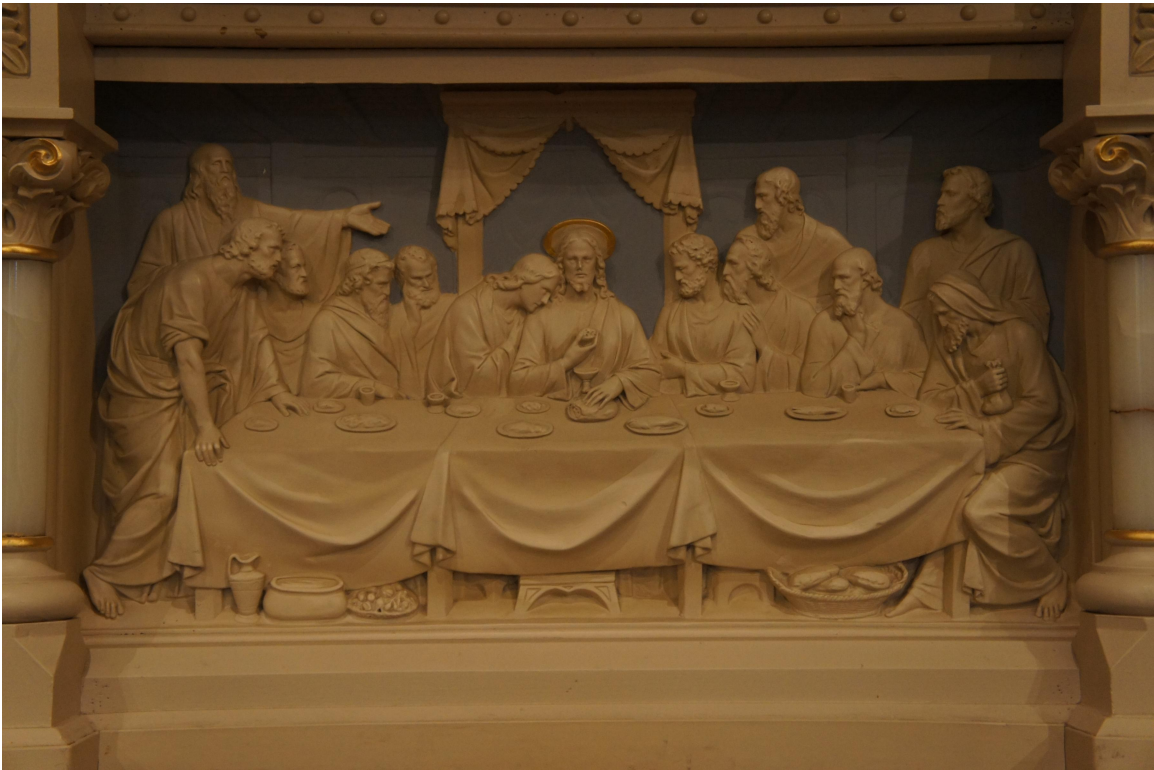


Below the tabernacle there is a bas-relief of Christ and the twelve apostles at the Last Supper.



Surrounding the tabernacle is the reredos, a tableau of sculptures and symbols which express a theme closely connected with the Eucharist and emphasizing the foretaste of eternal glory that is to be found in the Eucharist and emphasizing the foretaste of eternal glory that is to be found in the Eucharistic celebration.



The niches and setting for the sanctuary are of a style called Venetian baroque. Our altar of reservation rises like Golgotha presenting the great image of Christ crucified.

We have the image of Him who by his death overcame death.



This altar of reservation also expresses the doctrine of the communion of saints.



The statuary installed on the altar includes the saints who followed Christ even to the cross (St. John and the Virgin Mother).

Given special honor is St. Michael the Archangel powerful patron of the entire parish.



He is portrayed destroying a dragon which represents evil and sin in the world.
(St. Michael the Archangel)



Present too is St. Patrick who holds a bishop's crook in one hand and in the other, a three-leaf shamrock which represents the Trinity. (Parishioners of Irish background were prominent in St. Michael's early days; they insisted on inclusion of their patron saint.) Included in the tableau of statuary are two angels in prayer.

Two angels were originally part of the St. Michael's altar before 1958, but were removed. Shortly after the renovation of 1984, similar angels were located in private hands and donated back to St. Michael's.



The two angels, which remind us to be respectful in the presence of the Eucharist, were returned to make the altar of reservation whole again.



The altar of reservation has been painted so as to harmonize with the background of wall colors and to serve as a backdrop to the altar of sacrifice. It has been modestly touched with gold-leaf ornamentation – gold being a sign of victory and eternity. The statuary in the altar of reservation is finished to resemble polished marble, a natural stone color such as marks the statuary in St. Peter's in Rome. This natural stone color was chosen so that the statues would harmonize with the surroundings and to provide a muted background which would not create distraction from the altar of sacrifice and the celebration of the rites of the mass. When mass is not being celebrated, a different set of events takes place. The church becomes a shrine and a place of meditation. The altar of reservation is illuminated directing our attention to the tabernacle, the adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the events of Christ's life. The décor, in these moments, is one which calls us to a mood of quiet prayer.

