

"Environmental Crisis: An exploration of the layout and architecture of Catholic Churches since Vatican II; Why and how this must change in order for a greater centrality and understanding of the Eucharist as a historic and now modern, communal activity and liturgical celebration to be achieved."

Eleanor Mary Wells

2020

Word Count: 22,118

Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the degree of MRes in Theology at the University of Nottingham.

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Abstract

In this thesis, I will be discussing the liturgical and physical changes made to the Catholic Church, particularly since Vatican II. I will explore how those documents released by the Vatican were not sufficient in providing enough information on how to implement these changes effectively. I will then continue to discuss the importance of creating equality through the space which is used for worship especially the concept of female priests in relation to the space and the artwork which is seen in most churches. As well as this I shall explore how such things may persuade congregations to become more open to the concept of the female priesthood as a reflection of equality which is essential for the Eucharist to be understood as best as possible, as well as encourage community involvement in the Eucharistic tradition as a shared meal. Following this I felt that it was important I spoke of modern events, notably the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020 since this would inevitably change the face of worship spaces and how they are being used for the foreseeable future! I will further discuss how church layouts can be effective by critically analysing Liverpool Cathedrals modern and alternative layout, its strengths and its weaknesses and how we may learn from them. Finally, I will present some of my own hypothetical church designs and discuss the key uses and needs for most communities using these spaces and why these hypothetical designs are more suited to modern-day worship than the common cruciform layout which we see as the norm for most communities.

Chapter One:

Vatican II: *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and its effect on communities

To understand why I believe that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* can be seen as inadequate in what it achieved as well as what it meant for church communities around the world, we must discuss what exactly Vatican II, in particular, *Sacrosanctum Concilium* mandated regarding the use of church space and Liturgy. The events which unfolded throughout Vatican II are key to understanding why there was so little focus on certain elements of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* both at the time of its release and in modern-day worship. The document was to be released with very little protest as "Pre-Concilium preparation proved far more satisfactory than that of other comparably important texts."[1] There was still much left undiscussed, and to understand why this is the case, we must look a little earlier into Church history, seeing as the matter had been under debate since 1948.

The commission for liturgical reform was founded at this time in history and therefore it is difficult to understand why so much progress was made in this period of history in terms of pernickety linguistic challenges, yet so little was made in terms of encounters with religious spaces and giving proper access to the physical and spiritual needs and actions of the congregation. Even though the commission was keen that their work had a "pastoral sense"[2] it was failing to focus on the practical presentation and actions of the faith which would be directly visible and therefore easier to understand for lay members of the church. By encouraging a concentration on matters which would be noticeable to the clergy themselves

[1] Aidan Kvanagh Adrian Hastings "Liturgy (Sacrosanctum Concilium)" in *Modern Catholicism: Vatican II and after,* ed. Adrian Hastings (London, SPCK, 1991) 68-73.
[2] Annibale Bugnini *The Reform of the Liturgy* (The Order of St Benedict, USA, 1990), 10.

"the territorial bodies of bishops are empowered to adapt such things to the needs and customs of their different regions; this applies especially to the materials and form of sacred furnishings and vestments."[3] By giving a greater responsibility of how church spaces were to be decorated and arranged to the clergy, there was a greater possibility that those clergy who were in agreement with the Curia and took a more 'traditional' approach may not commit to the changes as fully as others. There is an importance of unique spaces being created within each church. However, there is also a value in an equal commitment amongst all clergy to create a renewed face of the Church with a view to demonstrating to communities that all parishes hold the same level of responsibility to implement the new instruction of how the Mass was to be presented.

By handing over the responsibility for the layout to clergy in a more lenient manner, the visual impact of Vatican II was made subjective and therefore created an opportunity for clergy to create a sacred space which feels right for them as someone who is in the position of delivering the Mass but did not necessarily reflect the need for an involvement of the congregation in worship especially during the Eucharist as a community activity. If the work of the commission was to be truly pastoral and consider the whole people of the Church, then surely there should have been some consultation with the members of the Church laity to ensure that they felt suitably included and satisfied with their experience and surroundings. Consultation with Clergy and scholars was a natural place for the commission to turn to, questionnaires were sent out for this very purpose. The lack of involvement of those who would be most affected by the changes was an oversight as *Sacrosanctum Concilium* keeps its sights set on the impact upon the logistical changes to the church and how to help the

[3] Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy "Sacrosanctum Concilium" 128. (December 1963. Accessed 19th April 2020) https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html

clergy adjust rather than acknowledging the laity involvement which was necessary for advancement. The laity is also a fundamental part of the celebration of the Eucharist and by not asking for their concerns there is a limited way in which the church can fully understand its members and their needs. Although, "Lay Auditors were to be invited to attend a Council for the first time"[4] they were only allowed into specific parts of the Vatican Council and it was very often lay scholars, who were in attendance with an academic view, as opposed to members of congregations who would be impacted by these changes daily. There is, of course, practical reasoning behind this, as academics were able to keep pace with the rhetoric of the council and understand the finer points of the debate. However, by not even thinking to include the everyday Catholic in discussions it creates a gap between those who are educated to such a level and those who engage with the church on a perhaps daily and practical basis.

The Council had misjudged the importance of introducing more obvious visual and physical measures to reflect the liturgical, linguistic and subtle changes which had been made for the clergy and thus, the community. Both the people and the clergy have valid and important roles to play, but the implementation of the new liturgy needed to be harmonious and not leave an obvious physical rupture between the new orders for the clergy and the congregation. This rupture is occasionally visible in certain church layouts and sometimes even linguistically. A brilliant and more recent example of this is when the wording of the Mass changed in 2011. From my own memory, there was a period of adjustment for many people and what felt like a shock to slowly recover from, with new physical and verbal actions to adjust to. Pamphlets with new words on were given to worshippers and there was a shared hesitancy. Something which had been so familiar for so many people had changed literally overnight for them. However, for those who had been implementing these changes

[4] George Bull, *Vatican Politics at the Second Vatican Council 1962-5* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1966), 55.

and working on them for a longer period, they had already had the time to adjust. Comparatively the congregation who, although key in the celebration of the Eucharist, were placed 'in the deep end' and expected to adapt quickly. This is exactly what happened at Vatican II with the change of the altar to versus populum. As well as this, the surroundings and actions of congregations often did not reflect the new words which are being said which could be related to a lack of understanding on the clergy's part of how to appropriately adapt a church space to the needs of their congregation. On the whole, the changes introduced at Vatican II needed to have a more communal focus, something which would have been at the core of the early Eucharistic meals.

A key element which has already been mentioned is the obvious visual change of the altar moving. In some congregations, it was the only change made signalling a reluctancy to change the layout of the church fully so as to accommodate a renewed understanding of the Eucharist. As Thomas O'Loughlin states:

> "the fundamental rationale of the reform was the renewed awareness of the early and patristic understanding of the assembly as gathered around the table of the Lord. The Eucharist is many things, but in its fundamental form is a meal of eating and drinking, a banquet, a sacrum convivium, and its visible focus is the visible focus of the meal: a table."[5]

If this is the case, then we also must consider what our core instinct surrounding a 'meal' is. For many, a meal constitutes a gathering *around* a table most often seated and most often containing some form of procedure of how things are to be consumed. Part of the problem which was created both before Vatican II and afterwards is the way the Eucharist is treated as such a sacred object that for many, they feel a hesitancy in becoming more involved with the ritual of it. O'Loughlin furthers this argument as he presents the idea that:

[5] Thomas O'Loughlin, "The Lord's table- at the centre of the assembly" *Renew. Vol. 182* (2017): 4-6.

> "The Eucharist is our common table as Christians and our sacred table as guests of the Lord: it was to re-establish this fundamental table-logic that stood behind the changes of Vatican II. The move in the presider's direction was not that 'he could face the people' in serried ranks of pews, nor be visible as a science teachers bench must be visible to her class, nor as a lecturer on a podium — but so everyone else could arrange themselves around that table as human beings do."[6]

This notion of the table being a centre for gathering enables us to realise that it is natural human instinct to congregate around them or, for religious purposes, an altar, which at its core is simply a sacrificial form of a table. These stem from the early Greco-Roman stone altars which although small, were found in nearly every household and gathered around on a regular basis. We may also look to our Jewish ancestors and brothers and sisters of today who still hold meals, and food at the core of their community as a key component of uniting everyone through the same rituals and gatherings. Salamon states that "by connecting the physical and the conceptual, food issues most powerfully represent the ability of a culture to channel senses and emotions into complex and powerful worldviews."[7] Although speaking of the Jewish faith, these words ring very true to the Catholic approach which is traditionally taken with the Eucharist since it is used as a physical and spiritual source of 'food' as well as a central reason for meeting as a community to demonstrate to the world what this source of 'food' means for each of the members.

Following on from this we must also examine the linguistic changes which were put into place and had such an impact on the Church. This is touched upon very well by Richard Vosko who posits that "one of the main roles of a church building is that of a storyteller."[8] If this is, in fact, the case then we must look also at the role of language, space and memory. Our memory links to language but also to the spaces with which we associate those

[6] O'Loughlin, "The Lord's table- at the centre of the assembly" 5.
[7] Hagar Salamon "Cutting into the Flesh of the Community," in *Jews and their foodways,* ed. Anat Helman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 110-131
[8] Richard Vosko, *God's House is Our House: Re-imagining the Environment for Worship* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2006), 5.

languages. When the linguistic changes were made both at the point of Vatican II and in the Mass translation of 2011 there should have also been a review of the space in which these new words were being used so that we may assess whether the space is suited to the new words and vice versa. In order for a congregation of people to fully understand the meaning of the Mass and for it to have as effective an impact as possible, the congregation must first be able to visually assess the effect that their words have in the church space but also see how they affect each other. By placing people in close proximity of one another but being so distanced from the Eucharist a gap is created between how we understand the Eucharist in relation to other members of the congregation. As Richard Vosko posits "it makes sense to create places of worship that draw the worshippers physically close to the ritual actions, not as spectators in an audience but as actors in the paschal mystery, being remembered and celebrated by that very congregation. Such church designs will, over time, help the faithful appreciate that acts of worship are something *they* do."[9] Therefore, we must understand that when people are placed so far away from the spectacle which is happening, they feel like they are solely watching rather than fully participating. The congregation may feel glad to be in the presence of the ritual, yet they are not shown to be a key or active part of it in an obvious visual way. The Catholic Mass has become the very epitome of 'call and response' with individuals trained to repeat the same phrases and saying numerous times, so much so, that the desired effect of these words may become lost over a long period of time due to an over-familiarity and therefore progressively less attention being given to what is said.

In my view, it is important that there is a physical spatial reflection on people's involvement in the Eucharist if we are to achieve an advancement of the communal effort needed to create

[9] Richard S. Vosko. "Standing on Holy Ground: Encountering Revelation in Sacred Space" *Liturgy, 31. no. 1 (2015) 42-50.*

a truer recreation of the original form of the Eucharist which may be translated into a ritual which is suited for the Church and its people today. The best analogy for this may be to compare it to a football match. When one attends a match, a certain atmosphere is created by having the crowd present to participate in supporting those who are playing. When we take this support and encouragement away, a certain 'buzz' about how the game is perceived is lost. Without the crowd, there is a less effective and supportive environment for the game to take place in as well as the question of who they are playing for if no one is witnessing it. The same may be said of the Eucharist, without a congregation, there is a lack of atmosphere. Too often, the congregation are physically present but mentally absent due to a lack of encouragement to participate as well as an understanding of why they are important in the process of the Eucharist. We must question why the ritual is being performed in such a way that if the congregation is not present, the same actions performed despite the congregation being a key element in celebrating the Eucharist. *Sacrosanctum Concilium* had an opportunity to revolutionise the approach to how the Eucharist is celebrated through taking it back to its roots and creating a more communal version of it. Instead, the council was held back by tradition and an abundance of power-play between those who were more traditional versus those who were more liberal. Worship spaces could have been transformed into places which demonstrate that the Eucharist, worship and prayer are happening *in* these spaces and working *with* spaces not simply words being said, and actions being obeyed.

