

# UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH



Der. Rm.  
BX4603  
P69E64

## LIBRARIES

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2009 with funding from  
University of Pittsburgh Library System

<http://www.archive.org/details/descriptionofepi00coak>



DESCRIPTION OF  
**The Epiphany Church**  
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

BY  
REV. THOMAS F. COAKLEY, D. D.

JOHN T. COMES, ARCHITECT FOR  
DECORATIONS, MARBLE AND BRONZE WORK

GEORGE SOTTER, PAINTER OF MODEL  
AND DESIGNER OF NEW WINDOWS

TABER SEARS, MURAL PAINTER, NATIONAL  
MURAL PAINTERS SOCIETY, NEW YORK



VENETIAN MOSAIC PANEL  
IN MAIN ALTAR

REV. LAWRENCE A. O'CONNELL, PASTOR

REV. EDWARD J. MCGONIGAL

REV. JOHN A. BREEN

REV. JAMES H. PRYOR

*Building Committee*

DENNIS DONAHOE

JAMES T. REILLY

PETER CASEY

P. J. BARRY

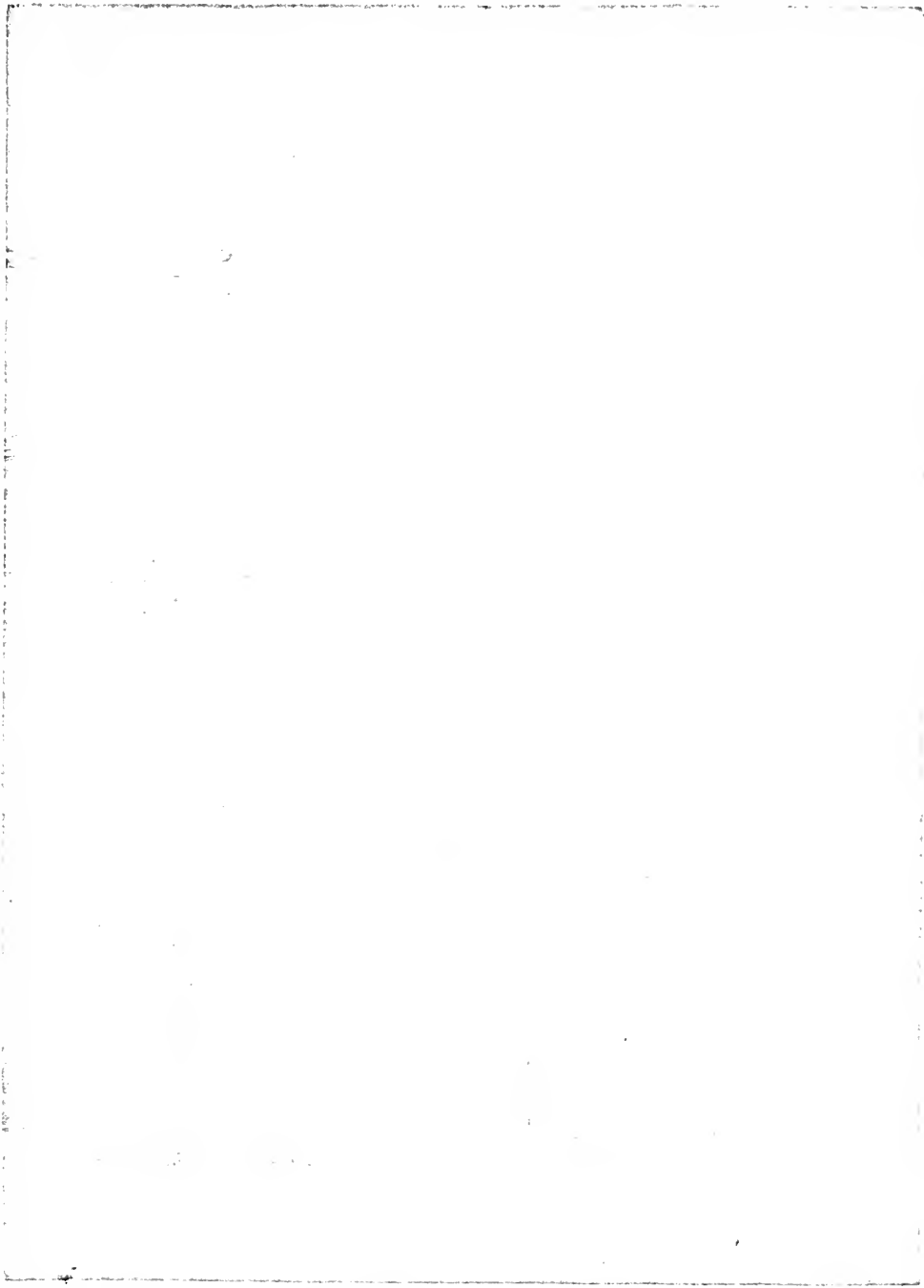
P. J. MCQUILLEN

JOHN A. MARTIN

JAMES S. DONAHOE

THOMAS J. EGAN





**SANCTUARY DECORATION**

From Water Color by Taber Sears. Exhibited at the Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York and Pittsburgh Architectural Club





## Appreciation



T is difficult to record the impressions received from the Church of the Epiphany. One has to be present and feel the effect, and language, always less exact than thought, is unequal to the task of translating into words a description of its simple, noble and powerful interior.

Almost the first feeling produced is one of tranquility and peace. We are ushered into a new world, where everything is lofty and inspiring. "*Sursum corda,*" "upward your hearts" rises on our lips spontaneously for in the Epiphany it is scarcely possible to be down-cast. Once we pass its portals, the noise and tumult of the busy city, the comings and the goings, the hurrying to and fro, the bustle and excitement, the business and the pleasure of this stern, hard, matter-of-fact world are hushed and forgotten under the potent influence of the surrounding decorations. What must be the beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem when God's earthly dwelling can be made so lovely! Every Catholic Church is indeed the abode of the living God, but the deep religious atmosphere of the Epiphany makes it possible to apply to it more than to other churches the words of Christ Himself: "Come unto Me all ye who labor and are burdened, and you shall find rest for your souls."

