

An Board Pleanala - Oral Hearing PL53.214338

Submission in favour of the Friends of St Colman's Cathedral

Midleton Park Hotel – 1st March 2006

Dr Alcuin Reid

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A. Some observations on the documentation submitted to the Board.

1. In respect of the submission by McCutcheon Mulcahy dated 9th November 2005

- (i) On page 2 it is stated: "We maintain that the appeals by FOSCC, An Taisce and the Irish Georgian Society are invalid because they fail to respect the liturgical requirements of the Diocese of Cloyne..." Similar sentiments are expressed throughout the document. This matter is crucial. Reference to "the liturgical requirements of the Diocese of Cloyne" suggests that the diocese itself has a competence, even autonomy, in this area. But the Diocese of Cloyne is Catholic, not Church of Ireland or Protestant, and therefore has no such autonomy. All of its officials are subject to the liturgical and canonical laws of the Catholic Church and have no authority to ignore or bypass them.

Liturgical *requirements* for the ordering or re-ordering of Catholic churches and cathedrals can only be asserted in accordance with the legitimate and legally valid prescriptions of the competent organs of the Catholic Church, namely the Holy See in Rome and, in accordance with the power given by the Holy See, the diocesan bishop. The submission by McCutcheon Mulcahy, however, seems to accord the *preferences* of the Historic Churches' Advisory Committee of the Diocese of Cloyne an authority they simply do not have.

Therefore, it is simply untrue to assert that "it is a matter for the Diocese of Cloyne to decide whether the liturgical requirements comply with the canon law and liturgical norms of the Catholic Church" (p. 13) or that the "Diocese of Cloyne [has] the right to determine its own liturgical requirements" (p. 14).

- (ii) The attention drawn to the Constitutional rights of freedom of religious practice in paragraph 1.1 is disingenuous. Would the appeal against the reordering, if

¹ Relevant publications and addresses are listed in Appendix I.

successful, truly prevent the practice of the Catholic religion in St Colman's Cathedral? It may prevent it being practiced in a style *preferred* by some, but that preference is simply not relevant. The Catholic religion will still be practiced freely and the State will not have inhibited that practice.

Furthermore, I am aware of no document of the Holy See that asserts that "the periodic reordering of places of worship to reflect changes in the liturgical practices of the religious denomination" is necessary. Catholic Liturgy has an objectivity and stability. As the Second Vatican Council stated in its Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy in respect of liturgical reform: "There must be no innovations unless the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them; and care must be taken that any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing" (para. 23).

The Council is, of course, speaking of the reform of the liturgical rites, but the liturgical and pastoral principle it states is applicable to the current case *mutatis mutandis*: does the good of the Church *genuinely* and *certainly* require what is proposed in the re-ordering? Are the changes truly required of the Diocese of Cloyne by the Sacred Liturgy (as opposed to being required *by* the Diocese of Cloyne due to *preferences* held by some of its officials – cf. p. 13)? This is by no means proven.

Indeed, the contrary has been strongly and convincingly asserted in the Objection to the Reordering submitted to the Town Clerk by Reverend Father Gabriel Burke, CC, of Macroom, Co. Cork dated 19th August 2005. In order not to unduly repeat what has been already stated in that objection, I append it and submit it to the board as part of my evidence (Appendix II). I concur with the argumentation contained therein. In particular I draw attention to its critique of Father Daniel Murphy's document "Liturgical Requirements." McCutcheon Mulcahy state that this objection is "one sided" (page 16). It does not appear that they produced a written rebuttal of the points it makes.

An authoritative answer to the crucial question of the necessity of this reordering can only be given by the competent ecclesiastical authorities as a result of hierarchical recourse to the Holy See. Without such an authoritative answer it appears to me that any civil authority granting permission for the proposed reordering to proceed might indeed be prejudicing the free practice of religion by subverting the right given by the Catholic Church to all Catholics to appeal decisions to Rome. Only when this is done can the board be certain that "the appropriate religious authority" has certified "that the liturgical requirements are those of the particular religious denomination's worship and [are] in conformity with their traditions and customs" (cf. para. 5.4.1 of the November 2003 guidelines, cited on p. 8).

- (iii) Reference is made on page 15 to the sanctuary of Westminster Cathedral. It should be noted that in this cathedral the sanctuary is not large enough to accommodate all the clergy of the diocese on those occasions, such as the consecration or funeral of a diocesan bishop, or even for the annual Chrism Mass. Temporary measures have always been necessary to accommodate larger numbers of clergy on such occasions. But the sanctuary there has not been extended. It should also be noted that to this day the Bishop's throne is in its original position and is used.

- (iv) Page 19 includes the statement: "Cloyne should now be allowed to participate in the modern liturgy to the same extent as other dioceses." Page 20 asserts that the reordering "is required for the modern liturgy." It is my understanding that the modern liturgy - i.e. the liturgy celebrated according to the modern, post-Vatican II, liturgical books - has been celebrated in St Colman's Cathedral for over thirty years now and that the people of the diocese have been able to participate in it without detriment to their faith.

It would be interesting to know precisely what is meant by "to the same extent as other dioceses". It appears that this means "with the same internal arrangement of furnishings as other dioceses." Once again, this is the expression of a *preference* for a particular style, not of a *requirement* of the Liturgy of the Catholic Church which has, apparently, been celebrated quite well and without hindrance in St Colman's for over thirty years.