A major disadvantage which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* faced was that it was the first document to be discussed by the council. It had been discussed pre-Concilium and approved by many of the formative figureheads of the council, mainly the Roman Curia and therefore it was trusted to be good enough. This - in my opinion - did not give a wide enough view of the needs and preferences of all the representatives who sat in that council at Vatican II. The

Roman Curia was a major disadvantage to the progression of the council and the detail with which *Sacrosanctum Concilium* could have been written. The issue with the Curia was that they were an extremely conservative group of men who did not think to consider a more liberal viewpoint and explore new and experimental options of how the liturgy could be expressed in a less traditional but nevertheless a worthy manner. The reform of the liturgy was driven by a united ambition for it to happen but, as Bull states, "this meant reform under two broad headings: first, a revision of the structure of power inside the Church itself; second, a revision of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Modern world, and notably the other Christian Churches."[10] If the reform of the Liturgy was to succeed then the reform of the structure of the Church was also in need of a change. This change was not overtly visible and did not really have any long-lasting effects of the hierarchical structure of the Church. However, the shared desire for change created some temporary freedom for those present at Vatican II as Pope John XXIII was "serenely confident that left to its own devices it would bring about the renewal of the Church, though in the event he was ready to push it along himself."[11] 'It' being the Council meant that even though there was some guidance of the topics to discuss there was a newfound freedom for the clergy of the Church to change the face of Catholicism. However, with so many differing opinions, some very conservative and others very liberal there was, without a doubt, going to be a friction between members of the council, this is clearly documented through accounts from the lesser-known writings of George Bull, all the way to tome of famous accounts from Bugnini on 'The Reform of the Liturgy.' Featuring in Bugnini's writings is a breakdown of just exactly what underlies the development of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* with the use of his critical eye.

[10] Bull, *Vatican Politics at the Second Vatican Council 1962-5. 1.*
[11] Bull, *Vatican Politics at the Second Vatican Council 1962-5. 39.*

As the council developed so did other things not so much directly related to liturgy, but those which surrounded and impacted upon the faith and how we perceive the religion as a whole. Most importantly the liturgy of the Eucharist was to be changed into a more community-focused process. However, the lack of direction given in *Sacrosanctum Concilium* becomes problematic when in conjunction with this, since there is a grey area regarding the space in which it is appropriate for the Eucharist to be presided over especially within Vatican II overall but especially in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. Alongside all of these issues there is the problem that although the way in which the Mass was to be delivered, versus populum, there is still the matter of involving the congregation enough to reflect a community-focused development in a not only physical but linguistic way. If we look at the Mass - the key expression of faith for Catholics - as an example of a function within the church space, then it is important that we are conscious of how we use the area in relation to the ritual. The space and ritual must work harmoniously without opposing one another in order for a mutual fluidity of worship to be achieved. Richard Vosko makes it clear that whilst rituals are important we must be cautious in how they are executed as he says "the forms used for praising and honouring God can unify people, but they can also generate alienation, and division in the large church community."[12] In short, a community must learn to worship *together* as a unit rather than as a group of individuals with a mutual interest. Through learning to worship in this style the surroundings of the worshippers must also reflect the development of this community which has worked so hard to create united congregation in order to strive for a real, shared experience of the Mass and of course, the Eucharist, the aforementioned gathering around a table would be a well-suited reflection of the communities efforts.

[12] Richard Vosko. *Art and Architecture in Congregational Worship: The Search for Common Ground* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2019), 23.

This new unified focus of worship is something which the changes at Vatican II (*Sacrosanctum Concilium*, in particular) failed to account for. The year following the release of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, a new post-conciliar document came to light, *Inter Oecumenici*. *Inter Oecumenici* aimed to fill in the gaps which were left by the policies put in place in the initial Vatican II documents but in particular the gaps in liturgical structure and execution. The very need for this document to be released affirms that the preparation and pre-council work which had been done on *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was insufficient and by not allowing more people to have looked at these concerns initially this could have been avoided. *Inter Oecumenici* has a more personal approach to the community's liturgical needs as it states, "Special care should be taken that the place for the faithful will assure their proper participation in the sacred rites with both eyes and mind."[13] There is a hint of a movement towards a more communal and equal celebration here, however, we must be conscious of how it is suitable for people to participate in the Mass. This statement clearly suggests that there is no encouragement of physical involvement other than the standard, sit, kneel and stand when instructed to do so. For a statement such as this to have any effect on the way in which people participate in the Mass, it needs to encourage a physical involvement outside of what is already known, such as equal accessibility for all, in a physical, audible and visual way. It claims that we need to use "both eyes and mind" yet does not explore how that may be achieved and therefore leaves both the clergy and communities yet again lacking in instruction or even simply new basic ideas for change.

[13] Consilium, *Inter-Oecumenici*. V.IX (September 1964.) Accessed 11th June 2020 https://adoremus.org/1964/09/26/inter-oecumenici/

The non-committal way in which the liturgy and the church space which facilitates it was approached throughout both *Inter Oecumenici* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, creates a liturgical backlash in communities. This backlash comes from a sense of uncertainty of what should be the appropriate layout and accessibility measures for churches. People who are Catholic, at the very minimum are aware that the Pope mandates what is appropriate in many different ways. The strict directions which are given means that Catholics can become very dependent on what the Pope says and how he expresses the suitability of various ongoing issues within the church and the wider world, from birth control to how it is suitable to receive communion he has the final say. The lack of direction which is given when we look at the importance of space and internal dynamics of Catholic churches in relation to the liturgy confuses people. It seems to be suggesting that as there is so little rigorous direction on these liturgical practices that the liturgy and the people who sustain it are being overlooked and therefore perceived as not as important for the Church and its people even though it is central to the faith. The laity is subject to following close rulings from the Papacy when it comes to certain elements of the faith, yet when it comes to how they should practice their faith as a community there is nowhere near enough practical advice and guidance on creating a community which embodies the core values of the faith.

The struggle which Vatican II faced is reflected in the lack of organisation at the very beginning of the council if not before as Pope John "had no detailed chart for what the Council was intended to achieve, he was serenely confident that left to its own devices it would bring about the renewal of the Church, though in the event he was ready to push it along himself."[14] The risk of this is seen clearly within the council documents and reflected in the content of some of them. However, for a council which had very little guidance there

[14] Bull, *Vatican Politics*, 39.

was almost certainly a large amount of control in particular when it came to the power play seen between the liberals and conservatives, but especially the Roman Curia. There was a lack of concern over issues which would impact the laity and in how things were to be practically achieved in a physical manner, such as the way the new altar layout could look and more importantly function on a practical level.

The practicalities which would affect the laity were barely considered throughout the Vatican Council and especially within *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. There seems to be a political and power motivated reason for this as the Church is "monarchical in nature: under the Pope, the Bishops enjoy powers of jurisdiction received from him; the lay Catholic plays no part in the government of the visible Church."[15] Even though the laity forms the community nature which is key to the pinnacle practice of the Eucharist which, historically was a communal shared meal. The origins of the Eucharist must be reflected in how we practice Mass today for it to have near the same meaning and historical viability, otherwise we run the risk of it becoming a staged performative ritual rather than a continued celebration of the Eucharistic meal in its most traditional and accurate form - a communal meal.

One of the biggest downfalls of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* and its post-conciliar counterpart *Inter Oecumenici* was the lack of thinking spatially in terms of how a church would function when full, when empty and anywhere in between. This led to a lack of clear direction for those who were making the decisions on how to set out their church space, particularly as this responsibility was often given to the parish priest. Although educated to a high standard through seminary, there was a lack of practical guidance in these matters for the priests at this time as it was not thought of as an issue at the time of their training. Many older members of

[15] Bull, *Vatican Politics*, 12-13.

the clergy left the priesthood after Vatican II because they felt it had changed how they were able to deliver their services to their parishioners. However, like many aspects of Vatican II, I believe that there was a struggle with power for many of them. Pre-Vatican II, these clergymen were in total control of how every small action was carried out. If you ever attend a Latin Mass in the church of today, there is a stark contrast between how involved you feel simply because of factors such as the placement of furniture, but mainly the placement and involvement of people. The new vernacular form of the Mass is a communal effort, yet the older Latin form is supposed to be just as equal a reflection of the early Eucharist as previously discussed, a communal meal. The Latin Mass claims to be a 'traditional' approach to the Eucharist yet I believe it fails in this since 'traditional' would connote that it is as close to its origins as possible, the Latin Mass is possible the furthest example of a communal meal of its origins. The Priest is in sole control of the Latin Mass and beckons on his server when or even if needed because there is such a focus on just the presider the congregation and the community are forgotten. The Ad Orientem position (as seen in *figure 1)* which the priest sustains throughout the Roman Rite lacks any visibility of the Eucharistic process and therefore adds to what some may call the 'mystery' of the Eucharist. However, I would hasten to suggest that it adds to the misinterpretation and lack of understanding of the Eucharist as a pinnacle focus of the community and almost encourages fear of the Eucharist in the sense that creating such a 'mystery' may support the idea that we as humans are not worthy of the Eucharist when we in fact are. This idea is still supported in some of the practices of the modern Mass, but it is not nearly as shrouded in incense and mystery. As we can see below, these photos demonstrate a sort of before and after of churches throughout Vatican II. *Figure 2* shows the blessed sacrament chapel in St Barnabas Cathedral,

Nottingham, which is still used today for Latin Masses, and *figure 4* depicts how the main altar and sanctuary are today.



Figure 1 sourced from https://catholicherald.co.uk/cdf-issues-new-eucharistic-prefaces-optional-saint-feasts-for-extraordinary-form-of-roman-rite/

The development of this church and the liturgy can be seen in the main body of the church, yet surrounding the area where the Mass is currently held are smaller 'Ad Orientem' style altars which may act as a Memoriam to the Latin Mass. Although these are a part of the history of the Church, in my view they create a sense of yearning for the Latin Rite. If we are to move the Church forward and create surroundings which are suited for the community and the modern liturgy which may still yet progress and develop further, surely, we must consider the removal or at least repurposing of these spaces. These spaces are a permanent feature in many older church buildings, but they have a sense of overshadowing the present as a reminder of the past. In keeping these spaces preserved and roped off as is often seen in these types of churches it says to the community that they are not welcome in the whole space which they use for worship, but only those which are deemed suitable for them. Therefore, surely, we are better using these spaces to serve the community of today and create a space

which has no barriers in, where people are permitted in all areas and it gives a sense of community through the use of the entirety of the space for all.



Figure 2 The Blessed Sacrament Chapel St Barnabas Cathedral Nottingham

The vision of what is meant by a communal approach to the Eucharist has changed over the years from a full shared meal to a simple shared cup and loaf, and everything in between, until we reach what we know today - the communion wafer and wine. Is this a true reflection on the Eucharistic origins? The bread is portioned for equality, but this a questionable form of sharing. We would do well to look to our Greek Orthodox brothers and sisters who take it in turns to bake the Prosphora (see *figure 3)*, their form of communion bread and share the loaf as a whole rather than giving individual manufactured portions. If we look at the process of how the Catholic Eucharist is given to a congregation and how it is reflected in its surroundings it is clear that there is a focus on the individual rather than the community. The

layout of the many cruciform churches reflects this focus on individuality, especially when we think of seating within them. Each person is allotted a space to take up within a church, it may not be the same every time, but they take up a certain amount of space. The use of pews allows for this space to be shared with others, yet the use of chairs demonstrates an individuality and 'apartness' from others, this is seen noticeably on the sanctuary. However, the common approach of a mixture of pews and chairs in the congregation gives a mixed message of whether these people are a community which gathers to worship together or a group of individuals who gather for worship together yet apart in their own personal space bubbles as it were. Richard Vosko suggests that a solution to this may be light moveable benches as they "do not lock a community into a fixed seating pattern"[16] Such a seating pattern is what can be detrimental to introducing new members into the community and by being able to move said



Figure 3



Figure 4 The Main Altar and Sanctuary of St Barnabas.

[16] Vosko, *God's House is Our House*. 89.

benches yet still have the ability to create a sense of shared space we are able to achieve a more suitable equally shared space for the Eucharist to be celebrated by all in.

This idea of furniture influencing the liturgy extends to the priesthood too. The lack of control which the priests now had in the vernacular was seen through the changes to versus populum as they were no longer the central player in the event of the Mass. The moving of the priest to versus populum also meant that priests could now judge the attentiveness of their parishioners, without a doubt this allows for a more self-conscious performance of rituals meaning that there could likely be a reservation in how they are delivered. As previously mentioned, following the revisions made at Vatican II many men left the priesthood as it had changed considerably, it could be said that many older priests left as they were near retirement and learning a new Mass did not appeal to them, much like the translational change of 2011 saw a similar happening.

We must also be careful to consider how these changes were carried out by different people, parishes and priests. The direction given for altar movement was basic and led to the redesign of older churches by moving altars, tabernacles and baptistries to new locations, yet somehow the vast majority of churches decided to place the altar, Tabernacle and most of the time the baptistry at the front on display rather than taking the radical opportunity to place them in the midst of the people. The building of new churches also came about, in wake of what was considered to be a major change but those buildings which did not have the facility to be re-built underwent a re-design which led to the term ‘wreckovation’ being coined and used informally by many Catholics. The motivation behind this term was due to the concern that things were being pulled out or put in place without much thought behind why it was there and how it would function to serve the community.

