

CHURCH TOUR

St. John the Baptist Catholic Church
Edmond, Oklahoma

*Just as you enter this church building, so God wishes to
enter into your soul, for he promised: I shall live in
them, and I shall walk the corridors of their hearts.*

from a sermon by Saint Caesarius of Arles, bishop

HISTORY

The first church at St. John's was a one room building with a bell tower that could seat 150 people. It was located at First Street and Boulevard in Edmond. It was dedicated on the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist on June 24, 1889.

In 1900 a new church was built on the same site to accommodate a growing congregation.

In 1936 a fire destroyed the bell tower and roof necessitating a complete renovation.

In 1955 the parish moved to its present location at Ninth Street and S. Littler Avenue. A new church was built and is still standing today. It is a multipurpose space used primarily as the school cafeteria. It is called "Seton Hall." An old house on the property served as the rectory and a feed store also on the property was converted into the parish hall.



The current church was built in 1982, and in 2006 it was expanded. The seating capacity is 1,250 persons. The architecture, popular in the 1980's, is contemporary. The emphasis of the design is on the communal aspect of the liturgy. It is built in a half-round shape with the congregation seated on three sides of the altar. In 2023 a crucifix and a Tabernacle were added to the sanctuary to better reflect that the Mass is a representation of the one, perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

ARCHITECTURE

Cruciform

The traditional shape of a Catholic church looks like a cross and faces East.

Apse

The semicircular recess of the sanctuary where the altar is placed or where the clergy are seated.

Transept

The separation between the nave and the sanctuary. It forms the arms of the cross.

Nave

The central part of the church that extends from the narthex to the sanctuary and provides the central approach to the altar. It makes up the main body of the church. The word nave comes from the Latin word *navis* which means 'ship.'

The nave of a church is the place where the people of

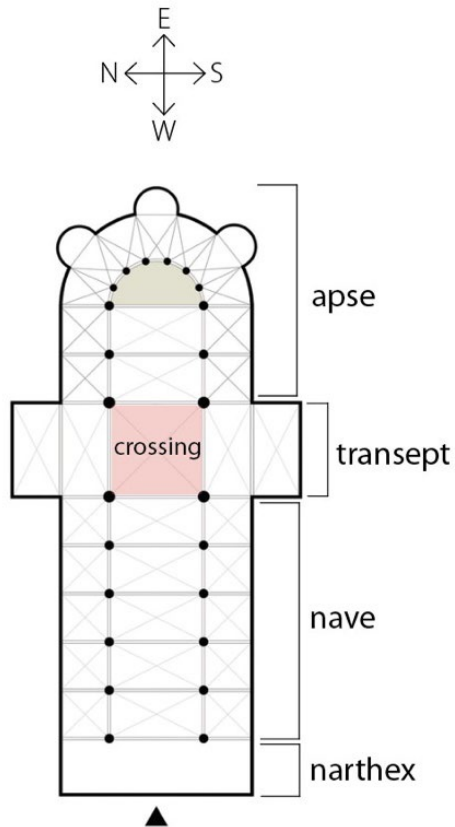
God gather. They are carried forward in their journey towards heaven. The Church is often symbolized as ship carrying the faithful above and through the stormy waters of life. In some churches, the ceiling looks like the bottom of a boat.

Narthex

It is the entrance or lobby of the church. The Greek word *narthex* means a 'small casket' and that is often what it looks like. It is also called a vestibule.

Sanctuary

The area around the altar. This is the holiest part of a church. The tabernacle, the altar, the ambo and the chairs of the main celebrant and the other ministers are usually placed in or near the sanctuary.



Sacristy

The room where the clergy vest for Mass. It is also where the sacred vessels, liturgical books and vestments are stored. At St. John's there are two sacristies: the vesting sacristy, and the lower sacristy. The vesting sacristy is located on the main lobby of the church, and the lower sacristy is located behind the sanctuary in the church.

Sacrarium

A "special sink used for the reverent disposal of sacred substances. This sink has a cover, a basin, and a special pipe and drain that empties directly into the earth, rather than into the sewer system." (USCCB, *Built of Living Stones*, 236). The sacrarium is usually located in the sacristy.

Baptistry

The area of the church where the baptismal font is located.

Confessional

A small room where the priest hears confessions and absolves sins either face to face or behind a screen.

