’s saving action, offer physical reminders of the theological beliefs of the Church, especially the communion of saints.

Chapter Nine: The Influence of Relics on the Liturgical Theology of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris

The Scriptural Word and euchology are two important ways of expressing the liturgical theology in the enacted rite. This chapter will look particularly at the symbolic language present in the proclaimed Scriptures and the euchological texts of the 1977 Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris. Euchological texts help develop the images present in the Scriptural texts and introduce new ones. These prayers help to forge the connection between Word and Rite. The interpretation of Word and euchology is influenced by the presence of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church.

Relics can be one of the most prominent factors within the Rite, shaping the entrance procession, influencing movement throughout the sanctuary, and being deposited beneath the altar. The relationship of these ritual elements to the proclaimed Word and the euchology shapes the liturgical theology expressed by the rite. It is clear that the presence or absence of relics influences the context in which the text of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris is proclaimed.

The liturgy is theological, and reveals various perspectives: soteriological, eschatological, ecclesiological, Christological, and Trinitarian. All of these theological dimensions are present

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1. The analysis in this chapter will use the method presented by Kevin Irwin in his Context and Text. Please see the General Introduction to this dissertation for a brief summary of this method.

2. The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar is inherently Christological. The liturgical Christology of the rite is discussed in detail by Giuseppe Ferraro in his book Christo è l’altare: Liturgia di dedicazione della chiesa e dell’altare (Rome: Edizioni OCD, 2004). Ferraro’s study of the Christology of the rite brings him to express the belief that Christ is the living altar, ontologically, and is the mediator of every gift from God to men and from men to God. Ferraro writes, “L’altare vivente, Gesù Cristo è il mediatore vivente, ontologico, è la mediazione stessa attraverso cui ogni dono viene dato da Dio a gli uomini e ogni dono viene offerto dagli uomini a Dio,” 335.
in the liturgical theology that can be derived from the celebrated Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar, especially in the Word and euchology. In the midst of the proclaimed Scriptures and the celebration of the Eucharist is the deposition of relics. Without an understanding of the historical development of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and the role of relics, a full sense of the liturgical theology expressed by the present rite is impossible. Here, the text of the reformed rite is analyzed in light of whether or not relics are included.

**Structure of the Rite of Dedication of a Church**

I. Introductory Rites  
   a. Entrance into the Church  
   b. Blessing and Sprinkling of Water  
   c. Hymn  
   d. Opening Prayer  

II. Liturgy of the Word  

III. Prayer of Dedication and the Anointings  
   a. Invitation to Prayer  
   b. Litany of the Saints  
   c. {Depositing of the Relics}  
   d. Prayer of Dedication  
   e. Anointing of the Altar and the Walls of the Church  
   f. Incensation of the Altar and the Church  
   g. Lighting of the Altar and the Church  

IV. Liturgy of the Eucharist  
   a. Prayer over the Gifts  
   b. Eucharistic Prayer  
   c. {Inauguration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel}  
   d. Prayer after Communion  
   e. Blessing and Dismissal  

**Part One: Introductory Rites: The Body of Christ as Church**

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3. {} indicates an optional element of the rite. The optional status of these elements is understood throughout Part IV of the dissertation.
Throughout the entrance, prayers, hymns, blessing, and sprinkling, the role of the whole Church (see SC nos. 26, 41) in the celebration of dedication is evident. The Introductory Rites stress the connection between the Universal Church and this particular church.

**Entrance into the Church**

The Rite of Dedication of a Church begins with the entrance into the church. The basic outline of the entrance rite is procession from the place where the people have gathered, a neighboring church or suitable location, to the doors of the church to be dedicated. At the doors of the new church, the building is ritually handed over to the bishop and then the doors are opened. The people then proceed into the building. A processional entrance, from the place where the relics were placed in vigil to the new church, is provided as the first option for entering the building. This procession presents symbols which will be used throughout the rite and expresses a liturgical theology of the Body of Christ hierarchically ordered and the nature of the Church as a pilgrim people.

In the entrance procession, the Christian community journeys to the church building that will be dedicated. When relics are part of the entrance procession, the Church is more fully represented. In the procession, especially when relics are carried, there is an important place for all different groups within the Christian community: the priests, the bishop, the people, and those who have given their lives in witness to Christ so that they may be restored as part of His body. The Church triumphant is an important element of the entrance procession because it
demonstrates the nature of the Church from the very first moments in which a Christian community enters its new worship space.

The Body of Christ involved in the procession into the church reveals the symbol of the pilgrim people moving towards the heavenly Jerusalem. The Church is journeying toward both the physical church building and the eschatological fulfillment of the Church. Wilbricht notes that the formal procession to the new church “not only demonstrates the beauty and dignity of the created work but also the spiritual quest of the local community that takes possession of it.”

The Rite of Dedication of a Church expresses both Church as the people of God and church as the place where the people worship God. The church building being dedicated is both a physical and eschatological place as the earthly and heavenly liturgies join together.

Michael J. Thompson highlights how the closed church building symbolizes the heavenly Jerusalem to which the pilgrim people must move. The Christian people “…carry with them relics of the martyrs or other saints, reminding us that the Church is not only on earth but in heaven as well and, as they process, they sing one of the ‘psalms of ascent’ (the songs of pilgrims approaching the Jerusalem Temple) — Psalm 122 with the refrain ‘Let us go rejoicing to the house of the LORD.’ Singing words that ancient pilgrims sang, the assembled faithful go to the entrance of the new church building.” The use of Psalm 122 is the preferred choice for accompanying the procession. However, the rubrics note that the scriptural text may be

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substituted for another suitable song. Psalm 122 is particularly appropriate, not only because it utilizes eschatological and pilgrimage imagery, but also because the antiphon parallels the ritual movement of the people.

The entrance procession of the people into their new worship space expresses an important element of the liturgical theology expressed by the reformed rite: not only does the worship space need certain ritual objects, such as the altar, to begin its dedication, it also needs the people of God. Relics enhance the symbol of the pilgrim church by representing those who have reached the heavenly Jerusalem and who provide support for the Christians on their journey. Once the church has been handed over to the bishop and the doors have been opened, Psalm 24 (23) is sung with the antiphon “Lift high the ancient portals. The King of glory enters.” The use of Psalm 24 (23) as the people enter the church shows the connection to the pilgrims entering into the holy temple in Jerusalem.

In the entrance into the church, the symbol of light is used only if relics are carried in the procession. Without candles in the procession, themes such as Christ’s light in the world are not present in the beginning of the celebration. Relics and light play an important role in demonstrating the presence of Christ in the new church and in highlighting the function of this new church as a place for worship of God. The use of candles in the entrance procession builds on the theme of the pilgrim church on earth, showing how they carry the light of faith throughout the world. These symbols build on theme of Church as the Body of Christ and pilgrim people, showing how the Church carries the light of Christ to the world. This part of the rite is

7. ODEA 1977, n. 32.
eschatological and ecclesiological, in that the Church, living and dead, is in procession together towards the altar.

**Blessing and Sprinkling of Water**

Water acts as a multivalent symbol, especially as a reminder of baptism. The euchological texts associated with the use of water in this rite continue the expression of the Church as the Body of Christ and the relationship between the physical church building and the Universal Church. The church becomes one in Christ, the temple of God’s Spirit, through baptism.

**Ritual Symbol**

After the building has been ritually handed over to the bishop, water is blessed and sprinkled. The blessing of the water calls for remembrance of baptism, notes that the water is a sign of the people’s repentance and is a symbol of the cleansing of the walls and the altar. This prayer also demonstrates the importance of understanding the reformed liturgy as part of a *genetic vision* which is shaped by the liturgical history of the rite. Although the numerous aspersions throughout and around the church present in older rites have been reduced, the tradition of blessing of water and sprinkling is continued but with a new focus.

**Euchological text**

Imagery which was particularly emphasized in the early twentieth century and at the Second Vatican Council emerges in the prayer of blessing the water. Calabuig notes that the

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revised lustratio is done using Easter terminology and includes the assembly. The texts are eschatological and soteriological in the salvation through Christ and hope for the world to come. The image of the Body of Christ is especially important here when the prayer addresses the unity of the Church and those who have been baptized. The bishop then prays for the unity of the people who worship in the church in the holy city and that the water sprinkled throughout the church serve as a sign of the salvific action of baptism. The prayer text develops the image of God’s saving role in the sacramental celebrations which include purification from sin.

The image of Christ as the head of the body appears in the blessing of the water and the sprinkling of the people. The prayer recalls that God has “established an inheritance of such mercy, that those sinners, who pass through the water made sacred, die with Christ and rise restored as members of his body and heirs of his eternal covenant.” Christ as the head of the Church is specifically mentioned in the prayer when the bishop asks that God “continually lead us back to Christ our head.” A connection is implied between the Church gathered and the communion of saints. When the euchological text recalls those who die with Christ so that they might rise as part of His Body, the saints or martyrs whose relics will be deposited beneath the altar are recalled in the background. These relics represent those who have gone before in the life of the Church, living out their baptismal calling.


The last section of the prayer looks towards the eschatological fulfillment of the Church, beseeching, “May all here today, and all those in days to come who will celebrate your mysteries in this church, be united at last in the holy city of your peace.” If relics are present in the sanctuary during this prayer, the connection to Christians who have gone before and who have achieved eternal life with Christ is especially clear to the worshipping community.

There is also a relationship between the physical church building and the Church as the people of God shown here. The worship space is referenced in the “cleansing of these walls and this altar.” Water made sacred is also part of baptism through which the Church “becomes one in Christ.” Euchological texts used with the blessing and sprinkling of water flow between the Church as God’s people and the building being dedicated.

**Opening Prayer**

The Opening Prayer is the final euchological text of the Introductory Rites. It emphasizes the role of word and sacrament in the church and again the faithful are the subject of the prayer. This text helps to delineate the relationship between Word and Sacrament in the celebration of the liturgy by suggesting that it is the combination of the two which strengthens the relationship between the faithful and God. The presence of relics affects the first line of the Opening Prayer which mentions “all those who call upon you.” Here, those asking for God’s presence in the


Church are not only the gathered assembly, but also the saints and martyrs. The presence of relics creates a fuller image of the Body of Christ.

In the Introductory Rites, the euchology plays an important role in expressing key elements of the liturgical theology of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Notably, the rite is ecclesiological. This is seen through references to the Body of Christ, the clear use of the dual meanings of Church, and the baptismal allusions in the blessing of water and sprinkling. The presence of relics in the worship space during these prayers enhances the sense of the communion of saints. Relics also provide a firm witness of those who have lived out their baptismal calling and are part of the fullness of the faith.

**Part Two: Liturgy of the Word: Christ is the Cornerstone, the Faithful are Living Stones of the Church**

In the *Rite of Dedication of a Church* specific choices for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Word are designated in the Lectionary. Throughout the Liturgy of the Word, the gathered community is called to dialogical listening, reflection in silence, and response. The restoration of the Liturgy of the Word to the Rite of Dedication of a Church is particularly important in the development of symbols throughout the liturgical celebration. When relics are to be deposited beneath the altar, they are present in the sanctuary for the Liturgy of the Word. This part of the *Rite of Dedication of a Church* develops the theme that Christ is the cornerstone of the Church and the faithful are living stones. Relics in the sanctuary enhance the liturgical theology expressed by the rite by serving as a visible reminder of those who have lived their lives in

accordance with the Word of God. Calabuig notes that the Liturgy of the Word “underscores the value of the proclamation of the word, which calls the community into being and is itself an essential moment in our faith.” The proclaimed Word helps to form the community and requires a response from them.

**Introduction to the Word**

The bishop’s prayer while showing the *Lectionary* to the people before the first reading calls attention to the mystery of Christ which is unfolded through the Word of God heard in the church. This prayer plays an important role in demonstrating the connection between the Word of God and the ongoing celebration of the mysteries of Christ.

Simons highlights the role of the Liturgy of the Word in dedicating the ambo. He suggests that the emphasis on this ritual moment in the reformed rite shows the renewed attention to the theology of the word. This ritual moment is important because it is part of the new context of the rite. This theology demonstrates that in proclaiming the liturgy of the word, “God’s word is active and redemptive.” God’s word forms the faithful who are the living stones of the Church. Relics symbolize those who have responded to the call inherent in God’s word. This power of God’s word in shaping the Christian community is present in the connection between Word and euchology. The Liturgy of the Word also sets the tone for the entire liturgical celebration by declaring that God is present and active in this moment. In the Liturgy of the

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Word, many of the key themes of the entire rite are presented and woven together. Here, the Christian community in this new church is shaped by the activity of God in their midst and their response to it.

First Reading: Nehemiah 8

For the first reading, the reader proclaims a text from the Book of Nehemiah. Unlike the other readings for the Rite of Dedication of a Church and many of the other reformed liturgical celebrations, there are no options for the first reading. Those preparing for the celebration do not select from a series of possibilities, rather the first reading always comes from the Book of Nehemiah.

The reading from the Book of Nehemiah begins with the people gathered together while Ezra the priest reads to them from the book of the law of Moses which God gave to Israel. Ezra read the law to the people who were at the Water Gate. The people gathered to hear what Ezra is reading parallels the community which is gathered to hear the Word of God proclaimed in the dedication of a new worship space. The scriptural text specifies that Ezra has been given a special platform from which to read the law, similar to the ambo in the new church.

In a gesture parallel to the actions of the bishop who held up the Lectionary for the congregation to see before the proclamation of the Word, the reading continues by describing how Ezra stood and opened up the scroll for all of the people to see it. Ezra then blesses the Lord

21. ODEA 1977, n. 54. Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10.

and the people bowed down before the Lord. This scriptural text calls for a response from the community gathered to hear the story of Ezra so that they may respect the Word of God and live out the response of those who saw the scroll containing the Law in their own time. Relics enhance the image of those who have lived out the response to God’s law in their own time.

Andrew Taylor-Troutman describes how listening is the purpose of Ezra’s reading:

“Perhaps the most importance change is that while the people spoke in the opening verse, the assembly will listen. Indeed, the infinitive of the verb… indicates that listening is their purpose… Just as Ezra’s leadership was tied to his ability to read the Torah, the people’s participation infers their own responsibilities. Those in this assembly ‘were attentive.’ We might call them active listeners…”24 Dialogical listening is apparent in both the desired attitude of those gathered for the Rite of Dedication of a Church and in the attentiveness of the assembly mentioned in the scriptural text. The gathered assembly is drawn into a relationship with God and one another, just as people in the reading were. The contemporary assembly parallels the attentiveness and openness of the congregation gathered to hear the Law. Kevin Irwin writes, “The liturgical assembly thus enters into the same faith relationship with God offered to and forged in Israel and the primitive Christian Church.”25 The presence of relics has the potential to highlight those who have entered into a faith relationship with God and have entered into His kingdom. It is evident that they are part of the living stones of the Church. Gathered at the

23. Nehemiah 8:5-6.


dedication of a church, the Christian community hears the Word in its own context, and they can deepen their relationship with God.

The reading from the Old Testament continues with the entrance of Nehemiah the Governor who, along with Ezra and the Levites, was instructing the people that this was a day for joy. The people are told to celebrate and to be happy, to rejoice in the Lord. The day is to be one of celebration. If the people of God gathered to dedicate the church are to be attentive listeners as the listeners in the reading were, then they, too, must obey the command that this is to be a day of celebration and rejoicing. The reading also alludes to the interpretation of the Law so that the people can fully understand what is being read to them.

At the conclusion of the first reading of the Liturgy of the Word, the people have heard two key ideas. First, they must be attentive to the reading and live out a response to it. Second, this day is to be one of celebration and rejoicing, a day which is holy to the Lord. This reading develops the importance of the symbol of the Word of God in the community and becomes part of the context for the rest of the celebration. It is apt that the first reading heard by the congregation in their new worship space is one which presents the foundation of the covenant with God, a reading about hearing and responding to the Law. Since Christ is the fulfillment of the Law and those who follow Christ become the Church, the liturgical themes of this part of the Rite of Dedication are evident here.

The reading, which represents the birth of Judaism, is also at the foundation of this Christian church. Parallels between the moment in history presented in the scriptural text and the

27. Nehemiah 8:8.
The contemporary context of the proclamation are evident and are made more explicit in the presence of the bishop and his inaugural prayer. Simons writes, “in the Church the scriptures give us the Christian way of life and, as the bishop said in his prayer, the word of God opens up the mystery of Christ and brings about salvation in the Church.” The connection between euchology and Word is evident here. While the Scriptures show the law of the Church and its role in the community, relics depict those who have lived out the law and responded to the call of God.

*Psalm 19: “Your Words, O Lord, are Spirit and Life”*

Following the reading from the Old Testament, the Lectionary prescribes the singing of Psalm 19:8-9, 10, 15 with the refrain “Your words, Lord, are Spirit and Life”. This Psalm provides a bridge between the reading from Nehemiah which described the people of God listening intently to the Law of God found in the Torah and the Law which comes through Christ. The Psalm echoes the importance of the Word of God and decrees that it is a source of wisdom. Directly following the reading about Ezra’s proclamation of the Law, the use of the Psalm and response exemplifies the dialogical nature of hearing the Word proclaimed. The Psalm reiterates the themes presented in the first reading, especially the importance of the Word and commands of the Lord and the aim of the people to be in favor with God.

Relics again provide a context for the ritual experience of the Word expressed in the Psalm text. As the Psalm mentions the power of the Word of God, the relics serve as a visual representation of those who have followed God’s Word throughout their lives. This develops the

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theological theme that Christ is the cornerstone and the faithful are the living stones of the Church by demonstrating that those who follow God’s call make up the Church.

New Testament Reading: Physical and Spiritual Temple

A few choices are offered for the second reading. These scriptural readings primarily address the dual meaning of Church as both the People of God and as the physical gathering place set aside by the people for the worship of God. This is accomplished by building on the theme of Christ as the cornerstone, the faithful as the living stones to enhance the image of both the spiritual Church and the physical church being celebrated in the dedication.

