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THE THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE OF MUNICH'S NEW SACRED HEART CHURCH – AN INTELLECTUALIST STATEMENT CALLING FOR A RETRIEVAL OF A SYNTHETIC AND SYMBOLIC THEOLOGY

In view of current developments in the Church – specifically in Germany – the question arises whence these come? This paper attempts to provide an answer by way of describing and analyzing a much celebrated (post-) modern church in Munich, Germany: *Herz Jesu Kirche* (Sacred Heart Church), which was consecrated at the turn of the millennium. In the second part, it tries to shed light on the central philosophical ideas and theological concepts that energize such sacred architecture. In conclusion, it shows that the architects and the ecclesiastic commissioners of this edifice first and foremost intend to make a philosophical statement.

1. Art and the Sacred

The preserved monuments of Europe's past art and architecture serve overwhelmingly religion. Popular piety gave Christianity her riches. The decisive phenomenon was that artistic endeavors were unleashed by a yearning to serve the Lord of hosts. The power of Christ working in the souls evoked creative forces

– and the churches proved art's most fruitful field. Still during the Renaissance do we encounter a preponderance of sacred art. This was by no means the case merely because the Church possessed at that time the greatest wealth. Rather, the world was preoccupied with the realm of the sacred and the Spirit, which strove for the continuously renewed incarnation of the Christian idea and the praise of the triune God. Only with such knowledge could the Sistine Chapel, the Stanza della Segnatura and the refectory of the Milan Dominicans have been painted.

Art history reminds us that well into the sixteenth century art originated from a dialogue with higher powers. Greeks and Romans, Egyptians and Indians, Chinese and Aztecs, Africans and Polynesians served and celebrated Gods. Only in the wake of the Western schism in the sixteenth century were religion and art torn asunder. Now, in modernity, it seems a commonplace to presume piety to be in no need of figurative expression. Modern art is considered by its very nature profane. The sacred and the beautiful are now two distinct and autonomous realities – that on rare occasions might collaborate (von den Steinen 1965, 7-12; Bouyer 1967; Jones *et al.* 1992, 528-542; Adam 1984).

However, is it not a central early Christian insight that the temple curtain had been torn apart precisely at the moment Our Lord died on the cross? Thereby unveiling what had up to that point been veiled in the Old Testament? Jesus' appearance had already led to this insight – in the human form of Jesus the Godman is revealed. When the Lord asks His disciples who He is in their own opinion, Peter on his own could have considered Jesus merely an extraordinary man, a citizen of Nazareth, the son of Joseph and Mary – and nonetheless, he responds: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". His Master – Jesus – does not react by remarking: "Peter, you observe well." Rather, the Lord states emphatically "(Not) flesh and blood has... revealed this to you, but my Father, who is in heaven" (Mt 16:16f). Only God can see God. Despite this a mere human being beheld in Jesus' human form His divinity – somewhere in the vicinity of Caesarea Philippi in northern Israel.

It is precisely this biblical scene that constitutes a constant challenge to art – in the fifth century AD as much as now, at the beginning of the twenty first century. Art and architecture are called upon to invite us ever anew to acquire, to claim the gospel – to behold like Peter the form of the Godman – and to profess Jesus as the Son of the living God – so that Christian discipleship might succeed also here and now. Imitation of Christ is the decisive concern for Christian art in late antiquity and in the Middle Ages. Church architecture is also today called upon to enable this.

In response to Jesus' miraculous words once a voice from the crowd cried out: "Blessed is the womb that bore you...!" Jesus does not thank for the well-intentioned compliment. Instead, Our Lord responds, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" (Lk 11:26f). Faith means active participation and cooperation. This active testimony springs forth also from an active participation in liturgy – as also the Second Vatican Council does not tire to stress (SC 27; Cordes 1995).

Art and architecture in the church are charged to achieve a penetration and representation of Christian faith, which enable the beholder to be responsible for him-/herself in front of the sacred figures and scenes.

How does contemporary architecture succeed in rendering present that what is meant by the words "*qāhāl Jahwe*", "*ekklesia*", "Church"? How do architects create space for the celebration of the Eucharist, for the people of God to assemble?

2. Munich's Sacred Heart Church – an Example of Modern Church Architecture

For this it is helpful to examine closer Germany's newest Catholic Church – the *Herz Jesu Kirche* – the Sacred Heart Church in Munich. From the Middle Ages to the future, it only takes a subway ride of ten minutes. Some four miles west of Munich's cathedral, the Church of Our Lady, situated in Downtown Munich is located Sacred Heart Church in the borough of Neuhausen, in the vicinity of beautiful Nymphenburg Castle. This edifice enjoys attention from all parts of Germany and even from abroad. On daily basis tourists, art historians and architects visit Munich's "most modern church" – thus Cardinal Friedrich Wetter, Munich's archbishop (Neuhauser Nymphenburger Anzeiger 2000). Or, as the current pastor, Hans Späth, calls it "the Ferrari among churches" (Herwig 2001).

2.1. Historical Background

It was by no means intended that Munich would become a prominent place for contemporary church architecture. The first parish church, built in 1890, a former *Festhalle* for athletes, had been destroyed during World War II. The second church had been the former movie theatre for the SS troops guarding Hitler's resort on the Obersalzberg in the Bavarian mountains. Due to faulty electric wiring this house of God burnt down in 1994 (Herwig 2001).

As a reaction to the archdiocese's call for a new church 158 designs were submitted. The offices Markus Allmann, Amandus Sattler and Ludwig Wappner won the competition. The chancery of the Archdiocese of Munich spent sixteen million

Euros or seventeen million Dollars on the new church. On November 26, 2000 Cardinal Wetter consecrated the third church for Sacred Heart parish.

2.2. Architecture's Leitmotiv – Luminosity and Immateriality

The leitmotiv or leading theme of the design team was to create a church, which has “no conceptual predecessor”¹ and is independent from any examples that evolved during the long history of church architecture. The edifice should not be the result of a drawing process, but rather should be an expression of “the word and its self-explanation”.² The structure is intended to become a symbol for openness to the exterior and at the same time a symbol for security in the interior. Thus the design team developed a church whose appearance varies and whose multifaceted message can be accessed only gradually by the visitor.

In architects' view architecture should give sensory expression to the fact that “the comprehensible becomes incomprehensible in the metaphysical realm,” “transcendence through transparency” (Herwig 2001). Light is therein allocated the central, space-constituting role. This church embodies the characteristic properties of our age: “conflicting contrasts and simultaneity”. It is considered an expression of contemporary architecture's “reflexive modernity” (Allmann, Sattler, Wappner 1998, 9-12).