As this new movement towards a more modern layout was in progress, many Catholics immediately quashed the idea of changing surroundings which had been so familiar for so many years and hence were very negative towards it. This push against a new way of setting out the Church was due to unfamiliarity and in many ways fear of the new unknown way of celebrating the Mass which many people had known their whole lives and had become a part of their identity. There is an ongoing debate, still, over the need of Latin versus vernacular Mass. In my view, the history of the Church must be appreciated, and the Latin Rite still practised and remembered, but we must be cautious to not create a Church which places this celebration above the vernacular, more communal Mass which know today. Some Catholics of today see the Latin Mass as a superior form and are easily drawn into the conservative nature of the Roman Rite and are keen to return to the Church of the past. Could this be a form of rebellion against the liberal views of today's world and even progressive views of the Church or should it always be seen as a genuine appreciation for the history and foundation of the Church?

One of the major issues which Catholics face today is defining whether the Eucharist as we know it is an activity which is practiced by the community or simply the object itself? In my view it needs to be a social and physical activity rather than simply an object so that congregations are able to relate to it on a more in-depth level and understand how and why it relates to the rest of the faith. Since the Eucharist was originally a communal meal if we were to demote the Eucharist to being simply another 'thing' within the faith then we are not only dismissing the roots of the Eucharistic celebration, but in some ways it de-humanises the aspect of Christ within it. However, we must also be cautious to remember that it is the celebrants responsibility to create an environment which supports the community's

involvement in participating in the Eucharist, but if it is to be truly communal the congregation must also have a role to play and feel involved and may be reflected by their surroundings.

Overall, the result of documents such as *Inter Oecumenici* and *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was that they simply created more confusion than they solved. The lack of precise instructions combined with the small-scale power given to priests led to a melee of issues which are still being resolved today. These documents are still being studied for a further understanding of what was exactly meant by their content as well as how it is best applied. One of the ways in which they may be studied I will be discussing next and this is why there is a need for equality to be reflected within the Church space and the implications of such a reflection as well as how it must be re-designed to do so.

Chapter Two:

Achieving equality through space and design

For many years' churches have created a clear division of those of supposed importance versus the congregation by both physical and non-physical means. The most obvious example within a church building context would be the usually elevated sanctuary *figure 5* is exceptional example of this a very high up sanctuary compared to the typical one or two steps. The Sanctuary is a space which appears to be reserved for only particular members of the Church who hold certain 'powers' and privileges. This obvious hierarchy is topped by men both at present and historically, yet women appear to have very little influence in acts of worship despite there being a clear desire within many women to do so. If you were to remove all women from a church building, Mass could still take place. If the Church is to continue negating the value and depth of commitment which many women bring to the faith, then the Church runs the risk of losing those who are more interested in a vocational path within the Church which is not simply as a religious sister especially as that is the only option for them. When we think of Church, most people would think of it as a space for everyone to be present without judgement or prejudice yet there is a major prejudice amongst many Catholic communities for women to take on leadership roles. The Church has, in reality, created a façade of equality which is projected through not only its lack of encouragement in participation for women but many other minority groups and classes.



Figure 5 The Sanctuary at St Gregory's Catholic Church, Preston sourced from https://www.stgregoryspreston.org.uk/

Growing up in the Catholic Church as a young girl there was very little scope for my value as a member of the Church to be seen. I asked to serve at Mass and was denied, I asked to read and was denied. Thankfully, as I have grown so has the church in certain aspects such as female's altar serving and reading at Mass. However, these slightly more progressive views are not reflected in the space in which we worship and nor do certain members of the clergy reflect upon it either as, at the end of the day, the personal decision will always come from the presiding priest. At Vatican II it was decided that priests would have more small-scale jurisdiction over how they were to interpret the instructions given, especially seen in the writing of *Sacrosanctum Concilium.*

The layout of most churches makes the divide between the veneration of women and the roles which they are told are acceptable in the Catholic Church of today even more visible. This is

reflected greatly in the decoration and even the layout of most churches. Usually, when one enters a Catholic church there will be, somewhere, a statue or depiction of the Virgin Mary if not more than one (see *figures 6* and *7* which both show her as a prominent figure). She is also depicted in artwork, engravings and spoken about during services alongside other women of note such as Mary Magdalene and Mary of Bethany and even in the more cryptic stories such as the woman at the well (John 4). Women play a key role in the development and history of Christ's story as well as the Church, but most importantly they also are shown to be the most loyal followers with the strongest faith, especially in a Biblical context. The artwork in many church buildings is at odds with the reality of the role and influence women in the Church today. The Church could be seen as contradicting itself and confusing its people by sustaining the belief that only males may celebrate the Mass mainly due to the idea of In Persona Christi – the celebrant must be male because Jesus was male. Ruether disputes that there is a need for this to be reserved strictly as a male role since:

> "It is evident to anyone with even an introductory-knowledge of Church history that the concept of priesthood of traditional Roman Catholicism is a historical construct that emerged gradually in the history of the Church. There is not a trace of such a concept of priestly ordination in the practice of Jesus himself. Jesus himself was not a *priest* in the meaning of that term in his own day. The title more properly used for him in the context of the religious organization of his own day was rabbi, not priest." [17]

The principle of In-Persona Christi is, in my opinion, at odds with the image of women as portrayed in the Bible and the gendered imagery which we use for God.

[17] Rosemary Radford Ruether "Women Priests in Christian Tradition," in *Women Priests: A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration.* Ed. Leonard Swindler and Arlene Swindler. (Paulist Press, 1977), 234-237. Accessed via http://www.womenpriests.org/classic/ruether1.asp



Figure 6 A side chapel at St Augustine Apostle of England. Nottinghamshire.



Figure 7 The engraving on the front of the altar depicts Mary at the last supper. St Augustine Apostle of England. Nottinghamshire.

Gender envelopes the case for female priesthood and many scholars are keen on the idea that God or Christ is neither male nor female because such an Omnipotent being does not need such an identity. Christ may have physically presented as male, however, the actions which he is believed to have performed and the characteristics which we associate with him are the same type of archetypal characteristics which women are encouraged to associate with. As well as considering the characteristics of Christ we must also think about what gender means in and for today's society. Gender and sex have become more prominently separate entities in modern day, with gender being considered a social construct and sex a scientific title bestowed at birth. Therefore, it would be considerate of the Church to be open to the idea of both female *and* male clergy in order to encourage people from wide varieties of backgrounds to become involved with the church whilst at the same time being able to sustain both the 'male' and 'female' aspects which we as humans propel onto God. We as humans take this approach in our relationship with God since that is all we know how to do to relate to Him in a familial way, especially through the common term of God as Father which is used very often. It could be said that people use this term for comfort and familiarity, not necessarily because it is a truthful claim but because it is a historical and taught behaviour. Even in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, it is stated that "We ought therefore to recall that God transcends the human distinction between the sexes. He is neither man nor woman: he is God."[18] Therefore if we are trying to argue that priests ought to be male because we are most familiar with a male presentation of God due to historical inequality and misogyny induced by a historical familiarity with male leaders, then the argument against the introduction of female priests into the clergy is weak considering the

[18] The Catechism of the Catholic Church https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P17.HTM (accessed 19th May 2020). 239.

advancement of gender equality in most of the world and especially some other Christian denominations of today. If we do in fact take the idea that Christ "is neither man nor woman"[19] then surely by this standard it would be most appropriate to offer the priestly roles to those who identify as gender non-binary, neither female nor male but on a fluid spectrum of gender.

Rosemary Radford Ruether also makes a further argument about the gender of God whereby she posits that "Christ's human nature appears as feminine (creaturely) but his dominant (divine) identity is masculine. Thus, the church's leadership is overwhelmingly masculine."[20] The historical norm of males being predominant leaders is not as common any longer and as our society has developed through the years so has the acceptance of women in leadership roles in many places, not just churches, this has put further pressure upon the Catholic Church to make changes to their outdated approach to the clergy which stems in a large part from the historical traditions of the Church. If the Catholic Church can to change their whole liturgy and still retain an appreciation for the history behind it, why an the same not be done within the priesthood. The Church of England in 1992 permitted the admittance of female clergy, had their first clergy member ordained in 1994, and in 2015 the first female bishop was announced. Conversely, the Catholic Church recognises that "the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women."[21] The argument over female priesthood has been a long debate, the main reason for this is the patriarchal hierarchy, which is deep-seated within the Catholic Church. Lennon affirms that "the Church cannot argue that

[19] The Catechism of the Catholic Church https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P17.HTM (accessed 19th May 2020). 239.
[20] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Mary – The Feminine Face of the Church* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 62.
[21] Pope Saint John Paul II "Ordinatio Sacerdotalis" (May 1994, accessed 13th May 2020) http://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_19940522_ordinatio-sacerdotalis.html

it is not patriarchal as long as it holds two positions: a) that women cannot be ordained, and b) that all authority in the Church must be exercised by the ordained."[22]

Women and the priesthood are closely related to how we may attempt to build a more inclusive church not just through leadership roles but in how we physically present the inclusion of women and other minorities through the use of space and design. Therefore, we must be careful to sustain a church space which either reflects the current inequality of the church in other words in most instances, keep it as it is, or we can create a new standard of surroundings which reflects diversity and equality more fairly. This is not just about women having an equal part to play in the Church, but the community, as well as the Church, also have a responsibility in aiding suppressed minorities such as ethnic groups and LGBTQ+ persons in ensuring that they are treated fairly and equally. Stopping the western whitewashing of depictions of Christ in churches as an example (see *figure 8* for just a small amount of world-wide representations of Christ), as well as focusing on equality in how we worship as a group not just as individuals which can be depicted in the internal dynamics and proxemics of a church space. Some churches may say one thing such as being "welcoming" to those of one of these minorities yet may have individuals who are not. In order to combat this, we must change the communal mindset by giving a physical joint focal point, in this case, the Eucharist. By placing the Eucharist physically at the centre of the community it makes the focus more obvious through the proxemics of the church building that the church is creating a sociopetal space in which everyone feels seen and heard and can see and hear others too. Alongside this, we must consider how the attributes of Christ would now be at the centre of the people reminding them to be caring, considerate and welcoming to all people, therefore encouraging equality amongst the congregation.

[22] Brian Lennon, "Towards an Inclusive Church," *The Furrow Vol.63 No.4 (2012):35-41.*



Figure 8 Sourced from https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/april/why-jesus-skin-color-matters.html

The suppression of minorities is a big problem in the modern church, especially in western communities. Western Catholics and Christians are surrounded by images of Christ, the disciples, Mary and many others depicted as white, slim, and overall presented as a western ideal of perfection. This is problematic since our society is a cosmopolitan environment and therefore how we envisage Christ and others of his time is by projecting our own societal ideals onto them and this creates confusion for our multi-cultural congregations of today. By creating an environment which is filled with purely western art and music we deny equal access to the faith for those who worship in a different manner or cultural way. We must, therefore, create a church environment filled with artwork, which presents the historically accurate ethnicity of Christ and his followers, the importance of the role of women in His life and most importantly curate a space which is physically inclusive of everyone from varied cultures. This can be achieved by demonstrating respect and appreciation of different cultures

and minorities without inappropriately appropriating any other cultures. The surroundings of worshippers are an aid in fulfilling a total focus upon the worship itself especially the Eucharist. Henceforth, it is important that these surrounding reflect the origins of the faith, as previously mentioned a gathering around a table would be best, but artwork and decorations can enhance the experience and understanding of the faith further whilst simultaneously creating a congregation with a closer relationship with each other and God.

One of the ways in which we need to change the church building for a better physical and visual effort of inclusion is through the seating. When we enter a traditional church building there are often many places for anyone to sit wherever they like, usually in horizontal pews. Traditional, heavy wooden pews can be problematic when used in the wrong way *figure 9* demonstrates pews which are set in concrete and completely non-moveable as an extreme example. They are difficult to move if you wish to adapt the space, but they also can give a feeling of inequality as someone can take up as much space as they want. Comparatively the use of chairs gives a clear and defined equality of the space that each person is given the same amount of space within the church building. However, there are a few select seats on the sanctuary reserved for specific people, most often, men. For example, the Bishop's throne or the priest's chair. There may be other chairs reserved for the choir or altar servers, but these are moveable and often not permanently for the same person. When we think about seating for women and especially those with families, many of whom may have young children it has become the norm that they sit at the back or to the side so that they do not disturb others. Whilst it is a considerate thing to do, families are constantly made to feel they are inferior because of this, by creating an equal space such as the one seen below in *figure 10* which was also suggested in my undergraduate dissertation, we can begin to attempt an inclusion of everybody from any background.



Figure 9 The Church of the Good Shepherd Nottinghamshire.