Options:
1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17 – “You are God’s temple”

Ephesians 2:19-22 – “You are members of the household of God … with Jesus Christ himself as the cornerstone”

Hebrews 12:18-19, 22-24 – “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”

1 Peter 2:4-9 – “Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house”

All of the possible selections are brief. Each of the four readings directly addresses the Christian community. These readings elucidate the image of the people as the Church.

From 1 Corinthians, the reading calls the Christian people “God’s Temple”. Here, the symbols of constructing a physical building also help with the continued dynamic of both meanings of church. The imagery involves the phrases “laid a foundation” and “builds upon it”.30 These images are reinforced with the opening statement that the people of the Church are God’s

30. 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17.
building. If the reading from 1 Corinthians is chosen, the liturgical theology expressed would receive an extra ecclesiological emphasis. This reading does not offer any specific connection to the role of relics in the church, but does emphasize the presence of the Spirit of God in each Christian. This highlights the importance of following the examples set by saints and martyrs as well as recognizing the presence of God in the lives of contemporary Christians.

The reading from Ephesians is equally succinct. Paul highlights the formation of the Christian community. The formation of the community in Paul’s letter is similar to the contemporary community which is listening to the proclamation of the Word. The Body of Christ is presented in in the relationship between the saints, prophets, apostles, those to whom the letter is addressed and Christ. When the image of the Body of Christ with Christ as the capstone is presented, the relationship between those in the earthly community and those who have gone before is particularly well-developed. The connection between Christ and those who have witnessed to his sacrifice is also emphasized in this imagery. These witnesses are represented in the relics. This reading concludes with the reminder that the Church is held together by and becomes sacred through the Lord. In this verse is not only a vivid image of the power of God, but also a clear depiction of why the community is dedicating this worship space and through whom the dedication is being accomplished. A clear shift in the role of relics in the rite of dedication is seen when this reading is used because the liturgical theology that emanates from it shows that relics are not the dedicatory element. Relics and the witnesses to Christ whose remains they are highlight those in the Christian community who have lived according to the Word of God.
The third selection is from the Letter to the Hebrews emphasizes the eschatological nature of the liturgy which is also shown in the presence of relics. This selection uses the imagery of the heavenly Jerusalem and the city of God along with allusions to the Old Testament. Relics represent those who have lived their lives as witnesses to Christ’s example and are now with Him in heaven. It also stresses the role of Jesus as “the mediator of a new covenant.” This image is particularly powerful when proclaimed in conjunction with the first reading’s description of the foundation of Israel through the reading of God’s Law. When this reading is chosen, the hope for the Kingdom of God and the participation in the heavenly liturgy are especially apparent in the rite of dedication.

Perhaps the best known choice is the fourth option from 1 Peter, which is the longest of the four options. This selection builds on the imagery of constructing a church building, particularly the theological theme that the Christ is the cornerstone and the faithful are the living stones. Using the image of “living stones”, this reading shows that the Christian community become a place for spiritual offerings. This reading also references the Old Testament and the importance of faith. The idea of a people called out is present in the excerpt from 1 Peter, harkening back to the people formed by the covenant and obedience to the Law in Nehemiah. Finally, the image of light is used in this reading. This increases the use of the symbol of light introduced in the entrance procession when relics are present. From this selection, a liturgical theology which emphasizes the importance of the Christian community, faith, and obedience to God’s Word is evident. A connection to relics is seen here in two ways. First, the reading uses the symbol of light which would only be explicitly visible in the liturgy up to this point if relics
are present since only then would candles be present. Second, relics provide a concrete example of those who have been influential in the Christian community. The relics remind the gathered assembly of those who have lived the Christian message and who offer assistance to those who are living the Christian life today.

Gospel Acclamation and Gospel: Tabernacle and Temple, Physical and Spiritual Church

Five options are provided for the Gospel Acclamation in the Common of the Anniversary of Dedication of a Church.31

2 Chronicles 7:16 – “I have chosen and consecrated this house, says the Lord, that my name may be there forever.”

Isaiah 66:1 – “The heavens are my throne, the earth is my footstool, says the Lord; What kind of house can you build for me?”

Ezekiel 37:27 – “My dwelling shall be with them, says the Lord; I will be their God and they shall be my people.”

See Matthew 7:8 – “In my house, says the Lord, everyone who asks will receive; the one who seeks, finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.”

Matthew 16:18 – “You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of the netherworld shall not prevail against it.”

These options all address the relationship between the physical church and the spiritual Church. Primary themes include the Lord’s heavenly dwelling place and the presence of the Lord in the hearts of the faithful. Further, these succinct verses offer insight into nature of the house of God, noting that God consecrates places to His name and that in God’s house he who asks will

receive. A theological theme throughout this part of the celebration is the spiritual house of the Lord in each Christian and the physical house of the Lord in the church building. Relics help to demonstrate this theme because they show the lives of people who have followed the Lord and given their all to build up the Church.

The final reading of the Liturgy of the Word is the Gospel. Four possible options for the Gospel are provided.  

_Matthew 16:13-19_ – “You are Peter: I will give you the keys to the Kingdom of heaven.”  
_Luke 19:1-10_ – “Today salvation has come to this house.”  
_John 2:13-22_ – “Jesus was speaking about the temple of His body.”  
_John 4:19-24_ – “True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.”  

These four options build on the theological theme of temple and tabernacle, spiritual and physical homes of the Lord. Relics highlight those saints and martyrs who have been exemplary spiritual homes for the Lord. Simons describes the christological and soteriological elements found in these Gospels, writing, “The passages from Luke 19 and John 4, in particular, underline that the rite is a celebration of Christ in his redeeming activity, for ‘today salvation has come to this house.’ The people are renewed by the saving power of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ.”  

Here, the reason for the construction of a church and the foundation of the Church is explicitly described for the gathered people.

The reading from the Gospel of Matthew points to the eschatological nature of the liturgy. The scriptural text also highlights Jesus’ divinity and the role of revelation. The

33. Simons, _Holy People Holy Place_, 43.
foundations of the Church are described in the reading in which Peter is named as the rock upon which Christ will build his Church. This allusion to both the physical and spiritual foundations of the Church connects to the images of church construction which were present in many of the possibilities for Reading II. Relics represent the saints and martyrs who help to serve as spiritual foundations for the Church.

A selection from the Gospel of Luke is the second possible choice for both the Rite of Dedication of a Church and in the Anniversary of the Dedication of a Church. This reading particularly addresses salvation in the Church. Here, Zacchaeus the chief tax collector recognizes his sins and repents, vowing to give half of his possessions to the poor and to return four times over anything that he has extorted. In this reading, the role of Christ as the bringer of salvation is developed. Zacchaeus welcomes Jesus into his home, promises to help the poor, and makes plans to right any wrongs he has committed. Salvation comes to Zacchaeus because he welcomed Jesus. This selection also builds on the community which was founded through the proclamation of and responding to the law in the first reading from Nehemiah. The image of the community established by living out the law and the need for continual conversion is especially evident when the reading from Luke 19:1-10 is used in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Relics connect the images present in this Gospel selection to contemporary Christian life by reminding the faithful of those who have made a home for Jesus in their lives, who have given all that they have in service of others, and who have received God’s salvation.

A third option for the Gospel reading is from John 2:13-22, the cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem. This reading also uses imagery that demonstrates the presence of God in the body.

The first selection from this Gospel provides directions as to what sacred space is not: a marketplace. The primary symbol in this reading is the spiritual temple, the temple of Christ’s Body. When this reading is used, the overarching importance of Christ’s sacrifice is stressed in comparison to the physical space for the worship of God. The sacrifice of Christ is echoed in the relics which testify to those who have sacrificed because of Christ’s salvific actions.

In the fourth option, a central theme is the worship of God in Spirit and truth. This reading from John 4:19-24 develops the eschatological component of the liturgical celebration. It highlights that God looks for people to worship him and that a change in the times and ways of worship is coming. True worship of the Father is the aim of Jesus’ admonition in this selection and of the construction of a church building, but the physical place for worship is less critical in this text. This reading suggests a shift in the worship practices that were common at the time while looking toward the coming Kingdom of God. Simons notes that this reading is a reminder of the humility of the Christian people, especially when a reading which shies away from emphasizing the physical worship space is used during the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Relics in the sanctuary during this reading evoke images of those who are in the Kingdom of God and who have truly worshipped the Father.

The Lectionary notes that Reading II and the Gospel reading may also be chosen for the anniversary of the dedication of the church, whereas Reading I and the Responsorial Psalm are unique to the Rite of Dedication of a Church. This demonstrates an important connection between the celebration of dedication and the ongoing liturgical life of the community who

gathers there. Relics can help to delineate the ongoing connection between the celebration of dedication and the life of the Christian community who gathers there by serving as a physical reminder of the celebration of dedication. The New Testament readings clearly express the theological theme of Christ as the cornerstone and the faithful as the living stones of the Church. Relics play a central role in expressing this theme and its connection to the celebration of dedication. Relics represent those who have been the living stones of the Church, building it up through their obedience to God and their sacrifices.

The Liturgy of the Word concludes with the proclamation of the Creed which seems to be a fitting response to the call to hear God’s commandments in Reading I. In establishing a place for their true worship of the Father, the Christian community helps to inaugurate the building with an expression of their beliefs and praise of God. However, the General Intercessions are omitted in favor of the Litany of the Saints, which begins the third part of the dedication celebration. The Liturgy of the Word presents and further develops many of the themes which underlie the entire Rite of Dedication, especially the salvific action of Christ, the foundation of the community on the Law and Christ’s sacrifice, the eschatological nature of the liturgy, the dual meanings of church, and the Body of Christ which helps to order the Church. The presence of relics in the sanctuary during these readings exemplifies the continuing nature of the Church and provides a physical witness of those who have lived out the Law. The theological theme expressed particularly by the Liturgy of the Word, that Christ is the cornerstone and the faithful are the living stones of the Church, is essential for understanding the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The readings emphasize Christ’s preeminent role in the life of the
Church and demonstrate that the sacrifices of witnesses to Christ are secondary to Christ’s own sacrifice. This idea illuminates why relics would be deposited beneath the altar, rather than in the altar itself, as well as showing that Christ is to be worshipped, and not the relics. The importance of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church is similarly emphasized by the Scriptural texts which clearly define how the people of God are to follow His Word; relics serve as a reminder of those who have done this. The Liturgy of the Word highlights one of the key themes of the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the renewal of the Christian community who will gather in the church. This theme is evident in the readings that show the creation of a community through God’s law and that use images of Christians as living stones.

**Part Three: Prayer of Dedication and the Anointings: Church as Holy City**

Part Three of the Rite of Dedication of a Church, perhaps the most euchologically rich section of the rite, follows the Liturgy of the Word. The ritual elements of this section express key themes in the liturgical theology of the celebration, especially when relics are to be used. This section is the most significantly shaped by the inclusion or exclusion of the deposition of relics because not only would relics be present during this part, they would also be deposited during this part of the rite.

**Litany of the Saints: Earthly and Heavenly Church**

This third part of the rite begins with an invitation to prayer which directly focuses the attention of the faithful onto the role of the saints and through that reference to the presence of relics in the sanctuary if they are to be used. The role of the saints in the liturgy is evident in this
euchological text: the saints support the prayers of the people which are made to God. In addition to clarifying the role of the saints in Christian life, the prayer also builds on the dual meanings of church, the people of God or the Body of Christ and the building. Relics present in the sanctuary particularly enrich the liturgical theology expressed in the intercession to the saints by serving as a corporeal reminder of those saints whose aid is being requested. Once relics have been deposited beneath the altar, the ongoing company of the saints can be more easily recalled.

The Litany of the Saints is an essential ritual action to this rite because it is inherently universal in its nature while also being adaptive and attentive to the celebration in the local Church by recognizing the saints who are particularly prominent in the local community. Relics represent a similar concept, saints of the universal Church present in the local church. Simons states that the litany acts as a bridge between the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist, taking the place of the Prayer of the Faithful. Stephen Wilbricht writes, “…the litany has now been placed in its traditional location before the prayer of blessing itself, proximate to the burying of the relics, and bears witness to the participation of the entire Church (earthly and heavenly) in the blessing prayer.” The ritual placement of the Litany of the Saints shows the direct connection between the communion of saints and the rite of dedication. The Litany also has specific references to the consecration of the church as part of its invocations. Further, the Litany of the Saints also allows for a direct connection to the particular church being dedicated.

37. ODEA 1977, n. 57.
38. Calabuig, The Dedication of a Church and an Altar: A Theological Commentary, 19.
39. Simons, Holy People Holy Place, 44.
when the names of the saints whose relics are being deposited are included in the Litany and when the patron saint of the church is included. These references to the saints whose intercession is especially asked for in this worship space demonstrates the relationship between the communion of saints and the earthly church and shows how the two are in communion. This relationship is evident because relics serve as concrete reminder of the saints who are being invoked, the earthly Church’s connection to the communion of saints.

Wilbricht explores the connection between the euchology at the conclusion of the Litany of the Saints and the themes in the Gospel of John in the Liturgy of the Word; he writes, “…it is noteworthy that the prayer concluding the litany speaks of a ‘house of salvation and grace where Christians gathered in fellowship may worship you in spirit and truth and grow together in love’; the ‘church’ is here a place but is also marked by the community’s growth in holiness.” The euchological text used in association with the Litany makes a reference to the fellowship of Christians. Through the connections between the assembled community and the community of Christians which has gone before, this euchological text asks that the prayers of Mary and the saints help the prayers of the community on earth. Each group within the Church has its own role to play in the life of the Church, which is emphasized by the prayer. The 1977 ordo follows the tradition of the Church by returning the Litany of the Saints to its traditional location. Further, the placement of the Litany of the Saints in relation to other Scriptural and euchological texts enriches the liturgical theology expressed by the whole rite. It helps elucidate that each part of the Church, each part of Christ’s body, has a specific role and is connected to the other parts. The communion of saints depicted here highlights the hope of the pilgrim church on earth seen in the

church triumphant. The Litany of the Saints emphasizes the way in which the saints intercede on behalf of the earthly Church as well as the intercessory power of the saints in heaven because of their special relationship with Christ. Relics make this idea particularly clear through their physical presence, not only in the rite of dedication but their ongoing place in the worship space.

**Deposition of Relics: Church Triumphant**

When relics are used in Rite of Dedication of a Church, the connection between this community and the larger Church is especially evident. The relics represent the church triumphant, the victims redeemed by Christ’s passion as described by Ambrose. When the Litany of the Saints is finished, the bishop concludes with a prayer asking for the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and all of the saints to help make the prayers of the congregation acceptable to God. Further, it asks for the church to be a place of fellowship. This prayer binds the Christian church on earth to the heavenly liturgy and the communion of saints. When the prayer directly precedes the deposition of relics of a saint whose intercession has been specifically invoked, it is clear that the church will be home to someone who can help make the prayers it offers acceptable to God.

If relics are not to be deposited, the Litany of the Saints flows directly into the Prayer of Dedication. This movement demonstrates the bond between the invocation of the saints and the dedication of the church. Although the saints do not act to dedicate the church, their intercessions are a sign of support and help for the community. The absence of relics during this part of the rite places an extra burden on the euchology to demonstrate the role of the saints both in this

42. *ODEA 1977*, n. 60.
liturgical celebration and in the life of the Church. The absence of relics removes from the rite one of its oldest and most traditional ritual elements. However, since the role of relics in the rite has been greatly simplified, less is omitted from the rite should the decision be made not to include relics. The Litany of the Saints plays a greater role in communicating the presence of saints as intercessors when the deposition of relics is not to be included in the rite of dedication.

The deposition of relics, if they are to be used, offers an explicit connection between the earthly Church and the heavenly liturgy. Relics provide a visible sign of the faith of believers who have gone before. As the profession of the Creed at the conclusion of the Liturgy of the Word was a valuable symbol of the faith response of the community gathered for worship, the deposition of relics provides a ritual response to the Litany of the Saints. The Litany of the Saints serves a kind of explanatory element, highlighting the connection between the relics and the gathered assembly. In the Litany, the position of the saints as special intercessors for the faithful is brought to the forefront. The relics are a physical witness to those who have been preaching their faith and living the faith contained in the Creed throughout the life of the Church. The lives of the saints and martyrs whose relics will be deposited beneath the altar are witnesses for the gathered assembly. The assembly can learn from the examples of the saints and martyrs. Relics can be reminders of how to live out the Christian calling. Likewise, relics are a reminder of God’s mercy towards his people. When the Litany of the Saints precedes the deposition of relics, the role of the saints, represented by the relics, in the ongoing life of the Church is especially clear.
Relics, if they are to be deposited beneath the altar, have been on a table surrounded by candles until this point in the rite, and they now reach their resting place in the church. There is no specific euchology associated with the deposition of the relics. A brief rubrical text describes the process for placing the relics beneath the altar, but there is no euchological text included. The rubrical texts here do not describe where, exactly, the relics should be deposited. In some cases they may be in the floor below the altar, in others attached to the base of the altar in some way. No specific directions are provided. Attention to the construction of the altar following Vatican II with no direct instruction on the placement of relics highlights the importance of the altar above the relics. The previous ritual element, the singing of the Litany of the Saints, is bookended by an invitation to prayer and a prayer which help to situate the Litany within the larger context of the rite. However, the deposition of relics, one of the oldest traditional elements of the rite, includes no prayer text or explanation. While the deposition of relics in previous ordines was completed away from the sight of the gathered community, behind a veil, the procession of the relics into the church emphasized the ritual action that was about to occur. Here, the procession with the relics alone has been eliminated and relics are included in the entrance procession. In the communion of saints, the pilgrim church on earth, the faithful, is connected to the church triumphant, the saints who are in God’s heavenly kingdom. In their special relationship with Christ and as witnesses to His sacrifice, the saints and martyrs aid the pilgrim church on earth. The inclusion of relics in the entrance procession helps to express the theological understanding of the pilgrim church and the role of all of the parts of the Body of Christ.
Since there is no euchology associated with the deposition of relics, the physical actions of the bishop and other clergy along with the stone mason take on extra importance. The deposition of relics in earlier versions took place without the assembly in the church and was both preceded and followed by numerous blessings and anointings. The simplicity of the actions in which the bishop moves to the altar and is brought the relics by a priest or deacon directs the attention of the congregation, who are standing after the singing of the Litany of the Saints, to the deposition of the relics. Then, following the historical tradition, it is the bishop himself who places the relics in their aperture beneath the altar. Unlike older rites in which incense or pieces of the consecrated Host were mixed in with the relics, only relics are placed in this aperture. Then, the stonemason, whose previous location is not mentioned, closes the aperture and the bishop returns to his chair. Saints offered their lives, as Christ did, in witness to the Lord’s salvific actions for mankind. Relics, then, are deposited beneath the altar where they rest as witnesses to the memorial of Christ’s sacrifice, rather than in the altar which is Christ. The sacrifice of the saints and martyrs, whose relics are present in the rite, is secondary to the saving Passion of Christ. Relics serve as a sign of those who have given their lives in witness to Christ’s sacrifice, called by God’s Word, not as equal to that once-for-all life-giving action.