As this church wants to attract people and enter into dialogue with its neighborhood, this is the first church of this parish to have a campanile. It is about 120 feet high and possesses a metallically charged surface. Likewise also the church itself stands out from its environment. It is a simple cube with a conspicuously blue front façade.³ As its predecessors, it is oriented towards the north. A large square separates the façade from the tree-lined street – signaling openness and change, faithful to the architects' principle of conflicting contrasts and simultaneity. Large plates of limestone continue from the outside square into the interior without threshold – producing an inviting effect. This effect is being heightened when the huge portal doors are wide open on high feast days – *nota bene* the world's largest church doors. They symbolize outreaching arms uniting by way of one singular gesture the open square with the narthex and the church's interior. Calling to mind Ps 118:20: “This is the gate to the Lord” or John 10:9: “I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in ... and find pasture.” On the other hand, wooden, lamellar walls shield the interior from the profane (Baumeister 1999, 38-40).

¹ This claim is not quite true – see below 2.2.

² It is not indicated whether “word” is understood in the sense of the Prologue to John's Gospel.

³ A number of cube-like religious edifices are now under construction in Germany: Christian churches in Hamburg and Vienna, synagogues in Munich and Dresden.

In a special way this church embodies permanent change – brought about by the way light is being deployed and employed. Changing light conditions are the formative theme of this church and lead the beholder gradually from spatial quality to the iconographic overarching program with its theological statement.

The church forms a cube measuring $52\frac{1}{2}$ yards long, 23 yards wide and 17 yards high (Römisches 2002, 8). Two translucent boxes form the walls. The exterior wall consists of glass closing the building thermally. The inner wall consists of wood and limits the actual liturgical space very much like an ancient “cella.” Between the two walls one finds a circumambulatory walking space providing for the Stations of the Cross and connected to the narthex. From the narthex these two u-shaped walls enclose the church. As the outside walls are almost exclusively made of glass, they seemingly reach into the sky. However, due to increasing saturation, the glass windows gradually change their optical property from transparent in the front to opaque as they near the altar. The inner walls consist of maple and oak wood panels that continuously are more open as they approach the altar. Thus, wood transports the organ’s sound and the orchestra’s voices to the front and that of the presider to the rear – but not that of the congregation to the front. They also serve to modulate the entrance of light. The inner rear wall – behind the altar – is a curtain consisting of tombac, a brass-copper alloy, used as casing also for rifle cartridges. As in the case of the front façade, also this curtain contains a picture program. Behind the congregation is perched on low columns a massive cube housing the organ and providing space for the orchestra (Römisches 2002, 8).

The formal architectural severity – with its simple and clear forms – contrasts favorably to the complicated construction realized here. The building consists of a steel skeleton with hanging glass façade and flexible wooden panels, which are steel re-enforced. An ingenious thermal system was developed solely for Sacred Heart Church. The elaborate construction employed and sophisticated techniques developed recede in favor of the overall impression. The varying moods and impressions this created space evokes, stand in the foreground and immediately catch the visitor’s attention (Römisches 2002, 9f). In comparison with other churches Sacred Heart appears less material. Indeed, it conveys an ethereal feeling. Common to almost every component is light transparency. Thereby built architecture steps in the background and structure dematerializes. Light becomes the space forming factor, orienting the church towards its interior and generating varying moods. George Sexton from Washington, D.C. consulted the architects on employing light to bring across well-calculated messages, highlighting liturgical events, producing as the occasion may arise gentle conditions conducive for con-

templation. In recognition of their innovative solutions the German Museum of Architecture awarded in 2001 Sexton along with the architects the Prize for Light Architecture (Römisch 2002, 10).

Direct light entering from above and the side produces a shrine-like atmosphere. The blue of the portal doors creates a cool filter. Given the cold light entering it, the narthex is sobering, almost verging on the profane. Very much like a paradise or forecourt in the early Christian basilicas or a Romanesque narthex, this space serves as the connecting link between outside world and church interior. The clear windows afford an unimpeded view of the surrounding neighborhood.

Two massive columns grace the entrance to the interior. The visitor's sight is thereby focused on the liturgical path from the baptismal font to the altar. The vestibule is low, almost mystically semi-dark, and thereby constitutes the actual threshold to the liturgical space. Here are located the confessional, a place to venerate Our Lady, and a seasonal crèche. Through a slight inclination the floor and the large oak panels are turned towards the altar, and the visitor is guided to the front – and is invited to the center, into the fullness of this church's spatial dimensions and luminosity. Very much like a protective gesture – corresponding to the inviting doors of the portico – the warm wooden panels embrace the liturgical space. While granting a view of the outside, they simultaneously also protect the faithful from intrusive looks. Again light is given the role of careful modulation of liturgy: baptismal area, pews, and the area around the altar. The closed position of the wood panels near the baptismal font and the pews veils them in subdued light. The more open position of the wood panels and the opaque windows near the altar allows the altar and the tabernacle to be immersed in more luminous and even diffuse light. It transforms the liturgical center into a metaphysical space, which has one sense of the numinous. Seams of light in the tombak curtain and ceiling heighten the impression of levity and levitation – almost to one of immateriality. As the architect Allmann describes it: “the path from comprehending terrestrial light to mystical light, the origin of which one cannot make out” (Römisch 2002, 12). Artificial light enables the liturgical area to glow like a shrine from within. Viewed from outside, a warm lantern-like effect is being produced (Maak 2000, 23).

The topos of immateriality is not novel to church architecture. Already the alabaster windows of antiquity and the rising walls of Gothic churches effected a diaphany of walls. Due to recent technological advances, the whole wall can serve immateriality, as it is exclusively glass hung unto a steel beam construction. Already in 1964 Franz Füeg used a similar construction for St. Pius church at the

Vierwaldstätter Lake in Switzerland. Already that church employs a cube with an inverted translucent marble shrine. However, a different impression of space is being conveyed in that case.

There exist some structural, but not topical parallels between Munich's Sacred Heart church and other profane buildings designed by Jean Nouvel, Edward Suzuki, or Herzog and de Meuron. Like in the case of Munich's church dematerialization, multiplicity, and vividness of architecture, as well as the paradox between simplicity in the ground plan and complexity in the statement and construction figure prominently. Such relational and tension-filled space without symbolic representations and focal point produces a quintessentially postmodern ambience: ambivalence. The surfaces of the materials chosen and their potential for adaptability play a decisive role. One must add to this the willingness to experiment with materials used and with the construction to be chosen. This includes the development of refined technologies in the field of glass processing, especially as regards silk-screen printing (Römisch 2002, 13).

2.3. Liturgical Equipment

As already at the beginning of liturgical reform, represented for example by Dominikus Böhm or Martin Weber, directed light serves to unite assembly and altar. Allmann, Sattler and Wappner achieve this by choosing soft light for the liturgical area in contrast to the hard light of the outside, the narthex and the circumambulatory walk. The idea is that in a "directed" area, with pews accordingly set, liturgy can also be celebrated in the old practice of "circumstantes" (Römisch 2002, 14).