It is fortunate that the Epiphany Parish is one of the largest in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, for the influence that will be exercised on the thousands of its devoted and generous parishioners by this really great piece of decorative composition, carried out conscientiously on sound Catholic principles by genuine Christian artists, is well nigh incalculable. In it will be found almost every essential of serene and perfect beauty. It has repose, it has frankness, it has dignity; it manifests an enthusiasm, a seriousness of purpose, an exuberance of imagination, and a depth of religious feeling that in the United States is so rare as to be almost unique. Its broad and simple masses of low toned color, applied with a sincerity and a vitality that is refreshing, have a mediæval feeling that recalls delicious memories of old world churches scattered up and down Europe. In its honest use of honest materials, in its spiritual suggestion, in its play of light and shade, it produces an impression at once cool, chaste and reserved, making it



incomparable among all the churches of the Diocese, and giving it an honored place among the few really great churches in America where the interior decoration of God's own dwelling has risen above the commercial and the commonplace. The whole color scheme of the church, excluding the sanctuary, is a warm yet quiet grey for the ceiling, and a restful shade of brown for the walls, producing an effect throughout of quiet dignity, self restraint, and simplicity, with accentuating notes at salient intervals, all culminating in the rich and glorious sanctuary.

Nowhere has the use of gorgeous materials been carried out more consistently and more soberly, with such supreme calm and superb restraint. Not once has the artist practised deception. We will look in vain for artificial marble, for cheap or tawdry gilding, for straining at effect, for ostentation. There is no suspicion of affectation, not the slightest attempt at elaboration, no seeking for undue richness. Conscious of the limitations of his art, the objects portrayed are never represented as realistic, but are flat and conventional, appropriate to the sacred character of the Church and conforming to the admitted canons of mural decoration.

Minds less gifted and hands less trained than those who have planned and executed the Epiphany decorations would have given us a combination so bizarre as to set our teeth on edge. And yet instead of turbulent unrest, or the strenuous onrush of distracting motives, we have what is far more exhilarating and spontaneous, a splendid glow of solemn color, quiet, restrained and restful, producing upon the earnest and thoughtful worshipper a tonic and ennobling effect similar to that which we derive from Gregorian music.

The whole interior is finely conceived. The color scheme accords well with the surrounding architecture, bringing out with unaccustomed emphasis the strong clean lines and the graceful proportions of the church. This is one of the happiest features in the Epiphany. The architectural and decorative features are correctly adjusted; and the ornamentation neither conceals nor stultifies the construction of the building. It not only pleases the eye, but it attracts and holds the attention, and the various parts are so skillfully blended and co-ordinated into one consistent whole that the effect is a marvellous harmony, no part of which could be omitted or displaced without causing a jar or a jolt.



A notable instance of this co-ordination and blending of the architectural features may be found in the cornice of the baldacchino over the high altar which carries the eye along in a continuous uninterrupted line from side to side of the sanctuary.

The Church of the Epiphany was dedicated in 1903, although its furnishings and decorations were incomplete, and even the altars were only temporary, having been taken from the old cathedral. As a consequence, the building cried out with an imperious voice for some sort of mural adornment and artistic treatment that would give its blank walls and blackened ceiling a certain degree of beauty. Nor is it strange that to supply this want an architect should be called upon. One of the especial functions of an architect is not only to make a building perfectly adapted to its needs, but also to make it beautiful. The interior decoration of any building lies just as much within the realm of the architect as does its exterior embellishment, and the architect is just as much in his own province in the inner adornment of any structure as with any exterior problem of mass, proportion, line, composition and ornament in relief.

Hence the authorities of the Church of the Epiphany did not seek out the cheapest kalsominer to decorate the noble walls and ceiling of their parish church, where the sanctuary and chapels present unusual opportunities for fine decorative effects. An architect was chosen in Mr. John T. Comes, of this city whose protracted visit abroad, whose life long devotion to the principles of genuine Christian art, and whose personal inspection of the best examples of European cathedrals and churches whose color decoration is the greatest the modern world has known, gave him a special aptitude for the problem.

His work in the Epiphany shows that without any base imitation of famous originals, he has caught something of the warmth and the fire and the spirit of the wonderful mosaics and marble altars and bronze gates and tabernacle doors and mural paintings at Monreale and the Capella Palatina, in the sunny Sicilian capital, in the early Christian basilicas and churches of Rome, Ravenna, Assisi, Padua and Verona, and above all in the great cathedral which is the chief glory of the queen of the Adriatic, St. Mark's at Venice.

Mr. Comes was ably assisted by Mr. George Sotter, an artist of this city, who painted the half-inch scale model, and whose residence in Europe studying the incomparable works of ancient Catholic art,



gave him unexampled opportunities for just such decoration as the Epiphany offered. The execution of the work was entrusted to Johnson and Sherwin with Mr. Taber Sears as the mural painter. Mr. Sears is an officer in the National Mural Painter's Society and among the designs for the Baptistery submitted in competition with other celebrated artists, his was selected as showing the most sympathy and appreciation for the particular style of decoration demanded by this church. The Baptistery and the Twelve Apostles are his creations entirely; the balance of the work is to be attributed to Mr. Sotter and the architect, the latter being assisted in the full size detailing of much of the ornament by Mr. L. F. Plympton.

The church presented appalling difficulties to a decorator, such as the stained glass figured windows in the transepts and aisles, already in place, and which for grave reasons of finance and policy it was impossible to remove, the slender proportions of the nave columns, the busy arcade supporting the clerestory, and above all the unequal intensity of light, and the impossibility of determining in advance the gradations of color when seen at the proper distance, some tones being too strong, while others could not be made strong enough in the dimly lighted interior, making imperative a special individual study for each square foot of ornamented surface.

There is one feature of the interior decoration that even to a superficial observer must stand out pre-eminent. It is the spontaneous expression of the faith and reverence, the thoroughness and intelligence of priest and people, of architect and artist, to make God's own house a place worthy of His Infinite Majesty. The embellishment of the church has been completed only at the price of self denial and hardship and the expenditure of labor and time and treasure, or their equivalent. God will not accept that on which we lay little value. The most precious materials, the richest and rarest fruits of mature genius, the skill of noble art and honest craftsmanship are none too good for the creature to offer to the Creator. All of these are to be found in large proportion in the Church of the Epiphany, where the spirit of sacrifice is revealed in each single line.

Not only is there sacrifice displayed in every noble lineament, but what is no less important, there is a frank sincerity about the mural decoration that separates it by an abyss from the vast majority of church interiors. The lack of shading in the simple, dignified and restful block





pattern decoration of the dado of the aisle walls, the breaking of its continuous lines by the interweaving of the trefoil to indicate that no deception has been practised, and that stone work has not been simulated, but that a purely decorative effect has been aimed at, is an example of the straightforward character of the work throughout.

There has rung out so often in clarion tones from the pulpit of the Epiphany that God is a God of Truth, not of sham or hypocrisy or pretence, and that as a consequence, men's lives must be honest and sincere. Small wonder then that its sacred walls revealing absolute truth and scrupulous uprightness should echo back the self same words in blushing marble and gold mosaic, in exquisite glass and glowing color.