The deposition of relics is not done in silence. After the prayer which concludes the Litany of the Saints and the invitation to stand, Psalm 14 (15) is sung along with one of two antiphon choices if relics are to be deposited. Psalm 14 (15) is a liturgical composition meant to
be sung by at the entrance to the temple, a dialogue between the pilgrims and the priests. It stresses the pilgrim nature of the Church. Psalm 14 (15) is, according to Calabuig, a “sign of the martyrs’ entry, following upon a heroic following of Christ, into the ‘tent’ of the Lord, their resting place on the holy mountain where they will enjoy eternal rest.” This psalm is similar in meaning to Psalm 23 (24) used in the entrance procession, in which relics were also included. Both psalms iterate the commandments to enter into God’s temple. Relics enhance these images because the saints whose remains they are have truly obeyed God’s commands and followed His will.

The antiphons are “Saints of God, you have been enthroned at the foot of God’s altar; pray for us to the Lord Jesus Christ,” and “The bodies of the saints lie buried in peace, but their names will live on for ever (alleluia).” These choices both emphasize the bond between the saints and Jesus Christ. The first antiphon highlights the role of the saints as intercessors for the Church on earth. This antiphon also demonstrates the proximity of the saints’ relics to the altar, but that they are separate from the altar. It shows that honor is afforded to the relics through their deposition near the altar, not that the relics bring honor to the altar. This simple antiphon presents the underlying thrust of the role of relics in the reformed rite of dedication.

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44. Calabuig, *The Dedication of a Church and an Altar: A Theological Commentary*, 23

45. Ferraro, *Christo è l'altare*, 84.

The second antiphon choice flows well from the Litany of the Saints because it references the ongoing remembrance of the names of the saints, singing “The bodies of the saints lie buried in peace, but their names will live on for ever (alleluia).” The names of the saints whose relics are being deposited were just specifically mentioned in the Litany of the Saints. This antiphon echoes what the Christian community has just done in its liturgical practice. It is the names of the saints which will be used in requesting their intercession with God. This antiphon depicts the importance of the saints’ perpetual rest in their undisturbed burial place while their names continue to be used as intercessors for the Christian community. Psalm 14 (15) provides a description of those who will walk with the Lord, highlighting the characteristics that many of the saints have exemplified. The Psalm choice with either antiphon provides a witness to the saintly way of life as well as serves as a guide for the community gathered for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. Symbols such as the tent in Psalm 14 (15) represent the church being dedicated and develop the need for good people and relationships among those who will worship there.

Reforms resulting from the Second Vatican Council emphasized Trinitarian activity in the life of the Church. The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar is no different in this regard. The Rite addresses prayers to the Father through Christ and includes a specific epiclesis in the prayer of dedication. Longstanding abuses and misconceptions in the rite of dedication had distracted the faithful from fully understanding the dedication of a Church to God through Christ’s Paschal mystery. Relics should be a complementary element, augmenting the liturgical theology expressed by the celebration of Eucharist. When the celebration of dedication is

47. ODEA 1977, n. 61.
situated within the context of the Mass, the dedicatory action becomes clearer. Christ’s primary role in the dedication and in the Eucharistic celebration are emphasized, rather than relegated to a complementary role. By making the role of relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church optional, the rest of the rite focuses more intently on God’s presence in the dedication rather than being distracted by the idea that relics made an altar holy. Previously, relics were seen as the consecratory element, which detracted from the importance of the Eucharistic celebration.

As an optional element, the deposition of relics allows the local bishop, with his knowledge of the local Church, to make a decision which best responds to the needs of the people. Sacrosanctum Concilium highlights the role of the bishop as the “high priest” of the local church.48 It also emphasizes the importance of liturgical celebrations in which the local community gathers around the altar with bishop.49 The Rite of Dedication of a Church serves as an opportunity for the pastors of a diocese, a local Christian community, and the bishop to celebrate the liturgy together. In the dedication of a new church, the bishop is also fulfilling his mission of setting up a local parish to help serve the local community.50 This rite, then, can demonstrate the vision of the Church and the unity in the local Christian community.

Sacrosanctum Concilium delegates certain decisions regarding the celebration of the liturgy to the local conferences of bishops.51 The inclusion of relics in the dedication of a church is a decision to be made in conjunction with the local ordinary. A local conference of bishops could

48. SC, n. 41.
49. SC, n. 41.
50. SC, n. 42
51. SC, n. 22.
offer guidance or considerations for the inclusion of relics. Jean Evenou notes that the deposition of relics can have a particularly expressive character, and so consideration needs to be given to incorporating it in the celebration of dedication. The *Rite of Dedication of a Church* helps to live out the vision of the church expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*.

The deposition of relics, preceding the Prayer of Dedication, complements the liturgical theology of the rite. This theology develops the importance of the entire Christian community, the pilgrim church and the church triumphant, in the life of the Church. Relics, however, cannot take the place of Christ in the celebration. Relics amplify key theological themes throughout the celebration of dedication. These themes include the Body of Christ, the connection to the heavenly liturgy, and the continuous witness to the faithful of the past, and are especially clear in the ongoing life of the Church when relics are used in the Rite of Dedication. The deposition of relics is traditional, ecclesiological and eschatological.

*Prayer of Dedication: Images of the Church*

One of the central euchological texts of the entire Rite of Dedication of a Church, the Prayer of Dedication, follows the deposition of relics or the Litany of the Saints. Following either of these ritual elements establishes the connection between the eternal heavenly liturgy and the present earthly liturgy. The Prayer of Dedication incorporates the imagery and symbols which have been interwoven through the previous Scriptural readings and euchological texts. Structurally, the prayer is addressed to the Father in heaven and consists of the naming of God’s attributes, a request by the people, an epiclesis, and a concluding doxology.

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Structure

The Prayer of Dedication, in Latin, consists of 41 lines in ten strophes. It is divided into three parts. The first part contains 5 strophes which form the foundation of the prayer. Giuseppe Ferraro writes of the first part, “…the initial one [strophe] is the prologue that expresses the theme, the will of the Assembly to dedicate the church, the other four strophes each contain a biblical image of the church, the bride of Christ, the vineyard of the Lord, the temple of God, the city on the mountain.” This cultivates the idea that the Church can be seen many ways and that it has many parts. Ferraro highlights how this part of the Prayer of Dedication typifies salvation history, expressing through praise how God has acted out of love for mankind. The second part of the prayer is one strophe which asks for God’s blessing and the sanctification of God for the church and the altar. Consisting of four strophes, the third part of the Prayer of Dedication depicts the functions of the church in each stanza. Ferraro demonstrates that the prayer closes with the eschatological hope of the church: “The last strophe concludes the prayer with the prospect of exultation in the heavenly Jerusalem.” The basic structure of the Prayer of Dedication forms a euchological summary of the rite, the whole Church gathered asks for the dedication of the church, remembers God’s salvific acts, invokes God’s blessing, names the purpose of the church in the Christian community, and expresses the Church’s hope for the Kingdom to come.

53. Ferraro, Christo è l’altare, 89. “La prima parte ha cinque strofe di cui quella iniziale costituisce il prologo che esprime il tema, la volontà dell’assemblea di dedicare la chiesa; le altre quattro strofe svolgono ciascuna una immagine biblica della chiesa: sposa di Cristo, vigna del Signore, tempio di Dio, città sul monte.”

54. Ibid., 90.

55. Ibid. “L’ultima strofe conclude la preghiera con la prospettiva dell’esultanza nella Gerusalemme celeste.”
The Prayer of Dedication is structured in a way similar to most liturgical prayers, but has the advantage of being longer and thus more fully expressing a liturgical theology. There is an anamnesis, a recollection in this prayer, of God’s previous salvific actions. There is also a specific request being made to God in the prayer. Here, the request is for the dedication of worship space to God.

**Euchological Text**

The Prayer of Dedication opens with a statement that it is true and right to praise God. The prayer states why God is worthy of praise and names some of God’s titles. In the Latin text, the prayer is addressed to God, sanctifier and ruler of His Church. In the English translation, the prayer names God as the “source of holiness and true purpose”. In both versions, the prayer then states that it is right to praise God’s name.

Following the praise of God’s name, the euchological text states why the community has gathered and is praying to God. The Prayer of Dedication highlights that this church is to be dedicated to God. This house of prayer (“hanc orationis domum”) is to be a place where the faithful are nourished and instructed by God’s word (“verbo eruditur”) and sacraments (“alitur sacramentis”).

The next four strophes reflect biblical images that outline the mystery of the Church. Christ’s sacrifice makes holy the Church, which is also likened to a bride radiant with his glory, a splendid virgin, and “a mother blessed through the power of the Spirit”. The Church as the bride of Christ emphasizes the deep connection between the two and the love of Christ for His

56. _ODEA 1977_, n. 62.
Church. Images in this part of the prayer focus on the universal Church, the vineyard of God and the city set on the mountain as a beacon for the whole world. The Prayer of Dedication highlights the relationship between church and Church, calling the Church “the dwelling place of God on earth: a temple built of living stones, founded on the apostles with Jesus Christ its cornerstone.”

Church here is both a people and a structure, a dichotomy which demonstrates the importance of saints and martyrs, those ultimate witnesses to Christ, in the life of the Church. In describing the Church as a city set on a mountain, the prayers of the saints are specifically mentioned. The text notes that the Church is “echoing the prayers of her saints.” This part of the prayer forms a connection between salvation history and the church building which is being dedicated.

Next, the prayer has an explicit epiclesis. The Prayer of Dedication asks that the Lord send His Spirit to make the church a holy place and to make the altar “a ready table for the sacrifice of Christ.” Here, the Spirit is present in the readiness of the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist. Describing the blessing and sanctification asked for from God through the mediation of Christ for the sending of the Spirit, Ferraro writes, “…the church and the altar are constituted and declared holy realities, that are made the special property of God and of his worship, are always destined for the celebration of the Eucharist and of effective signs.”

57. ODEA 1977, n. 62.
60. Ferraro, Christo è l’altare, 110. “La sanctificazione domandata a Dio Padre dalla formula di dedicazione ottiene l’invio dello Spirito Santo per la mediazione di Cristo nei fedeli che li dispone a ricevere con frutto i sacramenti in ordine ai quali la chiesa e l’altare vengono costituiti e dichiarati realtà sante, vengono cioè resi
sanctification prayed for is not only a sanctification of the physical objects, but also a sanctification of the People of God for the presence of the Spirit in the Church. This part of the prayer emphasizes the Triune God in the dedication of the church and throughout the life of the Church. It is God alone who can make the church and the altar a fitting place for the Christian community together to celebrate the Paschal sacrifice.

Then, the Prayer of Dedication begins to focus more directly on the specific church building which is being dedicated, highlighting the sacramental celebrations which will take place in the structure and the mission of those who will worship there. This tension between the church building and the Church as people parallels the ongoing tension between already and not-yet. The Prayer of Dedication highlights baptism and the death of Christians to sin and rebirth in grace celebrated in that sacrament.

The prayer then describes the community gathering around the altar together. At the altar, God’s children can celebrate the memorial of Christ’s Paschal sacrifice. The altar is the table at which the children of God are fed by Christ’s word and body.

The Latin text here references the offering of praise, “laudis oblatio”. Prayer is called “the Church’s banquet,” in the English text. Prayer is also a “plea for the world’s salvation” in the Prayer of Dedication. The image of prayer as the Church’s banquet is key because it calls to mind the Church’s Eucharistic participation, which is the aim of the dedication of the new worship space. It reflects the Church’s offering of prayer and sacrifice given to the Lord and the eschatological hope for glory. This offers a connection to the role of saints and relics in the rite;
previously, saints have been called intercessors who help to make the Church’s prayers acceptable to God. The saints help the prayers of the gathered community ask for the salvation of the world.

Further, the prayer talks about the church as the place in which the poor may find justice and those who are oppressed, freedom. The saints and martyrs of the Church have lived their lives as witnesses to Christ who worked for the poor and the oppressed. The examples of those who have gone before are especially valuable in helping the Christian community to live out the mission given to it.

The conclusion of the prayer is a doxology which presents imagery of the Triune God. The structure of the prayer, similar to most other liturgical prayers following Vatican II, allows for salvation history to be recounted while drawing in the assembly who recognizes the pattern present in the euchological text. The Prayer of Dedication brings together biblical, patristic, and liturgical images to show how the dedication of a church building is truly a dedication of God’s people to Him.61

Key Symbols

Linguistically, the Prayer of Dedication brings together all of the various symbols used to describe the Church as the people of God and the church building used throughout the rest of the rite. It also ties this celebration of dedication to the larger life of the Church. The prayer addresses the Church on earth and the heavenly Jerusalem. Theologically, it shows how Christ’s sacrifice is the context not only for the dedication of a church but for the whole of Christian life.

61. Ferraro, Christo è l’altare, 124.
All of the themes used in the liturgy are developed specifically and in conjunction to one another in the Prayer of Dedication. The theological riches referenced throughout the dedication are brought together in light of Christ’s salvific action in this prayer.

In *Models of the Eucharist*, Kevin Irwin notes that “When it comes to the ‘not yet-ness’ of the Christian life and our imperfections, we are reminded in such prayers that the liturgy offers us the consolation of being a part of a community far greater than we know – the whole community of the redeemed. The food that we take as ‘food for the journey’ is essentially a food that we share in as brothers and sisters of each other in faith.” Irwin shows that the Prayer of Dedication deals with both what is present and what will be. There is a tension between what is already, this particular church building, and what will be, eternity in God’s Kingdom. Irwin suggests that the prayer draws the assembly beyond this community and church building into the fulfillment of God’s Kingdom.

The symbols used in the Prayer of Dedication bring together the various elements of the rite and the ecclesiology expressed by the Second Vatican Council. Simons highlights the connections between the Word and the Prayer of Dedication, stating, “the entire prayer is rich with scriptural references, proclaiming a theology of a Church that is at the same time a faithful virgin and a mother made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Church is a vineyard no longer restricted to one people, but open to the whole world. Existing here on earth, it is also in


63. Ibid., 210-12.
union with the heavenly city.” The biblical imagery present in the Prayer of Dedication builds a bridge connecting the proclamation of the Word with the prayers of the Church and the sacraments to be celebrated in this space. Heavenly realities alluded to in the proclamation of the Scriptures and in the presence of the saints as intercessors are explicitly mentioned in the prayer.

The physical structure and the People of God are in continual conversation throughout the euchological text, as elements of each are exemplified in the prayer. The prayer highlights the primary physical elements of the church, alluding to the participation of the entire community in the worship of God. Finally, the mission of the Christian people who gather in the church building is spelled out: they must be witnesses to the life of Christ as the saints were, offering hope and freedom to those in need. The church is to be the place which directs the Christian people to live out their mission and to pray for the salvation of the world. Simons writes that this mission to care for the world must begin in the church building in order for the newly constructed space to be a symbol of the larger Church.

**Relics and the Prayer of Dedication**

If the Prayer of Dedication follows the deposition of relics, the expression of the “living stones” on which the Church was built is especially apparent and meaningful for the gathered community. There is no doubt whose saving actions have brought salvation to the Church;

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Christ’s blood made holy the church, and the Church fed by His word and body. Relics have no sanctifying or purifying function. However, the role of the saints, whose sacrifice mirrors Christ’s, is not brushed aside either; the prayers of the saints are specifically mentioned in this euchological text. That the prayers of the saints are so inherently important to the life of the Church that they are included shows that they should be part of the ongoing life of the church. If relics of a saint or martyr have been deposited immediately prior to this prayer, the connection to saints as intercessors for the community is present physically and symbolically. If relics are not deposited, the Prayer of Dedication and the Litany of the Saints are the primary ways of expressing the role of the saints in the life of the Church, an image which may be lost among all of the other images presented. The symbol of the saints present is more pronounced when the Prayer of Dedication directly follows the deposition of relics. Since the Prayer of Dedication describes many of the components of the life and faith of the Church, there is no confusion for the faithful as to the purpose of building a new worship space and the Trinitarian action of dedication.