Thirdly, Christ becomes present in the sanctuary through the Holy Word. From the earliest days of the Church, the scriptures, both the Old and New Testament, were seen as the voice of God. These holy writings were considered a verbal incarnation of Divine power and wisdom. "For the Word of God is living and efficient and keener than any two edged sword." (Hebrews, 4: 12).



The ambo or podium (successor to a more dominant elevated pulpit of an earlier St. Michael's) is like the tabernacle in one sense. It is here that God becomes present, not in the sacrament, but in the Word.

Louis Bouyer, a post Vatican liturgist, said that the ambo must be more than an ordinary lectern. "It must be clear by its dimensions and design that it is the most sacred place in the church after the altar itself."

St. Michael's ambo was fashioned in 1983 by parishioner Lloyd Martin from the carved wooden gates of what was once St. Michael's communion rail.



The façade of the ambo features the Alpha and Omega symbol of Christ who spans eternity. Historically, when Christ is represented artistically as “Christ With the Book,” the pages of the book are opened to show the Alpha and Omega letters.



The ambo also has carvings of the vine and grapes and wheat ears which are symbols of the Eucharist.



The ambo also includes a riser which lifts the reader to a higher level. Even this has symbolic meaning; readers imitate the Lord who went up onto the mountain to proclaim the word to the multitudes. In the early church, the readings were also proclaimed from a raised platform in the center of the church called a bema.

Christ's presence is shown through the three perceptions indicated above. It should be noted that there is a fourth presence, one which becomes a reality at ceremonial moments, in his faithful people acting under the power of the Holy Spirit. Christ is present in many ways to His Church; He is present especially in the Eucharistic species, in His Word, and in His Church's prayer, "where two or three are gathered in his name." As the faithful gather to celebrate Mass and partake of Holy Communion, their union with Christ is augmented. (Catechism of the Catholic Church: 1373, 1396). The congregation which gathers daily and each Sunday make Christ present and this can truly be regarded as the "Body of Christ." For this reason, the communion rail of older days was removed. It was too much of a barrier between the Church of the People and Church of the Clergy. Today the openness between St. Michael's sanctuary and nave, enhanced in both color and form, is an expression of the presence of the Lord in His Sacrament, His Word and His People.

Included in the sanctuary is another element of Catholic Church architecture which not



many churchgoers are aware of. This is the ambry or tabernacle for the holy oils which are blessed by the Bishop in Holy Week times and which are distributed to all of the parishes in the diocese (at St. Michael's it is in the wall to the left and below St. Michael's statue.) The oils are thus a dramatic reminder of the continued role of the Bishop, the head of the diocese, in every one of his churches. The oils include the oil of the catechumens used in baptisms, the oil used in the anointing of the sick, and the oil of Holy Chrism used in confirmations, ordinations. The oil of the catechumens in this diocese is usually sunflower oil which is a bounty of the fields of North Dakota, the oil for the sick is olive oil, an oil long used in healing (see Mark 6:13 and Luke

10:34), and the oil of Holy Chrism is a perfumed oil (usually with oil of Rose). It is the oil of gladness mentioned in Hebrews 1:9.



Prominently displayed in the sanctuary, especially on feast days, is the processional cross, an emblem of triumph which recalls the banners of soldiers going into battle, God's people in spiritual combat. St. Michael's main processional cross is of cast bronze of a style called formee (having arms narrower at the center and expanding toward the ends. It was a common type of cross in the 6th century. It features a central medallion of engraved ivory portraying "Christ, Light of the World." The back of the cross has three arm-plates and a central medallion featuring an array of stones from the Sinai: lapis lazuli, smokey quartz, sard, and Egyptian turquoise.
* Pictured is the current processional cross

Another special item often displayed in the sanctuary is an exquisite bronze monstrance. A bronze angel standing on an ivory globe holds the lunula or container for the Sacred Host which is exposed during Benedictions.

To the right of the chancel arch in the sanctuary is the baptismal font. This is an octagonal oak structure. The eight sides represent a long liturgical tradition. Baptistries and fonts, especially those of the Romanesque period were built with eight sides. The number eight symbolizes regeneration and a new birth (after the seven days of creation). The font is ornamented with floral motifs and an unusual finial which looks like a pinecone. These figures represent signs of the Tree of Life which stands beside the living waters of baptism. As already mentioned, holy water fonts at the entrances to the church are miniature baptismal fonts which remind parishioners that they were "born to Christ" in these holy waters.