The locations for the respective liturgical events were consciously chosen. The baptismal stone is made of alabaster and placed on the center axis. It illustrates symbolically baptism as the sacrament of initiation within Christian life – as it is in proximity to the dark area under the choir loft – from darkness to the light filled area around the altar. The goal of this path – which is the center aisle – is the altar. The altar is cut from the same limestone as the floor. Thus the altar seems to grow out of the floor. The mensa is deliberately chosen from the same quarry, but is somewhat more light-colored than the floor – as this area should be the one most flooded by light, and therefore also reflecting the most light. The same design and material was utilized for the ambo, the chair for the priest celebrant and the other seats. Disassociated from the altar is the tabernacle, positioned in front of the tombak curtain showing at times a cross. This is in conformity with the post-conciliar suggestion to establish for the Blessed Sacrament a distinct and

separate place. This explains also the cage consisting of tombak rods surrounding the alabaster tabernacle. From a distance this fragile, dematerializing metallic weave makes the appearance of a protective, impregnable cocoon. Here again one encounters the architects' formal principle of a space introverted by making use of a light flooded shell (Brinkmann 2000, 6f).

2.3.1. Pictures

Pictures have been loosely selected to fit the namesake of Sacred Heart Church. Thus the large entrance doors depict the nails of Our Lord's crucifixion. These have been applied to 432 dark blue colored glass plates of the 44 feet high entrance doors. Alexander Beleshenko, an artist living in England, is responsible for the design. Only vaguely noticeable is the cross on the exterior surface of the door. Reference is made on the inside to chapters 18-20 in John's Gospel – the only gospel mentioning the side wounds of Jesus. Beleshenko forms the nails to a grid showing the cross and uses a specially developed combination of nails to encode the gospel message – alluding to cuneiform. At random the gospel verses start somewhere in a sentence – thereby conveying the feeling of Christ's passion being both derailed and boundless. It stresses the simultaneity of the passion events, rather than their consecutive sequence. Blue symbolizes heaven (Erflé 2001).

Beyond this iconographic mission the portico functions within the architects' light agenda. To the outside it reflects the immediate surroundings. It is the beginning of a path from real light to mystical light. Also stylistically there exist parallels between art and architecture. Both work with flat areas, graphic means, with overlapping themes and reciprocal penetrations, which undo the bounds of space. Both strive for simultaneous and paradox representations and stress the visual versatility of surfaces.

2.3.2. Stations of the Cross

The abstract rendering of the passion narrative is mirrored in the pictures chosen for the Stations of the Cross in the side corridor. Matthias Wähner from Munich created them. The fourteen stations show stations on the *Via Dolorosa* in present-day Jerusalem as black and white slides. They are placed in aluminum steles facing to the church's interior, allowing outside light to shine through them. The pictures are unique in that they make do with no representation of Jesus. They are shots taken seemingly at random without using a flash or a tripod, as mundane situations in today's Jerusalem might present themselves to any passing tourist. The photographer wants to demonstrate that in a time of an uncon-

trollable flood of pictures and unlimited possibilities, art is able to produce pictures that, out of deference for the unportrayable, stay mute (Römisch 2002, 16-19). The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's observation involuntarily comes to mind: "One should keep silent about what one cannot speak" (cf. Wittgenstein 1963, 7).

The architects' intention is thereby echoed in the Stations of the Cross. As the properties of light transform the ambience from the real to the mystical, the beholder receives a concrete framework for space and time. He is granted the freedom and latitude to develop his own imagination and possibilities for identification with the sufferings of Christ. As translucent pictures, slides are ideally suited for this undertaking. Also here a close symbiosis between architecture and art is found. Wähner continues in an intensified form the signative image language prevalent after the Second Vatican Council.

2.3.3. The Old Cross

At the intersection of the interior and the outside a heavy, almost untreated wood cross hangs from the wall in the narthex. The Munich sculptor Karl Knappe had carved it for the preceding church. It had survived the fire that had destroyed in 1994 the second Sacred Heart Church. But it does show scars from this fire, which witness to the parish's history. In addition they intensify the intended impression of suffering and passion. The proximity to the new cornerstone must be considered as a sign of parochial continuity (Römisch 2002, 17-19).

2.3.4. Madonna with Child

Under the choir loft is located a place for veneration in front of a painting of Our Lady. The "Friends of Sacred Heart" expressly donated this rendering for the new church. It has an alabaster frame and is mounted in the same tombak lattice fabric as the tabernacle – suggesting vaguely Gothic altar wings. The painting originates in the workshop of Jan Pollack, is dated around 1500 and is ascribed to the master of the annunciation altar in Blütenburg Castle. This type dates back to the icon *Salus Populi Romani* from the 6th century (Römisch 2002, 17-19).

2.3.5. The Five Wounds

The Munich artists Marc Weis and Martin De Mattia created the five wounds of Christ. These are visible through five light shafts lowered into the floor – thereby suggesting the floor as the body of Christ. In order to be visible, they have been anamorphically stretched. Each cavern is one meter deep – but suggesting an in-

finitely luminous space. The pictures were reproduced by silkscreen print on glass and hung from the glass plate covering the cavern vertically downward. Lucas Cranach and Pasolini have inspired the pictures. Jesus Christ's wounds become the foundation of the Church.

An unusually high degree of imagination is demanded on part of the beholder – and at the same time strong emotionality. While taking recourse to images and topics that are familiar from art history, this is not done in the sense of topical examples but rather merely by way of association – in order to demonstrate expressivity (Römisch 2002, 20f). This is typical for the postmodern *modus operandi* (Römisch 2002, 20f).

2.3.6. The Cross as Curtain

The cross curtain behind the altar is undoubtedly the iconographic climax. The couple Susanna and Bernhard Lutzberger designed the curtain. It is formed of a two-layered metal fabric with wires of varying strength and hangs from an invisible steel construction. The front layer of wires is more transparent than the rear one. In addition, it is partially chain- and partially weft-woven. Moreover, both are counter-rotating. These factors produce the optical difference between the symbol of the cross and its background. Because tombak is most like gold in color and effect, it was chosen as material. During daytime diffuse light enters the altar area and makes the cross symbol recede and become invisible. The motive of a diaphanous rear wall with no visible supports, seemingly floating, conveys a metaphysical ambience around the altar. However, during the evening an immaterial golden cross steps visually to the foreground. More than any other architectural component, the curtain has different phases of appearance. Thus, it imparts a sense of vividness. The cross in Sacred Heart Church becomes both a symbol for the passion of Jesus and – due to the light captured therein - also a symbol for the light of Easter - a symbol for redemption and resurrection. It corresponds to the wooden nail cross at the entrance. Both embrace as program the whole of the church.