Relics complement the meaning of the Prayer of Dedication by connecting a physical reminder of the communion of saints and the Church triumphant with the earthly liturgical celebration taking place in the here and now. Further, relics remind us of those who have lived out the baptismal call described in the prayer and given their own lives in witness to Christ’s sacrifice. The saints whose relics have been deposited are those who have become the living stones of the Church described in the Prayer of Dedication. Relics open the possibility of expressing an additional connection to the heavenly liturgy and the eschatological nature of the

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Church to the Eucharistic celebration. The Prayer of Dedication is enriched by the presence of relics which provide a visible sign of the theological themes expressed in the euchological text.

**Anointing of the Altar and Walls: Altar as Sacred Meeting Place**

When the prayer of dedication concludes, the anointing of the altar and the walls of the church begins. The bishop prays that the altar and the church building may be signs of the mysteries of Christ and the Church. Then, following the ritual pattern described in the medieval rites, the bishop pours chrism in the center of the altar and then on each of its four corners. The bishop, possibly with the assistance of two or four priests, anoints the walls of the church with twelve (or four) crosses which are placed around the church on its walls.

Unlike the deposition of relics which occurs without introduction, a brief prayer by the bishop begins this ritual element. The bishop prays that God will make the altar and the building holy, signs of the mystery of Christ and the Church. Then, Psalm 84 (83) is sung, along with one of two antiphons which both describe the Church as God’s dwelling place. God’s action in the dedication is particularly apparent in this euchological text, and the action of anointing elicits imagery of the use of oil in various scriptural and sacramental settings. Simons outlines an ecclesiological element to the anointing, writing, “...the underlying sense of this action seems to be that as the altar represents Christ who is head of the body, so the walls, standing for the whole

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68. *ODEA* 1977, n. 64.

69. *ODEA* 1977, n. 64.
building, represent the people who, as the rite tells us repeatedly, are the Church. The role of Christ as the Altar and Head is especially visible in the prayers and actions of this ritual element.

The deposition of relics explicitly impacts the anointing of the altar. The anointing of the altar is now done a single time, and only after the Prayer of Dedication, unlike in the earlier rites when the anointing of the altar took place in conjunction with the deposition of relics. Relics are part of the altar which is being anointed, again connecting the heavenly church to the earthly church whose walls are being anointed and the people gathered there. The euchological text prays that the altar and building be made “visible signs of the mystery of Christ and his Church.” Relics are a visible sign of those who have witnessed to the mystery of Christ and who help to build up his Church. The deposition of relics followed by the Prayer of Dedication and the anointing of the altar form a powerful witness to the Anointed One and his salvific actions.

**Incensation of the Altar and the Church: Altar as Sacred Meeting Place**

Similar to the anointing, the incensation of the altar and the church is accompanied by a euchological text which alludes to the biblical foundations of the liturgical action transpiring. This is the first explicit mention of light within the celebration of dedication, coming after the Prayer of Dedication. Burning incense on the altar demonstrates that Christ’s saving actions will take place here in perpetuity. Fire and incense show a relationship between the liturgies of the Old and New Testaments and the Eucharistic celebrations which will take place in this

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church. In the Old Testament, incense is described in Psalm 141, “Let my prayers rise up as incense before you.” In Exodus, Aaron’s burning of incense as an offering to God is described. The Book of Revelation bowls of incense are called the prayers of the saints. In the biblical offerings of incense and in the celebration of dedication, burning incense is viewed as an offering to God and prayers rising up to God. Offering incense in the dedication of a church demonstrates the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the life of Christ celebrated by the Church. The bishop’s prayer shows connections both to the mission of the Church in the world and to the rising up of prayers to God. While the church is being incensed, Psalm 138 is sung along with an antiphon which expresses the incense rising up to God with the help of an angel. The symbol of the incense used in this moment calls to mind biblical sacrifices and the presence of God in the whole world. The reference to the angel in the use of incense also suggests a connection to the heavenly liturgy. Situating the earthly church in relation to the heavenly liturgy is an ongoing theme in the Rite of Dedication.

Relics influence the incensation of the altar and the church because they help to represent the way the Church has filled the world, as is prayed for while the incense on the altar is lit. Further, just as the incense rises up to God, so do the prayers of the saints as intercessors.

72. Ibid., 29.
73. Exodus 30:1-10.
74. Revelation 5:6-8.
75. ODEA 1977, n. 66.
76. ODEA 1977, n. 68.
Illumination of the Altar and the Church: Altar as Sacred Meeting Place

For the rite of illumination, the euchological text matches the ritual action, in which the light of Christ is spread throughout the Church. Aside from the entrance procession if relics are to be used, this is the first time in which candles and light will be used in the rite. This marks the presence of Christ the light very visibly and clearly for all to see. During the festive lighting of twelve candles on the walls of the church, the saints are connected to the illumination through the invocation in the canticle of Tobias which says: “Bless the Lord, all you saints of the Lord. Rejoice and give him thanks.” The Latin word here is electi, meaning “the chosen” rather than “saints”. This moment again focuses on the bond between the journeying of the earthly Church and the heavenly city of Jerusalem.

Pierre Jounel emphasizes that all of the rites up to this point have been to help prepare the altar to be the Lord’s Table. As witnesses to Christ’s sacrifice, relics have shaped the rites by serving as a sign of what is to come, the dedication of the altar and the memorial of Christ’s sacrifice. In the third part of the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the presence of relics in the sanctuary and then beneath the altar serves as a visible sign of the reality expressed in the euchological texts. Relics symbolize the faith of witnesses who have gone before, who have not only responded to God’s Word, but whose own sacrifices mirror Christ’s. It is clear that the Rite of Dedication of a Church has powerful threads of Christological imagery. The presence of relics beneath the altar adds to the eschatological and soteriological themes of the rite.

77. ODEA 1977, n. 71. “Benedicite Dominum, omnes electi eius, agite dies laetitiae et confitemini illi.”

Part Four: Liturgy of the Eucharist: Christ, Altar, Priest and Victim of His Sacrifice

The fourth and final part of the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, contains a number of proper liturgical texts which help to shape the rite, reflect the reforms that followed the Second Vatican Council, and continue the liturgical theology expressed by the previous three parts. This part, restored as the primary dedicatory action following the Second Vatican Council, plays an important role in reflecting the history of dedications and in emphasizing the Christological element of the rite. Saints and relics help to shape this section of the celebration, because if relics are to be deposited, they have now been set in a place of honor at the base of the altar. Honor given to saints by their burial in proximity to the altar reflects Ambrose’s understanding of why the relics of Gervase and Protase needed to be translated to underneath the altar of his church in Milan. The close connection between Christ’s sacrifice and those martyrs who mirrored his actions is especially apparent to the congregation celebrating this Eucharist when relics are present. Connected to the Prayer of Dedication, the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist makes the altar holy through participation in Christ’s sacrifice. The restoration of the centrality of the celebration of Mass with the Rite of Dedication binds together the historical tradition and the ongoing life of the Church, recognizing their participation in this liturgy and future liturgies.

Beginning with the preparation of the gifts, this ritual part of the Rite of Dedication enhances the images of a chosen people, offerings made to God, and obedience to the Law. This euchological text reminds the gathered community about to celebrate the Eucharist to approach
the Lord with joyful hearts.\textsuperscript{79} The preparation of the gifts allows the people to show the work of their hands that brings gifts to this Eucharist and to the creation of the new church building. Simons writes that the antiphon used in the preparation of the gifts “can be seen as an expression of thanksgiving on the part of the people who have made their gifts, not only at the Mass but in providing the funds necessary for the building of the church.”\textsuperscript{80} The preparation of the altar for the Liturgy of the Eucharist flows from the preparatory rites that took place surrounding the altar in the previous section, so much so that the altar and the gifts are not incensed.\textsuperscript{81}

After the gifts are on the altar, the Prayer over the Gifts continues the repeated references to the mysteries of the Church, the hope of those gathered for salvation, and the sacredness of the worship space.\textsuperscript{82} These themes in the euchological text here work to tie the Liturgy of the Eucharist to the rest of the Rite of Dedication. Although the reforms after the Second Vatican Council named the celebration of Mass as the central dedicatory action, the four ritual units form one liturgical cohesive liturgical celebration. Relics underneath the altar would increase the idea of hope for salvation for the Christian community because the saints whose relics are beneath the altar have achieved salvation through Christ. Relics are not necessary in the \textit{Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar}, but their inclusion is preferred and valuable. The ecclesiological character of the rite which emphasizes the importance of all parts of the Body of Christ is apparent in this prayer for the gathered Christian community during the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

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\textsuperscript{79} ODEA 1977, n. 72.
\textsuperscript{80} Simons, \textit{Holy People Holy Place}, 54.
\textsuperscript{81} ODEA 1977, n. 73.
\textsuperscript{82} ODEA 1977, n. 74.
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Similar to many of the other post-Vatican II rites, the Rite of Dedication of a Church gives a choice of special inserts for the Eucharistic Prayers which can be used for the celebration of the Eucharist. Each choice is accompanied with proper elements, including the preface, for the Rite of Dedication of a Church. The Rite of Dedication of an Altar expresses imagery of the sacrifice of Christ, who offered himself on the altar of the cross, and whose sacrifice is offered in mystery, in order that the people become, “in him, a worthy offering and a living altar.” The euchological texts contained in the Liturgy of the Eucharist often look to synthesize the images in prayers and biblical texts from earlier traditions in this Eucharistic context.

The proper euchological texts for the dedication of a church must be used here, along with Eucharistic Prayer I or III. The preface notes the importance of a place set aside for the worship of God, even though He is present in the whole world. The relationship between the physical church and the Church as God’s people is emphasized in the preface when terms describing the construction of a building are applied to the Church. For example, the prayer says, “You continue to build your Church with chosen stones, enlivened by the Spirit, and cemented together by love.” This builds on both images of church which have been expressed continuously throughout the rite.

83. ODA 1977, n. 60.

84. Ferraro, Christo è l’altare, 152. “Alcune di queste idee sono già state espresse da altri testi eucologici e biblici che abbiamo commentato; qui esse vengono riprese con nuova sintesi, come inizio della preghiera eucaristica.”

85. ODEA 1977, n. 75. “…sed electis construendam lapidibus, Spiritu vivificatis, coagmentatis caritate.”
Giuseppe Ferraro notes that the preface summarizes and develops many themes which are already in use throughout the rite. 86 These themes include the sacramentality of creation through the Incarnation, the eschatological character of the Church, and that it is through Christ that praise is offered to the Father. 87 Simons calls the church “a symbol of the whole of created reality,” in the context of the preface. 88 If this is truly part of the liturgical theology expressed by the Eucharistic Prayer, then the need for relics to be included in the Rite of Dedication of a Church is evident because relics are the remains of the saints and martyrs who are part of the whole created reality of the Church. If the church building is to be a symbol of the heavenly kingdom of God, then the relics of saints provide an important symbol of those who have gone before. In the absence of relics, the symbol of the witnesses to the faith from previous parts of the Church’s life is lost to a large degree. The preface presents the Church’s self-understanding, and builds on the symbols and themes which characterize the earlier parts of the rite.

It is evident that the preface to the Eucharistic Prayer is influenced by the context of including or excluding relics from the previous section of the rite. The inclusion of relics helps encapsulate all of the elements of the life of the Church, physically and visibly serving as a reminder of witnesses who have given the ultimate praise and sacrifice to God. The absence of relics from the Rite of Dedication of a Church affects the preface because it does not offer a visible symbol of the connection between this liturgy and the heavenly liturgy, although Christ

86. Ferraro, Christo è l’altare, 155. “Il prefazio offre così un compendio e una sintesi di molti dei temi già trovati e illustrati nel loro ricorrere.”

87. ODEA 1977, n. 75.

88. Simons, Holy People Holy Place, 55.
always creates that connection. In the preface, a clear pattern of demonstrating the faith of the Church is evident. Choosing not to include the deposition of relics in the rite removes a valuable symbol of the communion of saints and the faith of the Church in ages past. The presence or absence of relics impacts the liturgical theology of the Rite of Dedication of a Church as expressed in the preface because the relics offer a symbol which develops the theology present in the prayer: that the communion saints is active in the Church. The eschatological hope of the Church is also expressed in the presence of relics beneath the altar. The presence of relics beneath the altar demonstrates a connection between the earthly Eucharistic celebration taking place on that table and the ongoing heavenly liturgy.

In Eucharistic Prayer I, the proper Hanc igitur asks that those who built the church as an offering to God be counted among those saved from final damnation, those chosen by God. It also places the local community who built the church within the larger context of the whole family of the Church. The saint or title the church is being named in honor of should be mentioned. Naming the saint or title of the Church connects the physical building to the Eucharistic Prayer. It also echoes the mention of the saints’ name that took place during the Litany of the Saints. If the relics of saints or martyrs have been deposited below the altar, a connection between the two is even more explicit because that saint’s name was also part of the Litany of the Saints. Relics would not be inappropriate if a church is named for a title of Christ or Mary, because the relics would still show the relationship between the Body of Christ and the Head. Not only do the relics represent the larger Christian community, they highlight the connection between those who have been saved in the heavenly liturgy and those who are saved.

89. ODEA 1977, n. 76.
participating in the earthly liturgy. The presence of relics develops the mention of the “whole family” and the “chosen” in the euchological text. These connections within the Eucharistic prayer are vital to demonstrating the ongoing song of praise and offerings which are given to God in this church and through his Church.

If Eucharistic Prayer III is being used, the proper intercessions ask for the church to be a place of peace for the proclamation of the Gospel and the celebration of the mysteries of Christ. It emphasizes the journey towards the heavenly home of all Christian people. If relics are located below the altar, this prayer is especially meaningful because it connects the relics of saints who have reached their heavenly home with those who are journeying there. The connection between Word and sacrament is also expressed here in the mention of the word as guidance for the Christian community. The euchological text here brings together the holy mysteries celebrated in this liturgy with the Word and the eschatological hope of those participating in the sacrament.

Communion follows in the usual way, with an appropriate antiphon sung with Psalm 128 which highlights God’s blessings on those who fear the Lord. The antiphon choices help to express the mission of the Church, spreading peace and becoming closer to the Lord. The antiphons illuminate the life of the Church whose members are now partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ.

Following the distribution of communion, another optional ritual element, the inauguration of the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, may take place. This optional portion of the rite

90. ODEA 1977, n. 77.
91. ODEA 1977, n. 78.
also looks to emphasize the altar as a sign of Christ and the primacy of the Eucharistic celebration just as the revised role of relics highlights Christ’s sacrifice on this altar, rather than the witness of martyrs and saints. This is done through the clear separation of the tabernacle and the altar. The Prayer After Communion, whether immediately before the procession to the Blessed Sacrament Chapel or directly following communion if this is to be omitted, prays that the people in this Christian community will be able to rejoice in God’s presence with the saints.\footnote{ODEA 1977, n. 83.}

This prayer’s meaning is expressed more fully if the relics of saints or martyrs are resting beneath the altar because the symbol is clear: the saints are there in the presence of the gathered congregation giving praise and thanks to God. Relics beneath the altar provide an ongoing expression of this prayer text in the life of the church.

The final blessing asks that God fill the people who have gathered to dedicate the church with the blessings of heaven and that they be made temples for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit. Saints are mentioned a final time when the prayer asks that the people “live with him for ever in the company of all his saints.”\footnote{ODEA 1977, n. 84.} Being counted among the saints is the goal of the people gathered in the church. This prayer summarizes the hope of all of those who have worked to build this worship space. The aim of the community is to worship the Lord and to grow closer to him. Here, the Church’s desire to be united with all of God’s children is apparent. The idea that the Christian community is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit brings the Rite of Dedication of a Church to a conclusion with the continued relationship between the universal Church and this
local church. The eschatological nature and mission of the Church are particularly apparent in the final euchological text of the rite.

The euchological texts, especially the Prayer of Dedication and the preface to the Eucharistic prayer, weave together the symbols and themes that have been expressed throughout the rite. The Word is intertwined throughout the Liturgy of the Eucharist in references to symbols from the Liturgy of the Word and the ongoing use of Psalms in the rite. Relics help to express the theological idea of the communion of saints and the ongoing heavenly praise when they have been deposited beneath the altar. The eschatological hope of the rite is also enhanced when relics are present because the relics represent those who are with God. Throughout the Liturgy of the Eucharist, the presence of relics beneath the altar is a sign of the Body of Christ and of the saints who surround this new community.

**Conclusion: Celebration as Construction of the Church**

The Word, euchology, and symbol in the Rite of Dedication of a Church are interwoven to present a clear sense of the liturgical theology expressed by the rite. Examination of the proclaimed Scriptures in the rite and the euchological texts demonstrates that the Rite of Dedication of a Church is concerned with the action of the Church on earth in response to God’s word and the role of Christ’s salvific action in dedicating a worship space for the community’s gatherings. Calabuig notes that the rite addresses temples, both earthly and cosmic, as well as the sacredness of the assembly gathering in them. In the Liturgy of the Word, the faith response of the Christian community was particularly emphasized. Throughout the rite, Psalm selections

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provided examples for how the community might live out the faith it is hearing and act in praise of the Lord. It is important that those who are planning the Rite of Dedication of a Church be attentive to the strong presence of the Word and the interwoven themes and symbols in the euchology and Scriptures when making decision about the rite. The close connection between those elements could easily be severed if a poorly selected song replaces the Psalm choices. Relics serve as a reminder of the faith of previous generations and their response to the Word of God, even as the Word is proclaimed anew here and now in this liturgical celebration.

When relics are present in the Rite of Dedication of a Church, the liturgical theology of the celebration gains an extra emphasis in its ecclesiological, eschatological, and soteriological elements. The Rite of Dedication of a Church is indisputably Christological, and the reforms made by the Second Vatican Council have properly situated the dedication within the celebration of the Mass. However, the use of relics should be fittingly retained in such a way that it enhances the Christology of the rite rather than detracting from it. Relics make it clear that there are faith witnesses from previous ages who have responded to the call to faith made in the celebration of the Mass and of dedication. These examples demonstrate the possibility of truly witnessing to Christ and in living out the Christian life.