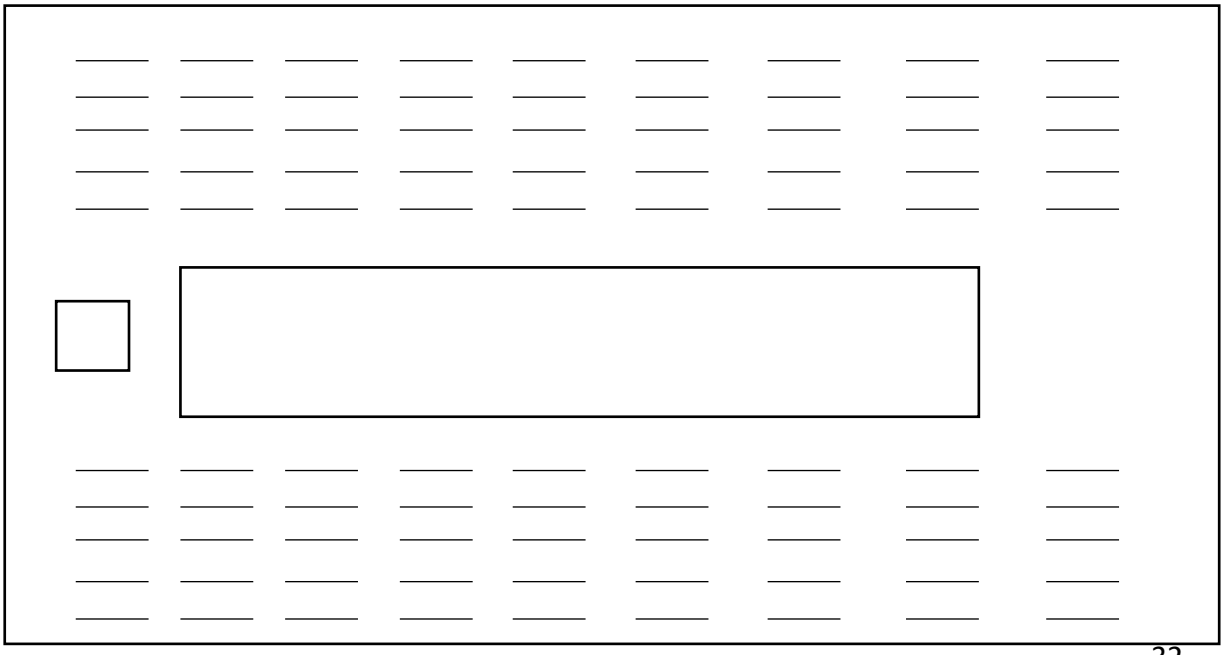


Figure 10

The basic idea behind this layout is that everyone can gather around the table at the Eucharist and have an equal shared experience. Through this kind of arrangement, we reach a closer understanding of the early Eucharist which was held as a communal meal rather than the grand type of ceremony with which we are acquainted today. The seating and the gathering around the table also implies an equality of all and does not give an impression that one is more important than another. Although this layout is good it is not the best option, therefore later in this thesis having considered the needs of congregations and the history of the Eucharistic meal and how it has developed through Vatican II and beyond, I shall propose an updated suggestion from further and more developed research which has taken place throughout the writing of this thesis.

In a Catholic Mass, it is the norm to see a procession of the priest(s) and servers up to the altar and often they are mostly male with possibly a couple of female altar servers. In this moment of the Mass, the focus is taken away from the congregation as a community and gives the impression of inequality between the presiding priest and his helpers. The congregation who are all there to worship in a community capacity may therefore find it difficult to focus and participate fully in the Mass since they are unable to take their focus away from the perceived hierarchy which is visually presented to them throughout the entire Mass, even if subconsciously. The design of the sanctuary, most often, being a raised platform could be considered to be acting as an invisible iconostasis (See *figure 11* for an iconostasis example), an idea which I also presented at the undergraduate level which I will now develop further. This visible separation through a non-tangible means acts as a distraction from encouraging full community participation in the Eucharist. It is key to note

that when I use the term invisible, I am referencing the sanctuary being separate from the rest of the church, despite it being made more obvious through, most often, the use of steps or a raised platform. However, many members of congregations have become so acclimatised to this common blueprint of churches that the divide is no longer given much thought yet still impacts how they worship as they are aware that they as laity are usually not permitted upon the sanctuary. Vosko comments that "these church plans suggest that whatever is of a Holy, God-given, grace-filled nature, is guarded and delivered to the assembly by privileged members of the congregation."[23] The idea of a privileged few delivering the message of Christ fully only being possible by a certain elite class does not reflect the qualities which Christ was known for and furthermore does not encourage a united community.



Figure 11 The Iconostasis of the Ascension Church, Rugby, Warwickshire. Behind these panels the Priest will celebrate the Eucharist. The area behind is supposed to represent heaven and the main church area, earth.

[23] Richard S. Vosko. "Standing on Holy Ground: Encountering Revelation in Sacred Space" 44.

It is important as a part of our understanding that we see people who reflect ourselves in positions of responsibility to be able to understand whatever is being taught more effectively. Think back to that image of the procession, it is a sobering thought that if we were to take women out of the Church entirely, then all religious ceremonies could still go ahead without any need for a woman to even be present. It wasn't until recently that women were even allowed onto the sanctuary let alone to read or take on greater community leadership roles. This suggests that there is room for movement towards inclusion of a broader range of people to be a part of the priesthood and I am sure that many people look forward to and hope for this further advancement in the future.

The visual and physical divisions between a priest and the congregation are a barrier to creating a community which worships with the same intent and united focus upon the Eucharist. If we are to encourage people to keep a focus upon the Eucharist, then we must encourage them to take a deeper interest in it. One way of achieving this is by increasing the level of physical involvement in the Mass and no, I don't mean more kneeling and standing. The greatest way in which we can do this is through each person having some role to play in Holy Communion. Encouraging a gathering around a shared table much like the original known form of the Eucharist, this enhances equality by ensuring that everyone is given the chance to participate physically even if they do not receive the sacrament. The surroundings of worshippers play a key role in how their knowledge of faith will develop Vosko furthers this argument as he says that:

> "A church building that expects all worshippers to be as close as possible to the pulpit and table, as well as other ritual centers, makes it easier for the members of the assembly to participate and come to realize that what is being experienced is an engagement with the very God they are worshipping. It is a God who is not distant but in the midst of the congregation"[24]

[24] Richard S. Vosko. "Standing on Holy Ground: Encountering Revelation in Sacred Space" 45.

By creating physical surroundings which are unique and interesting whilst incorporating an aspect of gathering around a table, it would be the hope that people may ask more questions about certain pieces of artwork or architectural design since they may be from a different culture or area of the world as well as be encouraged to feel closer to the faith and therefore people may begin to learn about the faith in a different and more accessible manner whilst still encouraging an involvement, inclusion and representation of minority groups.

We must be careful to remember that most congregations may be sensitive and not comfortable with their surroundings being changed since it forms a part of their identity and therefore a key part of themselves. The renewal of how a church space may be laid out is not an over-night fix, but rather it will take time and patience to create a new type of space which is more suited to the community focus of the Eucharist as well as encouraging those who are so accustomed to the current design to embrace the changes. Church space is unique in that it also forms a historical part of past generations and their cultural ideals. Margaret Daly Denton states that "we are the custodians of historical buildings that inevitably reflect the liturgical understanding that prevailed when they were designed."[25] Thus, we must acknowledge that church design and layout must be re-thought not only as the liturgy progresses but as moral and social values change. By keeping the surroundings of the church, the same as they always have been, we remain stuck in the values and mindset of the past and it reduces the ability for the church to be a more progressive community.

Following this idea, we may reflect on how if we were to change the common layout of the altar and the sanctuary into being on a single plane, then we would be able to encourage participation more actively but also reflect the true equality and unity which is found through

[25] Margaret Daly Denton "There's Always Room at the Table" *Worship* Vol.92 (2018): 292-297.

the worship of the Eucharist. However, true communal worship may only be achieved if all members of the congregation feel that they are equally valued and understood. This will never be the case unless the Church makes a move to encourage a greater level of shared celebration through physical and verbal means as wells as keeping up to date with modern social issues which worshippers face today. Instead of looking to the past to accommodate for this the Church must learn to use the challenges of the modern world as an opportunity to grow and understand congregations. Behind the façade of historical reasoning which the Church use, there is a central reason why this kind of reform of the faith and the architectural layout has not been carried out and that is due to a shared fear on both the part of the leaders and the community. It would be fair to say that the Church is afraid of changing how they bestow the role of the priesthood upon people especially when Papal infallibility comes into the picture. Papal infallibility can be valuable in settling arguments over certain topics; however, it also creates a narrow spectrum of what the Church is able to achieve and how it might develop. Papal infallibility may well be, in the long term, to the detriment of the church since there may come a time when there is no longer the possibility of not contradicting a previous Papal decree due to religious, worldly, or other events, this means that there may even come a point where the Church itself reaches an impasse due to its own rulings. This historical teaching of the Church makes it difficult to implement any changes which people may desire even if there is a communal want for a particular change.

Daly Denton weighs in on this argument surrounding the idea of a renewal of architecture and liturgy as she remarks by commenting about experiences in renewed church spaces compared to “conventional parish churches, crammed with timber and resolutely divided into chancel/sanctuary. Choir and nave, it really has been a case of ‘how ya gonna keep ‘em down

on the farm after they've seen the paree.'"[26] The idea behind renewing the layout and design of churches to give everyone an equal share in the participation of the Eucharist will give more independence of faith to worshippers but it would also allow for a new kind of equality to be achieved. If women are not going to be allowed into the priesthood, then the next smaller but still meaningful and very important step to take would be to increase everyone's involvement at the Eucharist by gathering as a unified group of people around a shared table in order to emulate the community occasion of the Eucharist which would expand and understanding of it as a meal and a shared celebration of the life and sacrifice of Christ.

Overall the argument for the institution of female priests in relation to the architecture and internal dynamics of churches is one which needs reflecting upon by the Church itself. If the Church is going to continue to present images of women in important historical roles which are central to Church history and the life of Christ, yet create physical barriers to roles of a similar level of importance in modern society, then the Church needs to ensure that they are doing everything in their power to break down these physical and societal barriers. Even if women will still not be permitted into the priesthood, the act of reducing these visual restraints might be enough to encourage women into other supporting roles as well as have it be seen that an effort is being made to include women more purposefully in the life and faith of the Church.

[26] Daly Denton "There's Always Room at the Table," 294.

Chapter Three:

The COVID-19 pandemic: Heightening the importance of physical presence and surroundings

I felt very strongly that I could not write this thesis without acknowledging the great changes which are happening within the Church right now and what this means for the future of worship in terms of Church, worship space and the liturgy of the Eucharist. The current climate which the Catholic Church is functioning in is completely unchartered territory. COVID-19 has had an extreme effect on the way in which people are worshipping, or even, not worshipping. The environment in which people are worshipping has changed dramatically from a shared space of the church to most often individual, or family houses, living rooms, bedrooms and everything in between. This has meant that there has been a major change in the type of environment in which people are experiencing their faith and especially the Eucharist. Therefore, I felt that it was important to discuss how pinnacle it is that a church acts as a space which facilitates not only worship but a physical communal experience and a connection with the Eucharist which cannot be replicated through other non-physical means.

The Catholic Church has always been a physical entity relying on the Eucharist and physical presence as an essential part of its core values. The ability to worship as a group fully present in mind, body and spirit has been taken away and the reaction which many churches and other faith institutions had, has been through making use of modern technology and delivering services online, yet some have already been doing this for years, so why is the Catholic Church so far behind? The Catholic Church faces a particular challenge as the Eucharist is the core foundation of the faith which creates a physical and spiritual connection

between all people who receive it. Compared to some other denominations of Christianity, Catholicism faces a particular set-back as receiving the Eucharist is the pinnacle of the Mass and the Catholic form of worship. The coming together of a group of people has long been a tradition within the Catholic Church and therefore it is one that is hard to break, especially as the Church has never had to adapt in this modern way since the demand has never really been there, the Mass is known as a physical event and for many Catholics it is not the same when delivered through an electronic format. Attempts have been made on the part of churches to make these services feel less alien, such as photos being placed in seats for the congregation, but also for the comfort and familiarity of the celebrants as seen in *figure 12.*