2.4. Appreciation

At the beginning of the 21st century the Sacred Heart Church of Munich sets new standards in sacred architecture. While picking up individual themes from art history – especially the last century's theme of dematerialization - both the architecture and the furnishings make do with few predecessors. In this case architecture and art form one total piece of art. In the sixties and seventies of the

past century a number of matter-of-fact, functional churches – looking more like pastoral centers - were produced. Munich's Sacred Heart church strives again for expressions of the sensory kind, indeed of emotionality. It adds to contemporary church architecture again the dimension of the mystical.

With its characteristic components of clear, reductionistic elements, formed by translucent surfaces with transformable structures and complex constructions Sacred Heart of Munich becomes a signature of the present time and a means for interpreting it. It connects easily to the subtle elegance of contemporary architectural avant-garde.

By way of renunciation of previously known forms and motives the architects and artists intend to offer the visitor a living church for liturgy and contemplation. New, unusual sensory experiences should lead to a radically personal experience of the transcendental.

3. A Theological-Philosophical Assessment

This church manifests a fresh style of architecture: it has departed from a "heroic" modernity. It is moderate; it is not full of itself. Not self-assured, but pensive. It lacks altogether a false sense of progress. It is a church almost without memory, without recollection. The philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche asked in despair: "What did we commit, as we severed this earth from its sun?" (Nietzsche 2001, 164). Decades later the author Alfred Döblin responds: "the cross becomes the symbol for a world that need not stagger about aimlessly" (Döblin 1980). It is as if Sacred Heart's architects had chosen these two quotes as their leitmotifs.

Every generation and age have a right and even obligation to design its own churches. The style is a manifestation of its faith. Original approaches to church architecture can be signs of a strong faith. Whenever church history passed through a neo-phase, such as Neo-Baroque or Neo-Gothic or Neo-Byzantine, it was a time of weakness or of impending weakness. A nostalgic, retrospective, idealizing attitude seem to have dominated then, frequently shying away from the challenges the present *hic et nunc* posed and not taking up the impulses a particular age might offer. Such transfiguring romanticizations usually do not yield much. They produce plagiarisms of doubtful quality. The term "mannerism" comes to mind. Already from afar one recognizes their flaws of duplication and lack of originality.

This accusation certainly cannot be levied against Munich's Sacred Heart Church. This church is almost singular. There is no actual precedent for this church in church architecture. Certainly this church is not meant for the fast-food consumer or the fetishist of baroque art. The beholder is challenged to discover what the architects and artists have in mind, what message they intend to convey.

The choice of John's passion narrative as inscription of the large doors is felicitous. It is the only biblical basis for the veneration of the sacred heart: "but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one soldier pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water" (John 19:33f).

In a time when suffering is passionately and deliberately suppressed, Sacred Heart Church does not shy from taking up this topic – but, alas, in an encoded way. As a Christian one may not deny oneself and others the reality of suffering. One is called to confront it with honesty and seriousness. The willingness to take up one's cross remains a lasting sign of recognition who the disciples of Christ are: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Mk 8:34).

The 44 feet high portico-like doors on the southern façade – when hydraulically opened – contain also another message. They are appealing gestures of invitation. Their openness is Sacred Heart's second message: welcome, reception and thereby catholicity. The open doors signal an all-encompassing embrace for all seeking Christ. Thus, Cardinal Wetter prayed at the consecration: "May the poor find mercy, the oppressed freedom and every human being the dignity of your childhood." The doors give eloquent testimony to the gospel words: "Come to me; all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mt 11:28) (Römisch 2002, 9).

Depending on the position of the sun, weak outlines of a cross may become visible on this blue glass façade. While the cross on the front façade might suggest passion, the rear one – resplendent at times in shining gold – reminds one of the joy of resurrection. It is the architects' intention to accentuate passion and resurrection equally. Do they succeed? The double crosses perform an arch around the central Christian mystery of faith: "Lord, by your cross and resurrection you set us free. You are the savior of the world" the congregation responds during the Eucharist. What theology considers the core and nucleus of the Christian creed, namely "suffered, died, buried and resurrected", Sacred Heart attempts to translate into architecture.

The shafts depicting the five wounds of Christ are part of this theological message. The same applies to the painting of Our Lady. The position of this place of prayer is significant. Our Lady is not isolated, but stands in reference to Christ. The painting is located on a diagonal pointing towards the tabernacle. Already in the picture she shows us the child Jesus – the incarnate Son of God, who in turn brings the message from the eternal Father. Jesus almost appears adult. He

holds in his left hand a scroll; thereby indicating HE is the Word of God, the *Logos*, revealing Himself definitively to humankind.

It is much more difficult to interpret the third picture sequence in Sacred Heart: the 14 Stations of the Cross. Graffiti on walls, street peddlers, bored passers-by, noisy tourists, souvenirs, crowds of pilgrims, so-called holy sites characterize these intentional snapshots. It is what the average tourist perceives to be glaring banality and stupid degeneration. There is no other rendering of the Stations of the Cross resisting in such determined manner to depict Jesus. The artist Wähler challenges our imagination, our ability to abstract and perhaps even challenges our faith.

These stations are ordered around the church and signify thereby that suffering is a part of Christian discipleship. They reveal something of the nature of being a member of the Church. The circumambulatory Stations of the Cross around the liturgical interior of the church also signify the people of God as on a constant pilgrimage. Eyes from outside could at any time observe the one praying the Stations of the Cross through the transparent glass wall. Being Christian means being constantly put to test by one's environment. Insofar Sacred Heart Church reminds one of the pioneering words of the Second Vatican Council: "The joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the people of our times ... are the joys and hopes, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well" (GS 1). This way of thinking perceives the Church not as a refuge, but in interaction with the outside world. Sacred Heart of Munich confronts head on this tension of being not of the world, but in the world. But does it address it adequately?

The pictures' intention is to speak a very discreet language. The whole of the church is meant to stress liturgy and to come to life during the Eucharist. No picture distracts or offers diversion. Light welcomes the visitor and lets him experience an atmosphere. Eucharist is not intended to be celebrated against, but along with, and sustained by the space provided and the assembled people of God. In a time of a constant deluge of impressions and stimuli it is difficult to perceive, let alone comprehend liturgical sign language. Sacred Heart church attempts to enable a concentration on the liturgical events. The interior is one single invitation to have oneself be stirred, spiritually moved and led to theological depths.