Filled with the most perfect religious feeling, there are here no unworthy motives, nothing that calls up thoughts of the theatre or the auditorium, nothing vulgar, or trifling, or frivolous. A rich and gorgeous effect has been secured legitimately by the genius and love and labor and sacrifice expended by the architect and artists on materials that have natural beauty, exquisite texture, and that are in themselves intrinsically precious and lovely. The picturesque darkened recesses, where the changing sun produces a constant ebb and flow of light and shade, the flush of bluish light gleaming through the deepening gloom in the apse, the dusk of sunshine penetrating through the amber glass of the clerestory—all this suggests visions of Old St. Paul's Cathedral, whose interior in a remarkable degree, stimulated piety by its great masses of rich luminous vibrating shadow, ever sweeping to and fro, gathering now in transept, now in aisle, or sleeping like fragrant incense beneath its lofty vaults and heavy supporting arches.

In the Church of the Epiphany interest increases as the eye is carried along the nave to the apse, the focus of the whole decorative composition. The vague palpitating ruby light of the sanctuary lamp breaks the almost impenetrable purple shadow, and throws into high relief a glorious burst of color and gold. The beauty of the variegated marbles of the altars and walls, the glittering mosaics of glass and gold, the marshalled groups of the great Apostles, the touch of Oriental splendor in the dusky hues and blazing colors melting through the windows far up in the apse, the solemn figure of Christ blessing the earth with uplifted hand, produce upon the beholder a feeling of awe, mystery and devotion that is unparalleled by any other church in the diocese.



It must be stated that the proper and harmonious execution of this notable work could not have been secured without the constant sympathy and encouragement, for all that is true and noble, on the part of the zealous rector, Rev. Father O'Connell and his building committee.

The success here obtained can be secured by any congregation if similar methods are employed, viz: that first-class architects and artists be engaged and given a free hand in all matters that require artistic expression.

Our many failures to do anything really serious and noteworthy in the domain of Christian art in America, are not due so much to the lack of talented men, as to their non-employment, and the restrictions placed on them by those not qualified to do so by knowledge and personal experience.

*The freedom to use his God-given art instincts as he sees fit is just as essential for the development and growth of the artist and architect, as pure air and sunshine are to growing plants.*

The architect, and artists collaborating with him on the Epiphany Church must have been supremely happy to have been allowed the free and independent use of their imagination and talents, a circumstance that is clearly evidenced in the harmony and unity of every detail throughout the work.

## Baptistry



HE vestibule, with its simple masses of subdued color gives one an air of expectancy. Painted Angels of Purity and Temperance, with those virtues inscribed on the scrolls, guard the doorways, and as we enter the splendor of sheer loveliness is experienced rather than seen in the Baptistry immediately to the right of the south aisle. The subtle sense of beauty in its rich, sober, mysterious coloring, its cool darkness, its exquisite lancet windows flashing fire, its panel painting of the Baptism of Christ, and its gorgeous Byzantine lamp, especially designed to be a constituent element in the total effect, make one almost feel that he has wandered back into the forgotten centuries, and stands once again in the lower church of St. Francis at Assisi.



## Symbolism



THE style of architecture of the Epiphany being Romanesque with Byzantine details and ornamentation suggested the Byzantine scheme of decoration that has been carried out, and it gave splendid opportunities for the employment of the symbolical features and the use of rich Oriental color effects

with which Byzantine art is inseparably connected.

There are few churches in which ancient symbolism is expressed with such fecundity as in the Epiphany. A symbol is an allegorical representation of a Christian principle under a tangible image. It answers one of the cravings of the human mind. From the very beginning of the world man has experienced a certain pleasure in exercising his intellectual faculties by conjecturing the answer of the half revealed and half concealed riddle thus presented to him under a visible formula, and of preserving secret from others the hidden truths therein summarized. It is undeniable that any truth set in an allegory is more emphatic, more pleasing and more impressive than when formulated in technical words.

Early Christian symbolism has a deep mystical import. It expresses that with which we are already familiar, and it illustrates the mind and the thought of the people, giving expression to what all feel but what all cannot say. One of its great advantages over more precise forms of representation lies in its ability to express ideas which are outside the range of exact definition. Christian art, like every other art, has been symbolical in its beginnings. It deals with the unseen world, and it leaves room for ulterior suggestion; hence it furnishes more to the imagination than the hand of the artist is able to depict. To those who are familiar with the symbols found everywhere in the Roman catacombs, and in the early Christian Basilicas, the repetition of the same themes on the walls and ceiling of a Pittsburg church carry us back across a gulf of centuries to the very beginnings of Christianity.

The colors themselves used in the Epiphany have a mystic meaning.

Green, symbolical of eternal hope and of the yearning of the soul for final repose.



Grey, indicative of the ashes of penance.

Brown, the sober hue of poverty and humility.

Gold, the emblem of divine love.

Blue, the color of the Immaculate Virgin, signifying chastity and innocence.

Red, the color of fresh blood, the symbol of zeal, charity and suffering.

On the transept ceiling there are painted conventional symbols of the four Evangelists. The representations here given date from the most ancient times, and are based upon the visions of the Prophet Ezekiel<sup>1</sup> and of the beloved disciple<sup>2</sup>.

They are attributed to the four Evangelists because the opening chapters of their Gospels bear a striking reference to those heavenly visions. St. Matthew is represented as a man, because his Gospel begins with the human genealogy of Christ. St. Mark has for his emblem the lion, because his Gospel records St. John the Baptist as a voice crying in the wilderness. St. Luke is symbolized by the calf, the Old Testament Holocaust, because his Gospel opens with the sacrifice of Zachary in the temple. St. John is symbolized by the eagle, his Gospel opening with his soaring flight to the very throne of God.

These four symbols are here introduced at the crossing of the nave and transept ceiling to provide an interesting rest and spot of color by way of transition to the glowing tones of the sanctuary. Were they larger, they would interfere with the simplicity and mass of the color scheme of the ceiling; if they were smaller, they would be scarcely distinguished from the floor, sixty feet below.

The Dove representing the Holy Ghost<sup>3</sup> on the great central arch is surrounded with winged seraphim, each bearing a scroll inscribed "*Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus, Dominus Deus Sabaoth Pleni sunt caeli et terra gloria tua.*" The colors of the outspread wings are diversified, giving both unity and variety, as the definition of beauty requires.

In the Sanctuary diaper pattern, there is a combination of the masculine and feminine features in art, the masculine, composed of diagonal and rectilinear lines denoting Christ, and the feminine, consisting of circular or oval forms, signifying His Bride the Church.

<sup>1</sup> 1—10.

<sup>2</sup> Apoc. 4—8.