Excluding relics from the Rite of Dedication of a Church offers a new line of tradition for the celebration of the rite; post-Vatican II celebrations of dedication are the first in more than a millennium that relics were not an inherent part of the context and text of the celebration of the rite. This is the first time a ritual has not included the use of relics since the Ordines Romani. Caution should be exercised in the decision making process regarding relics. Relics play a
valuable role in the ritual celebration and are part of long-standing historical and devotional tradition.

Many of the theological components of the Rite of Dedication of a Church are apparent from the symbols in the euchological texts and Scriptural readings. However, the presence of relics as a sign and visible reminder of many of those themes develops the liturgical theology of the rite even further. Relics signify the eschatological nature of the Church and of the communion of saints. Relics demonstrate the hope of the faithful fulfilled in historical witnesses. Signs and symbols, such as light, relics, water, oil, and incense, help in the preparation of the faithful for the celebration and in liturgical catechesis.

Word, euchology, and symbol present the key components of the liturgical theology of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. However, the presence or absence of relics impacts which themes are dominant in the celebration. The liturgical theology of the Rite of Dedication of a Church is less rich without the deposition of relics and their presence throughout the rite. When relics are absent, the ecclesiological and eschatological elements must be garnered from participation in the Eucharist and from various texts, rather than from relics.
Chapter Ten: Context and Text of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris

The historical evolution of rites of dedication provides a context for understanding the optional role of relics in the 1977 Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris. The first part of this chapter will summarize the components of Kevin Irwin’s method in Context and Text that will be used in this analysis. The second part of this chapter will highlight the major changes in the role of relics throughout the historical evolution of the dedication rites studied earlier in this dissertation. The third part of the chapter will describe the new ritual context of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris in light of the Second Vatican Council. The final part of this chapter will offer a theology of what is said and done in the 1977 Rite in relationship to the deposition of relics. This chapter presents how context and text have impacted the liturgical theology expressed by relics in the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris.

Context and Text

In his Context and Text, Kevin Irwin outlines a method for understanding the relationship between liturgy and theology. Part of Irwin’s method is that one must examine the parts of liturgical rites, including texts, symbols, actions, and gestures, in relation to one each other and in light of the historical time and place in which the rites were celebrated. Irwin writes, “our thesis is that liturgical context is text, in the sense that context provides the source — text — for

1. Kevin Irwin, Context and Text: Method in Liturgical Theology (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994). Irwin’s method has been described in more detail in the General Introduction. All italics follow those in Irwin’s text.

2. Ibid., 54.

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developing liturgical theology.” There are three aspects for examining the context: the historical evolution, in light of contemporary reforms, and in the current cultural and theological environment. Irwin argues that these components of context become a source of text in developing a liturgical theology.

According to Irwin, “the theology of the liturgy (text) necessarily shapes the theology and spirituality of those who participate in the liturgy (context).” The constitutive elements of the liturgy, including Word, symbol, euchology, and the arts, have constitutive implications. Irwin writes, “we understand there to be an ongoing dialectical relationship between text and context where the ecclesial and cultural settings in which the liturgy takes place — context — influence the way we experience and interpret the liturgy — text.” The various contexts, historical and contemporary, of the ritual celebration shape the interpretation of the text and the ritual celebration becomes a source of text shaping the context of those who participate in the rite. There is value in including the liturgical tradition in the interpretation of the present rites. Liturgical theology can be drawn from understanding the liturgy as a theological event. Irwin’s method is that context is text, and that text shapes context theologically and spiritually.

3. Irwin, Context and Text, 54.
4. Ibid., 54-55.
5. Ibid., 55.
6. Ibid., 56.
7. Ibid., 56.
8. Ibid., 74.
In his method, Irwin presents the adage *lex orandi, lex credendi*, “the law of prayer is the law of belief” to examine the relationship between liturgy and theology.\(^9\) Irwin adds *lex vivendi*, the life relation of the liturgy, to this axiom.\(^{10}\) This leads to the idea that there are theological and spiritual implications of engaging in the liturgy which impact the way the faithful live their lives.\(^{11}\)

Irwin’s method has been used throughout this dissertation to examine one of the component parts of the *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris*, the role of relics. The dissertation builds on Irwin’s idea that liturgy and liturgical theology are the result of historical evolution paired with theological and pastoral reform and renewal.\(^{12}\) Chapters One and Three traced the historical evolution of the rite of dedication. Chapter Two provided social, cultural, and theological context of the historical rites. Chapter Four described the context and the preliminary texts of the Vatican II reform of the rite. Chapters Five and Six detailed the text of the contemporary liturgical rite. Chapters Seven and Eight looked at ritual and theological reforms regarding saints and the altar which influenced the context of the contemporary rite. Chapter Nine looked at two of Irwin’s constitutive elements, Word and euchology.

Kevin Irwin’s method will now help bring together the various components of the study. First, this chapter will review the historical texts and make explicit the context that they provide. Second, it will present the principles of the post-Vatican II reform which shaped a new ritual

\(^9\) Irwin, *Context and Text*, 3.


\(^{11}\) Ibid., 55-56.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 62.
context. Third, it will analyze the texts of the rite regarding relics in light of all of the contexts which shape the text: history, reform, and ritual. Finally, this chapter will conclude with some of the theological and spiritual implications of the deposition of relics, the *lex vivendi* of the rite.

**The Historical Evolution of Relics in Rites of Dedication: Texts as Context**

As seen in Chapter One, the earliest records of dedication celebrations do not elucidate a specific ritual for the dedication of a church. Eusebius’ account in 316-319 A.D. does not specifically describe the celebration of the Eucharist as part of the dedication. However, this first record of the dedication of a new church shows that this was a momentous occasion in the life of the local church.

Ambrose of Milan changed the use of relics in celebrations of dedication while serving as bishop of Milan during the late 4th century. The account of the discovery, translation, and subsequent inclusion of relics in dedication of the Basilica Ambrosiana is the first documented account of how relics came to be used in a dedication rite of a new church. Ritually, this is an important shift in the deposition of relics because it introduces the transfer of relics and a vigil on the eve of the transfer. This account marks an important moment in the historical development of the rite of dedication because relics are specifically included in dedication rite and there is a

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13. For additional historical examination of the role of relics in the liturgical rites described below, please see Chapters One, Three, Five and Six of this dissertation.


procession with the relics. There are two notable elements of the use of relics here: 1) the relics were deposited beneath the altar, and 2) the relics were translated in order that the triumphant victims might gain honor from their nearness to the place where Christ is the victim. Ambrose’s translation and deposition of relics occurred in the context of his theological understanding of the relationship between relics and the altar. Relics received honor through their proximity to Christ the altar. It is Christ who gives honor to the saints and martyrs; those who are redeemed are below the altar. The earliest mention of the use of relics in the rite of dedication of church is clear that it is Christ who is the focus of the deposition of relics.

The writings of three popes from 400 to 600 A.D. highlight two important aspects of dedication celebrations in this period: 1) there were no set ritual texts for the celebration of dedication of a church, although a dedication involving the celebration of Mass is required, and 2) relics are being interwoven into the fabric of dedication celebrations.

The *Gelasianum Vetus*¹⁶ (hereafter *Gelasian*) is the oldest extant sacramentary to contain euchological texts for the ritual for the dedication of a church. Among the ritual elements in this text are a blessing of the altar, a blessing of water and wine, and a consecration of the basilica. The euchological text for the blessing of the altar in the *Gelasian* shows a shift in understandings about the altar; there is a shift in perspective away from the altar as the place of the sacrifice to the altar as an object which blesses other objects. In the writings of Ambrose, the altar was the place of Christ’s sacrifice; here, the altar is seen as blessing the sacrifice being offered.

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Three *ordines romani* (OR), ORs XLI, XLII, and XLIII, provide rubrical and descriptive material regarding the use of relics. In these *ordines*, we see relics as an essential component of the dedication of a church. In *ordo* XLI, relics are deposited into the altar outside the view of the gathered community, after having been brought into the church as part of a procession. *Ordines* XLII and XLIII expand the ritual actions, and the relics are placed into a *confessio* along with three pieces of a consecrated Host and three grains of incense. *Ordo* XLII is the first source to entomb the consecrated Host, understood as a relic of Jesus, with the relics of saints. This period saw the growth of the ritual elements in the rite of dedication of a church, with a particular expansion of the role of relics including the introduction of the Host and incense into the deposition of the relics.

In the age of development of the pontificals, four sources include rites of dedication of a church. They are: the *Romano-Germanic Pontifical of the Tenth Century* (PRG), the *Roman Pontifical of the Twelfth Century* (PR XII), the *Pontifical of the Roman Curia of the Thirteenth Century*. Three *ordines romani* (OR), ORs XLI, XLII, and XLIII, provide rubrical and descriptive material regarding the use of relics. In these *ordines*, we see relics as an essential component of the dedication of a church. In *ordo* XLI, relics are deposited into the altar outside the view of the gathered community, after having been brought into the church as part of a procession. *Ordines* XLII and XLIII expand the ritual actions, and the relics are placed into a *confessio* along with three pieces of a consecrated Host and three grains of incense. *Ordo* XLII is the first source to entomb the consecrated Host, understood as a relic of Jesus, with the relics of saints. This period saw the growth of the ritual elements in the rite of dedication of a church, with a particular expansion of the role of relics including the introduction of the Host and incense into the deposition of the relics.


Century (PR XIII)\textsuperscript{21}, and the \textit{Pontifical of William Durandus} (PGD)\textsuperscript{22}. The PRG retains the structure from the \textit{ordines}, but includes a further developed sense of \textit{processio} and \textit{statio} involving the relics. Pieces of the consecrated Host and incense are deposited with the relics. The PRG also contains the \textit{Quid significent duodecim candelae}, an allegorical interpretation of the dedication rite. This text highlights the symbolism of the dedication ritual, highlighting the procession with the relics as a procession of the perfected to heaven. In the PR XII, the structure of the rite of dedication remains the same; however, there are no pieces of consecrated Host placed with relics. PR XIII expands upon the previous tradition by duplicating some ritual actions, such as aspersions and blessings, while retaining the essential ritual structure seen in the earlier pontificals. As seen above in Chapter One, although the ritual structure of PR XIII is inherently the same as the previous pontificals, the word for the space where the relics will be located changed from \textit{confessio} to \textit{capsella}. This shows a shift in understanding. While a \textit{confessio} is a place under the altar, a \textit{capsella} is a box that would go into the altar. Further, a \textit{capsella} would not have held the entire body of a saint or martyr, but only a small relic. The final pontifical of this period, the PGD, expands some of the ritual actions and instructions. Relics continue as an important element of the rite of dedication here and are replaced with the Body of Lord only if relics are not available. In all of these pontificals, Mass is celebrated after the other


\textsuperscript{22} Michel Andrieu, ed., \textit{Le pontifical de Guillaume Durand}, Vol. 3 of \textit{Le pontifical romain au moyen-âge}, Studi e Testi 88 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1940), Liber Secundus, II, p. 455-478.
ritual elements of dedication have been completed. The celebration of Mass no longer seems to be the defining ritual of dedication.

Following the Council of Trent, the Pontifical of William Durandus served as the foundation for the 1595/6 Pontificale Romanum: Editio Princeps, codifying the inclusion of relics in the official liturgical celebration of dedication of a church. This rite, with its attention to relics, remained the rite of dedication of the Roman Church until the Pontificale Romanum 1961/2 (hereafter PR 1961/2).\(^{23}\)

The Ordo ad ecclesiam dedicandam et consecrandam in the PR 1961/2 eliminated duplicated gestures of the earlier pontificals and emphasized the baptismal components of the rite of dedication. The deposition of relics was retained as a lengthy and elaborate central element of the dedication of a church.

These changes were the product of the Liturgical Movement which had spread throughout the world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This movement stressed the importance of historical study of liturgical sources, the active participation of the People of God in the liturgy, and the renewal of the theology of the Church as Body of Christ. Reflected in liturgical study and papal encyclicals, the principles of the Liturgical Movement abounded in the mid-twentieth century. The Pian Commission worked on a revised rite of dedication that came to fruition in the PR 1961/2.

The Second Vatican Council flowed from these same concerns, especially the Eucharistic celebration as the source and summit of Christian life. Liturgical rites, promulgated by Pope Paul

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VI following the Council, situated most ritual celebrations within the context of the Eucharist. Renewed attention was given to the importance of the gathered assembly in the celebration and their active participation in the liturgy. The rites had to be revised in order that the Christian community could participate in a full, conscious, and active way (SC n. 14). The Eucharist is seen as “the outstanding means whereby the faithful may express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church” (SC n. 2). Sacrosanctum Concilium lays out the “already” but “not yet” aspect of the liturgy and the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration (SC n. 2 and nos. 5-8).

Principles for the restoration of the liturgy were laid out in Sacrosanctum Concilium. The role of local conferences of bishops in making some adaptations for local use and having authority over certain aspects of the liturgical life of the local community (see SC nos. 22 and 128) was also expressed in a new way. The historicity of the lives of saints was given attention, and there was a deeper attention to biblical and patristic theological visions. The underlying thread of all of the reforms was the reinterpretation of Christian life in light of the mystery of Christ. These concerns are reflected in the rite of dedication promulgated in 1977, the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris.

The 1977 rite is integrated into the celebration of Mass, and while relics are still prominent, they are now an option. A number of ritual elements seen in the earlier pontificals, such as numerous aspersions, the abcedarium, and the use of Gregorian water, have been removed. This rite emphasizes the centrality of the Paschal Mystery in Christian life.
Rites of dedication evolved over the centuries from no specific rite, to the celebration of the Eucharist, to a rite in which relics were a central component, to a rite that required relics, to the present rite in which relics are an optional element. Shifts in liturgical celebrations reflect ongoing developments in theological understandings.

**A New Ritual Context: Vatican II, Altars, and the Celebration of the Eucharist**

As we saw above, the historical texts of the rite of dedication evolved over time. A marked shift in the ritual context of the celebration of dedication occurred following the Second Vatican Council. This shift comes as a result of the renewed Eucharistic theology and the restoration of the understanding of the liturgy as the source and summit of Christian life.

It is clear that the celebration of the Eucharist is the ritual context not only for the rite of dedication, but also the optimal context for all liturgical rites promulgated after the Second Vatican Council, excepting only Penance. The *Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris* is now thoroughly situated within Mass, no longer a prior ritual with Mass as a festive conclusion. This completely shifts the celebration of dedication because the very dedication of the church and altar is connected to the sacrifice of Christ.

*Sacrosanctum Concilium* emphasizes the centrality of the Eucharistic celebration and its connection to the heavenly liturgy, themes which are evident in the *Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar*. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy also notes that we venerate the memory of the saints and hope for fellowship with them. The deposition of relics offers one

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24. SC, n. 8.
way to do this. The liturgy is an exercise of the priestly office of Jesus Christ, along with the members of His body, the Church. The prayer of dedication in this rite expresses the tension between “already” and “not yet,” the church here and now and the future fulfillment of God’s kingdom. The Eucharist is both the daily bread and the hope for the coming of Jesus Christ.\(^{25}\) Sacrosanctum Concilium describes the value in the entire local Christian community gathered around one altar with the bishop in prayer.\(^{26}\) A celebration of the dedication of a church is an event for the entire diocese, and it is an opportunity for clergy from throughout the diocese to celebrate with the bishop and the faithful. This gathering is the visible Church in the world. That this celebration is led by the bishop or his designee particularly highlights the fullness of the Body of Christ.

* Sacrosanctum Concilium states, “In the liturgy, by means of signs perceptible to the senses, human sanctification is signified and brought about in ways proper to each of the senses; in the liturgy the whole public worship is performed by the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ, that is, by the Head and his members.”\(^{27}\) In the dedication of a church, relics are a sign, perceptible to the senses, which signify the hope for resurrection and eternal life with Christ to come. Relics draw the attention of the gathered community to the altar.

One of the primary concerns surrounding saints and relics following the Second Vatican Council was historicity.\(^{28}\) Attention to revising the lives of the saints after Vatican II so that they

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26. SC, n. 41-42.
27. SC, n. 7.
28. SC, n. 92c.
were historically verifiable prompted the removal of many saints from the Roman Calendar, though not necessarily from the Martyrology, and a change to how the lives of the saints are conveyed in the Sacramentary and the Liturgy of the Hours. The lives of the saints have been recontextualized in light of the Paschal Mystery.

The ritual context of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar has been reformed so that the new rite is situated within the context of the Eucharist and all of the ritual components are celebrated in light of the sacrifice of Christ.

**Text of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris**

This part of the chapter will look at how the text of the 1977 *ordo* expresses a changed liturgical theology in light of the historical context. The text of the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar reflects the renewed Eucharistic spirit present in Vatican II. The Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar is situated within the context of the Eucharistic celebration which influences the liturgical theology of each ritual element of the rite.

**Praenotanda of the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris**

The *Praenotanda* of the Rite of Dedication of an Altar note that the altar is a sign of Christ and reiterate the statement, “The altar is Christ.” The altar is the center of the Church’s activity. Erecting an altar over the burial place of a saint or depositing relics beneath an altar

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29. RDA, n. 4. For additional examples, see RDA, n. 2, “Christ, Head and Teacher, is the true altar, and his members and disciples are also spiritual altars” and RDA, n. 4, “This is the basis for saying: ‘The altar is Christ.’” RDA, n. 4, “The Christian altar is … a table at which the church’s children gather to give thanks to God and receive the body and blood of Christ.” See also, RDA n. 48, “Make it the center of our praise and thanksgiving until we arrive at the eternal tabernacle, where together with Christ, high priest and living altar, we will offer you an everlasting sacrifice of praise.”
symbolizes that the sacrifice of saints and martyrs has its origin in the sacrifice of Christ which is perpetuated in mystery on the altar. There is a Christology inherent in this rite; Christ is both human and divine. The physical building and the people gathered are both Christ’s temple. In the liturgical celebration of dedication, the earthly and heavenly members of the Body of Christ join together to dedicate the Christian community and the physical space. The deposition of relics beneath the altar retains the importance of the unbroken mensa of the altar while also forging a symbolic relationship between this community and the saints who have gone before us.