The German convert and author Alfred Döblin (1878-1957) wrote 1931 something regarding the then new Corpus Christi Church in Aachen, which also applies to Munich's new Sacred Heart Church: "The human being entering this church finds nothing but the living God – provided he seeks him – and no picture should make this task easier for him. This task he should perform all by his own" (Römisch 2002, 9).

Indeed Döblin's quote sums up well the isolation of modern lives, their forsakenness and forlornness – indeed their speechlessness when confronted with religion. Sacred Heart Church is an eloquent testimony at the beginning to the 21st century to existential and architectural veracity. This church is truly “honest to God”. But does it suffice for a church to be “honest to God”?

4. The Parishioners' Reception of their New Church

What is the reality of church life in Sacred Heart today? Have parishioners accepted the new church?

The seating capacity of the old church was exactly one thousand. On feast days sometimes two thousand would attend one single mass. The new church offers seating for 396 parishioners. Until 1995 there were four Sunday masses held at Sacred Heart. Now, 2003, only one Sunday mass is held. Previously the parish was famous for concert masses. Now something more in keeping with the spirit of the times is scheduled for every Sunday evening: a high-quality concert with accompanying meditative texts written by the new pastor. In fact, more people attend the concert than Sunday Eucharist. Intriguing and highly informative is another piece of statistics. In the years prior to the fire Sacred Heart registered 2 to 5 converts per year all coming from the parish territory. In 2001 and 2002 the same parish had 20 and 31 converts respectively. The new converts are attracted by the concerts and the pastor's meditative texts and are by and large singles. These converts come from a variety of parishes now, while the vast majority of actual Sacred Heart parishioners now prefer going to neighboring parishes – *nota bene* all having churches built after 1950. In 2000 90% of all parishioners rejected the new church.

No survey has been conducted as to the causes for these developments. From conversations with locals it seems that the new church is considered as being “an aquarium”, “a container hall”, “revolutionary”, “sober”, “not uplifting”, “cool”, “uninviting”, “too intellectualistic”, “nowhere is there a profession of faith found”, “the tabernacle is a bird's cage”, “out of step with our faith”, “an unreasonable demand”, “it is more a philosophical statement than a House of God”, “in this church I couldn't believe that God became one of us” and finally “an imposition on us by architects who cannot pray and do not live a Christian faith”.⁴

Indeed, the architects – who readily admit being non-practicing Christians (*sic*) – have had no intention of hanging up the old wooden cross from the former parish. Also, parishioners had insisted upon having the venerated painting

⁴ The author has given several tours of this church to clergy and laity working in two deaneries in Bavaria. He also attended mass there on different occasions in 2002 and 2003.

of Our Lady installed – overcoming the architects’ opposition. In addition, it was the parish, which wanted the wounds of Christ somehow present in the Church. Thereupon, Munich’s auxiliary bishop Wolfgang Siebler introduced the notion of having five shafts inserted into the floor showing the wounds of Christ. Last but not least, parishioners alerted the architects that they had altogether forgotten to make provision for a sacristy.

The majority of parishioners prefer attending Sunday services elsewhere, but the new church enjoys popularity among some. The concerts are full to capacity. What factors contribute to these contradictory results?

5. Sacred Heart Church and the GIRM

In seven points one can summarize an evaluation of the art and architecture of Munich’s Sacred Heart Church, bearing the GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal 2011) in mind:

1. The church’s architecture is one of the best expressions and manifestations of the *Zeitgeist* it lives in – *nota bene* in Central Europe. Formulated theologically, it eloquently gives form to “the signs of the time” (Lk 12:56). Insofar it is much in keeping with the General Instruction of the Roman Missal, which calls for “new works of art that are in harmony with the character of each successive age” (GIRM 2003, 289).

2. The revolutionary way light is employed creates an ethereal, indeed mystical place – reminding one of Hugh of St. Victor’s theology, perhaps best expressed in the Sainte Chapelle of Paris. Hugh teaches that through Jesus Christ illumination is imparted to humankind. The origin of this illumination is Christ (St. Victor 1879-80, 923-1154; Roques 1962, 214-365).

3. The light message is well manifested in the glass walls and large portico doors. But where is its focal point, its fulcrum? Frequently people walk around aimlessly in the sanctuary with no visible center – they have a sense of being lost. At no place does the church convey a feeling of security – aside in front of the picture of Our Lady. By virtue of its clear colors and strong expressiveness this painting stands in stark contrast to its surroundings, which lacks a clear message *prima vista*. The rear, flat curtain is a silent wall. In addition, the beholder cannot relate to the passion of Our Lord when looking at the photos from the *Via Dolorosa* in Jerusalem. The Roman Missal, however, calls for “art, which nourishes faith and devotion and accords authentically with both the meaning and the purpose for which it is intended” (GIRM 2003, 289). By making do with no central theme for the pictures and supported by black and white photos, he is able to con-

vey a heightened sense of dislocation and distance between the onlooker and the Passion of Christ. The Stations of Cross do not invite to prayer or meditation, but rather encourage thought and reflection.

4. The acoustics are superb, but lend themselves less to a dialogue between priest and congregation. In addition, also the way the pews are arranged suggests little appreciation for the “*communio-structure*” of the church. A church should be “clearly expressive of the unity of the entire holy people” (GIRM 2003, 294). Is Sacred Heart Church essentially a place to marvel at, to listen to superb concerts, but not to celebrate together as a living Eucharistic community faith (Langer 2003, 14)? The renowned German liturgist Klemens Richter (Münster) describes the church even as “a step back into the 19th century” (Pfarrei Herz Jesu München 2003).

5. The leitmotiv “cross” is not as present and engaging as the architects had hoped for. The cross on the front blue glass façade is barely visible. The old wooden cross hanging in the narthex is far too large and too high for such a narrow space. It does not speak to those entering the church. The much celebrated cross woven into the tombak curtain behind the altar becomes clearly discernable only when illuminated by artificial light, i.e. during the evening hours. The cross on the curtain does not repeat the inviting theme of the entrance doors. Rather it confronts abruptly and this in a very impersonal, abstract way. The Roman Missal, however, calls for “a cross, with the figure of Christ crucified upon it, either on the altar or near it” (GIRM 2003, 308). This is not the case. All crosses refrain from depicting the body of Christ. They provoke – but do they invite to follow the cross? Do they evoke compassion and gratitude for someone’s vicarious sufferings?

6. The opaque alabaster tabernacle is inconspicuous, not in dialogue and interaction with the rest of the church – there is no discernable relationship between the altar and the tabernacle. On the contrary, the tabernacle is set apart, is seemingly inaccessibly locked in a cage. It even conveys the impression of having been put aside but not been picked up yet. Must church architecture reflect this epochal God-forsakenness? No one is felt invited to adore and worship. This is all the more the case, as the eternal light is now white and so thin that it is hardly noticeable. Perhaps a separate chapel set aside for the Blessed Sacrament might have been better. As there is no figure representing Christ and as the tabernacle plays no positive role, does not Jesus Christ suffer the danger of becoming superfluous here? The Catholic convert and author Gertrud von le Fort (1876-1971) paralleled history with the stages in life of Our Lord and called our age the one in which Jesus remains hidden, unrecognized and therefore unacknowledged (von le Fort 1949).