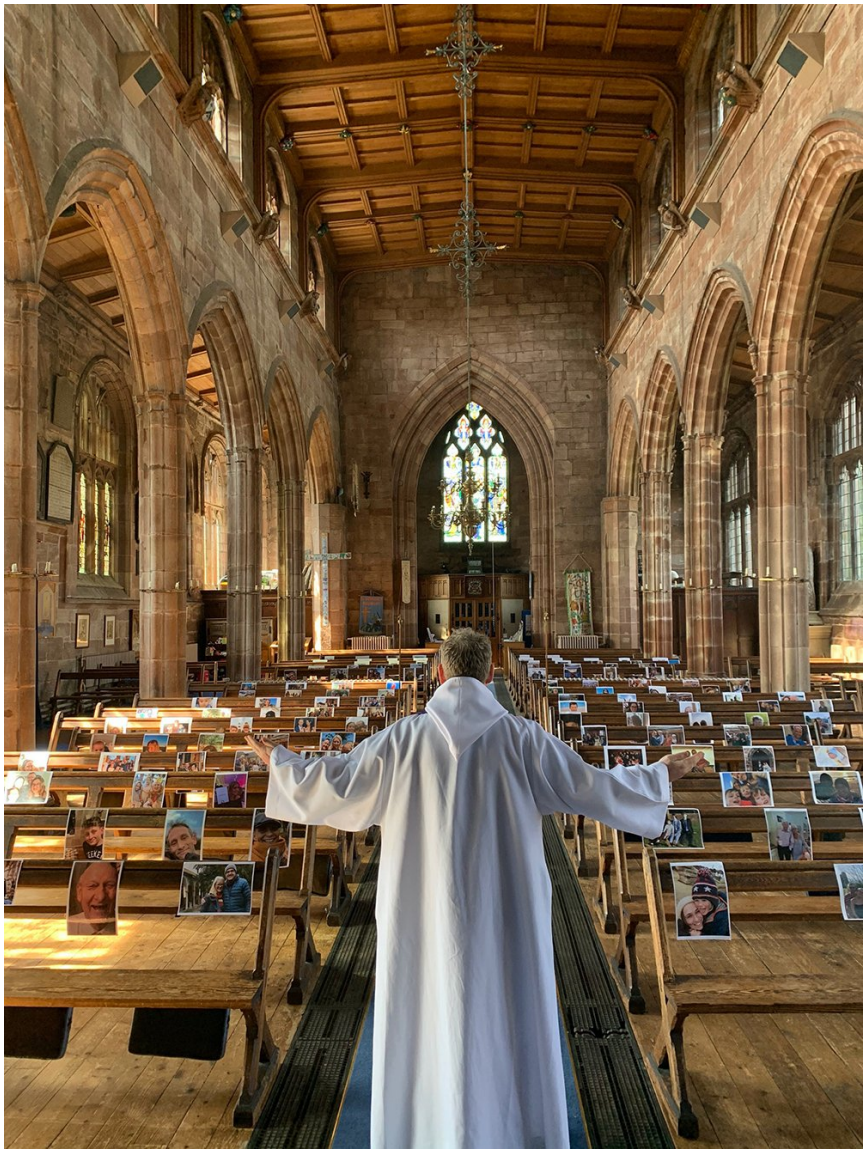


Figure 12 Prayers for our community' by Tim Hayward sourced from the BBC https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/in-pictures-54122082



Figure 13 Could this be the 'new normal' of Mass? Especially those who must shield. The empty pews look out of place and the video camera the only audience.

Comparatively other churches such as those which regularly stream online or even have television channels may make use of music or member testimonies as their core focus and therefore it is not something which requires as much of a physical presence and shared experience. Pope Paul VI asserted that congregations which celebrate the Eucharist together are important because:

> "Taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of the whole Christian life, they offer the Divine Victim to God, and offer themselves along with It. Thus, both by reason of the offering and through Holy Communion all take part in this liturgical service, not indeed, all in the same way but each in that way which is proper to himself. Strengthened in Holy Communion by the Body of Christ, they then manifest in a concrete way that unity of the people of God which is suitably signified and wondrously brought about by this most august sacrament."[27]

[27] Pope Paul VI, *Lumen Gentium,* 11 (21st November 1964) accessed 23rd June 2020. https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19641121_lumen-gentium_en.html

The new approach of having ‘church’ online must be dissected so that we may assess whether this is a suitable solution or not. Sunday Mass is a ritual, some people have been attending every Sunday for as long as they can remember, others may visit sporadically, and some may have only been once or twice. When Mass is experienced in a church space there is a pressure and expectation of returning week on week, yet when it is carried out online there is equal accessibility for all, even for those who may never have been to a Mass before especially if they are anxious about new experiences and uncertain of what the Mass entails.

Delivering services online is an effective way of teaching the Mass, however, the best way to learn the process of the Mass is in a community of people, physically present all with a unified intention and mindset, much like when you learn a team sport, you need someone to teach you as you can only learn so much from the theory of it but the practicalities of working together may only be achieved through practice. As previously stated, we must be cautious of making the Mass and especially the Eucharist an object rather than an experience. By taking the Eucharist online we run the risk of blurring the line between the physical community experience of it, with an object which we see on a screen, these two experiences of the Eucharist are miles apart and therefore would we not be better keeping the Eucharist as a physical experience only and using alternatives such as the liturgy of the word for when virtual services may be the only way to access a church. The Eucharist has always been defined by its communal status, gathering, worshipping and sharing a ‘meal.’ If this ‘meal’ cannot be shared, then what separates Mass delivered online from the liturgy of the word. The support of a community is key for a successful celebration of the Mass and how the Eucharist is understood. Giving people access to the Mass in their own homes has been available in some parishes prior to the coronavirus pandemic, but people still chose to come and gather instead. This decision signals that a core instinct in the Catholic faith is seeking

contact and affinity with others even though it may take more effort than watching it from the sofa of your living room. The space in which the Mass is held must therefore be reflective of the community which it holds. The Mass has long been defined as a community activity and when we remove the physical interaction and community effort for the Mass to be celebrated, we must question whether this is still Mass. An individual in their own home is unable to participate fully and communally in the Mass, compared to a congregation who are present and together. Although the Mass online encourages people to spectate the ritual, they cannot fully take part in it.

However, there is another side to how we see the Mass - the promise of redemption. For many years the Catholic Church has insisted that the Eucharist is the core of redemption and that through receiving it we are redeemed. There is a shared thought amongst many Catholics whether they are consciously or subconsciously thinking it, that by attending Mass they are rewarded in some way, it is possible to say that we have become so accustomed to the presence of the Eucharist that when it is not available there is a sense of entitlement and loss of what is seen as belonging to the community.

One must not forget the consideration of space and mindset when we think of how the Eucharist is being displayed. As stated previously there is a major difference between physically attending the Mass in a church, compared to being at home. When one is in a church there is a mindset put in place by the rituals which come hand in hand with entering the property. The cross with Holy Water, genuflecting towards the Tabernacle and finding a personal worship space all signal to a person that they are preparing to attend a ritual. Removing these small rituals of preparation also remove a mindset for worship, and we must question whether these actions are appropriate to be carried out in a non-church space. This

links into a more large-scale issue of physical engagement within the Church. Congregations learn to rely on the use of all their senses (if they are fortunate enough to) and when the ability to use these senses is removed then surely there must be a decline in involvement and engagement with the Mass. By becoming so acclimatised to this there comes the question of whether we are desensitised to the core of the Mass as a raw entity, have we become so reliant upon what we can get from the Mass that we forget what we can give to the community and how we can best use the space around us to reflect how the community is formed to support and engage with one another.

The Mass for many people is a regular weekly occurrence that they are accustomed to the rituals, sayings and actions which come with it. Since people know exactly what to expect and how to perform, we must question whether people are getting lazy with how they worship? Do they need new experiences? Or, is there a simple answer to this - there needs to be a new layout and approach to how people are seen as valued individuals in a community with the Eucharist at its centre. The COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed as a very great missed opportunity for the Church to develop a new way of worship. The new normal of social distancing is difficult to navigate when there is such a historically Ingrained intuition for people to physically interact in church, from the sign of peace to sharing a cup. Overcoming these challenges may be strange and will without a doubt change the face of the church. The psychological effect of worship space is lost when there is a smaller community to fill it, will there be more regular Masses to accommodate people with social distancing in mind or will there be no adaptation made to these services and people left out from the ability to attend Mass.

When we think of how the church may be arranged post-pandemic it must be done in a positive and more importantly creative way in order to engage and retain worshippers. A concentric layout may be more appropriate for smaller congregations as it allows a sense of equality and togetherness. It would also allow for social distancing and make a lack of the Eucharist being shared less noticeable, yet it would still demonstrate physically that the community are present and together with a clear unity towards the Eucharistic celebration. This would encourage people to approach the Mass as a community rather than having an awkward layout of chairs being removed from between people and creating a difference of how people would worship as individuals operating in their own small worship space compared to a community in a space defined by all of them. By taking this pandemic as a positive influence churches can rearrange themselves and experiment without having to justify their changes to the community and persuade people to move for change. This allows for people to attend a service without fear and encourages people to accept a new form of how the Mass may be delivered and celebrated moving forwards.

Catholics have a learned behaviour of the Eucharist and how it should typically be delivered within a cruciform layout. Newer concentric sociopetal layouts, however, allow for the Eucharist to be equally observed by all and encourage involvement with the Eucharist as an activity, but do not come without hesitation from communities, as what they have known (for some throughout their whole life) is being changed. There is naturally some resistance to changing these learned behaviours but one of the biggest anxieties which worshippers seem to have is a visual need to see the Eucharist and the Priest in an odd equal capacity. This not only decreases the importance of the Eucharist as a central focal point but glorifies the priest into a position equivalent to the Eucharist which means we must question what congregations are really there to see. Are they there to take part in the Eucharist as an activity or are they

there for a performative ritual which they receive comfort from? Vosko makes a very clear statement about the adaptability of the Eucharist and presider as he claims that "While it may be important for some to observe the Eucharist elements at this time, seeing the face of the priest is no more important than seeing the faces of everyone else in the assembly." [28] The presence and involvement of the community is what makes the Eucharist so impressive and effective for worshippers, the spiritual connection which people gain with one another through a shared physical experience cannot be replicated through any electronic or online means.

Vosko continues to play on this idea in a more theological manner rather than the practical aspect as he asserts that "If we believe that the liturgy is the action and responsibility of every person in the assembly, the questions shift"[29] do we need to actually see the presider, Eucharist and all the people around us for the Eucharistic experience to be valid? If not, then there appears to be not much difference between attending a service online compared to sitting at the very back of the church with a reduced audio-visual experience. Moreover, we must also think about the choices which are made by the congregation, some people may feel more comfortable out of sight of other people due to anxiety or want of privacy even. Therefore, it is important to consider how adaptations can be made to suit those with other needs, such as disabilities, anxiety or even just larger families who need more space. The choice is personal and should be able to be made by individuals in order to make them feel comfortable in their community worship space which is key to making people feel welcome. However, we must question whether this feeling of needing to be 'out of the way' is a symptom of the current cruciform layout because there is the choice to be further away from

[28] Vosko, *God's House is Our House*. 63.
[29] Vosko, *God's House is Our House*. 92.

the altar and the areas of the church which are deemed more 'important' than others. If these areas were made more accessible and placed amongst the congregation rather than in a place which feels out of reach and intimidating, could these attitudes change? The cruciform layout is a historic norm and creating a new standardised layout which encourages a participation in the Eucharist may be an extremely difficult task. Therefore, it is only with the support and engagement of the community that this renewed space and approach to Mass and Eucharist may be achieved.

The spiritual connection which people feel to the Eucharist is partially created through physical atmospheric means in a shared and sacred space. The space in which this experience takes place must be able to accommodate for the personal and communal experiences which the congregation encounters. This means that a worship space must be a reflection of its community in some way whether that be through art from local artists or even having the readings delivered by a wide range of people rather than sticking to a rigid rota. Richard Giles suggests a possibility for "art to be seasonal and temporary rather than a permanent fixture from which there is no turning back, and no escape"[30] This is a very sensible suggestion since the liturgy changes with the seasons of the Church throughout the year why not have this reflected in the surroundings. In doing this, congregations would be able to learn more about the faith through the Mass but also be supported by a visual understanding in order to improve upon a congregation's understanding of the liturgical year and where the Eucharist fits within it.

[30] Richard Giles, *Creating Uncommon Worship: transforming the liturgy of the Eucharist.* (Norwich, Canterbury Press, 2004), 81.

The rigidity of artwork in most churches means that more often than not, the same artwork, statues and crucifixes have been in place for a long time without any change. By changing these artworks and therefore the surroundings of the congregation on a semi-regular basis, it would encourage people to notice, since when you visit a space regularly and you know it intimately you will notice these adjustments however small or large. This would hopefully be an effective tactic to retain an interest in the church and encourage an understanding of why certain artworks or statues are being placed within the space at certain times of the year and therefore encourage a more intimate understanding of not only their surroundings but also the liturgical year. This increased awareness is only made possible through these sacred surroundings, which is why having Mass online so that people can attend in their own homes will never be able to replicate the numinous feeling which many people claim to feel within a church. One can endeavour to recreate certain parts of the experience of church in homes such as small-scale statues, crucifixes, artwork or even incense but these will always be chosen by the individual and therefore have a bias. Whereas by changing artwork within a church building, individuals may encounter ornamentation which they would never choose themselves and therefore be subjected to a new experience within a place which is usually known to be traditionally quite stagnant in its approach. This attempt of re-creating church at home also tells us a lot about what people value within the faith. The use of statues, crucifixes, artwork, incense, and even music informs us that people are trying not only to create a similar surrounding but a full physical experience which stimulates all of the senses alongside the spiritual and religious feelings which they may be accustomed to. This is why the act of going to Mass and being within a church building is so important to so many people – it cannot be replicated on an individual basis and relies upon a shared feeling and emotive experience.