<sup>3</sup> Mark 1—10.





Inserted and interwoven in these spaces are numerous symbols, the chalice and the host, denoting the Real Presence; the Circle, the emblem of Eternity, and the letters I. H. S.— There is a Latin inscription surrounding the wall above the dado, “*Domine dilexi decorem domus tue et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ.*” “I have loved, O Lord, the beauty of Thy House, and Thy Glory’s dwelling place<sup>1</sup>.”

In Our Lady’s Chapel, the predominant tone is the virginal glory of blue, the color which tradition has ever accorded to God’s own Mother. The wall decoration is made up of a number of circular and oval forms, the feminine symbol in art, inserted in which are found various figures emblematic of the Blessed Virgin, such as the monogram A. M., the first two letters of the words, “Ave Maria,” “Hail Mary,” pronounced by the Archangel Gabriel at the Incarnation of Christ<sup>2</sup>. The crown which signifies the Queen of Heaven; the Vase, emblematic of the spiritual vessel and those of honor and devotion found in our Blessed Lady’s Litany; The star indicating her popular titles, Morning Star and Star of the Sea.

The Latin inscription or line with that in the Sanctuary is “*Ave Maria, Gratia Plena*”, “Hail Mary, full of grace”<sup>2</sup>.

In contrast with the Blessed Virgin’s chapel, the predominant note in the chapel of St. Joseph is the bugle cry of gorgeous red. The wall decorations are made up entirely of rectilinear and diagonal lines for square and angular forms have ever been the male symbols in art. The hatchet, the triangle, the rule and plumb bob, the symbolical representation of St. Joseph’s trade, a Carpenter, are all inscribed and interwoven in the decorative scheme.

The Latin inscription is “*Ite ad Joseph*”, “Go to Joseph”<sup>3</sup>.

The inscriptions in the Sanctuary are in Latin, not only because Latin is the official language of the Roman Catholic Church, but for the peculiar aptness, energy and terseness which it affords for the purpose of inscriptions. To these may be added a further reason, its removal from the ordinary language of the street, for just as the church itself is not of the world, neither is its language, and the eye falling upon the texts embodied in a tongue not spoken by the people gives to the inscriptions a freshness and a charm that they would otherwise lack.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 25—8.

<sup>2</sup> Luke 1—23.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. 41—55.



On the under side of the arches dividing the nave from the aisles, there is a large number of symbols, sanctified by the traditions of many centuries, which are in themselves a summary of a large portion of Sacred Scripture and Catholic theology; among them are found "X. R.," the first two Greek letters in the word Christ. This is called the Constantinian symbol, and it is the traditional manner of representing the sign which the Emperor Constantine saw in the heavens in the year 312, just previous to his decisive victory over Maxentius at Rome. It is of vast importance in early Christian art, as the use of a Christian emblem for the standards of the army indicated the official adoption of Christianity as the religion of the empire. Hence it is a symbol of triumph, and from its very introduction it became exceedingly popular.

The Constantinian monogram is accompanied frequently by the Greek letters, Alpha and Omega, the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying the "beginning and the end,"<sup>1</sup> so that this symbol came to represent not only Christ's name, and the cross of His Passion, but His Divinity as well.

The "*Crux Gammata*" or "Gamma Cross," or Swastika, so called from its being formed from the interlacing of the Greek capital letter "G" called "Gamma."

The Heart pierced with the sword.

The Lily, symbol of purity, and the emblem of the Blessed Virgin, who is called the Lily of Israel.<sup>2</sup>

The Double Triangle, called the shield of David. The Triangle alone is a symbol of the Blessed Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

The seven branched Candlestick, which stood in the Holy of Holies.<sup>4</sup>

The Anchor, symbol of hope.

The Dove, emblematic of the Holy Ghost, the soul, and of peace and returning prosperity.

I. H. S. The Latinized form of the Greek words seen on the Constantinian symbol, meaning "*In Hoc vince*" or "*In Hoc salus*" or "*Jesus Hominum Salvator*."

The two tables of the law, on which were written the ten commandments.<sup>5</sup>

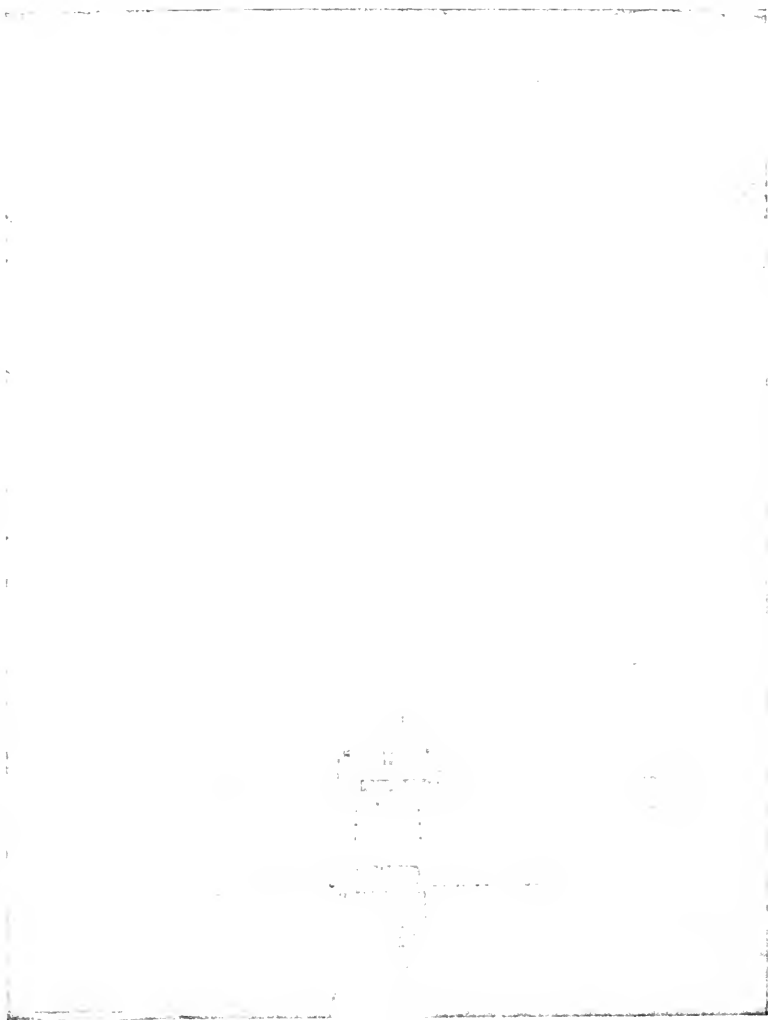
<sup>1</sup> Apoc. 1-8.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. 2.