7. As the solemn consecration ceremony and the institutio of 1969 bear out, the altar is the fulcrum of a church. It is there that the presence of God among His people occurs. This significance of the altar as the church's architectural center finds little expression in Sacred Heart. Neither is this altar sufficiently visible nor is artistically rendered in such a way that it could convey its twofold meaning as cultic table and as sacrificial stone. This church is not conducive for a congregation's responding to the priest's *sursum corda* with a *habemus ad Dominum*.

8. Indeed, the architects seem to have born little in mind the actual nature of the Eucharist as "thanksgiving" (GIRM 2011, 296) as *actio sacra praeexcellenter*. The paucity of signs and symbolic language puts the burden too much on the spoken word and on liturgical gestures. This lack of artistic forms is conducive to a cultic verbosity. Priest and congregation are called upon to compensate for this lack of forms beyond their means and possibilities.

6. Possible Causes for Architectural Imbalances in the Sacred Heart Church

It is precisely the strength and genius of Sacred Heart Church, which renders it theologically problematic and liturgically difficult to accept. It is a perfect seismograph for the temper of our time – one is reminded of the French-Jewish mystic and philosopher Simone Weil's (1909-1943) observation: "speak quietly of God to me". While a product of the close of the 20th century, Sacred Heart church is also a perfect expression of existentialist philosophy: we must draw up and design our own life. Only we as individuals can give our own existence meaning – apart from society, family and friends (Sartre 1948).⁵ This, however, runs counter to the nature of the church as *communio sanctorum*: communion with Jesus Christ, the saints and all members of the Church, past and present. The Church is the mystery and sacrament of unity for the council fathers. Truly, in the Europe of today the *bon mot* circulates of Christianity's "self-secularization". As the Church is inextricably communion and the mystical body of Christ, it may never promote an existentialist/individualistic understanding of life or faith. Common symbols and signs establish common points of identification.

As the Second Vatican Council eloquently affirms, it is the task of the Church to seek for the "signs of time" (GS 4). But the church is an edifice where the church assembles and celebrates in thanksgiving the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As such it cannot be content merely in expressing these signs of a particular time. It is more than the experience of some nebulous, mystical form

⁵ Philosophers traditionally attribute the concept of a self-caused being to God. Sartre has claimed that every human being seeks becoming self-caused – thus the ultimate project of every human being must be to become God.

of the transcendental. It must undertake the effort to transform these features of every specific age into a profession of faith, into an active participation in the Eucharist. Church architecture's vocation is to struggle time and again for a critical balance between "the signs of the time" and abiding Catholic faith. Neither is the Eucharist an actualistic event, produced by human beings isolated and set apart from preceding generations of believers, by a group of people in their very own way. Nor is it simply representing a past event. It is the one and always Eucharist of Jesus Christ spanning and transcending the centuries, but becoming present in a specific parish. Faith is not something spontaneous, individualistic and momentary, being "created" new every Sunday. Not as a cheap compromise, but out of a genuine concern to have the concrete parish at a specific place celebrate the one Eucharist – as Logos-containing liturgy – in an authentic manner a new form of church architecture must develop.

If new forms in architecture and art do not relate to an ever youthful and ageless faith, active participation of all becomes difficult. Signs and symbols, as well as architecture should have churchgoers rediscover their belief after a week immersed in a secularized and non-religious environment. A church – as edifice and as community of believers – should strive to overcome the harmful dualism of sacred and profane, of world and Church, of earth and heaven, of individualism and society, of time and eternity. Precisely by virtue of the Eucharist celebrated there is always greater continuity than discontinuity. In addition, liturgy is a significant *locus theologicus* attesting to the Church's faith, explaining and constituting it (Schumacher 2002, 161-185; Vagaggini 1976, 519; Guardini 1935, 135f).⁶ The rule *lex orandi – lex credendi* confirms this insight (Prosper of Aquitania 1866, 664f).⁷ Architectural minimalism is suitable for confrontation and provocation, but not "to lift up your hearts" and join with previous generations of believers, with the saints and angels in praising the one and same triune God (Vincent of Lérins 2016).⁸ The difference between what truly Eucharist is, i.e. the assembly called to participate in actively and the degree believers can achieve, coming from a secularized society, remains in such a church almost unbridgeable. Church architecture must take people from where they are, bring them to a conscious celebration of the Eucharist and release them again in such a fashion that they can sanctify the world. For this reason art must be symbolic – it must express more than mere fac-

⁶ Liturgy cannot be found as one of Melchior Cano's *loci theologici*. Nonetheless, the forerunner of liturgical reform, Romano Guardini, speaks of it as interwoven with dogma and thus "prayed truth".

⁷ The clearer formula reads *legem credendi lex statuat supplicandi* (the law of prayer should statuate a law for belief). Liturgy as the Church's prayer presupposes the Church's belief and is an expression of the same.

⁸ "*Semper ubique ab omnibus creditum*" (Vincent of Lérins 2016, 2, 23).

ticity. As Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) famously reminded in his treatment of art in *Laokoon*: the fine arts are called to allow the beholder to see beyond the merely tangible. The open mouth of the snake permits the beholder to imagine the snake devouring its victim in the next moment (cf. Lessing 2020).

6.1. Two famous Brothers

As a theologian one ponders the causes for this imbalance and searches for an explanation also within the boundaries of one's own discipline. One arrives at an interesting conclusion: of two brothers who equally have contributed greatly to theology in the 20th century, today one remains well known and the other is almost forgotten. Perhaps this injustice need be corrected in order to improve on contemporary church architecture? The two theologian-brothers are Hugo and Karl Rahner.⁹ While Karl Rahner's transcendental theology is a well-established part of contemporary theology, his brother Hugo's contributions are valued only by the few experts in the field. One cause may be that Hugo passed away already early on in 1968, while Karl lived until 1984 (Fischer 1986, 58; Rahner 1968, 53-135, 93,106; Imhof, Biallowons 1983, 39).¹⁰

It is a thesis of this presentation – to simplify matters a bit – that both brothers' contributions must equally be appreciated and appropriated in order to repair the imbalance one sometimes encounters in contemporary church architecture. Karl Rahner's transcendental approach ascertains the rooting of the one and same faith in the contemporary here and now. Hugo Rahner's symbolic-synthetic approach secures our joining the saints, church fathers, angels and previous generations of believers in the one and same faith. Transcendental theology must be supplemented by and conjoined with symbolic and synthetic theology. Anthropocentric humanism finds its fulfillment in a christocentric existence.