Another consideration which we must take into account when we talk of the COVID-19 pandemic is the heightened sense of gender segregation within the church which it has revealed further. No more so is this noticeable than in convents, under normal circumstances a community of sisters would normally have a priest who visits and says the Mass daily. This is something which for a religious sister would be an essential part of their routine and religious practice, after all the Mass and specifically the Eucharist it is what their life revolves around and is centred upon. Referring to my previous chapter on equality through space and the design of churches, in short, without women in female leadership roles within the church, we run the risk of creating a part extinction of some religious communities if the communities are no longer able to access the Eucharist, which is the focus of their life and religious commitment. The COVID-19 pandemic is unprecedented, yet we do not know the length for which this crisis will continue for and the longer that those religious communities are deprived of the Eucharist, the longer they feel excluded from the practices and community of the Church.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, various churches and religions have reacted in differing ways. However, even though the Catholic Church has followed some of the most popular responses such as making church services, Bible studies, Lectio Divina, and even funerals online, it is no match for the physical shared experience. This shared experience is only enhanced by the way in which a church sets itself out. Moving forward this pandemic has given us a brilliant opportunity to re-think how to structure churches to an optimum layout to create a communal feel even if people have to be socially distanced with a ritual such as the Mass which socially and physically unites a community.

Chapter Four

Progressive design and encouraging a feeling of movement: How Liverpool Cathedral pushes the boundaries of Catholic architecture.

Movement and involvement in the liturgy especially during the Eucharist are very often frowned upon by Catholics. The only time one might be permitted to leave their space during the Mass is if you are a minister of any kind or when you join the queue to receive the Eucharist. This contributes further to the idea that the privileged members of the congregation are the ones allowed to interact on a more intricate and intimate level with the Eucharist as compared to those who may not be able to receive communion or are unable to freely move due to restrictions such as accessibility or for example, they have young children so find it difficult to do so. It might not be practical on many levels for the standard cruciform layout which we see in many churches of today, but with a renewed space we may be able to encourage people to become involved by using movement more freely in particular at the Eucharist.

By bringing the community to the Eucharist rather than bringing the Eucharist to the community, there comes a more instantaneous connection with what the Eucharist means to the individual and the community. By placing the altar table in the centre of the community it makes a statement of intent to worship and live as a unified community who share a focus on Christ and what the Eucharistic sacrifice means for the faith. Richard Giles makes quite the statement when he suggests that:

"other restrictions might have to be lived with, but the single most potent symbol of liturgical renewal is the deregulation of the altar table. No longer the centrepiece of the holy of holies, hedged about with steps and fences, no longer the sole possession of the priestly caste, the altar table once again belongs to the holy community, and it must be seen to do so."[31]

[31] Richard Giles, *Creating Uncommon Worship: transforming the liturgy of the Eucharist.* 59.

It is through this reclaiming of what the altar table traditionally means for the people gathered around it that the Church can once again renew an understanding of the Eucharist in a new light. Through gathering and using the space around the table to an advantage of the community for purposes such as baptisms, weddings and funerals as well as its central Eucharistic focus. By placing the table in the centre of the space a bi product of this is that the 'blank space' around it now functions effectively for Baptisms especially since the whole community may be present and involved in this important moment. Traditionally the baptismal font is kept to the side of the sanctuary and historically it was by the entrance to the church. Having a moveable font may be desirable in such a space whereby we have the altar in the midst of the community as the font can be moved and have the same focus from the community gathered around it. This would not only serve to improve the overall experience of a baptism, but the people gathered around the baptismal candidate would be reflecting the physical and spiritual welcome into the Church reflected in the community encircling them.

This encircling and sense of safety which this creates is something that should be considered when building or re-designing church spaces. The use of concentric circles makes for a space which feels softer and calmer than the gothic architecture and designs which many of us may be accustomed to within traditional churches. This sort of design can be seen in some modern churches, notably for Catholics, at Liverpool Cathedral. As Catholics, we can learn many different things from the layout and style of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral, from its shape to its simplicity, this church has much to offer. However, it is also a building which gives an abundance of mixed messages to the congregation and visitors alike. Many people venerate Liverpool Cathedral for its 'modern' architectural style, yet, in doing so they cannot see the liturgical minefield which this building has created. It is not so much a worship space

as it is a tourist attraction-come-museum of Catholicism. Within the space, there are charges to enter the crypt and contactless donation points on walls. Surrounding it, a gift shop and café, making it feel more like a 'National Trust' family day out than a clear and defined place of worship. The juxtaposition of modern surroundings with the age of the Catholic faith will always feel odd due to Catholics being acclimatized to historic architecture which matches the faith and traditions. These modern quirks such as the contactless donation points, are convenient and adapt to the culture of today's fast paced society, but they also give the impression that the space is not primarily for worship, but an architectural showpiece. Despite this, the modern design of Liverpool Cathedral acts as an important landmark in suggesting how churches might look in the future.

The circular shaped Cathedral has many offshoots of small rooms which contain religious statues and icons, this makes these items feel like art installations at a gallery rather than a purposeful and thoughtful fixture in the space which serves a purpose for the community. The small rooms which spring off to the sides all the way around are used for varying purposes, some simply for storing historical artefacts and others facilitate things like children's liturgy with colouring in sheets and religious picture books at the ready! These small caverns around the space make for a brilliant way in which to facilitate all of these objects as well as smaller liturgies without cluttering up the main space of worship which in turn allows for a more fluid movement around the building also reflected in its circular design which gives it a natural sense of everything feeling connected and flowing into each other. In many other Catholic Churches, the 'sanctuary area' is commonly overrun with what we can perceive as clutter: flowers, candles, and crucifixes to name but a few. Therefore, Liverpool Cathedral must be praised for having these purposeful 'viewing spaces' which makes for a great

solution to this issue and reduces distraction during the liturgy of the Eucharist restoring the focus to it.

In one of these offshoots, however, stands the baptismal font which could be considered to be quite problematic. The font is located in a historically traditional space - at the back of the church, this is not the issue. The issue lies within *how* this font is presented; behind prison-like bars as seen in *Figure 14*. The baptismal font is a physical and spiritual point of entry into the Catholic Church, so why put a barrier between this and anyone who may be awed and inspired by it? The space in which the font is situated is large but not large enough for an entire community to witness to the initiation of a new member and therefore would be a good example of where the trend of using a portable font may come in use. If using a portable font, then it is still important that it has some sense of permanent presence within the community since it must be in an area of its own right and not simply "a mere object among many."[32] This is why it is important that we maintain a balance between having a separate space for the baptismal font but at the same time ensuring that there is space for the congregation. Giles further proports that "increased visibility for a congregation too lazy to move around is no excuse. Such provision assumes fixed seating and an assembly that is static, spatially if not theologically"[33] Liverpool Cathedral is a fine example of a church which has the space to do so and despite the flaws of it being too separate from the main body of the church building, it still reflects the intention of baptism and of the community.

[32] Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent: The Definitive Guide to re-ordering church buildings for worship and mission.* (Norwich: Canterbury Press: 2004), 168.
[33] Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent. 168.*



Figure 14 The Baptismal font at Liverpool Cathedral locked behind bars.

This intention is also reflected in the architecture, as this baptistry is the only circular room off of the main circular body of the church. The imitation of the main area of the Cathedral in this smaller space demonstrates the importance of communal involvement in the varying liturgies of the Catholic Church alongside the total and complete cleansing of sins at baptism. However, surely it would be to the benefit of all involved if the entire congregation were able to see and surround those being baptized, as previously mentioned this would more truly reflect the reasoning behind the rounded soft architecture and create a more welcoming atmosphere for those baptismal candidates.

There is a major confusion in allowing the font to be locked behind bars since baptism is a marker and spiritual event which stands between the Church and the world. The bars which

have been placed between the church and the Baptismal font create a very physical gap between baptism and the Church. This is not something which we should see being replicated in our parish churches, smaller churches for one, may not have the space to allow for a completely separate space and secondly, we must allow for an intrigue amongst congregations by using the architecture and space of churches to our advantage. An open space where all feel involved and valued in every aspect of the faith creates an open mind and encourages inquisitiveness by the church being open in all that it does, physically and spiritually in the faith including how people are welcomed into the Church and the community.

The Cathedral's circular shape as seen in *figure 15* encourages community involvement, notably in the liturgy of the Eucharist. However, it seems to overlook the notion of all of us acting equally *in persona Christi* because some of the congregation are seated almost directly behind the altar. This is problematic for the women amongst the congregation due to the beliefs on female priesthood in the Catholic Church. However, is this as big an issue as some may see it to be? The answer lies in the core aspect of community within a Church. As previously discussed, women are a major part of many church communities and they cannot simply be removed from them to make decisions easier. A lot of churches happen to have the choir stalls upon the sanctuary area and yet, having women within them is acceptable. However, having women behind the altar in a worship capacity is seen as abhorrent. Drawing the line of what constitutes this worship capacity and what is simply a contribution towards the congregation's worship experience is a hard task. Females cannot be removed from partaking in community activities due to the structure of the church building as it would lead to the collapse of many precious communities as well as create further confusion about the notion of *in persona Christi.* This is precisely one of the reasons why a reform of church

spaces to reflect the needs of each specific community would not only improve upon the collective and individual experience but also enhance understanding of the liturgy and especially of the Eucharist. We must also remember the origins of the Eucharist when looking at this issue though. As I have already ascertained, the historic Eucharist as a community meal often took place gathered around a table, it is not the church space which we must see as problematic in this instance but rather the rulings which have developed throughout Church history to make it so. Therefore, we must be able to use history to our advantage, to learn from it and grow an understanding of *how* to gather effectively for the Eucharist, rather than getting hung up on the particulars and details of modern church rulings but looking further back in history to understand the core nature of such circumstances.



Figure 15

Image from https://www.visitliverpool.com/things-to-do/metropolitan-cathedral-of-christ-the-king-p8045

The 'sanctuary area' in Liverpool is raised and clearly defines who is intended to be in which space and, therefore, in which capacity they are worshipping this can be seen very clearly again in *figure 15*. As aforementioned, it can be said that 'sanctuary spaces' can simply act as

an invisible iconostasis, none more so than in Liverpool Cathedral. In a time when we should be referring back to the origins of the Eucharist as a communal shared meal, the Eucharist is more often is something which resembles a scene from 'Oliver!' (1968). A simple dishing out of each person's allowance of the shared body of Christ does not reflect the full and giving nature of Christ himself. As Catholics, we must reflect upon the connotations of implicitly excluding the community from partaking fully in the Eucharist, which is - at its core – a shared meal and should be celebrated in such a way which reflects this. This may be difficult in smaller parish settings where space is limited but a simple reminder of community values in the homily, or even before communion is given, would suffice to create a greater understanding and community feeling within the context of the Mass as a whole.

On the theme of shape reflecting community, we come across the Blessed Sacrament Chapel which is a more traditional rectangular shape and layout. The sanctuary is at the front elevated by a couple of steps as well as the altar being front and centre with the Tabernacle behind it. This design can work in some places, but in a space, which is supposedly designed to express an architectural and liturgical message about worship, why is this side Chapel -



Figure 16

The Side Chapel

which is used for smaller and more frequent Masses not reflecting this too? A mirror image of the circular baptistry area with seating around would be far more appropriate as a space in which to hold a Eucharistic celebration because it reminds participants of the overall space which they are in. In doing so, it would reflect on the community as equals, especially between those who attend these smaller Masses as well as those who may only attend when they are able or want to. The lack of similarity of shape between this Chapel and the main body of the Cathedral seems to show a disparity in appreciation of the community as the celebrants of liturgy. This Chapel (*figure 16*) is used more frequently for Mass; therefore, it should be a space which equally reflects the community rather than a simple common design which is found in many other places since it is ineffective in communicating the communal sense of the Eucharist, which the rounded layout achieves in a far better manner.

Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral is an anomaly on the map of Catholic churches as it is used on many great occasions (the crypt can even be hired out for corporate events), but it is also first and foremost a place of worship. However, we must question whether it is appropriate that this sense of sacred space should be sacrificed in favour of creating a space which is a commercial showpiece? Should it not be a place of prayer and a centre of calm for many people's lives. The business side of how the Cathedral is run is impressive, but this must not overshadow the sacred nature of the space nor the fact that it is a religious space act as a quirk as to why it is popular to hire. As well as this, it might be suggested that any consequential funds which come from the commercialisation of the church should be used to maintain the aspirations which the community have for the Cathedral. The community are the core group who use the space for its intended purpose as a space of prayer and therefore they should never be overlooked in the importance of maintaining the spiritual life of the

Cathedral, in doing so there comes a more harmonious balance between its use as a commercial space balancing with a benefit for the community.