Perpetual Adoration Chapel

When the current church was built in 1982 the tabernacle was placed in a separate Reservation Chapel and not in the sanctuary. The same space is now used for perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. Adoration is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Daily Mass Chapel

The parish outgrew the Daily Mass Chapel for daily Mass, but it is used for convalidation services, prayer group meetings and private prayer. The Daily Mass Chapel has stained glass windows of the apostles, as well as Mary and Joseph and the parents of St. John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zechariah.

Choir Area

This area is used primarily by the choir and musicians. Liturgical music in the Catholic Church is congregational. Hymns are selected according to the feast, liturgy and/or scripture. The organ is the primary instrument in Catholic worship.

Cry Room

This is self-explanatory.

Stained Glass Windows

Windows made of colored glass that usually depict religious symbols, saints or biblical stories are common in Catholic churches. During the Middle Ages, stained glass windows were called “the poor man’s Bible” since many people at that time were illiterate. The best-known windows of this era can be found at Chartres Cathedral in France and Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. The large stained-glass window at St. John’s was installed during the expansion and depicts the moment when St. John the Baptist, our patron, announces the appearance of the long-awaited Messiah and says, *Ecce Angus Dei*, ‘behold the Lamb of God.’

On the upper deck of the church there are remnants of the stained glass from the 1955 church. The stained-glass window of St. John the Baptist that came from the 1955 church and was in several locations in the church is now in the chapel of the rectory.

The stained-glass windows in the Daily Mass Chapel depict the apostles, as well as the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, and the parents of St. John the Baptist, Elizabeth and Zechariah.

Baldacchino

A canopy placed over an altar this usually made of stone or marble. The word comes from a luxurious fabric from Baghdad. The most famous baldacchino is at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome. Sadly, we don’t have a baldacchino at St. John’s...yet.

LITURGICAL BOOKS

The original texts are written first in Latin, the official language of the Roman Rite, and then translated into the vernacular and approved by the Holy See through the Dicastery of Divine Worship.

Gospel Book

A visible sign of Jesus Christ the Word of God. Carried in procession at the entrance of the Mass by the Deacon and placed on the altar.

Roman Missal

Contains all the prayers and rituals said by the Priest during Mass. It also contains rubrics for the clergy and the congregation

Ritual Books

The official liturgical books containing the prescribed texts, rubrics, and prayers for rituals and sacraments like matrimony, baptism, funeral rites, and blessings.

CHURCH BELLS

The use of bells in Catholic worship can be traced back to ancient times. Early Christians adapted the practice from the Jewish tradition, where bells were used in the Temple of Solomon. The sound of bells, with its distinctive and harmonious tones, symbolized the presence of the divine and marked the sacred moments of communal prayer and the hours of the day.

During the medieval period, bells evolved from simple instruments to complex structures. Large church bells, often cast with intricate designs and inscriptions, became central to Christian worship. These bells served not only as musical instruments but also as communicators, signaling the faithful to gather for Mass, prayer, or important events in the life of the Church.

The digital bells system at St. John is programmed to ring from 8:00 AM until 8:00 PM seven days a week. They ring ten minutes before weekday and weekend Masses, as well as on the hour, the half hour and the quarter hour and for special occasions like a funeral or a wedding.

There are different types of bell ringing.

Pealing

The pealing of bells is for joyous occasions within the liturgical calendar. From the announcement of Christmas to the triumphant ringing of bells during the Gloria on Holy Thursday during Holy Week to Easter Sunday. Bells resonate with the festive spirit of the Church, lifting the hearts of the faithful in celebration of the mysteries of faith. Bells are pealed after weddings and in the call to worship.

Tolling

The tolling of bells takes place in moments of sorrow. The sound of a single bell takes on a solemn tone, tolling to mark the passing of a soul from this earthly life on its way to heaven. The funeral toll, a slow and measured ringing, serves as a reminder of the hope of resurrection and the eternal life promised through faith in Christ.

The Naming of Bells

In the Catholic tradition it is customary to give bells a name. The blessing of bells is often referred to as a “baptism.” Bells are named after saints, the apostles, or the Blessed Virgin Mary. This custom reflects the importance bells have in the life of the Church and that each bell has its own “voice.”

SACRED FURNISHINGS

The Altar

The central and focal point of a Catholic Church, where the sacrifice of Christ on the cross is made present under sacramental signs of bread and wine during the Mass is the altar. Among the Israelites the altar was the place where sacrifices were offered to God. The Christian altar represents two aspects of the mystery of the Eucharist, as the altar of sacrifice where Christ is the sacrificial victim and where he offers himself for our sins as food from heaven. An altar should be made of a strong material, i.e. marble, granite, stone, something that cannot be moved.