<sup>3</sup> John 5-7.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 25-31-40. <sup>5</sup> Exodus 31-18.





GENERAL VIEW OF INTERIOR





### MAIN ALTAR

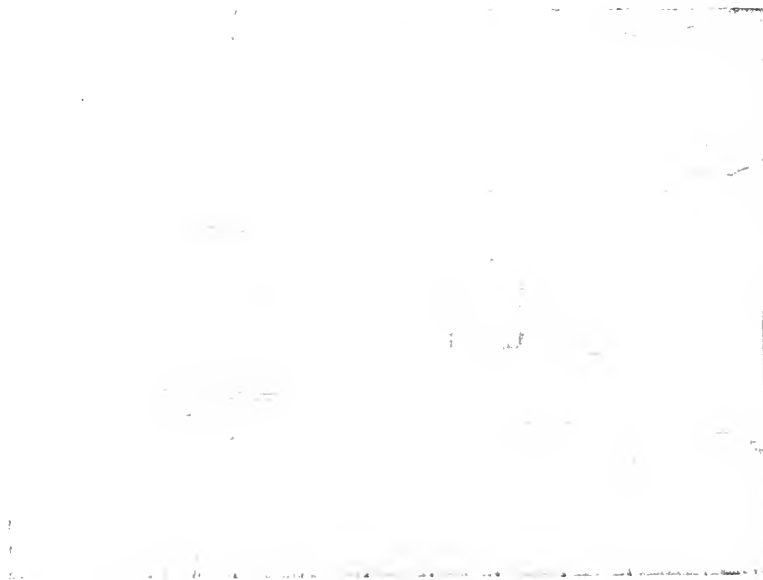
The Tympanum and Circular Panel are Executed in Venetian Enamel Mosaic