The role of relics in the rite of dedication needed to be resituated in the current theological context; what do they signify? The Praenotanda of the Rite of Dedication of an Altar provide an answer, “…although all the saints are rightly called Christ’s witnesses, the witness of blood has a special significance that only the relics of martyrs beneath the altar express in its entirety.” Preference is given to using the relics of martyrs because of the special connection between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the martyrs. Relics need to be historically verifiable, so that they may express the ultimate in witness to Christ. When relics are those of saints or martyrs whose lives have been historically verified, they show how the saints lived as witnesses to Christ. Relics of saints and martyrs express the hope of the resurrection and the mission of the Church in the world. The Eucharist is not only about the liturgical celebration, it is also about living the Christian life, the mission of the Church. Relics of historical figures, saints, who lived their Eucharistic spirituality, can guide the Christian community.

30. RDA, nn. 4-5.
31. RDA, n. 5.
When relics are deposited beneath the altar, the bishop places into the reliquary an affidavit detailing the historical facts of the dedication of the church and the name of the saint or martyr whose relics are deposited.\textsuperscript{32} If the inclusion of relics helps the local community understand their own role in the liturgy, then they should be deposited. This helps to situate this dedication into the larger context of the Universal Church.

\textit{Pastoral Preparation}

Relics in the \textit{Rite of Dedication of a Church}, whether present or absent, impact the liturgical theology expressed by the rite. In the \textit{Praenotanda}, a clear call for the pastoral preparation of the people is made.\textsuperscript{33} This preparation, along with liturgical catechesis, is an essential element in the dedication of a church. The \textit{Rite of Dedication of a Church} is rich with symbols and meaning for the local church and the Universal Church. Since the rite is celebrated so rarely, pastoral preparation and liturgical catechesis are exceptionally important in order for the Christian people to be able to participate actively and to experience the meaning-laden symbols fully. Since there are no euchological texts directly associated with the deposition of relics, it is especially important that the catechesis prepare the congregation for this moment. Similarly, the \textit{Rite of Dedication of a Church} is often a once in a lifetime celebration. Thus, the church must ensure that the relics, if deposited during this rite, continue to communicate their meaning and presence to future congregations.

\textsuperscript{32} RDC, n. 25.

\textsuperscript{33} RDC, n. 20. “In order that the people may take part fully in the rite of dedication, the rector of the church to be dedicated and others experienced in the pastoral ministry are to instruct them on the import of the celebration and its spiritual, ecclesial, and evangelizing power.”
Pastoral preparation provides the local church with the ability to shape the context in which the rite of dedication is celebrated. If relics are included, this liturgical catechesis is an opportune moment for helping the community explore their role in the communion of saints and in the mystical body of Christ. The inclusion of relics in the rite offers an opportunity to teach the community about the saint whose relics will be deposited. Since the rite of dedication is situated within the Mass, this can also be a moment of education on the euchological texts of the Eucharistic liturgy.

**The Deposition of Relics in the 1977 Rite**

In the 1977 *ordo*, there are no specific euchological texts connected with the deposition of relics. Earlier rites, such as the PR XII, included a blessing of the sepulcher in which the relics were to be deposited. In PR XII, the prayer, “May this sepulcher be consecrated in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” is used.\(^{34}\)

In the 1977 rite, only a psalm and corresponding antiphon provide the verbal context for the deposition of relics. The psalm choice and antiphon have been changed from the earlier rites. They show a shift in the theology expressed by the deposition of relics, from relics as the consecratory element to relics as receiving honor from their deposition near the altar. In *OR* XLI, the antiphon *The Saints are Exalted in Glory (Exaltabunt sancti in gloria)* is sung with a psalm during the deposition of relics.\(^{35}\) In *OR* XLI, the selection is an antiphon with the psalm *Blessed*.

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\(^{34}\) PR XII, n. 49. Euchological text: “Consecretur hoc sepulcrum, in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.”

\(^{35}\) OR XLI, n. 29.
are the Immaculate, Psalm 118 (119). PRG repeats the antiphon of OR XLI with the psalm, Cantate Domino, Psalm 95 (96). The PRG also includes the antiphon Sub altare domini sedes accepistis; intercedit pro nobis ad domnum qui vos elegit while the relics are being deposited.

In PR XII, the antiphon is Sub altare domini sedes accepistis; intercedit pro nobis ad domnum qui vos elegit with the psalm Exultate Deo adiutori nostro sung by the clergy, Psalm 80 (81).

PR 1961/2 offers the same antiphon as PR XII and adds, “I heard the voices of those that are slain under the altar of God, saying: Why do you not avenge our blood? And it was said: There is yet for a little season, until the number of your own brethren, Alleluia”, and “The bodies of the Saints are buried in peace: their names shall live forever.” Psalm 149 (150) was previously sung as the relics were prepared. The deposition of the relics concludes with a prayer derived from the Gelasian Sacramentary. The psalm choices of the pre-Vatican II rites express a theology in which the role of the saints is highlighted. The psalms are focusing on the glory of the saints and how they are revered by the Christian community. The connection between the sacrifice of the saints and the sacrifice of Christ is not evident.

The 1977 ordo introduces a different psalm, Psalm 14 (15), while providing two antiphons options from the earlier rites, “The bodies of the Saints are buried in peace: their

36. OR XLIII, n. 12.
37. PRG, n. 38. “Et extenso velo inter eas et populum, recondit ipse pontifex manu sua ipsas reliquias in loco altaris, canendo antiphonam: Exultabunt sancti in gloria, cum psalmo: Cantate Domino.”
38. PRG, n. 41. “Et dum recludentur, cantatur antiphona: Sub altare Dei sedes accepistis, intercedite pro nobis ad dominum qui vos elegit.”
39. PR XII, XVIII, n. 52.
40. PR 1961/2, nn. 635-637.
names shall live forever” and “Saints of God, you have been enthroned at the foot of God’s altar; pray for us to the Lord Jesus Christ.” This selection shows that the deposition of relics in the current rite is connected to the ritual element present in the previous rites while seen in a new context. In the context of this particular rite, the psalm and the antiphon emphasize that the relics are beneath the altar and that the saints intercede for the gathered community to the Lord. The theology in the 1977 Rite firmly situates the role of the saints in relationship to the sacrifice of Christ. It is evident here that the sacrifice of the saints has meaning because of the sacrifice of Christ. The theology of the Church as a communion of saints is expressed here; the saints join with the Church on Earth in worship with Christ, the Head, as members of His body.

The present deposition of relics includes no specific euchological texts which would be omitted if the relics were not deposited. This enhances the optional character of the ritual element. The prayer preceding the deposition asks that “the prayers of the Blessed Virgin Mary and of all the saints make our prayers acceptable to you.” The image of the saints aiding the community’s prayers is vividly depicted by placing the remains of saints in the midst of the community’s worship space, a melding of the ritual and the verbal elements of the rite. Theologically, the ongoing presence of relics emphasizes how the prayers of the saints join together with the prayers of the faithful gathered in the church building.

The Praenotanda and the texts of the rite itself show that relics are an optional, but preferred, element. The rubrical and musical texts addressing relics in the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar: Provisional Text (Washington, DC: Bishops’ Committee for the Liturgy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989), n. 61. Hereafter DCA, RDC, and RDA.

41. “Dedication of a Church,” in Dedication of a Church and an Altar: Provisional Text (Washington, DC: Bishops' Committee for the Liturgy, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1989), n. 61. Hereafter DCA, RDC, and RDA.

42. RDC, n. 60.
Church and an Altar express ecclesiological, eschatological, soteriological, and Christological themes. The texts situate the deposition of relics in the context of Christ’s sacrifice, namely a life of total self-gift to the Father.

**Theological and Spiritual Implications: Texts Shape Context**

The deposition of relics has theological and spiritual implications for the Rite of Dedication of a Church and an Altar and for those who participate in the rite. The *lex vivendi*, as Irwin calls it, serves as the source of these reflections. Liturgical texts have shaped the context in which the deposition of relics is understood. Relics can be included in the dedication celebration as long as they guide Christians towards Christ. The placing of the rite of dedication within the context of the Eucharist associates the understanding of relics as dedicatory with Ambrose’s vision that relics gained honor from their placement in close proximity to the altar.

Although the deposition of relics is not the only way to communicate the importance of the saints to the Christian community, their inclusion in the rite of dedication provides an opportunity to do so. Theologically, this is important because it expresses how the local community is part of the communion of saints in a ritual way. The epiclesis of the Eucharistic Prayers asks that the offered gifts become the Body of Christ for the salvation of those who participate in the Eucharistic offering. Relics point to the members of the Body of Christ in heaven while still hoping for the resurrection of the body for all the faithful in the new creation. The intercessions of the Eucharistic Prayer express the communion between the Church on earth and in heaven. Relics symbolize both the Church in heaven and its unity with the Church on earth. The deposition of relics can impact the spirituality of those who participate in the rite by
helping them understand how they live out their lives in relation to other members of the Body of Christ.

The deposition of relics can serve as a reminder for the Christian community of the spiritual examples of the martyrs and saints. Theologically, now that the deposition of relics is again seen in light of Christ’s saving actions, relics can be valuable signs of the communion of saints and serve as a reminder to live out the mission of the Church.

Conclusion

Kevin Irwin’s method as outlined above and in the General Introduction, enables us to reaffirm that liturgy is “an act of the Church’s self-understanding and self-expression” and that liturgy is an act of theology.\(^\text{43}\) Thus, the Ordo dedicationis ecclesiae et altaris expresses a renewed theology of the Church; namely that the Church, Head and members, past, present, and in heaven, are one Body of Christ. Relics are an important symbol, and the way in which they are included or excluded from the dedication celebration makes a theological statement. The context is text method applied to the rites of dedication allows us to see that relics were initially incorporated into dedication celebrations in such a way that highlighted the sacrifice of Christ. Relics not only influence their own ritual moment in the Rite of Dedication of a Church but also impact how the theology of other parts of the rite is expressed, as seen above and in Chapter Nine. The decision whether or not to include relics in the celebration of dedication must be made carefully with great consideration for the theology expressed by the rite, for the role of

\(^{43}\)Irwin, Context and Text, 44, 47-48.
relics in the community beyond this one celebration, and for the pastoral well being of the community.

The connection between the local Christian community and the universal Church plays an important role in the dedication of a church. That the entire rite is now thoroughly integrated into the Eucharistic celebration makes it evident that it is Christ’s salvific actions which dedicate the church. Depositing relics beneath the altar helps Christians to understand the relationship between this new church and the universal Church. It also reveals the role of the saints as present as intercessors for the Church on earth and the communion of saints. The presence of relics beneath the altar expresses the bond between the earthly liturgy and the heavenly liturgy. Relics beneath the altar provide examples of witnesses to Christ’s sacrifice and those who have lived their life as beacons of faith for their communities. If relics are not part of the Rite of Dedication of a Church, then the various realities and relationships which their presence emphasizes and communicates need to be expressed in a different way. Whether or not relics are part of the dedication of a church, liturgical catechesis and pastoral preparation must be incorporated into the celebration.

The *Praenotanda* suggest that the deposition of relics should be fittingly retained as long as the relics chosen will not detract from the faith of the community. While the deposition of relics is not necessary for the dedication of a church, it is valuable. The introductory material provides criteria for guiding such a decision, but also leaves some notable gaps, such as the style and shape of the aperture should relics be used and where the relics should be deposited, which is at the discretion of those planning the liturgical celebration. Great care is to be taken that the
relics are identifiable as human remains and historically verifiable, interesting concerns considering that the relics will be buried beneath the altar and likely will not be visible to the people. The emphasis of the *Praenotanda* is that the practice of depositing relics should be retained whenever possible. The rite itself and the *Praenotanda* leave no doubt that the deposition of relics should only be beneath the altar and that the *mensa* should not be disturbed. These instructions provide a change to the ritual action of depositing relics in a new church in order that the altar which is Christ remains undisturbed, while still allowing for the deposition of relics to be part of the dedication. Simple alterations to the way in which the deposition of relics is carried out helps to communicate the theological vision emphasized by Vatican II while retaining a traditional element of the Rite of Dedication of a Church. When the local Christian community gathers to dedicate a new church, it is given a unique opportunity to engage in a glorious vision of the whole Church: the visible Church gathered, with relics representing the Church Triumphant below the altar, in worship led by the bishop, with Christ the Head. As the Church dedicates places of worship, may the pilgrim church on Earth be guided by the knowledge that it is Christ who redeems the triumphant victims who rest beneath His altar.
### Appendix A

**Elements of Dedication Rites in the Sacramentaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verona</th>
<th>GeV</th>
<th>Hadrianum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Verona Sacramentary contains no precise ritual for the dedication of a church, but does reference the celebration of mass in the new church. Entitled the “Item alia in dedicatione,” the text is placed in the civil month of April, among masses for martyrs and confessors. It includes euchological texts for the dedication of a church to Saint Peter.</td>
<td><strong>Opening Prayer</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oratio quando levantur reliquiae</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Consecratio Basilicae</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oratio post velatum altare</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Oratio Super Aquam et Unium ad Consecracionem Altaris</strong></td>
<td><strong>Oratio in dedicatione ecclesiae</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Sequitur Praefacio Consecracionis Altaris</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Benedictio Altaris</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Benedicció Altaris Siue Consecracionem</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Praefacio Lentiaminum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ad Consecrandam Patenam</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Ad Calicem Benedictendum</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Item Alia</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Item Benedicció ad omina in Usem Basilica</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Praefacio Chrismalis</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix B

### Elements of Dedication Rites in the Ordines Romani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OR XLI</th>
<th>OR XLII</th>
<th>OR XLIII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Denuntiatio cum reliquiae sanctorum martyrum ponendae sunt.</td>
<td>In nomine Dei summi ordo quomodo in sancta romana ecclesia reliqua conduntur</td>
<td>Incipit ad reliquias levandas sive deducendas seu condendas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Ordo quomodo ecclesia debeat dedicari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 1. Lighting of 12 candles

Bishop goes to the place where the relics were kept, sings a litany and offers a prayer

The antiphon **“ecce populus custodiens iudicium”** is sung by the cantors with the psalm, *Fundamenta eius*.

### 2. *Tollite Portas*, Bishop knocks on the doors of the new church

The relics are placed onto a paten held by a priest and a cloth is wound around the priest’s arms. The ministers then come out of the place where the relics were singing the antiphon **“We shall go out with joy”**.

At the conclusion of the antiphon, the bishop raises up in his hands the covered relics and paten, supported by two deacons, and prays the first prayer.

### 3. Prostration before the altar with Agnus Dei

The bishop continues on to the new church, where the relics will be deposited. He enters the church with two or three ministers and closes the door of the church

After the prayer is completed, the procession with candles, incense and a singer begins. The antiphon *Cum iucunditate exibitis* is sung. There is a provision for the singing of a psalm with the antiphon should the procession need to travel a long distance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OR XLI</th>
<th>OR XLII</th>
<th>OR XLIII</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Prayers by bishop</td>
<td>The bishop prays and exorcizes the water.</td>
<td>When they reach the church, the procession, singing the litany, stops as the bishop gives the relics to a priest who remains outside the church while the bishop enters the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Abecedarium</td>
<td>The bishop and his assisting ministers prepare the cement, water, chrism and lime mixture which would later be used to seal the relics into the confessio.</td>
<td>Inside, the bishop washes the altar with exorcized water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Prayer before the altar</td>
<td>Altar is “baptized” with exorcized water</td>
<td>When he is finished, the bishop returns to the outside of the church and prays the second prayer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blessing of salt and water with ash mixture and prayer</td>
<td>The bishop and the ministers go to the church and the schola sings a litany</td>
<td>He then sprinkles the people with the remaining exorcized water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Exorcisms</td>
<td>The bishop then gives the prayer before the doors.</td>
<td>The doors are opened and the people enter the church with the litany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Mixture of salt with ashes, signing of the cross</td>
<td>The bishop receives the relics and takes them the altar inside the church and puts them upon the new altar.</td>
<td>When the litany is completed, the third prayer is given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OR XLI</td>
<td>OR XLII</td>
<td>OR XLIII</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Water and wine mixture blessed</td>
<td>The bishop anoints the <em>confessio</em> with chrism, in the sign of the cross in the four corners.</td>
<td>When the third prayer is completed, the antiphon <em>Sacerdos magne, pontifex summi Dei, ingredere templum domini et hostias pacificas pro salute populi offeres Deo tuo. Hic est enim dies dedicationis sanctorum domini Dei tui</em> is sung with the <em>Gaudete, iusti, in domino. Glora. Sicut erat.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Mixture used to mark the altar in the four corners with the sign of the cross</td>
<td>The bishop places the relics into their space below the altar along with three pieces of a consecrated Host and three grains of incense.</td>
<td>Next, the bishop alone puts the relics in their place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Altar sprinkled with hyssop branch seven times, accompanied by the antiphon <em>Asperges me, domine, ysopo et mundabor</em> with the psalm <em>Miserere mei, Deus</em>; sprinkling around the altar and around the walls of the church with the antiphon <em>Exsurgat Deus</em> with its psalm; return before the altar singing antiphon <em>Qui habitat in adiutori altissimi,</em> with its psalm</td>
<td>While the relics are deposited, the antiphon <em>Sub altare domini sedes accepestis - intercedite per nobis per quem meruistis</em> is sung.</td>
<td>While the bishop is placing the relics in their new resting spot, another antiphon, <em>Sub altare domini sedes sccepistis, intercedit pro nobis per quem meruistis,</em> is sung with the psalm <em>Blessed are the Immaculate</em> until he is finished</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Outside walls of the church are sprinkled by two or three priests</td>
<td>The bishop sets the stone on top of the <em>confessio</em> and prays.</td>
<td>The bishop makes the sign of the cross with chrism on the corners of the place where the relics will remain, and then he prays.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>OR XLI</td>
<td>OR XLII</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Bishop sprinkles the middle of the church, make the cross on the</td>
<td>The confessio is sealed with the previously composed cement mixture and marked in the sign of the cross with chrism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>floor with the antiphon Domus mea domus or aitionis vocabitur, with</td>
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<td></td>
<td>the verse Narrabo nomen tuum fratibus meis and the Gloria</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Prayer in the middle of the church</td>
<td>The sign of the cross is made with chrism in the four corners of the altar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Prayer in the middle of the church</td>
<td>The altar is veiled, and the bishop prays.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Antiphon Introibo ad altare dei is sung with its Psalm. The bishop</td>
<td>Then, all in the church are sprinkled with holy water.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>comes before the altar and puts the remainder of the water at the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>base of the altar, and wipes the altar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Incense is offered and oil is put on the top of the altar, in the</td>
<td>The tablet which is placed over the relics is also “confirmed with chrism”.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shape of the cross in the middle and in the four corners</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>A similar offering with Chrism, accompanied by the singing of the</td>
<td>The translation of the relics and their deposition in a new altar concludes with a public mass to be celebrated for eight days.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecce Odo with the psalm Fundamenta eius</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Bishop makes a circle around the church making the cross on the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>OR XLI</td>
<td>OR XLII</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Bishop makes the cross of incense above the altar</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Prayer over the altar</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Followed by the blessing</td>
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<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Antiphon <em>Confirma hoc, Deus</em> with the <em>Gloria</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Blessing of vestments, as the rite continues in the Sacramentary</td>
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<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>The bishop and assisting ministers process to the place where the relics have been overnight. Now the relics can be brought into the church in procession accompanied by candles, crosses, censers and singing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>When the bishop reaches the altar, he is shielded by a drapery so that he may bury the relics in the place of the altar outside of the assembly’s view. The antiphon <em>Exultabunt sancti in gloria</em> is sung with its own psalm</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Mass is celebrated by the bishop</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C

