

Views from the Pews - Church Architecture

Barbarism rules, O.K. Today we enthusiastically build huge arenas in the style of the old colosseums so that common man and his wife can watch men, and now women, beat each other to lingering deaths from brain injuries suffered in the course of battle over possession of a small air filled ball.

The Romans used men with clubs with steel spikes and all kinds of stabbing and slicing instruments to inflict entertaining damage, but essentially, the roar of a blood lusting mob is the same, whether in Rome's Colosseum or 2000 years later in Hamilton's FMG Stadium.

Similarly, the great religions have built huge worship centres to the Glory of God but these are the antithesis of the brutality and barbarism inherent in the colosseums. Great cathedrals were designed so that their architecture carried the timeless message - praise God and care for your neighbour. In 2022, however, true barbarism has returned. Christchurch is likely to spend uncounted millions on a modern colosseum capable of holding an audience the size of a suburb while only just managing to save its classical, 500 seat, cathedral. Other denominations are replacing their churches with community halls, pretty boxes which architecturally ignore the sacred and spiritual, and admire the financial profane.

For St Peter's Anglicans, however, every element of the physical church building includes a biblical / spiritual reference. Our church is the ultimate encyclopaedia of our Christian understanding, a visual library from which we can call up every element of our faith, personal and collective. In its simplest, most visible, form, as you sit in the pew, even reading this pew sheet during the sermon... this tradition appears in the triad of altar, pulpit, and Lectern.

Because God is central in our worship, His table, the altar, is situated centrally in the sanctuary. To one side is the Lectern, from which His Word is read, and to maintain the distinction between the sacred word of the Bible and the profane, ephemeral words of the sermon, the pulpit is on the opposite side. The arrangement is a revealing

demonstration of elemental principles of our belief system. In the Porch you can obtain a copy of the Cathedral visitor's guide. In it there is a diagrammatic floor plan of our cathedral church. In a time when the earthquake strengthening also provides opportunities for change, you may find it more interesting than you thought.

Sam Edwards