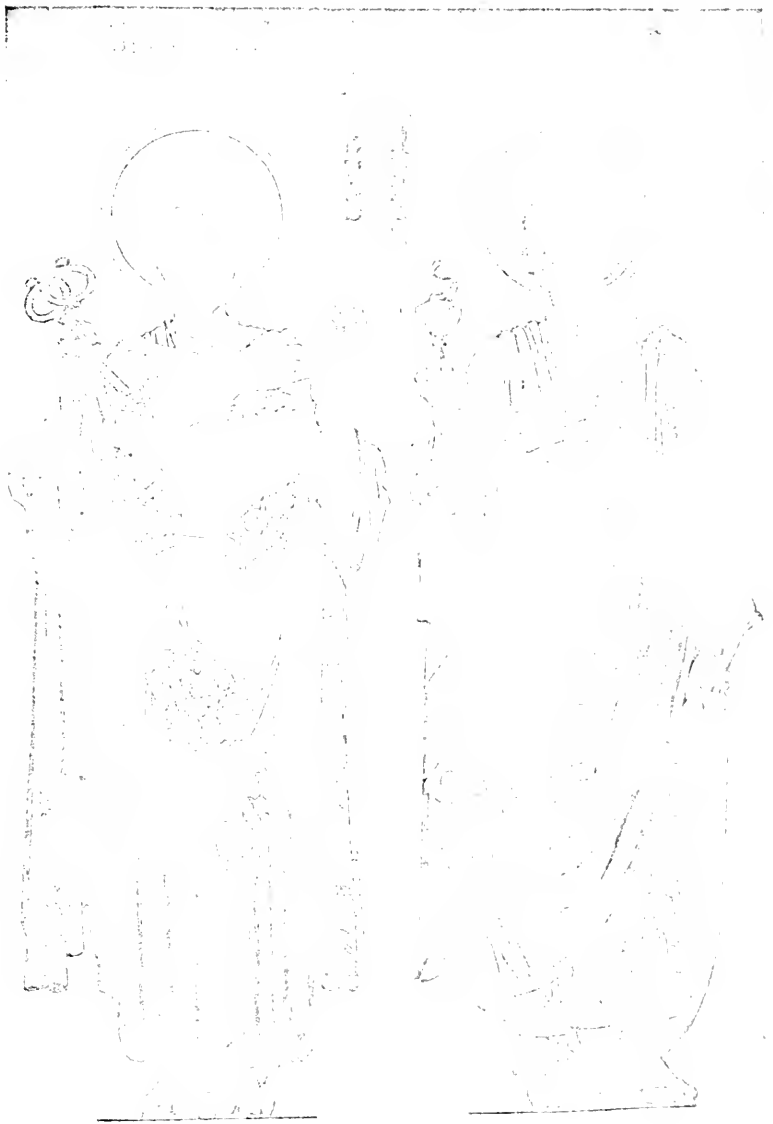


ST. JOSEPH'S CHAPEL



BAPTISTRY CHAPEL

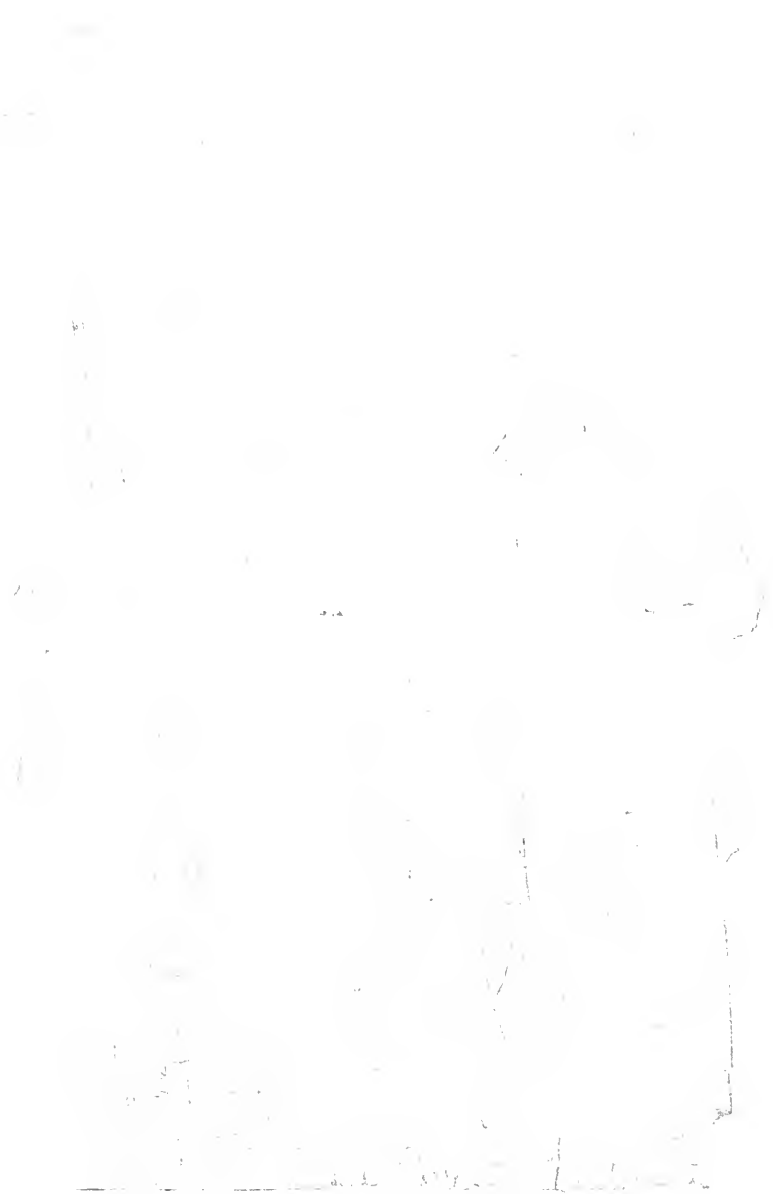




CARTOON FOR CENTER PANEL, ST. PETER AND ST. JOHN

Faber Sears Mural Painter





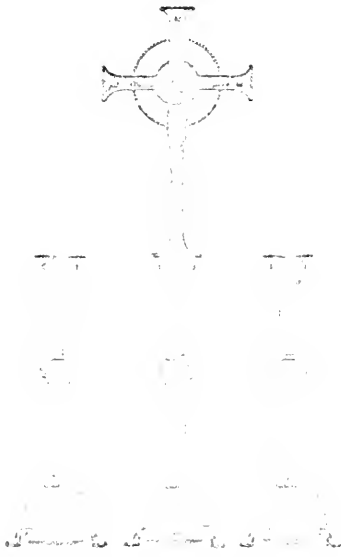
CARTOON FOR APOSTLES IN SANCTUARY

Taber Sears Mural Painter





SANCTUARY



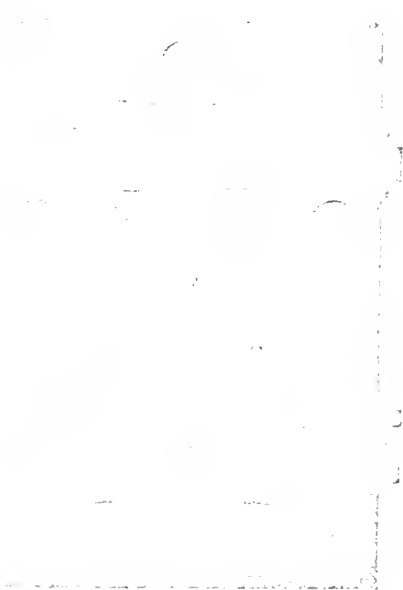
CRUCIFIX AND CANDLE STICKS FOR MAIN ALTAR



LAMPS



ACOLYTE CANDLE STICK



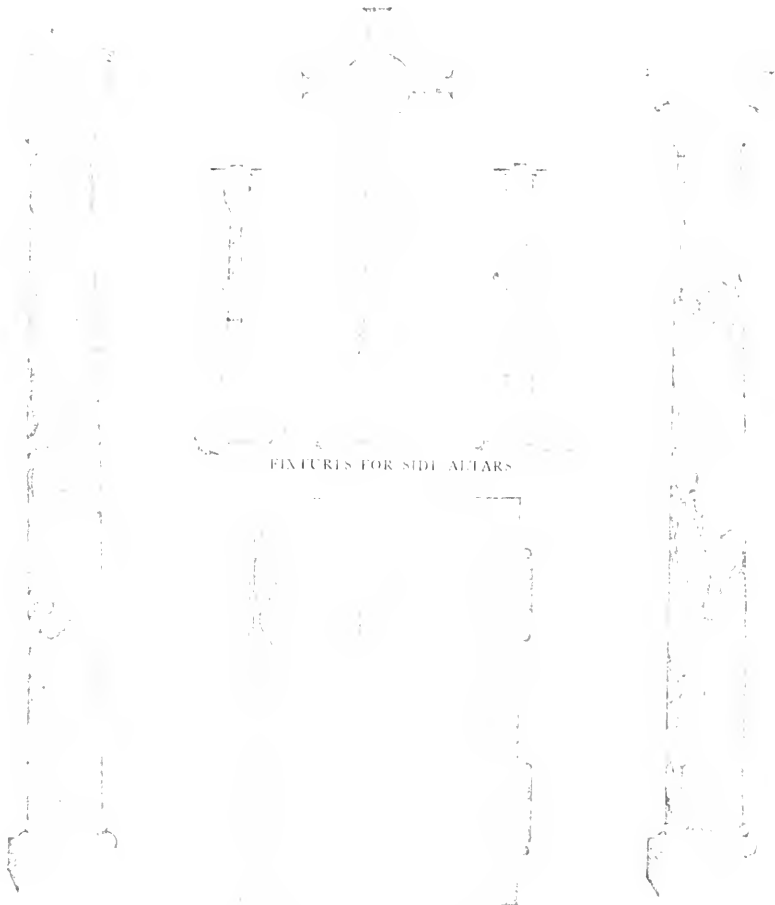
MAIN ALTAR TABERNACLE DOOR IN BRONZE WITH SOLID GOLD CROSS



ACOLYTE CANDLE STICK







FIXTURES FOR SIDE ALTARS

BRONZE TABERNACLE DOOR FOR SIDE ALTAR



BRONZE GATES FOR COMMUNION RAILING

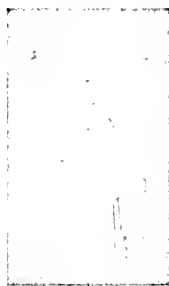




SIDE ALTAR  
COLUMN



MISSAL STAND



THE EVANGELISTS CARVED



IN STATUARY MARBLE



COLUMN CAPITAL  
FOR MAIN ALTAR  
STATUARY MARBLE



SIDE ALTAR  
COLUMN



Crown, the emblem of superiority and sovereignty.

Hand, symbol of the power of the Creator.<sup>1</sup>

Rose, a symbol of Our Lady, for in her litany she is called the mystical rose.

The lunettes between the arches in the nave have the chalice and the host, emblematic of the Real Presence of Christ on our altars. The Grape and Vine, indicating not only the Holy Eucharist, but also the Precious Blood that was shed for our sins. The crossed hands and feet, showing the wounds of Our Saviour, the vessels being filled with His blood. The various instruments of the passion, the nails, scourge, column, crown of thorns, ladder, sponge, sword, club, hammer, dice and pincers.