Early Christians celebrated Mass during the persecution (300+ years) over the graves of the martyrs. This tradition continues today. All Catholic altars have relics in or underneath them. At St. John the Baptist we have a second-class relic of Bl. Stanley Rother, a first-class relic of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton and a first-class relic of St. Peter, the apostle in our altar. The relic of St. Peter was given to Fr. Petuskey by Archbishop Peter Wells.

Tabernacle

The locked receptacle in a church usually behind the altar where the Blessed Sacrament is "reserved." The sanctuary candle, when it is lit, indicates the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The Eucharist contained in the tabernacle is brought out by a priest or deacon for the distribution of Holy Communion during Mass. It is also taken by Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion to the sick.

Sanctuary Lamp

A candle which is kept burning in front of the tabernacle in Catholic churches as a sign and a reminder that Jesus Christ is really present in the tabernacle.

Ambo

It is the place where the word of God is proclaimed and preached. It is also called a pulpit.

Main Celebrant's Chair

This is the place where the main celebrant sits and stands during the liturgy. Next to him is also a chair for assisting ministers like a deacon or a concelebrating priest.

Crucifix

A cross with the figure of the crucified body of Jesus upon it. Its placement on or near the altar signifies that the Mass is the same sacrificial act as Christ's crucifixion. The altar is where the sacrifice of the cross is made present through the Eucharist.

Ambry

It is traditionally located in the sanctuary of a church or in the Baptistry, and is used to store the oils used in the sacraments: the Oil of Catechumen O.C. *Oleum Catechumenorum*; Oil of the Sick O.I. *Oleum Infirmorum*, and Sacred Chrism S.C. *Sacrum Chrisma*. The Sacred Chrism is used at the parish for baptisms and confirmations.

Holy Water Stoup

A small bowl that contains holy water and is typically placed at the doors of a church. Baptism is the first sacrament and we bless ourselves with Holy Water whenever we enter the church.

Relics of Saints

Any part of the physical remains of a saint or items that have touched the body of a saint are referred to as a relic. Every Catholic altar has a relic within it or underneath it originating from the days when the early Christians celebrated Mass over the graves of the martyrs in the catacombs outside of the city of Rome (see “The Altar” on page 7). There are three types of relics: First Class Relic is a piece of bone or flesh of the saint/blessed; Second Class relic is a piece of clothing or an item that was used by the saint/blessed; and Third-Class relic is a piece of cloth that touched a first-class relic.

Stations of the Cross

A series of 14 meditations on incidents in the suffering and death of Christ. Pictures of these scenes can be found round the walls of most Catholic churches. At St. John we have two separate series of the Stations of the Cross. One is made of wood and located on the north wall and the other one is etched glass along the railing of the balcony.

Statuary

It is common to find statues in Catholic churches. They are holy reminders of various saints and of God. They remind us of heavenly things. Statues are instruments, tools to be used in the spiritual life and not ends in themselves. Most Catholic churches have a statue of the Blessed Mother, St. Joseph and the patron of the parish.

Pews & Kneelers

Pews appeared in churches in the 15th and 16th century after the Protestant Reformation when emphasis was placed on long sermons. Prior to that time the congregation stood in the nave during the Mass and knelt on the floor.

Credence Table

A small table in or near the sanctuary that hold the vessels needed to celebrate the Mass.

SACRED ITEMS

Chalice

A cup for the wine used by the main celebrant that will become the Blood of Christ.

Paten

A small plate for the bread that will become the Body of Christ.

Monstrance

The vessel used to display a large, consecrated host during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The name comes from the Latin: *monstrare* which means “to show, or to point out”)

Cruets

Small containers for wine and water.

Lavabo Bowl and Towel

Used to wash the hands of the priest before the consecration.

Sanctus Bells

Small handheld bells rung by an altar server during the epiclesis and the elevation of the Body and Blood of Christ during Mass.

Thurible & Boat

The thurible (also called a censor) holds the charcoal and incense. The boat holds the incense that is placed in the thurible by the priest.

Aspersorium & Aspergillum

The bucket (*aspersorium*) holds holy water, while the instrument dipped into the holy water (the *aspergillum*) is used to sprinkle holy water onto people and object. The names come from the Latin word *aspergere* to sprinkle.