Liverpool Cathedral sends out many mixed messages which are easy to pick up on, some are explicit others implicit. The impact which this can have upon worshippers and the community creates a tension either seen or unseen, but still a tension. This is why it is so important that we take care not to do the same within a parish context. If we were to try to replicate the same design as this Cathedral at a parish level, I believe that there would be more confusion caused than solved. It is still possible to renew the use of church spaces which are on the smaller side without feeling the need for a complete reconstruction, but this requires a commitment from the community and a willingness to teach *why* it is being changed on the clergy's part. The concepts seen in Liverpool Cathedral can be a very demanding task for parish churches, but the outcome could be great and worth the time and investment in the building and the community if there is a willingness to commit to taking the core ideas of gathering around a table and using the space which they have in new and experimental ways in order to find what works best for the community so that they may participate in the Eucharist to the best of their ability rather than simply observe the ritual.

Movability should be a primary consideration when looking at using space in innovative ways since a community changes as evolves by and having statues drilled into place made immovable, or artwork made permanent, it does not allow for a flexible approach which may be needed by some communities. For example, at Christmas, the Nativity scene is often placed in the same spot year on year, because that may be the only place it can fit and be seen easily, but if we were to create a

church space which has an almost modular design then things can move to adapt for that certain season and its requirements.

Chapter Five:

Creating the Ideal Space

Curating the 'ideal' worship space is no easy task, even before we look to all of the finer points which I have raised about community, accessibility and honouring Eucharistic Origins, there are many other boxes to tick. In a standard Cruciform layout church, there is often not much argument over where the pews or sometimes chairs should go. But, if we look at the issues which I have been trying to combat such as reflecting a community through the seating, not the individual, as well as thinking about how the shape of the building may be of great importance such as the circular design at Liverpool, how do we put all of these hypothetical thoughts into practice? Firstly, I want to create a space from scratch as a hypothetical ideal space and following this, I want to navigate the idea of transforming the cruciform layout into something more accessible and reflective of the origins of the Eucharist.

Figure 17 depicts my hypothetical idea of a space which could work well to serve a community efficiently and effectively in terms of Eucharistic participation as well as practical use. This diagram only shows those spaces which may be of use to the congregation so does not display areas such as the sacristy. The front smaller circular area shows the entrance to the building on the left, with the baptismal font in the middle, this allows for the community to gather in an intentional space for baptisms which, much like Liverpool Cathedral, reflects the main space of the Church but, in this instance, it would be large

enough for everyone to gather around and support the baptismal candidate. As well as this the entrance between the baptistry and the main body of the church should be without a barrier, an open plan link between the two areas which also allows for a visual link between the font, the altar which the community also gathers around and of course the Tabernacle. This baptistry area being at the entrance to the church not only reflects on the original placement of the font but it also allows for appropriate space to be given to this important ritual as well as acting as a reminder of the baptismal promise upon entrance to the church which places the worshippers - consciously or otherwise – into a state of mind appropriate for celebrating the Mass or any other Holy occasion. My design is heavily inspired by the ideas of Johannes Van Acken summarised by Vosko as "a very different church plan that would center on Christ symbolized in the altar table… The long naves facing the sanctuary where the clergy presided were replaced by a Christo-centric plan where all of the worshippers would sit in concentric circles facing the altar in their midst."[34] In creating this concentric circular plan we immediately evolve the space into a more sociopetal environment, wherein every member feels seen and heard. This plan, however, will not work to its full potential unless there is an intentional effort on the community's part to develop how they use to the space to its full advantage to engage and involve every member. This may be achieved by implementing further tasks for the congregation to take part in as well as, on the presider's part, for the space to be spoken about and explained so that congregations have a greater understanding of the reasons why church space is designed in such a manner.

[34] Richard Vosko, *God's House is Our House. 33.*

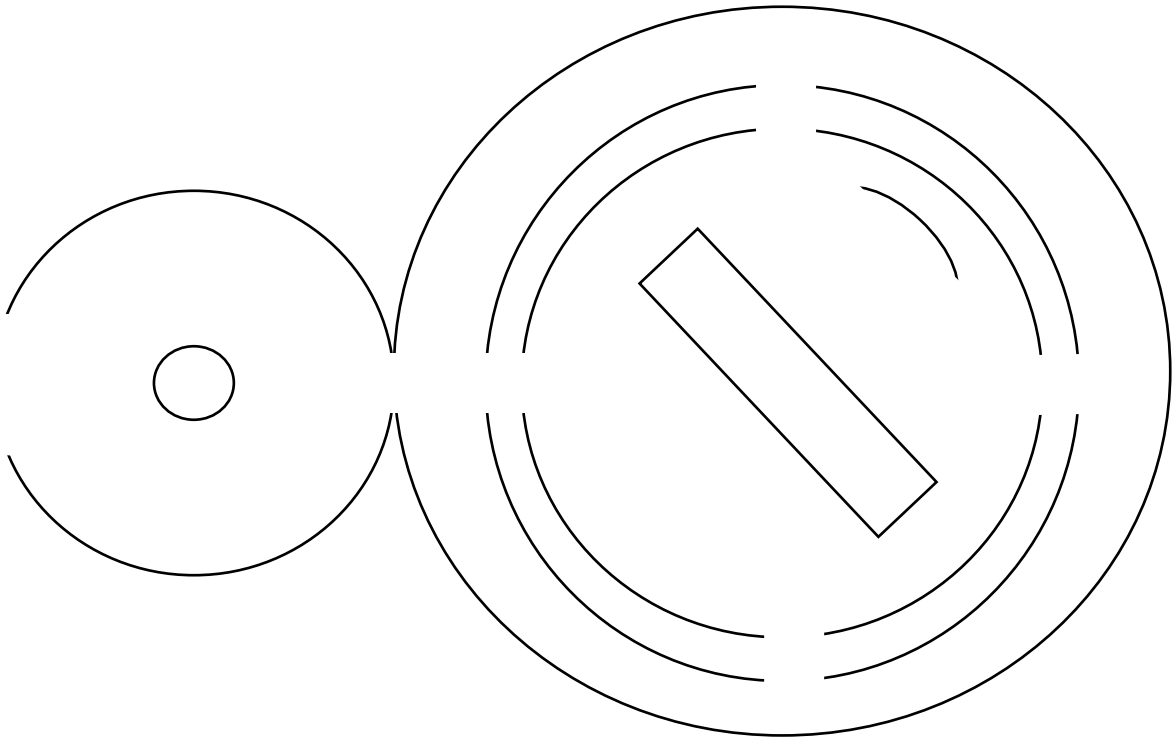


Figure 17

As water is at the core of Baptism it may be of note to take into consideration the use of less traditional fonts, some churches may even facilitate the use of flowing water so it may "have about it a celebratory air, the bubbling waters of the font as welcome as a fountain in an Italian hill village on a baking hot day. The community must accord it a central place in their life together."[35] Although this not often seen within Catholic churches, I believe that having a flow of water would act better to create more awareness of the meaning of the font, instead of having the font abandoned in the corner of the church forgotten until needed. We would do better to make the font a focal point for the faithful as well as those who may be entering the space for the first time, it is, after all, "the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to

[35] Richard Giles, *Re-Pitching the Tent. 170.*

life in the Spirit… and the door which gives access to the other sacraments"[36] In placing this important symbol of the faith at the entrance to the church it reflects the clear intentions of the community to welcome everyone into its midst furthermore having the font in the entrance to the church helps people discern that "the church shares in a different space from the street in which it stands."[37] Thus, by having the font standing in the eye line of those passing by as well as entering into the building, it acts as a pertinent reminder that the faith is not contained within the boundaries of the church but what is contained within the space, is the community sense of gathering with a unified intention of spreading the faith amongst others.

As we venture into the main body of the church, one would see curved seating made of small linked lightweight easy to move and stackable pews (see *figure 18* as an example of what I believe would be most suitable). This method of seating would allow for less individuality and encourage a more explicit sense of community as well as reflecting an image of gathering around the altar to share in the Eucharist as a meal. Although we would in most churches find the sanctuary to be raised, I suggest that in this church it is on one plane in order to create greater equality amongst the people who use the space. The celebrant of the Mass along with the servers may be seated on the smaller bench as seen in *figure 17* having these people sitting in the same type of seating as the congregation but still separate, ensures that there is some form of separation still between the priest and the congregation for them to understand the importance of the role the priest plays in the Mass, but, there is still enough of a link between them and the members of the congregation to feel that they are participating rather than spectating as if they were at a theatre. This form of seating would be ideal for movability

[36] The Catechism of the Catholic Church https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__P3G.HTM (accessed 9th August 2020) 1213.
[37] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion,* (New York: Harcourt Publishing, 1987) 25.

so that the Church space can be altered for different occasions such as weddings or funerals, but it also means that the church space can accommodate the important seasonal paraphernalia and necessities. Alongside this, it would be able to facilitate the performative aspects of the faith such as the readings at Easter, or if a procession must stay as a part of the Mass then at least it may be done in a circular motion encompassing and including the whole community rather than be a performance on the part of the celebrants creating a divide between them and the community.



Figure 18 image taken from https://trinitychurchfurniture.co.uk/products/theo-pew/ a church furnishing company. These options are available so why are they not being used?

The altar, as may be seen in this drawing is elongated compared to a traditional sized altar, this enlargement of the altar allows for a sufficient sense of gathering as well as a feeling and visual ability of the table being shared with the facility to truly accommodate the entire congregation. Above the altar (although not pictured) I would take inspiration from the community at Mount Saint Bernard's who have their tabernacle suspended above the altar (as best seen in *figure 19*). This would not only create a sense of the numinous nature of the Eucharist and a church building but it would also reflect that the Eucharist belongs to the community as it is suspended above to remind them that it is the focal point of the faith and visible to all from wherever they may be sat. As a consequence of this, we may see more community engagement as it adds a new dynamic of movement to the service and draws attention to the Eucharist at the height of its involvement in the Mass. The area behind the pews should sufficient enough to allow for artwork, movement and potentially even have small recesses for such in order to create a dedicated and intentional space for it so that it doesn't just feel as though items have been placed because there was a free space for it. Eliade further contributes to the idea of making space intentional by maintaining that "every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different."[38] How do we make this space explicitly different then? Well, in creating a circular space, we quite obviously divert from a standard rectangular or square room shape which is so common and often seen in cruciform churches as well as sharing the shape with, for example, an office room, consequentially by using a different shape than the norm we are able to create more interest and define the space as accommodation for religion Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Blackpool makes an attempt of this, but still holds some cruciform features making it a strange half and half mix of circular close to the altar, but rectangular towards the back of the

[38] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion. 26.*

building (see *figures 20* and *21*). Following on from this, the proposed space seen in *figure 17* draws attention to the focal points of the religion such as the Eucharist, the gathering around the altar and the Baptismal font, all of which are core elements and fundamentals of the faith, hence this space can reflect the religion explicitly rather than blend in with the secular world.



Figure 19 Picture taken from http://www.mountsaintbernard.org/vocations



Figure 20 Notice the curvature compared to the straight seating at the back of the church. Sacred Heart Roman Catholic Church, Blackpool.



Figure 21 The Altar with yet another barrier, Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Blackpool.

Having discussed a hypothetical design of a church without restrictions yet still honouring the regulations of the Catholic faith, I now have arrived at the difficult task of suggesting a sensible alternative and repurposing of the traditional cruciform shaped church. Before I begin, it is important to note that I believe not all cruciform churches are inefficient in how they use the space, but rather my focus is on renewing the space to suit the Eucharist as a modern shared meal. In many cruciform churches, especially within Cathedrals, there is often so much decoration, alcoves and recesses that the space becomes overrun with items and can become cluttered over time, however, in my proposed re-design of the space there is more scope for intentional spaces for such items.