Above the canopy over the high altar, there is an enameled mosaic of the lamb, an ancient symbol of the Saviour, based upon the saying of St. John when he pointed Him out to the assembled multitude, "Behold the Lamb of God."<sup>2</sup>

Special attention should be directed to the magnificent grouping of the twelve Apostles, executed by Mr. Taber Sears. They are by no means an imitation or a copy or an adaptation of any previous work, but they form an altogether original series of paintings, being arranged and studied and executed especially for the apse of the Epiphany, and there is nothing quite like them in existence, giving this feature an individuality and a character and a value all its own.

Writing of his own work, Mr. Sears says :

"The domed sanctuary of the Epiphany suggests even in its primary architectural form, the construction of the early Christian basilicas, and it was a wise choice on the part of the architect to adopt a style of decoration for it which is so well exemplified in the original structures of Rome and Byzantium. In executing the decorations I had decided from the beginning upon two essentials; first, to portray on canvass the manifestation of Christian faith as set forth by the Apostles; secondly, to adapt the rugged simplicity of Byzantine painting to their presentation, which is as far removed from conventional geometric forms on one hand, as it is from naturalism on the other,—an important distinction. If the inspiration of religion was to be presented in a vital and convincing form, then the painter should be con-

---

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 2—24.

<sup>2</sup> John 1—29.



cerned with the portrayal of evident emotion. The heads of the Apostles, then, were rendered graphically, with much attention paid to their individual expression. The method of grouping the figures, the patterned robes, the Apostolic attributes, such as the keys, the chalice, the staff and book, were painted with the Byzantine tradition very much in mind. It was a matter of design primarily, and a question of interesting forms in silhouette against spaces of gold. Stability of composition is as important in an extensive decorative painting as in architectural design. So in the frieze of the Apostles the restrained gesture, and the restful vertical drapery become important factors in the unity of effect."

"If these principles were true regarding the frieze, they were indispensable in painting on the dome the figure of Christ. The monumental proportions of the painting rest in its simple forms and tranquil surfaces. The arrangement of color in this composition was largely determined by historic examples, but with additional consideration given to the effect on the design of light and dark masses in their proper tone and relation and contrast."

Perhaps the most impressive piece of decoration in the entire church is the majestic head of Christ on the ceiling of the sanctuary with the abbreviated Greek words *I. C.* and *X. C.* "Jesus Christ" on either side. Its gravity and solemnity on the colored ceiling with its background like the firmament, studded with stars of gold, brings back vivid recollections of the grand mosaic head of Christ in the Pope's own cathedral, St. John Lateran, at Rome, where He looks down upon the worshippers and with uplifted hand blesses them with His visible presence.





## Marbles



HERE is always a calm dignity about marble. It is a material so superb, so stately and so enduring that when it is used in large masses a magnificent effect can be produced by the skillful employment of its rich sobriety of coloring, and its harmonious contrasts. Marble is one of nature's choicest productions. Of all opaque colored materials it is the most perfect, for not only has it the widest range of color of any natural substance, but it has infinite variety, and gives sudden and brilliant surprises.

The nave and aisles have been paved with marble mosaic and there is a splendid array of marbles in the sanctuary, many of which can scarcely be put in any category of coloring. No imperial robe can exceed in splendor the violet breccia columns of the main and side altars of the Epiphany, with their large patches of purple, and red, the color of clotted blood, or the lordly Siena with its deep orange ground lining the wall, or the lustre of the cool and pleasant polished Carrara. Then, too, there is the purplish yellow Pavonazzo, truly royal in its fine restraint of tone; the Istrian and Siena greys, the Cipollino, with its light grey and sea-green veins, the red from Verona, all culminating above the altar in the large cross of deep Numidian, the color of dappled blood. A surprising richness and variety are obtained by the brilliant patches of color formed by the glittering enameled mosaics of green and gold which give life and interest by breaking the broad polished surfaces of the altars and walls. In the Communion rail, for instance, the small but gorgeous panels, squares, borders and rosettes relieve the otherwise dull uniformity of the cream white marble. Above the high altar and immediately under the rich marble canopy, there is a Venetian mosaic tympanum of the Epiphany, showing the three wise Kings from the East bringing their gifts to the infant Saviour. The side altars have small marble reliefs of the four Evangelists, while statues of St. Ann, St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin which are not yet completed are to fill the gilded niches.

Just under the choir on the right and left of the nave are two casts of Luca della Robbia's "Singing Gallery" now in the "Opera del Duomo," Florence. The original work is one of the most celebrated pieces of sculpture in Europe, and it was a happy thought to



place this famous group of lovely children in precisely this position in the Epiphany. The innocent grace and the unconscious simplicity and charm of these beautiful curly headed boys pouring forth their whole soul in gladness of heart makes us almost hear the rich melody of their united voices, and they seem to breathe the very spirit of music.

## Mosaics



THE mosaics of Europe of the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh centuries are noted for their great beauty and magnificence. There is a scarcely perceptible deterioration observable at the end of the period, but in the eighth and ninth centuries they are marked by a large number of Greek mosaicists who had taken refuge there from the persecutions of the Iconoclasts. During the tenth century there was an almost total cessation of the art. Reviving again in the eleventh, fairly good work was done in the twelfth and much better in the thirteenth centuries. Then it was that mosaic began to be used very widely as a purely architectural decorative material. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the mosaicists returned almost exclusively to pictorial decorative work, while in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they became mere imitators of painters in oil and so dexterously are their mosaics made that they are continually mistaken by laymen for the original pictures of which they are copies. In the eighteenth century the art hardly existed but in the nineteenth it was once again called to life, and now in the twentieth century its value is fully recognized.

The artist in mosaic has a great future, especially in this country where durable materials are being employed more and more, and mosaic is the only lasting substance possessing a large color field and an adaptability for permanent polychromatic architectural enrichment.

The marble work in the Epiphany Church presented a magnificent opportunity to introduce this Venetian mosaic, or Cosmati work, as it is properly known, and it is introduced successfully in the Communion railing and the three altars. The main work consists of a representation of the Adoration of the Magi, a tympanum eleven feet long by five and one-half feet high. All the mosaic was executed by the



Venice Murano Company. It must be confessed, however, that it is very difficult to get strictly decorative and conventional work in Italy at the present time as the Italian mosaic artists are entirely too modern in their tendencies; erroneously thinking that the nearer they approach accurate representations of paintings, the more perfect is their work. It will take some time to inculcate in them reverence and appreciation for the old work, planned and executed in that distant period of the world's history that it was once the fashion to call dark, and until this is done, mosaic art cannot thrive as it should. It is interesting, however, to have made at least a beginning in this Diocese in an art that has wonderful opportunities for ecclesiastical decorative work.

