

# The Nave

The faithful on entering St. Michael's pass through a second set of major church doors



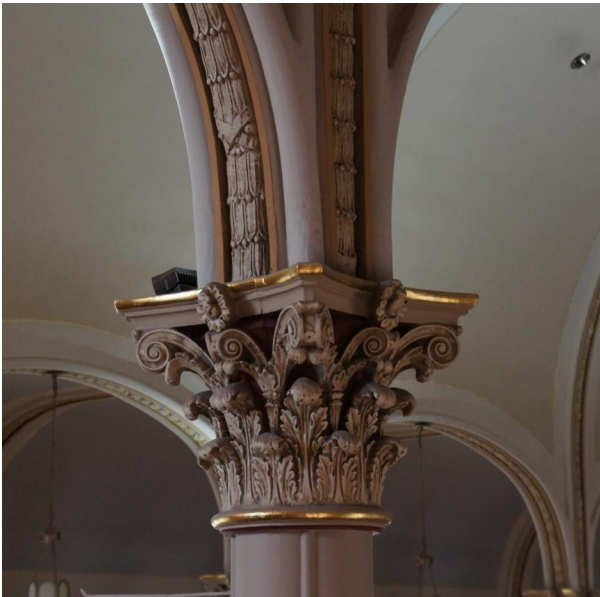
into the nave and the majesty of the church becomes immediately apparent. The interior of the church has length, breadth, and height. The length represents fortitude-the long march of the person of faith to holiness and salvation; the breadth of the church represents charity-the wide embrace of the Lord of his people; and the height symbolizes



courage and the vision of heaven. Near the ceiling, a decorative Ovolo molding, called egg and dart, lines the walls like a chain of beads, the beads of a rosary.

The worshiper proceeds down the broad main aisle of the church which represents the foundation of our faith,

past the columns and Romanesque arches which support the vaulting overhead. In Medieval times, the columns or pillars represented the bishops and teachers of the church. One notes that St. Michael's has twelve columns calling to mind the twelve



apostles. The capitals, the decorative tops of the columns, particularly the acanthus leaves portrayed in our Corinthian style capitals, were said to represent the words of Holy Scripture. Surmounting the tops of the capitals are fleurons or carvings of bursting buds which symbolize the emergence of personal faith.

The entrance into the nave, the full body of the church, has a further connotation, a very profound one: It means an entrance into a gathering community-a community of God's people, of every lineage, a hopeful people, a people who come together to express their love of God and their trust

and love of each other.

The worshiper proceeds down the aisle through the nave to the chancel arch, the massive arch which marks the division between the nave and the sanctuary. In Medieval times it was seen as dividing the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant, the faithful ones on earth and the holy ones of heaven. The chancel arch in St. Michael's contains several



important symbols of our beliefs. Two medallions, one at either side of the arch show the Chi Rho (or X and P joined), the first two letters of Christ in Greek. This emblem is flanked by the first and last letters of the Greek Alphabet, the Alpha and the Omega which represent the beginning and the end. Christ is seen as "The Alpha and the Omega, the one who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (Revelations 1:8).

Four medallions on the chancel arch represent the four evangelists, the authors of the gospels. St. Matthew is portrayed as a man because his gospel emphasizes the humanity of Christ. St. Mark is displayed as a winged lion for his gospel informs us of Christ's royal dignity. St. Luke is represented by an ox, a docile animal destined as an offering and sacrifice for Luke's gospel dwells on the passion of Christ. St. John is represented by an eagle because he soars above historical details and shows us the divinity of Christ. The

chancel arch also frames the celebration of the Mass at the altar.