**Elements of Dedication Rites in the Pontificals**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRG</th>
<th>PR XII</th>
<th>PR XIII</th>
<th>PGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Ordo romanus ad dedicandam ecclesiam</em></td>
<td><em>Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam</em></td>
<td><em>Ordo ad benedicendam ecclesiam</em></td>
<td><em>De ecclesie dedicatione</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. The bishop proceeds to the church or the place where the relics are laid and prays.</td>
<td>1. The bishop and clergy go to either the old church or to the place where the relics have been kept. Here, the names of all of the saints’ relics are written down one by one, sealed with the bishop’s seal and signature. A responsory is then sung, the saints are beseeched, and the night watch is ordered. The next day, the bishop returns to the church to be consecrated and begins the preparation of the church with water, wine, salt and ashes.</td>
<td>1. The vigil was held in a separate tent, keeping watch on the relics.</td>
<td>1-2. Direction that while consecrations of churches may be done any day, they are most fittingly celebrated on Sundays or on the solemn days of saint’s festivals. Fasting prior to the dedication is required and it is to be celebrated as a solemnity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PRG</strong></td>
<td><strong>PR XII</strong></td>
<td><strong>PR XIII</strong></td>
<td><strong>PGD</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. At the first station, following the prayers, the relics are placed on a paten in the bishop’s hands. The relics are covered with a fine linen cloth. The bishop and the priests leave the place where the relics were.</td>
<td>2. Begin with the lighting of twelve candles all around the inside of the church, and then all are expelled from the church until only one deacon remained inside.</td>
<td>2-3. On the day of the dedication, when all of the necessary items for the dedication have been gathered, the ritual begins with the lighting of twelve candles around the inside of the church. Specific instructions for the preparation of the confessio are given, in addition to a procession around the church with the relics.</td>
<td>3. Directions for the absence of relics for the rite of dedication. The rubrics specify that if relics are not available, the Body of the Lord may be used in their place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a-b. When they reach the new church where the relics will be deposited, the deacon goes inside before the bishop enters and lights twelve candles.</td>
<td>3-7. Preparation of the water. The exorcism and blessing of salt and water, followed by the casting together of the salt and water and the blessing of the completed mixture.</td>
<td>4. Two large vases for the two types of holy water, one to be placed before the doors of the church and the other before the altar, are prepared. Salt, ashes, and wine are also in place there, along with the wine and necessary masonry tools.</td>
<td>4. Instructions for the preparation of the relics and the type of box into which they may be placed. Next, the rubrics precisely describe the information about the relics, the name of the church, and the indulgences to be offered, which the bishop is to write on leather and enclose with the relics. The relics are then placed in a suitable location on a bier.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRG</td>
<td>PR XII</td>
<td>PR XIII</td>
<td>PGD</td>
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<tr>
<td>4-5d. The procession arrives at the doors of the church, the bishop knocks on the doors with the antiphon <em>Tollite portas</em>. The deacon, who lit the candles inside the church, responds <em>Quis est iste rex gloriae?</em> This is repeated three times before the doors of the church are opened to the bishop with some ministers. The bishop, with two or three ministers, enters the church and the doors are again closed.</td>
<td>8-10. Having completed the preparation of the water, the bishop, clergy and people circle the church. The bishop then prays for God to help them in this place, this house of which God is the founder. The bishop then strikes the door with his staff, asking that the gates be lifted up so that the King of glory shall enter. The deacon who remained behind in the church responds. Follows <em>Tollite portas</em> pattern.</td>
<td>5. Exorcism of salt</td>
<td>5. During the night before the dedication, a vigil is to be kept in front of the relics. The vigil includes the singing of nocturns and laudes for many saints or the one whose relics are present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-7. Inside the church, the ministers prostrate themselves before the altar followed by a prayer prayed by the bishop.</td>
<td>11-16. Circle of church repeated complete with responsorial, collect, knocking, and response by the deacon. After a third circle of the church, the bishop, repeats his knock on the door with his staff; however, this time he adds the command to open the door. Once the doors have been opened, the bishop enters with only the clergy.</td>
<td>6. Blessing of salt</td>
<td>6. Admonition to prepare the same items as needed for the <em>Rite of Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of a Church</em> on the day of dedication</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRG</th>
<th>PR XII</th>
<th>PR XIII</th>
<th>PGD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. The bishop then traces the Greek and Latin alphabets onto the floor of the church.</td>
<td>17-20. The clergy and bishop prostrate themselves and pray. The bishop prays in the center of the church and then ashes are sprinkled across the floor of the church in the form of a cross. Using the ashes spread across the floor, the bishop writes the Greek and Latin alphabets.</td>
<td>7. Exorcism of water</td>
<td>7. Two vases of water are prepared, one at the door of the church, one inside the presbytery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-15. Coming before the altar, the bishop prays and then blesses the salt and water with ash mixture. Exorcism of the water and the salt. The bishop puts wine in the blessed water. Using the mixture, he makes the sign of the cross on the right side and in the four corners of the altar.</td>
<td>21. Antiphon: <em>O quam metuendus est locus iste; vere non est hic aliud nisi domus Dei et porta coeli</em>, with the canticle <em>Benedictus dominus Deus Israhel</em>. The bishop comes before the altar with the prayer &quot;Deus in adiutorium meum intende&quot; with the <em>Gloria patri</em>.</td>
<td>8. Blessing of water</td>
<td>8. Twelve crosses and twelve candles are marked on the walls of the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRG</td>
<td>PR XII</td>
<td>PR XIII</td>
<td>PGD</td>
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<tr>
<td>16. With hyssop and the wine-water-ash-salt mixture, the bishop sprinkles around the altar seven times.</td>
<td>22-27. The bishop then exorcizes and blesses salt and water. Blessing of ashes before mixing them with the salt. The bishop then makes the sign of the cross over the water while asking that the commixture of salt and ashes be sanctified with the holy water for the consecration of the church and the altar.</td>
<td>9. Mixing salt in water</td>
<td>9. Additional instructions for marking the twelve crosses and moving freely around the church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17-21. He sprinkles the interior walls of the church and makes the sign of the cross throughout the center of the church. Some ministers are sent to sprinkle the exterior walls of the church. These sprinklings are punctuated with psalms and prayers, including the <em>Consecratio</em>.</td>
<td>28. The bishop prays.</td>
<td>10. Blessing of salt and water mixture</td>
<td>10. The bishop should announce to the people in whose name the church will be dedicated and whose relics will be enshrined in the altar.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-22a. Coming before the altar, the antiphon <em>Introibo ad altare Dei</em> is sung with the psalm <em>Judica me Deus</em>.</td>
<td>29. Bishop mixes wine into water with prayer</td>
<td>11. Bishop walks in a circle around the church with the clergy and the people sprinkling the walls with the antiphon <em>Fundata est domus domini</em></td>
<td>11. Directions for lighting of candles and placement of chair on a carpet in the middle of the church</td>
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<td>22b-c. A mixture of lime and cement is put together with holy water and placed at the base of the altar.</td>
<td>30. Prayer</td>
<td>12. Prayer by bishop</td>
<td>12. Instructions for vestments and closing the door upon leaving the church</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Oil and incense are then offered upon the altar, and the cross is made in the four corners.</td>
<td>31. Blessing of the water with wine mixture.</td>
<td>13-19. <em>Tollite portas</em>, circling of church three times, bishop and clergy admitted after third knocking.</td>
<td>13. The bishop, clergy and the people go to the place where the relics were the day before and pray seven psalms. Bishop's instructions for vestments</td>
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<td>24. After this, the bishop anoints the whole altar with his hands while a priest offers incense in a circle around the altar.</td>
<td>32. The bishop then blesses the altar with the mixture by making the sign of the cross in the middle of the altar, followed by the four corners.</td>
<td>20. Door is closed.</td>
<td>14. Vesting instructions for deacons and subdeacons</td>
</tr>
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<td>25-29. The altar is chrismated and crosses are made with chrism in the places of the twelve candles around the walls of the church. Incense is offered in the sign of the cross on the altar. Prayers.</td>
<td>33. The bishop asperses the altar three times with hyssop; antiphon <em>Asperges me</em> <em>ysopo</em> with psalm <em>Miserere mei.</em></td>
<td>21. Kyrie, clergy and bishop lay prostrate in the middle of the church; <em>Agnus Dei.</em></td>
<td>15. Return to the church to be consecrated, antiphon <em>Adesto, Deus unus omnipotens.</em></td>
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<td>30-33. The bishop prays over the altar, referencing the sacrifice of the cross which was prefigured by the sacrifice of Jacob and asking that the people be able to humbly pour out their prayers.</td>
<td>34. Another preface.</td>
<td>22-24. Prayer by bishop, ashes sprinkled on the floor of the church, another prayer.</td>
<td>16-17. Prayer and Litany.</td>
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<td>34-36. After additional prayers the church is decorated with its sacred objects.</td>
<td>35-39. Following the sprinkling of the walls and making the sign of the cross in the middle of the church with the water mixture, the bishop then stands in the middle of the church and prays for the consecration of the basilica. In a lengthy preface, the bishop mentions the martyrs who will be in the church and asks that God be present in the church and hear the prayers of the people.</td>
<td>25. Abecedarium</td>
<td>18-23. Exorcism and blessing of salt, water, and water/salt mixture.</td>
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<td>37 a-c. The bishop takes the relics from the priest and brings them into the church with great honor, accompanied by the cross and thurible, as well as many candles. They are placed on the new altar.</td>
<td>40-44. After the bishop prays and pours the remaining water mixture at the base of the altar, the bishop, clergy and people go to the place where the relics had been kept for the vigil the night before. There the bishop prays, the clergy sing an antiphon and they raise the relics up on the bier, and the procession goes out with the cross, incense, and candles.</td>
<td>26. Antiphon <em>O quam metuendus est celi. Benedictus dominus Deus Israel</em>. Bishop goes before the altar saying “Deus in adiutorium” with the <em>Gloria Patri</em></td>
<td>24. Sprinkling, with antiphon <em>Asperges me, domine, hyssopo et mundabor</em>.</td>
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<td>38. Extending a veil between them and the people, the bishop takes the relics in his hand and conceals them in the place of the altar while singing the antiphon, the <em>Saints Shall Rejoice in Glory</em> with the psalm, <em>Sing to the Lord</em></td>
<td>45. When they reach the new church, the procession circles the church with relics before entering the building.</td>
<td>27-38. Exorcism and blessings of salt, water and ashes. Mixture of all three. Blessing of wine and mixture with water.</td>
<td>25-27. Sprinkling of walls of church with the clergy and the people, inside and out and the whole cemetery. Responsorial being sung is <em>Fundata est domus domini</em> and prayer after completion of circuit.</td>
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<td>39. The bishop puts chrism into the <em>confessio</em> in three corners in the shape of the cross, saying, “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”</td>
<td>46. As the procession returns to the doors of the church, the bishop declares the dedication of the church, speaks about tithing, and declares in whose honor the church is to be dedicated, mentioning the names of the saints who will rest there.</td>
<td>39. Another consecration of the altar.</td>
<td>28. Knocking on the doors of the church, <em>Tollite portas</em>; Door remains closed</td>
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<td>40. The bishop puts three pieces of the body of the Lord and three pieces of incense into the <em>confessio</em>. He then reveals the relics in the <em>confessio</em>.</td>
<td>47. Prayer by bishop</td>
<td>40. Altar marked in the four corners with oil and then sprinkled with hyssop. Bishop walks around the altar three times/antiphon is <em>Asperges me</em>, Ps. <em>Miserere mei Deus secundum</em></td>
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<td>41. The antiphon <em>Sub altare Dei sedes accepiistis, intercedite prop nobis ad dominum qui vos elegit</em> is sung.</td>
<td>48. The bishop proceeds to the place where the relics are to be enshrined, and a veil is spread between him and the people so that he can place the relics in the box.</td>
<td>41. Circle around the church, sprinkling the walls with the water, circle done three times, each with antiphon</td>
<td>30. Schola sings the responsorial: <em>Benedic, domine, domum istam, quam edificavi nomin tuo</em>.</td>
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<td>42. Next, the bishop takes the tablet which belongs on top of the relics and marks it with chrism, praying as above.</td>
<td>49. The relics are then anointed with the prayer, “Consecrate this sepulcher in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”</td>
<td>42. Water sprinkled in the middle of the church in the shape of the cross</td>
<td>31. Prayer before the doors of the church.</td>
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<td>43. The bishop then places the tablet on top of the relics while praying to God</td>
<td>50. Prayer &quot;Deus qui omni loco dominationis tuae clemens…”</td>
<td>43. Prayer by bishop in the middle of the church</td>
<td>32. Bishop knocks on the doors of the church again with his crosier, Tollite portas, doors remain closed.</td>
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<td>44. The tablet is then sealed with the lime mixture prepared previously and then marked with chrism, using the prayer above.</td>
<td>51. The bishop then “confirms” the stone which is to close the confessio by anointing it with chrism.</td>
<td>44. Prayer for consecration of basilica, &quot;Deus santificationum, omnipotens dominator,…&quot;</td>
<td>33. Third circle of the church and cemetery with clergy and people</td>
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<td>45. The four corners of the altar are then marked with a cross of chrism, using the prayer above.</td>
<td>52. Three pieces of incense are then added to the relics, the stone is placed on top of the confessio, and the edges are smeared with previously prepared lime. The antiphon Sub altare domini sedes sccepistis; intercedit pro nobis ad ominum qui vos elegit with the psalm Exultate Deo adiutori nostro is sung</td>
<td>45. Prayer by bishop</td>
<td>34. Schola sings the responsorial: Tu, domine universorum, qui nullam habes …</td>
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<td>46-49. Once the relics have been deposited, the altar is then covered. The bishop goes with the priests back into the sacristy where he vests for the celebration of Mass. Simultaneously, the altar is vested and all of the candles are lit. Mass is then celebrated, and a public mass is to be celebrated in that church for the next eight days.</td>
<td>53. Prayer &quot;Deus qui ex omni coaptatione sanctorum aeternum...&quot; 46. Bishop goes before the altar while the schola sings the <em>introibo ad altare ...meam</em> with the Ps. <em>Iudica</em>. The bishop puts the water on the base of the altar and on the <em>mensa</em> of the altar. When this is done, he cleans it with a towel.</td>
<td>35. Prayer before the doors of the church.</td>
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<td>54. Altar table is blessed with incense</td>
<td>47. Then the bishop, clergy and the people, in procession, go to where the relics were kept the night before. Prayer by bishop.</td>
<td>36. Following the third knocking on the door and its accompanying psalm text <em>Tollite portas</em>, the bishop’s final command to open the door had been expanded to a triple imperative: <em>Aperi, Aperi, Aperi</em></td>
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<td>55-56. Using the holy oil of the catechumens, the bishop makes the cross in the middle and four corners of the table. Oil spread across the table, while praying that the altar stone be consecrated and sanctified through the oil and prayer.</td>
<td>48-49. Antiphon <em>O quam glorioso est regnum</em> … with Ps. <em>Exultate iusti in domino</em> and prayer by bishop.</td>
<td>37. Once inside the doors, the bishop now tells all phantoms to leave the church.</td>
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<td>57-58. Throughout this, a priest has been constantly incensing in a circle around the altar with the thurible, continuing until the consecration has been finished. The altar is again anointed as before.</td>
<td>50. The bishop then lifts up the relics onto the prepared bier, the priests carry the relics on the bier with honor and joy, with the cross and thurible, with incense and candles. They process out with the Ps. <em>Cum iocunditate exibitis</em>…<em>cum gaudi</em> with the antiphon <em>Ambulate sancti Dei ingredimini</em>…<em>maies tatem domini</em>.</td>
<td>38. Once the doors are open the bishop alone with the clergy, ministers and masons who must place the stone and smear it over the <em>sepulcro</em> with the relics and the altar table, closing the door behind them.</td>
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<td>59. Bishop incenses above the altar and then 12 anointings with oil are done throughout the church</td>
<td>51. Before the bishop enters the church, the procession carrying the bier with the relics, circles the church singing a responsorial.</td>
<td>39-40. &quot;Peace to all who enter here&quot; and antiphon by schola <em>Pax eterna ab eterno patre huic domui</em></td>
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<td>60.</td>
<td>Incense is placed in the middle of the altar and in the four corners and lit with the antiphon <em>Ascendit gumus aromatum in conspectu domini de manu angeli.</em></td>
<td>52. When the procession returns to the door of the church, silence is restored and the bishop speaks to the people. He announces in which saint’s honor this church will be named.</td>
<td>41. The bishop goes to chair in the middle of the church; schola sings <em>Veni creator spiritus</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>61.</td>
<td>Another prayer</td>
<td>53. Bishop makes sign of cross over the church</td>
<td>42. Litanies including the saint for whom the church will be named or the name of the saint whose relics will be in the altar are sung.</td>
</tr>
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<td>62.</td>
<td>Prayer- another prayer for the consecration of the altar</td>
<td>54. Bishop accepts the bier and enters the church with the priests while the schola sings the antiphon <em>Ingressimini, sancti Dei; preparat est vobis a domino habitatio sedies vestre</em></td>
<td>43. Litany, response, intoned: <em>Ut locum istum visitare digneris. Te rogamus</em> by bishop</td>
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<td>63.</td>
<td>Preface prayed by bishop</td>
<td>55. Bishop puts chrism in the <em>confessione</em>, the relics are placed in the <em>sepulchro</em> and the corners and middle of the space are marked with chrism. Prayer for consecration of <em>sepulchro</em></td>
<td>44. Consecration of the church and altar with staff in left hand, sign of cross made with right hand; saint's name mentioned; <em>Te rogamus</em></td>
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| 64. | Prayer "Maiestatem tuam, domine, …"
<p>| 56. | Three grains of incense put in with the relics; antiphon Exultabunt sancti in gloria… Ps. Cantate domino cantieum novum… |
| 57. | Bishop prays “Deus qui in omni lco dominationis tue clemens..” |
| 45-46. | Prayers, hymns and litanies as ashes are spread throughout the floor of the church. |
| 65. | &quot;Confirmation&quot; of the altar stone |
| 58. | Tabula is &quot;confirmed&quot; with chrism in the middle and placed over the relics while the clergy sing antiphon Sub altare … with the psalm Exultate iusti in domino |
| 50. | Schola sings antiphon O quam metuendus est… porta celi |
| 66. | Blessing of the linens |
| 59. | Prayer by bishop |
| 51. | Bishop goes before the altar, says “Deus in adiutorium meum intende”. Response by people. |
| 67. | Additional blessing |
| 68. | Antiphon Corpora sanctorum in pace sepulta sunt et vivent nomina eorum in aeternum. Deacons vest altar |
| 52-56. | Exorcism and blessing of salt and water. |
| 60. | Mensa put over the altar and strengthened with lime. Incense used over altar. |</p>
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<td>69. Another prayer</td>
<td>61. Oil of catechumens is used by the bishop who takes his thumb and makes a cross in the middle and in the four corners. He spreads the oil over the whole altar with his hands. Prayer for sanctification</td>
<td>57-60. Blessing of ashes, mixing the salt and the ashes in the form of the cross, mixing that mixture into the water in the form of the cross, blessing.</td>
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<td>70. Prayer after the vesting of the altar</td>
<td>62. Clergy have been singing antiphon; incense has been being used in a circle around the altar</td>
<td>61-63. Blessing of wine, Mixing of wine and water in the shape of the cross, blessing of the wine and water mixture</td>
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<td>71. Bishop returns to sacristy to vest for mass, candles are lit, cantor sings introit <em>Terribilis est locus iste; hic domus Dei est et pora coeli et vocabitur aula Dei</em> with the Ps. <em>Quam dilict tabernacula</em></td>
<td>63. Bishop again makes the sign of the cross with the oil in the middle and in the four corners, with his hands, saying the <em>Consecrare</em> and the antiphon <em>Mane surgens Iacob</em>… with the Ps. <em>Deus noster refugium et virtus</em>…</td>
<td>64. Some churches say the preface that follows; preface</td>
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<td>72-81. Prayers and the celebration of Mass</td>
<td>64. Bishop then takes the chrism and repeats the process used with the oil of catechumens, with the antiphon <em>Ecce odor</em> and the Ps. <em>Fundamenta eius in montibus sanctius</em></td>
<td>65. Prayer by bishop, asking for blessing of building</td>
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<td>82. Blessing over the people in the anniversary of the dedication of the church</td>
<td>65. Then he goes in a circle around the church and makes a cross with his thumb and chrism in 12 places. Prayer is &quot;Sanctifectur hoc templum...&quot; Schola is singing <em>Hec est domus</em> with Ps. <em>Lauda Ierusalem dominum...</em></td>
<td>66. Bishop goes to the place where the water was blessed; prays.</td>
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<td>66. Then the bishop again offers incense above the altar, with antiphon; prayer by bishop</td>
<td>67. Consecration of the altar, singing of <em>Introibo ad altare Dei</em></td>
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<td>67. Incense placed in the middle and in the four corners of the altar. Response and verse</td>
<td>68. Bishop spreads water into the middle of the altar; prayer for sanctification of altar</td>
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<td>68-72. Prayers, another consecration of the altar</td>
<td>69. Spreading of water from above all over the altar, making crosses</td>
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<td>73-74. Front of altar stone anointed in the form of the cross with antiphon. After the burning of the incense, the cinders and the chrism should be removed. Burning ashes should be put in the pool.</td>
<td>70-74. Prayer and Antiphon <em>Asperges me</em>; circle altar seven times with hyssop sprinkling. Title to be said during each circuit; psalm is <em>Miserere mei, Deus</em>; Three verses of the psalm are said; There are three antiphons for the circuits, antiphon not used in additional two verses of the psalm</td>
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<td>75. Then, the ornaments of the church are brought forward.</td>
<td>75. Next, the walls of the inside of the church are sprinkled.</td>
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<td>76. Blessing of the altar linens and other sacred objects</td>
<td>76. Antiphon for first circuit is: <em>Hec est domus domini</em> … Second circuit is: <em>Exurgat Deus</em>… Third circuit is… <em>Qui habitat in adiutorio</em></td>
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<td>77. Singing of antiphon, vesting of altar, incense offered and the cross made above the altar.</td>
<td>77. After that, coming before the altar, floor of the church is sprinkled; antiphon</td>
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<td>78-79. Prayer; prayer after altar is vested.</td>
<td>78. Coming to the middle of the church, antiphon and additional sprinkling.</td>
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<td>80. Bishop returns to sacristy while church is prepared for mass</td>
<td>79. Prayer in the middle of the church</td>
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<td>81. Instructions for if only the altar is dedicated</td>
<td>80. Prayer for the dedication of the basilica</td>
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<td>82-91. Celebration of Mass</td>
<td>81-82. Preface; at the conclusion of the preface, the bishop goes before the altar and blesses cement, as in the <em>Consecration of an Altar Without the Dedication of a Church</em>.</td>
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<td>83. Procession back to where the relics were the night before.</td>
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<td>84. Prayer upon reaching that location</td>
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<td>85. Entering into that location, antiphon by schola, <em>O quam glorioso regnum</em>, reference to name of saint to whom relics belong</td>
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<td>86. Prayer</td>
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<td>87. Then the priest lifts the relics upon the bier prepared for them, and carrying them with honor and praise accompanied by the cross, candles and thurible with incense, the procession leaves this location.</td>
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<td>88. As the procession returns to the new church, four antiphons are provided for the schola, highlighting themes of walking with God and justice in the heavenly kingdom.</td>
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<td>89. Then, before he enters the church to be consecrated, the bishop circles the church with the relics, the people following and praying the <em>Kyrie</em> and singing the prescribed antiphons.</td>
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<td>90. The bishop then gives some brief words about the virtue and privilege of the dedication of a church.</td>
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<td>91. Then it is declared that the church will be for Him who has constructed and consecrated it and that the church community will fulfill the orders of the bishop the schola sings a responsory of offering</td>
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<td>92. Prayer</td>
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</tbody>
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398
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRG</th>
<th>PR XII</th>
<th>PR XIII</th>
<th>PGD</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>93. The bishop marks the door of the church as blessed, sanctify and consecrated by God who commanded it</td>
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<td>94. The relics are then brought into the church on the bier by the priest while the bishop begins and the schola continues the antiphon <em>Go in the saints of God</em></td>
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<td>95. If it is necessary before they arrive at the altar, another antiphon is provided</td>
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<td>96. When the relics reach the altar, the bishop begins the antiphon <em>We Shall Rejoice.</em></td>
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<td>97. The rubrics then again recommend that the rest of the celebration follow as in the <em>Rite of Consecration of an Altar without the Dedication of a Church</em>, providing a specific place within the ritual where the celebration continues, with the exception of the preface for which this rite provides its own</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>98. Preface</td>
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<td>99-110. Celebration of Mass</td>
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# Appendix D