A precursor of modern theology, Henri de Lubac, stated in his book *The Splendor of the Church* that giving up a genuinely theological symbolic thinking occasioned in the case of the Eucharist a one-sided emphasis on the real presence and thus the disintegration of the Church-Eucharist mystery (de Lubac 1993, 202-235).

As an expert in the Church Fathers, as a theologian and dean of the famous Jesuit theology department in Innsbruck, Austria, Hugo Rahner had been held in

⁹ Incidentally, Karl Rahner was a frequent homilist in the second Sacred Heart Church.

¹⁰ Karl Rahner apprehends the mysticism of St. Ignatius as a model for "transcendental experience". For him Ignatian retreats have the sole purpose of unlocking existential self-experience as transcendental experience. In contrast, Hugo Rahner sees Ignatius' mystical experiences as priestly mysticism: Christocentric and Trinitarian spirituality springing forth from the Eucharist and serving the concrete Church as "*sichtbare(n) Christuswirklichkeit*". To Karl Rahner Ignatius' immediacy to God is not granted through liturgy. On the other hand, Hugo Rahner discovers the mass's "*Te igitur, clementissime Pater*" as a source of mystical graces for Ignatius.

high esteem during his life. His perhaps central thought is: the awareness, “that the primordially old Church is always positioned to become new and that the presence lives from a circulating stream, flowing through humanity ever since Pentecost” (Ernst 1966, 15-16), the founding of the Church.

The Second Vatican Council speaks of different images unlocking the innermost nature of the Church for us (LG 6). Hugh of St. Victor defined symbols as “bringing together, what belongs together, presented to the eye in visible forms along with the invisible matter, by which they are suited to refer to the invisible matter” (Werbick 1994, 38). It serves an accord of contents and form, of thought and expression. Symbols become something of “a living form (*Gestalt*) of the Spirit” (Cassirer 1971, 84). In this sense Hugo Rahner’s concern is an alternative plan to a rationalistic, abstract and speculative philosophy. While Hugo thinks historically and symbolically, his brother approached theology transcendently – much indebted to the philosophies of Thomas Aquinas, Heidegger, Hegel and Kant. This means Karl Rahner reflected on the a priori conditions of insight and belief on part of the believing subject. In his central book he therefore consciously often avoids using theological biblical arguments (Manz 1990, 37).¹¹ “Knowing, subject-like self-possession” leads to “self-determination”. This thematizes human beings as creatures of transcendence already always positioned with a reference to God (Rahner 2000, 22).¹² Here the individual “mirrors” a person’s transcendental (Rahner 1966, 221-252, 230; Manz 1990, 37).¹³

6.2. Hugo Rahner’s Thoughts as a Contribution to a Retrieval of a Synthetic and Symbolic Architecture

Incarnation as the entry of God into human history is the origin and the secret as mystery of the visible Church. This incarnational structure of faith means there are a divine element and a human element indissolubly in the Church as the mystical body of Christ. This means that the history of humankind becomes an interior part of “divine history” (Rahner 1937, 99-104). Thus the symbols are not mere allegories, but belong to the historical embodiment – body as *Gestalt* – of the visible Church. The unity of soul and body, of form and matter, with other words the hylemorphic principle, is for Hugo Rahner the essential category to comprehend theological symbols (Rahner 1967, 46). This symbolic-morphological understanding was lost in the Renaissance and Goethe regained it. With such a method one wards

¹¹ Some call his theology a “*Phänomenologie des Bewußtseins*,” a phenomenology of consciousness.

¹² For an in-depth discussion of Karl Rahner’s understanding of “transcendental” see Knoepffler 1993. The term “revelation” is associated with the subject.

¹³ For Karl Rahner, on the other hand, symbols are a part of a phenomenology of consciousness.

off Platonic and Neo-Platonic tendencies spiritualizing faith. In the *Gestalt* or form, the essence of something becomes apparent. Interior and exterior, kernel and shell belong together. What Thomas Aquinas calls "*forma substantialis*", Goethe calls "primordial image" (*Urbild*) or "primordial phenomenon" (*Urphänomen*) (Trunz 1974, 358).

It is in this vein then that the great precursor of liturgical renewal, Romano Guardini, defined liturgical education as an initiation into the *Gestalt*, the form. Upon this canvas Guardini states in his small gem *Sacred Signs*: "The liturgy is not a matter of ideas, but of actual things, and of actual things as they now are, not as they were in the past" (Guardini 1956, 9). We partake in a centuries-old continuous movement. A symbol comes about if something interior, spiritual, finds its expression in something exterior, tangible. The scale is merely allegorically a representation for justice. In contrast, human movements and mimics of the face can be seen and addressed – but they express the invisible human soul. In this sense the altar is a symbol (Guardini 1955, 27).

Upon this background one then understands Scripture. While upon first glance it has no interest in abstract ontological speculation – it speaks of the "form" of God, who took on the "form" of a servant (*morphe tou Theou – morphe tou doulou*) (Phil 2:6.7) so that humankind may be of similar "form" with Him, "conformed to" God (*symmorphos*) (Rom 8:29). Here one sees what a vital role the term "form" enjoys in the New Testament. On this the *analogia entis* is based.

It is with this in mind that Hugo Rahner wrote his classic *Greek Myths and Christian Mystery* and *Symbols of the Church*. A few of these symbols could well find modern, contemporary expression in church architecture and art.

6.2.1. The Cross

For Christendom's self-understanding the cross possesses great symbolic strength. In this sign Christianity's self-assertion in an erstwhile inimical environment unfolds. The realism of the cross did away with pagan cults of mysteries; likewise with evil spirits. "From this point onward there goes through the whole of ancient Christian literature an unceasing hymn to the cosmic mystery of the cross and to the outstretched hands of the Logos, who from the cross embraces the entire world and brings it home to his Father" (Rahner 1963, 51). The cross is the world's protological and eschatological secret, mystery. It unites the primordial beginnings of the world and is world history's finality and consummation. Expressing this in art in the midst of modernity's anonymity would be a message of immeasurable consolation. Such a rendering of the cross would uplift people

and give their lives a greater, lasting, eternal meaning – beyond efficiency and performance, beyond net value and status.

