



Young Adult Ministry – Archdiocese of Chicago
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SOME HELPFUL RESOURCES:

Champlin, Joseph. *Inside a Catholic Church: a Guide to Signs, Symbols, and Saints*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.

Cotter, Theresa. *Called to Preside: a Handbook for Lay People*. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1997.

Dues, Greg. *Catholic Customs & Traditions*. Mystic, Ct: Twenty-third Publications, 2002.

Foley, Edward. *From Age to Age*. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 1991.

Klein, Peter. *The Catholic Source Book*, Third edition. Orlando: Brown-Roa, 2000.

McKin, Donald. *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996.

The Harpercollins Encyclopedia of Catholicism, Richard McBrien General Editor. New York: Harper-Collins, 1995.

Visit the Young Adult Ministry website: www.yamchicago.org/res-books.html



WITHIN THESE WALLS

a self-guided tour of the signs, symbols,
and treasures of (your parish name)

Your Parish Name
123 Main Street · Chicago, Illinois 60000
www.yourwebaddress.org

There is an often spoken concern that many younger Catholics do not know the basics of their faith. Many of these are now the parents of the next generation. That means there is an honest fear that their children's generation will be even less knowledgeable about their Catholic faith than they are.

Yet in our very midst is a treasure chest packed with a remarkable collection of reminders of our Catholic view of life — the wealth of signs, symbols, images, artifacts and visual stories found within the walls of our church buildings. A deeper understanding of these Catholic works of art, signs and symbols can greatly inform who we are, all that our faith calls us to be and to do, and where our God is found.

For centuries Catholic images were a catechetical tool used to pass on the faith. We invite you to consider re-introducing this catechetical technique.

We propose that each parish create a brochure that, through pictures and words, explains the meaning of what people see when we gather for Mass or any other celebration in our churches.

THIS PROPOSAL IS BASED ON TWO PRINCIPLES:

1. Knowledge is power. To unlock the meaning behind what people see and the objects we use in church, will give them a greater understanding of our faith, and support their efforts of teaching the faith to others, including the next generation.
2. Presume little; explain lots. We should not presume that our parishioners and guests have an understanding of religious terms or the signs and symbols they see. It behooves pastoral ministers to explain as much as possible, presuming nothing.

WHAT WE SEE WITH OUR EYES:

In each church there are two main categories of signs and symbols: those that are intrinsic to every Catholic church (altar, tabernacle,



ambo, baptismal font, stations of the cross, etc.) and those that are unique to a specific church building (unique windows, paintings, frescoes, statues, the patron saint, cultural objects and designs, special books, etc.).

THE PROJECT:

1. Create a list of every religious image found within your church building (we'll start you out!). Include those found in all Catholic churches, as well as those particular to your building.
2. Take a picture (digital, if possible) of each sign, symbol, image and artifact.
3. Invite a group of parish staff members and/or knowledgeable volunteers to write an explanation of those signs, symbols, images and artifacts.
4. Create a brochure with the pictures and explanations. There may be some graphic artists in the parish who would love to help. Also, there are a number of wonderful resources that can assist you.
5. Consider using the title: Within These Walls: A Self-Guided Tour of the Signs, Symbols, and Treasures of (parish name).

ONCE THE BROCHURE IS PRINTED, IT CAN BE USED IN THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

1. The first weekend the brochure is available, distribute it to all who attend Mass. Announce for the next several weeks that the brochure is available.
2. Make the brochure available throughout the year at all the entrances to the church.
3. Print one or two pictures and explanations in the parish bulletin every week.
4. If your parish has a website, put the contents of the brochure on it. Also, consider a virtual tour.
5. Distribute the brochure to the children in the religious education program, with a note to parents suggesting they lead a tour for their children after Mass on Sunday.
6. Have a parish staff member or volunteer host a tour after the last Sunday morning Mass for all interested parishioners. This can be directed toward adults, or, on a more basic level for parents with their young children. The tour would include an opportunity to ask questions about the church or any of the items presented.

INTRINSIC

- Altar
- Altar Clothes (table cloth, corporal, finger towel, purificator)
- Ambo



- Baptismal Font
- Book of Gospels/Lectionary
- Bread
- Candles/Pascal Candle
- Censer (thurible) & incense
- Chalice



- Ciborium
- Confessionals
- Credence table
- Crucifix

- Cruets
- Decanter
- Funeral Pall
- Holy Oils: sacred chrism, oil of catechumens, oil of the sick



- Holy Water/Flowing water
- Kneelers
- Missal/missalette
- Narthex
- Nave
- Paten
- Pews
- Presider's Chair
- Processional Cross
- Pyx
- Sacramentary
- Sacristy
- Sanctuary
- Sanctuary Lamp
- Stations of the Cross
- Tabernacle
- Vestibule

- Vestments (alb/surplice, chasuble, cincture, various stoles) & colors



- Wine

SPECIFIC

- Abbreviations (INRI; ICXC NIKA, AMDG, HIS, etc.)
- Altar Stone
- Angels
- Book of Intentions
- Choir Loft
- Four Evangelists (images)
- History of the Building / Architecture



- Holy Spirit / Dove
- Memorials
- Monstrance
- Organ/Instruments
- Paintings on Walls
- Pictures / Mosaics in Windows
- "Poor Box"
- Relics
- Sayings/Scripture verses
- Shepherd's Staff
- Shrines
- Stained Glass & Images in Windows
- Statues / Mary, Joseph, Holy Family, Saints



- Steeples / spires
- Various Crosses

HOLY WATER FONT...

It is customary for Catholics, when entering a church, to dip their right hand in the holy water font and make the sign of the cross. The experience of blessing ourselves with holy water reminds us of the water poured over us at baptism, when we entered the family of God and became members of the Church. Water also reminds us of two important events in our religious history. First, when Moses led the Hebrew people from slavery to freedom, God parted the Red Sea giving them safe passage



to the promised land. Second, after Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, a voice could be heard from a cloud which overshadowed them. This is my beloved Son. Listen to him! (Mark 9:7) After passing through the waters of baptism, Jesus was on his way through life,

preaching and proclaiming the presence of God. Interestingly, after blessing ourselves with the holy water at the entrance of the church, we pass by (symbolically pass through) the water and journey into the church building, the house of God. We, too, are on a journey that will lead us to the promised land. By following Christ in our daily lives, that we are on our way into the fullness of life in God.

THE EYE OF GOD...

The all seeing eye of God is looking at us from inside a triangle. The triangle is the symbol for the Holy Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



God sees us. God the Creator, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit are looking to us and watching over us. God cares about us. The Divine cares deeply about the human. Aren't we blessed!

SANCTUARY LAMP

In every Catholic church, you will find one candle burning 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week (24/7). This sanctuary lamp is found very near the tabernacle, where the consecrated bread, the Body of Christ, is held. That light is the reminder of the constant love and presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. The sanctuary lamp has its origin in the Temple in Jerusalem, built by King David. Originally an oil lamp, it burned 24/7 next to the Holy of Holies, where the tablets of the Law (the 10 Commandments) and the manna, the holy bread



that the people ate in the desert, were kept. God fed them and kept them alive. There was another light in our sacred history. When the Hebrew people wandered through the desert in search of the Promised Land, they had two symbols of the constant presence of God

among them: a cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night. The light reminding them that God was with them, day and night, 24/7.

Find the sanctuary light next to the tabernacle. It is that sacred reminder, 24/7, that the Lord is with us always, in good times and in bad. In the tabernacle, like the manna and tablets of the Law in olden days, is the presence of Christ — the Light of the World — 24/7, in the Bread of Life. God is with us and feeds us everyday.