

Sacred Images

What should be required is that true excellence in art which nourishes faith and devotion and accords authentically with both the meaning and the purpose for which it is intended

In the earthly Liturgy, the Church participates, by a foretaste, in that heavenly Liturgy which is celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem toward which she journeys as a pilgrim, and where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; and by venerating the memory of the Saints, she hopes one day to have some part and fellowship with them.

Thus, images of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the Saints, in accordance with the Church's most ancient tradition, should be displayed for veneration by the faithful in sacred buildings and should be arranged so as to usher the faithful toward the mysteries of faith celebrated there. For this reason, care should be taken that their number not be increased indiscriminately, and that they be arranged in proper order so as not to distract the faithful's attention from the celebration itself. There should usually be only one image of any given Saint. Generally speaking, in the ornamentation and arrangement of a church as far as images are concerned, provision should be made for the devotion of the entire community as well as for the beauty and dignity of the images.

GIRM 318

Some Questions

- Does the range of images in the church reflect and assist the devotions of the faithful of today?
- Do they represent saints of the cultures and places of origin from which the faithful of the parish have come?
- Are the images used for public devotion or private devotion only?

Further References

General Instruction of the Roman Missal:
288-294

Practical Points

- The duplication of images in the Church should be avoided. A worthy alternative siting for 'second images' might be found in parish rooms used for catechesis and small group prayer.
- No images should be disposed of without consulting the Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee.
- If new images are being commissioned, guidance should be sought from the Diocesan Art and Architecture Committee.



Questions for Groups

1. What is good about current practice?
What concerns do you have?

4. Who is most directly involved in these matters, e.g. liturgical ministers?
What formation/information is necessary to engage them in the renewal of current practice?

2. In what ways does the documentation affirm or challenge your current practice?

5. How will the assembly be engaged in the process?
What, in particular, needs addressing at Sunday and/or weekday celebrations?

3. Prioritise the issues you have identified.

6. How will you know whether the formation has worked?