## Comparing the Ordines Romani and the PRG

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OR XLI</th>
<th>OR XLII</th>
<th>PRG</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Denuntiatio cum reliquiae sanctorum martyrum ponendae sunt. II. Ordo quomodo ecclesia debeat dedicari</td>
<td>In nomine Dei summi ordo quomodo in sancta romana ecclesia reliqua conduntur</td>
<td><em>Ordo romanus ad dedicandam ecclesiam</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Lighting of 12 candles</td>
<td>Bishop goes to the place where the relics were kept, sings a litany and offers a prayer</td>
<td>1. The rite opens with the bishop proceeding to the church or the place where the relics are laid and praying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Tollite Portas</em>, Bishop knocks on the doors of the new church</td>
<td>The relics are placed onto a paten held by a priest and a cloth is wound around the priest’s neck. The ministers then come out of the place where the relics were singing the antiphon “We shall go out with joy”.</td>
<td>2. At the first station, following the prayers, the relics are placed on a paten in the bishops hands. The relics are covered with a fine linen cloth. The bishop and the priests leave the place where the relics were.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Prostration before the altar with Agnus Dei</td>
<td>The bishop continues on to the new church, where the relics will be deposited. He enters the church with two or three ministers and closes the door of the church</td>
<td>3a-b. When they reach the new church where the relics will be deposited, the deacon goes inside before the bishop enters and lights twelve candles.</td>
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<td>OR XLI</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Prayers by bishop</td>
<td>The bishop prays and exorcizes the water.</td>
<td>4-5d. The procession arrives at the doors of the church, the bishop knocks on the doors with the antiphon <em>Tollite portas</em>. The deacon, who lit the candles inside the church, responds <em>Quis est iste rex gloriae?</em> This is repeated three times before the doors of the church are opened to the bishop with some ministers. The bishop, with two or three ministers, enters the church and the doors are again closed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Abecedarium</em></td>
<td>The bishop and his assisting ministers prepare the cement, water, chrism and lime mixture which would later be used to seal the relics into the <em>confessio</em>.</td>
<td>6-7. Inside the church, the ministers prostrate themselves before the altar followed by a prayer prayed by the bishop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Prayer before the altar</td>
<td>Altar is “baptized” with exorcized water</td>
<td>6. The bishop then traces the Greek and Latin alphabets onto the floor of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Blessing of salt and water with ash mixture and prayer</td>
<td>The bishop and the ministers go to the church and the schola sings a litany</td>
<td>8. The bishop then traces the Greek and Latin alphabets onto the floor of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Exorcisms</td>
<td>The bishop then gives the prayer before the doors.</td>
<td>9-15. Coming before the altar, the bishop prays and then blesses the salt and water with ash mixture. Exorcism of the water and the salt. The bishop puts wine in the blessed water. Using the mixture, he makes the sign of the cross on the right side and in the four corners of the altar.</td>
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<td>OR XLI</td>
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<td>9.</td>
<td>Mixture of salt with ashes, signing of the cross</td>
<td>The bishop receives the relics and takes them the altar inside the church and puts them upon the new altar.</td>
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<td>10-11.</td>
<td>Water and wine mixture blessed and used to mark the altar in the four corners with the sign of the cross</td>
<td>The bishop places the relics into their space below the altar along with three pieces of a consecrated Host and three grains of incense.</td>
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<td>12.</td>
<td>Altar sprinkled with hyssop branch seven times, accompanied by the antiphon <em>Asperges me, domine, ysopo et mundabor</em> with the psalm <em>Miserere mei, Deus</em>; sprinkling around the altar and around the walls of the church with the antiphon <em>Exsurgat Deus</em> with its psalm; return before the altar singing antiphon <em>Qui habitat in adiutori altissimi</em>, with its psalm</td>
<td>While the relics are deposited, the antiphon <em>Sub altare domini sedes accepestis - intercedite per nobis per quem meruistis</em> is sung.</td>
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<td>13.</td>
<td>Outside walls of the church are sprinkled by two or three priests</td>
<td>The bishop sets the stone on top of the <em>confessio</em> and prays.</td>
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<td>16. With hyssop and the wine-water-ash-salt mixture, the bishop sprinkles around the altar seven times.</td>
<td>17-21. He sprinkles the interior walls of the church and makes the sign of the cross throughout the center of the church. Some ministers are sent to sprinkle the exterior walls of the church. These sprinklings are punctuated with psalms and prayers, including the <em>Consecratio</em>.</td>
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<td>22-22c. Coming before the altar, the antiphon <em>Introibo ad altare Dei</em> is sung with the psalm <em>Judica me Deus</em>. A mixture of lime and cement is put together with holy water and placed at the base of the altar.</td>
<td>23. Oil and incense are then offered upon the altar, and the cross is made in the four corners.</td>
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<td><strong>OR XLI</strong></td>
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<td>14. Bishop sprinkles the middle of the church, make the cross on the floor with the antiphon <em>Domus mea domus orationis vocabitur</em>, with the verse <em>Narrabo nomen tuum fratribus meis</em> and the <em>Gloria</em></td>
<td>The <em>confessio</em> is sealed with the previously composed cement mixture and marked in the sign of the cross with chrism</td>
<td>24. After this, the bishop anoints the whole altar with his hands while a priest offers incense in a circle around the altar.</td>
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<td>15. Prayer in the middle of the church</td>
<td>The sign of the cross is made with chrism in the four corners of the altar</td>
<td>25-29. The altar is chrismated and crosses are made with chrism in the places of the twelve candles around the walls of the church. Incense is offered in the sign of the cross on the altar. Prayers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>16-17 Prayer in the middle of the church and antiphon <em>Introibo ad altare dei</em> is sung with its Psalm. The bishop comes before the altar and puts the remainder of the water at the base of the altar, and wipes the altar.</td>
<td>The altar is veiled and the bishop prays. Then, all in the church are sprinkled with holy water.</td>
<td>30-33. The bishop prays over the altar, referencing the sacrifice of the cross which was prefigured by the sacrifice of Jacob and asking that the people be able to humbly pour out their prayers.</td>
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<td>18. Incense is offered and oil is put on the top of the altar, in the shape of the cross in the middle and in the four corners</td>
<td>The tablet which is placed over the relics is also “confirmed with chrism”.</td>
<td>34-36. After additional prayers the church is decorated with its sacred objects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>19. A similar offering with Chrism, accompanied by the singing of the <em>Ecce Odo</em> with the psalm <em>Fundamenta eius</em></td>
<td>The translation of the relics and their deposition in a new altar concludes with a public mass to be celebrated for eight days.</td>
<td>37 a-c. The bishop takes the relics from the priest and brings them into the church with great honor, accompanied by the cross and thurible, as well as many candles. They are placed on the new altar.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Bishop makes a circle around the church making the cross on the walls with his thumb and the chrism</td>
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<td>21-23</td>
<td>Bishop makes the cross of incense above the altar. Prayer over the altar is prayed and followed by the blessing</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Antiphon <em>Confirma hoc, Deus</em> with the <em>Gloria</em></td>
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<td>25.</td>
<td>Blessing of vestments, as the rite continues in the Sacramentary</td>
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<td>26.</td>
<td>The bishop and assisting ministers process to the place where the relics have been overnight. Now the relics can be brought into the church in procession accompanied by candles, crosses, censers and singing.</td>
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<td><strong>OR XLI</strong></td>
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<td>27.</td>
<td>When the bishop reaches the altar, he is shielded by a drapery so that he may bury the relics in the place of that altar outside of the assembly’s view. The antiphon <em>Exultabunt sancti in gloria</em> is sung with its own psalm</td>
<td>44. The tablet is then sealed with the lime mixture prepared previously and then marked with chrism, using the prayer above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Mass is celebrated by the bishop</td>
<td>45. The four corners of the altar are then marked with a cross of chrism, using the prayer above.</td>
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<td>46-49. Once the relics have been deposited, the altar is then covered. The bishop goes with the priests back into the sacristy where he vests for the celebration of Mass. Simultaneously, the altar is vested and all of the candles are lit. Mass is then celebrated, and a public mass is to be celebrated in that church for the next eight days.</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

Sources


_________. Sacram Liturgiam (January 25, 1964) DOL 2.


Archival Material
Consilium ad Exsequandam Constitutionem de Sacra Liturgia. Photocopies of all the Schemata listed below may be found in the ICEL Archives in Washington, DC.

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<td>October 8, 1970 and October 21, 1970</td>
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Studies