6.2.2. Ark of Noah as Ship of Salvation

No subject has been treated more often by the church fathers as a symbol for the Church than the ark of Noah. Like Noah's ark the Church preserves humankind from God's judgment. Rahner draws here heavily on the research the French Patrologist and editor of *Sources chrétiennes* Jean Daniélou had conducted. It is the central theme for Rahner's "nautic ecclesiology". Already in his *Baptismal Book*, published in 1523, Martin Luther spoke of the Church as "the holy ark, which has kept Christianity dry and secure" (Rahner 1964, 505). In the typology of the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 11:7) and of the Second Letter of Peter (2 Peter 2:5) Noah becomes a precursor for Jesus Christ. Due to the justice of one the new ark, the church has become the vessel of eternal life, no flood can threaten. What a powerful symbol against modern-day individualism and in favor of the Church as community.

6.2.3. Isaac – Christ Typology

The vision of the lamb coming forth from the brushwood and being sacrificed in place of Isaac by Abraham (Gen 22) is realized in Jesus. He, the shepherd has himself bound and sacrificed, in order to liberate us. Would not this be a felicitous way to adorn an altar? Would not this be a wonderful way to encourage the congregation to conform to Christ by becoming a sacrifice? Consonant with this typology Petrus Chrysologus calls upon Christians: "Therefore, human being, be sacrifice and priest ... God seeks faith, not death; sacrifice not blood" (Petrus Chrysologus 1894, 499). By becoming one with Christ, we are transformed unto the Logos, we contain the Logos.

6.2.4. Ulysses and the Mast

The history of Christian interpretation of Homer is for Hugo Rahner a particularly appealing example for Christian humanism. Greek wisdom continues to influence humankind. In Raphael's painting in the *Stanza* of the Vatican, the blind Homer gazes on something, it is Christian Dante who is granted the chance to behold with open eyes.

Among the many motifs a scene from the 12th book of the *Odyssey* was particularly striking for Christianity: Ulysses and the Sirens. On Ulysses' way home to Ithaca, his ship must pass the island of the sirens. With sweet songs they at-

tempt to cast spells on the seafarers, and thus detracted many suffer shipwreck. In Ulysses one encounters the eternal human being, who in spite of all the trials and temptations masters life. To the early Christian Ulysses is the embodiment of a true Christian. The Christian is in fact a sailor, "a seafarer, truly a heavenly Ulysses" (Rahner 1963, 328-386). Little wonder then that already around 200 BC the Septuagint translated the Hebrew words "tanîm" and "benôt ya 'anâh" – literally "jackals" and "female ostrich" – six times as *Seirenes* (Job 30:29; Isa 13:21.22; 43:20; Jer 50:39; Micah 1:8). The Church Fathers continue this reception process. At first, they use the image of Ulysses bound to a mast to encourage combat against pagan culture and gnosis. Beginning with the Constantinian turn Ulysses bound to a mast becomes a warning not to succumb to the threat of accommodation to the ways of the world. In the fourth century a sarcophagus depicts Ulysses on the mast of the cross.¹⁴ Ulysses as the traveler is the human being *par excellence* amidst the aberrations and vicissitudes of life, but also the Christian as the *homo viator*, the pilgrim on the way to heaven, in the discipleship with the cross of Christ.

The Irish author James Joyce uses the name Ulysses for his classic description of a thoroughly nihilistic, broken modern society (Joyce 1961). Therefore, bringing the theme of Ulysses into church architecture today may be a particular challenge and timely response.

In contrast to the lack of orientation that befell Joyce's *Ulysses*, Hugo Rahner states:

The strength of Christian humanism lies in the following fact – and the symbolic interpretation of the story of Odysseus brings this home most effectively: only a human being in touch with the eternal, who can see the earth as a thing reborn, can recognize it and love it in a manner that befits the true nature of a created being. Only by becoming detached from the world can human beings recognize and embrace the true humanistic values. They alone who renounce find, and they alone who are bound have freedom. The clear and lovely forms of earthly things stand revealed by the light that streams through that door which we enter only on our death (Rahner 1963, 386).

Such is the beautiful commission, indeed the vocation of church architecture.

7. Epilogue: *Mater Ecclesia* – Seeing the Church in Mary

One final consideration: Hugo Rahner calls parallelly to a retrieval of a synthetic-symbolic theology for a symbolic-mystagogic evangelization. "It is central to learn, seeing Mary in the Church and the Church in Mary, because both mysteries of our faith belong closely together. Only when having descended again to the

¹⁴See picture in: Rahner 1963, 266-267.

profound depths of these Christian mysteries can we joyfully know what our own state of grace, our spiritual life is" (Rahner 1951, 8; cf. de Lubac 1993, 236-278, 314-379).

A Church beholding itself in Mary discovers its own countenance as mother. Where the secret of the Church's Maryhood is overshadowed or surrendered altogether, the Church runs the risk of becoming merely organized. A church – as edifice – without some Marian reference runs the risk of being an ultimately empty, pointless, because a solipsistic and rationalistic celebration (von Balthasar 1998, 64-72).¹⁵

What does it mean to be Christian? It means free election, to be a tool for the world. Christianity is charism, not glory by virtue of one's own achievements; it means election by virtue of divine choice. Therefore, the promise, which Paul assured the Jews of, applies equally also to us today as Christians, architects, artists and theologians: „the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29).

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¹⁵ It degenerates to a functionalistic entity, to a Church of permanent dialogues, organizations, councils, congresses, synods, structures and restructurings, of sociological experiments and statistics.

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**The theological Language of Munich's new Sacred Heart Church –
An Intellectualist Statement Calling for a Retrieval of a Synthetic
and Symbolic Theology**

A b s t r a c t

By presenting the architecture of the *Herz Jesu Kirche* (Sacred Heart Church) in Munich, and unlocking its undergirding worldview, this article accesses aspects of the contemporary "liquid" (Zygmunt Bauman) postmodern era. The tension sensed in the cube that is church, expresses quite felicitously the fundamental difference of views espoused by the two famous Rahner brothers: Hugo (1900-68) and Karl (1904-84). Overall, the Church as institution has given too little attention

to the spiritual and liturgical criteria required for a form of Church architecture that is conducive to both the *ars celebrandi* and “fully conscious and active participation” of the faithful, so eloquently advocated by Pius X and the Second Vatican Council in *Lumen Gentium*.

Keywords: *Herz Jesu Kirche*, Sacred Heart Church, Munich, architecture, Hugo Rahner, Karl Rahner, modern, postmodern, art, the sacred, cross as curtain, liturgy, worship, philosophy, theology, *Zeitgeist*, Second Vatican Council, *ars celebrandi*, active participation

Słowa kluczowe: *Herz Jesu Kirche*, kościół Najświętszego Serca Pana Jezusa, Monachium, architektura, Hugo Rahner, Karl Rahner, nowoczesny, ponowoczesny, sztuka, świętość, krzyż jako zasłona, liturgia, nabożeństwo, filozofia, teologia, *Zeitgeist*, II Sobór Watykański, *ars celebrandi*, aktywne uczestnictwo