## Glass



It is scarcely necessary to call attention to the splendid new stained glass recently placed in the apse, the sanctuary, sacristy, baptistery, outer vestibule doors, clerestory, and the lower windows in the transepts. In fact, with the exception of the figured windows in the side walls and transepts which for weighty reasons already stated could not be removed, all the old glass has been replaced with new leaded windows which are in entire accord with the whole color scheme of the interior.

The glass in the clerestory and in the transepts is of a quiet warm opalescent color, amply diffusing the light, yet keeping out the strong glare of the sun, and harmonizing perfectly with the color of the walls and ceilings. This is another evidence of the scholarly taste which dignifies many of the details of the Epiphany. Were the interior more brilliantly lighted, the result would be theatrical and secular.

The small upper panels of colored glass in the outer doors of the church have a rich Oriental grill effect, giving the desired measure of illumination as the sunlight creeps mysteriously subdued into what would otherwise be a gloomy vestibule.

These new windows cost very little money and a magnificent result has been produced at a trifling expenditure. Some of the colors have a sort of resonance, as they flash back fire; others grow more somber like the glow of dying embers. They show the rare good



sense of Mr. Sotter, who made the glass, who thoroughly understands the limitations of his art, and who holds himself rigidly within the boundaries set by the medium in which he works. A stained glass window is nothing but a piece of colored or translucent decoration. It must not be descriptive, but flat, formal and conventional, without perspective or modelling, hence picture windows that assert themselves with insolence or insistence, with great sheets of glass molded into drapery, must be condemned as being utterly unworthy and unendurable, since they violate every law of good glass, and are without any decorative value.

A stained glass window is not a hole in a wall, but a portion of the wall itself made translucent; it is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end, respectfully holding its honored place, continuing the structural surface of the wall, being made absolutely subordinated to the surrounding architecture, and planned and executed with a serious regard for its sole function as a component part of a great artistic whole.

A stained glass window should be a mosaic of comparatively small pieces, held together by strips of lead of varying widths. The leads themselves are of quite as much importance as the glass, and great skill is required in their handling for they punctuate and divide paragraphs of flame with lines of ink. They must not be minimized or concealed, or reduced to the smallest size and quantity, as if they were a mere expedient, or an inevitable misfortune from which an escape was sought. They are of vital structural importance, and must be as carefully studied and as fully respected as the glass itself, for to the glowing colors of the quivering glass they add a strength and a vigor an energy that would otherwise be lacking.





## Bronzes



THE bronze sanctuary gates, the crucifixes, candle sticks, altar cards, and tabernacle doors are all from especially prepared designs by Mr. Comes. They were cast in Europe especially for the Church of the Epiphany, and they conform in every respect to the Byzantine character of the accompanying decoration. The crucifix and candle sticks on the main altar are set with English enamel matrix of more than ordinary brilliancy. The tabernacle door on St. Joseph's altar has a gilded relief of the chalice and the host, emblematic of the Real Presence. The bronze tabernacle door on the main altar is surrounded with semi-precious stones. It has a Byzantine cross of solid gold studded with gems, all contributed for this purpose by individual members of the congregation, old men and young, maidens and matrons. The relief work is of exceptional beauty, being two doves feeding upon the wheat and grapes, which form the cross, indicating the soul and the world being nourished by the body and blood of Christ who lives on our altars within the tabernacle.



## Parting Word



THE Roman Catholic Church was once the mother of artists as well as of saints. Under her inspiration art and sanctity, side by side, rose up and grew and flourished. But art fell from her high estate as the handmaid of religion, a chasm wide and deep was created, and for long centuries this potent ally that shed so much lustre on Catholicity has seen her chief glories relinquished to aliens. Religion has not gained by the separation, and the loss to art has been immeasurable. What the church has rejected, those outside her fold have raised to an honorable place. What we have discarded, cast down, despised and mistrusted, has been advanced to a high eminence by the Evil One for the enemies of Christ know the value of art, even if we Catholics do not. To bring back to the Catholic Church the ancient splendors of her own art, to make it expand and burst forth of its own impulse, to create a feeling for the beautiful that will be the instinct and the heritage of every Christian, to put within reach of our Catholic people a luminous example of the exalted traditions and principles of the golden age of Christian art, to make the interior decoration of God's own dwelling a spontaneous outpouring of love and devotion and enthusiasm and faith,—this has been the mainspring of the activity of the architect and artists who in the fear of God have worked humbly and loyally that the Church of the Epiphany might appear lovely before the eyes of men.

Christian art requires Christian artists, men who feel that a Catholic Church is the noblest structure possible for human beings to erect, demanding the best materials, the best workmanship, and the best art. It supposes architects, artists and craftsmen who work for God and not for fame, men of sterling Christian character, of high ideals, of lofty purposes and thoroughly grounded in the basic principles of genuine Christian art. The embellishment of the Church of the Epiphany proves that we have here in our midst in the City of Pittsburgh Christian artists who fulfill all of these conditions, and who understand the fundamental laws that should govern the decoration of a Catholic Church.

The writer has not thought it necessary to call attention to what he considers defects or imperfections in the decoration of the Epiphany,



---

PARTING WORD

---

for on the whole they are very few, and the task has been left to other hands. The artists themselves freely admit them, with that modesty which is a characteristic of real ability. All that is claimed is that in the Church of the Epiphany Christian art in this community has reached a level immeasurably higher than it has hitherto attained.

And yet it is foreseen that self-constituted critics who are wedded to their own opinion, who are unfamiliar with the great works of Catholic genius that are yet the masterpieces of the world, who have never studied Christian art, who are unable to differentiate one style of painting from another, who can neither give a definition of art nor distinguish a fresco from a wall painting, will rise up and condemn in whole or in part the entire work. Let us have criticism, but let it be real constructive and intelligent criticism and based upon thorough information. It is easy to pick flaws, but it takes some knowledge to detect excellence.

Christian art has been staggering so long and has been reduced so low by the repeated blows of commercialism and narrow-mindedness, by culpable extravagance and sinful ignorance, that the Church of the Epiphany, so splendid, so vital and so inspiring, standing out almost solitary and alone amid so much that is unworthy and vulgar and dishonest and untruthful seems to streak the east with silver and to herald the dawn of a brighter day.

THOMAS F. COAKLEY, D. D.

St. Peter's Day, 1910  
St. Paul's Cathedral,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.



VIEW OF MARBLE YARD IN PIERASANTA, ITALY

Showing Ascending of Main Altar Steps and Platform  
Before Stipend to this Country