Ablution Bowl

A bowl on the credence table and/or next to the Tabernacle used by the clergy and Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion after distributing Holy Communion at Mass.

Pyx

A small container that is gold lined used when the clergy or an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion bring the Blessed Sacrament to the homebound or sick.

C A N D L E S

Easter Candle

The largest candle in a Catholic church is the Easter Candle or Paschal. It is placed near the baptistry. It is called the Easter Candle because it is blessed at the Easter Vigil and is used throughout the year for baptisms. It is also used at funerals because we believe that in baptism, we die with Christ so that we might also rise with him when he comes again in glory.

Altar Candles

They are placed on or near the altar. There can be at least two but up to six (seven if the bishop is visiting). Altar candles must be made from 51% beeswax. They are a reminder of Christ's real presence in bread and wine at the consecration.

Procesional Candles

They are carried by the altar servers flanking the processional crucifix.

Votive Candles

They are used for devotions and are usually placed near statues. Catholics light a votive candle to represent a prayer or the intercession of a saint for a particular need.

Dedication Candles

They are located on the walls of the church. As part of the dedication of a new church the presiding bishops consecrated the walls with sacred chrism. The dedication candles are placed there and are lit on special occasions, the date of the church's dedication, Solemnities of Jesus Christ (Christmas, Easter etc.) and when the bishop visits the parish.

The Blessing of Candles

It is customary to bless candles on the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord (also called *Candlemas Day*) which occurs 40 days after Christmas.

ALTAR LINENS

Altar linens are white. White symbolizes purity and reverence for the Eucharist. Altar linens are carefully laundered, often by a dedicated ministry, and must be washed separately from other laundry.

Corporal

A large, square white linen cloth placed on the altar. Its name comes from the Latin *corpus* ("body") and symbolizes the shroud that wrapped Jesus' body. It's used to collect any particles of the consecrated host and must be large enough to hold the chalice and paten.

Burse

A square, flat case made of cardboard covered in fabric used to hold and transport the corporal.

Chalice

A smaller white linen cloth used to wipe the lip of the chalice after communion and to purify the sacred vessels after Mass.

Chalice Veil

A square piece of fabric to cover the chalice. It is typically made of the same material and color as the priest's vestments. It is removed during the Offertory. The veil symbolizes that the sacred vessels are set aside for God, and its removal represents the unveiling of the mysteries of the Eucharist.

Pall

A stiffened square, often with a cross, that covers the chalice to protect it from dust and other contaminants. Originally, the folded corporal served this purpose.

Lavabo Towel (Manuterge)

A cloth used by the priest to dry his hands after washing them during the preparation of the gifts.

Altar Cloth

A larger cloth that covers the entire altar, showing reverence for the sacred table. It can be made of tapestry or a colored cloth that reflects the feast day or liturgical season. The cloth that sits on top of the altar is called a mensa.

LITURGICAL VESTMENTS

Alb

A long, white, tunic-like robe worn by clergy. It symbolizes purity and is often made of linen or cotton.

Amice

A rectangular white linen cloth worn around the neck and shoulders to cover the priest's street clothes. It symbolizes a "helmet of salvation" to protect against temptation.

Cincture

A rope or belt worn around the waist to cinch the alb.

Stole

A long, narrow strip of fabric worn around the neck. For priests and bishops, it is worn crossed over the chest; for deacons, it is worn over one shoulder to the opposite hip. It symbolizes a sign of authority and the yoke of Christ.

Chasuble

The outermost garment worn by a priest or bishop during Mass, symbolizing love and the passion of Christ. Its color changes to reflect the feast day or liturgical seasons.

Dalmatic

A special vestment worn by a deacon during certain ceremonies.

Cope

A semicircular cape worn by clergy for processions and other solemn functions outside of Mass.

Cassock & Surplice

A cassock is a long, ankle-length garment with 33 buttons, often black, worn by clergy. A surplice is a shorter, white garment worn over the cassock. It symbolizes purity and holiness. Altar servers and choir members are also permitted to wear a cassock and surplice.

Humeral Veil

A long cloth draped over the shoulders to cover the priest's hands when carrying the monstrance. The use of the humeral veil symbolizes that Jesus Christ gives the blessing not the priest because he is not touching it with his bare hands.

Written by Msgr. William Novak for the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults, 2025.