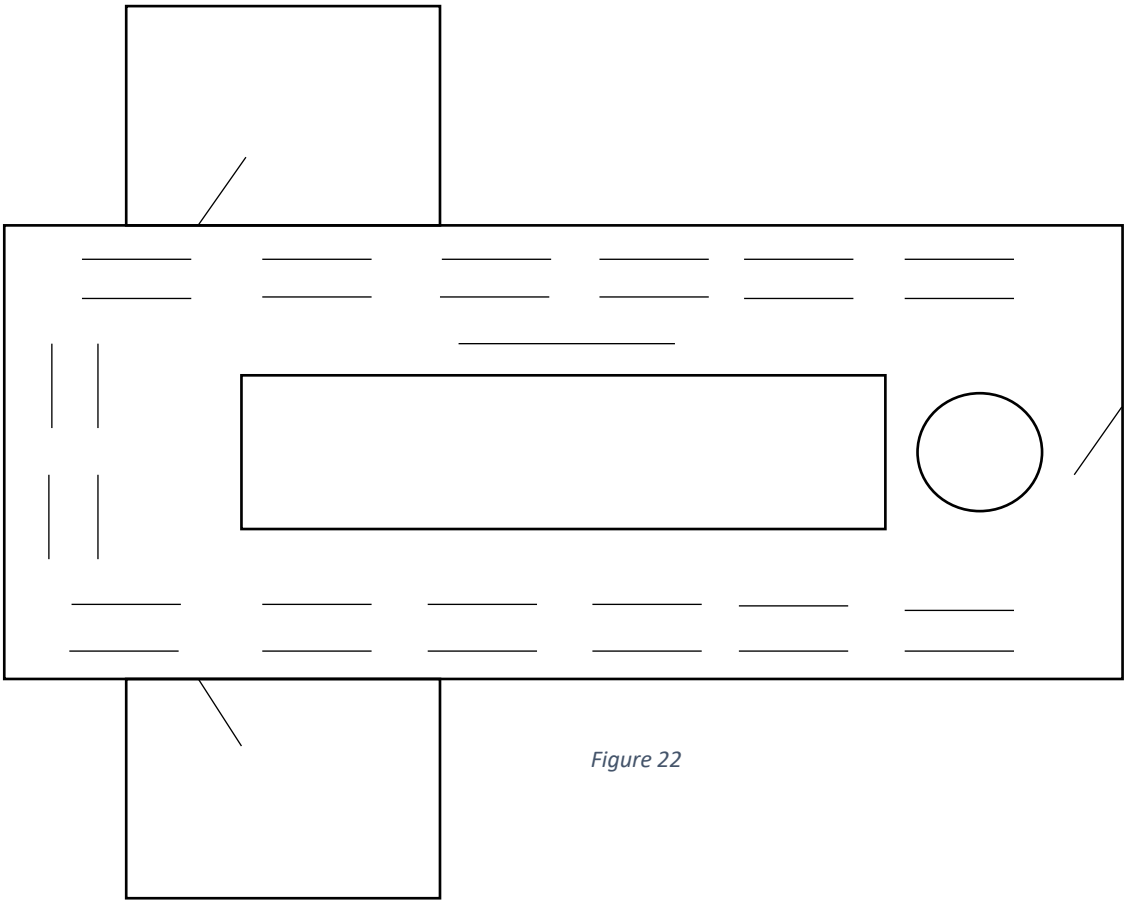


Figure 22

Figure 22 provides an idea of a redesign of a basic cruciform shaped church. The two side areas which create the cross coming off of the main body of the church I propose should be divided off and used for activities such as Sunday school, a private area for nursing mothers or for those who become overwhelmed due to mental health issues or disabilities as well as any other occasions or needs as are called for by the community. In having this private space away from the main body of the church but still connected, people no longer would feel awkward about having to shimmy through pews to leave the building for fear of judgement. These spaces could alternatively be partitioned with a simple curtain or moveable division so that they can be used to display artwork or seasonal attributes of the faith such as the Nativity scene at Christmas. Having a new division would also allow for a more practical face to face area for confession out of sight from public view but would facilitate the sacrament more easily for those churches which may not have a dedicated confessional. In short, creating new multi-purpose spaces allows for the life of the church to be expanded beyond the theatrical set up which we currently most often see, the life of the church can now be widened past simply the sanctuary and nave as they become one and create a far more inclusive, welcoming and less intimidating environment.

As we look at the main body of the church we see smaller pews, again as in my previous design I would suggest that these be lightweight moveable and stackable so that the area can be used accordingly, especially as we look at the effects of Covid-19, this would allow for social distancing if required, as well as have the ability to accommodate large or more intimate occasions without the area being overwhelmed by furniture. I have used the same principle as in *figure 17* of creating a larger seating area with a shared design as the congregational seating, for the presiding priest and their servers as this seamlessly integrates

them into the rest of the congregation but still defines their importance in the role of the Mass.

The baptismal font plays a key role in Christian and specifically Catholic life; therefore, I believe it should be placed at the entrance of church since it defines the meaning and purpose of both the faith and the building. Although I am aware that not all churches have the ability for such a great upheaval of their baptistry area, especially as many traditional stone fonts are heavy and often built intentionally so as they may not be moved. If this is the case for a parish wishing to renew the space, then I would suggest looking at how to build the space around the font and tabernacle primarily, as the altar is, most often, the element which is most easily moved. Although this may not always be possible due to the location of the font, for example, if it were in the very corner of the building an unable to move as some can be quite literally, set in stone such as in *figure 23*. In this case, the use of a portable font may be preferable, yet it would be beneficial to explore ways of involving the use of the original feature such as possible decanting the water from the main font into the moveable one so that it may be seen still as a central point in the baptismal ceremony.

As seen in my plans, the altar is again elongated and suitable for a large gathering, particularly suited for a sizeable meal such as the Eucharist. The sense of surrounding created by the seating in this design not only encourages a greater sense of involvement for the community but creates a notion of safety for those involved since all are on an equal plane, there is no sanctuary and no longer such a harsh divide between the congregation and the priest. This design gives a simplicity through creating a connection between the community and the Eucharist by physical means as well as via design changes which effect the subconscious way in which people worship.



Figure 23 The baptismal font at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, Blackpool.

By removing both the physical and non-physical barriers between the people and the Eucharist we are able to establish a greater connection to the Eucharist both emotionally and visually for many people. This connection can often be lost through the 'smoke and mirrors' approach of the Mass today, the incense, processions, formality, distance and divisions, all create a feeling of greatness for the Eucharist, which is quite right, but it also denies both the

physical and spiritual connection which is required for the Eucharist to be celebrated as a community (as seen in *figure 24*). In my view, surely, we would be better suited to simplifying the procedures which seem to surround the Eucharist and by breaking down these barriers we may ensure a better connection and understanding of what the Eucharist means for each individual. In simplifying how we approach the Eucharist we are also able to make an understanding of its importance more accessible in many different ways, through physical gathering, non-physical and most often verbal affirmations about the Eucharist, the most popular form being through music. Music can enhance the numinous sense which people claim to feel within church spaces as well as serve as a different mode of expression since everybody worships in such varied and individual manners. In both of my church designs, you will notice that I have not included choir stalls as a separate entity, this is because I am a firm believer that in order to get the congregation to sing and become involved with the musical aspect of the liturgy you must bring it to the congregation. Rather than have some far off choir that seems out of reach I would suggest that the choir members are spread throughout the congregation so as to encourage people to feel involved with the music rather



Figure 24 Mass at St Barnabas Cathedral Nottingham. Image from https://www.nottinghampost.com/news/local-news/historic-city-centre-church-celebrates-2967708

than simply see themselves as observers of it, much like the premise used for the Eucharistic gathering around the altar. By not segregating ‘chosen’ members of the congregation, we are able to create a more uniform and unified intention for gathering as a community without any divides.

Overall, these two designs both differ greatly but have the same intentions and aims at their core: to unify congregations and break down any barriers between the faithful and the Eucharist, whether these be historical or modern, visible or invisible, physical or non-physical. These barriers have all been put in place over time to maintain the so called ‘mystery’ of the Eucharist and although is important that there is a level of respect for the Eucharist and the liturgy which surrounds it we must remember engaging and involving a congregation in a more deliberate manner creates a community which is united in their intent to celebrate the Eucharist but this may only be achieved if we have spaces which may accommodate for such. These barriers which we witness between the Eucharist and the people are oftentimes not criticised because we are so acclimatised to the way in which a church building is laid out, or how the liturgy is to be practised that many people never question it either because they are too scared of change, or have a fear that change may never happen because of the rulings and decrees of the Church. For example, as a woman, challenging certain aspects of the faith is hard, when you do not have the same privilege as your male counterparts and are unable to discuss the issues which matter to you without having to speak to someone who is both in a superior position to you in the faith and at the same time always a male. This in itself is a barrier to creating an atmosphere where everybody – regardless of gender – is comfortable with expressing their concerns on both an individual and community level which can be aided by curating a space where everyone feels

equally seen, heard and that they matter as an individual in the wider community. Creating such an atmosphere may be achieved in great swathes through space and design as evidenced in my two hypothetical layouts for both transforming the cruciform church as well as building a space from the ground up. Although they are both different in their appearance, they both aim to create an atmosphere which fosters equality and deeper understanding of what gathering for the Eucharist as a meal today, should really be like.

If we are to look to the history and origins of the Eucharist, compared to the stark methodical process which the liturgy demands of it today we are really quite far from the type of celebration which it was supposed to be, a welcoming atmosphere where all were permitted to eat the shared bread and drink from the shared cup. Instead, we have created an elitist system where only those initiated through baptism may partake in the shared meal, hardly the type of divisional message which Christ was known for. If we are able to even remotely make changes to the layout and internal dynamics of church spaces to make them more accessible and encourage a greater interest in the Eucharist and the liturgy then surely in turn we can create communities which are welcoming, and understanding of the needs of one another without these strict barriers to worship whether they are visible or not, the church must change its layout in order to send a clear message that all are welcome, and all of the people gathered within the church space matter, regardless of what they may believe the church space must be open to all and demonstrate this in its design.

Chapter Six:

Conclusion

I believe that this research has been fundamental in understanding how the Catholic Church would benefit from advancing not only its physical surroundings and layouts, but a review of certain elements of its rulings such as female leadership and how the liturgy is presented. I believe that these barriers may prevent a more unified sense of worship and Eucharistic gathering and can have a larger impact on the community than the Church may realise. From looking at the successes and downfalls of Vatican II through to the impacts of COVID-19 upon the church of today it has come to my attention that the church must be prepared to understand how they may take this enforced change as an opportunity to renew how Catholics worship. This change may draw to the Church's attention exactly what support and advancements congregations require and desire as the world around them evolves yet the church, for the most part, remains pretty stagnant in their approach to furthering the development and desires of the church as a body of people. We must, of course, be cautious to remember that the world is forever evolving, and it may be hard to implement any changes within an appropriate time frame due to the hierarchical nature of the church leadership bodies. However, whatever happens, the Church must be ready to adapt and overcome any adversity, but it must also be ready to admit to when it requires changes, I believe that there is great value to be had in admitting that there may be some shortcomings within the church, and admitting to them is the first stage in developing a solution to the issues and concerns which congregations and individuals may raise.

In developing a church design which encourages equality (more so than the standard cruciform layout at least) the congregation is automatically handed a useful tool as the space encourages people to become more involved but to also feel more welcome when partaking

in communal activities. The church is now a space which aims to unite the community and reflect the intentions of both the work of the Church through the Eucharist and the welcoming nature and efforts of the community through the space and design which is available for them to utilise for their needs. Liverpool Cathedral is one of the closest examples to my ideal space created from the ground up. However, on many levels, because Liverpool Cathedral is so different to a 'normal' church, it becomes more of a tourist attraction than primarily a worship space. If we can create more spaces which have a similarly unique shape and architectural style, then we may demonstrate that having churches which are unique and different from the standard cruciform shape are being designed for a purpose rather than to be a tourist attraction.

Finally, I feel it is important to say that the effects of Vatican II are not being ignored within this research, without Vatican II I would not even be able to discuss the need for further advancement. Vatican II opened the door to new research and discussion within the Catholic Church. However, I have rather aimed to debate the shortcomings of the Council and where they may have elaborated or been more decisive on what exactly was to happen once the changes were implemented. The major downfall of Vatican II was that they could not consider the future of the Church as they were trying to create the future whilst still being mentally and physically bound by the history and rigorous tomes of teaching which the clergy, as well as the congregation, were all so accustomed to. Despite the many Papal letters, Vatican documents and teachings which have been released since the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council, in my view there needs to be another form of a conference, and a new aim for progression and development. There needs to at least be some form of feedback from both the clergy and laity to the Vatican, especially since the laity is the group for whom

these changes have the biggest impact as they are the ones the church is meant to be delivering a service to. Although this may not be possible on a smaller scale, I believe that churches need to be consistently evaluating the effectiveness of their worship space and encouraging participation in discussion about it with their communities in order to expand and progress both the space and the involvement of the community.

Overall, the changes which need to be made to the Church as an organisation and the churches which house congregational communities cannot be done overnight and nor should they be. Rather, the transformation which I am encouraging would take a long time so it may be done correctly, and, in a manner, which would appreciate the rich history of the Church whilst acknowledging the need for change and taking an active step towards it. The issues which the Church faces in the present day are miles apart from the concerns of the Second Vatican Council, the pressure to create a more inclusive, expressive and social justice focused Church has become overwhelming in the past years. Other denominations and even other faiths have made great strides towards this, yet the Catholic Church remains stagnant in many of these areas. Therefore, a step towards an inclusive and more unified Church which would be manageable and achievable would be the renewal of the spaces in which Catholics worship as small communities all around the world. United as one Church through the Eucharist as a shared experience, they now have an even greater awareness of their surroundings which reflect the intent and focus which Catholics have for the Eucharist as well as each other as individuals and therefore a true Eucharistic community.

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