2. In respect of the submission by Professor Cathal O'Neill and Associates dated November 2005

- (i) On page 5 it is asserted that the Prefect of the Congregation of Divine Worship has approved the proposed reordering. This document must be disclosed and its juridical value - if any - must be clarified.
- (ii) The assertion that the "majority of Churches in Europe...have been reordered" (p. 6) does not prove that the proposed reordering of St Colman's is *required* by the Church. The quotation given: "It is certainly true..." (from Cardinal Ratzinger writing to the Bishop of Carlow in 1996) in fact proves the opposite.
- (iii) On page 8 the desire is expressed to bring about through the reordering "a changed dynamic in the gathering and movement of the congregation around the altar in St Colman's." I know of no authoritative document of the Holy See that would regard this *preference* as a liturgical *requirement* justifying reordering.
- (iv) The discussion of the relationship between space and liturgy on page 9 once again demonstrates that this argument is about preferences, not genuine liturgical requirements.
- (v) On page 11 it is asserted that it is a "liturgical requirement to relocate the altar so that the congregation can gather around it." Again, I know of no authoritative document of the Holy See that would regard this preference as a liturgical requirement justifying reordering. It would seem that the burden of proof that this is a requirement must rest with those proposing the reordering.
- (vi) On page 12 it is asserted that Vatican II "superseded" the liturgy that preceded it. Certainly the Council called for a reform, but as has been asserted in reference to no. 23 of its Constitution on the Liturgy, that reform was to be an organic development not a radical departure from what preceded. Many modern liturgists and church architects ignore this need for substantial continuity. In recent years the likes of Cardinals Arinze and Ratzinger are on record as trying to correct this one-sided approach (cf. citations in Fr Burke's Objection).

- (vii) It is by no means clear that “the potential gains” of the reordering shall be, liturgically speaking, or indeed in terms of the spiritual good of the people, “immeasurable” as is asserted on page 15. It may be pastorally disastrous, even scandalous, given the large numbers of people who are said to be opposed to it.
- (viii) The authority and ecclesiastical competence of the HCAC to establish the liturgical necessity for the reordering, as asserted on page 15, has been questioned above.
- (ix) Providing a “better view” of the existing High Altar, as stated on page 18, would further underline the anomaly of the existence of two of the same primary liturgical symbols. Modern liturgists concur that one main altar only should be visible. This is why many reorderings have destroyed the old high altar. A better solution is to use the existing High Altar for its intended purpose – a practice that would be entirely within the provisions of the modern liturgical books and which has been recommended by Cardinal Ratzinger.

The cathedra or throne of the bishop, and the ambo or pulpit, are also primary liturgical symbols. What has been said about the High Altar applies *mutatis mutandis*. To duplicate them is liturgical non-sense.

B. General Observations

The Sacred Liturgy is a constituent element of Christian Tradition (*Catechism of the Catholic Church* para. 1124). Hence it has a theological importance. My own academic work, which carries the recommendation of Cardinal Ratzinger, demonstrates that the development in the Liturgy must needs be organic in the sense referred to by *Sacrosanctum concilium* no. 23 (discussed above – A 1 (ii)). There must be a continuity in the Liturgy from one generation to another. This does not prohibit development, but such development must be proportionate, not a radical break from the past.

This principle must be respected by all: bishop, priests, architects, planning consultants, and people. In 2004 in the preface he kindly wrote for my book *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, Cardinal Ratzinger spoke of the *limits* of the Pope in respect of the development of the Liturgy:

The Pope is not an absolute monarch whose will is law, but is the guardian of the authentic Tradition, and thereby the premier guarantor of obedience. He cannot do as he likes, and is thereby able to oppose those people who for their part want to do what has come into their head. His rule is not that of arbitrary power, but that of obedience in faith. That is why, with respect to the Liturgy, he has the task of a gardener, not that of a technician who builds new machines and throws the old ones on the junk-pile. The “rite”, that form of celebration and prayer which has ripened in the faith and the life of the Church, is a condensed form of living tradition in which the sphere which uses that rite expresses the whole of its faith and its prayer, and thus at the same time the fellowship of generations one with another becomes something we can experience, fellowship with the people who pray before us and after us. Thus the rite is something of benefit which is given to the Church, a living form of *paradosis* the handing-on of tradition.

Our Holy Father is speaking here of the liturgical rites. But the principle he outlines is applicable also to the reordering of a church. Authority, even the Pope's authority, or that of a diocesan bishop, has its limits. And, as Cardinal Ratzinger so beautifully explains, such authorities are the guardians of that which has been passed on into their care. They have a duty of care, which certainly does not exclude proportionate development, but which does exclude radical innovation. Radical innovation – such has been imposed on many churches – is nowhere required by the Church. Care for and improvement of a church building are one thing; a radical reordering are quite another. The disquiet that the current proposals have aroused in so many of the people of Cloyne testify to the Church's wisdom in holding to the principle of organic development in her Liturgy and architecture.

This is not to deny that different periods have seen the emergence of new styles of architecture in the building of new churches. But St Colman's is not a *tabula rasa* upon which one can draw afresh. It is an existing place of worship, and continuity, not substantial innovation, must be the guiding principle in any future development of it.

Recent decades have seen much liturgical experimentation. But this has now officially ended.² There is likely to be a period of stability in the immediate future, indeed, under the present Holy Father it is likely that we shall be encouraged to recall and recapture the beauty and wealth of many elements of our liturgical tradition – ritually and spatially – that recent generations have discarded and which St Coleman's preserves. I understand that in Ireland it is a singularly beautiful example of this. The current proposals seem to be motivated by the preferences of recent generations of liturgists and do not seem to have grasped the stability and indeed the willingness to treasure more classical forms of liturgy and architecture that is growing at the present.

This is seen most clearly in the proposed re-ordering's constantly expressed desire to have the community gathered around the altar. Certainly, the altar is a centre of focus for the worship offered by the community. But it is not necessary that the people be gathered *around* the altar for Catholic worship. It suffices that the altar is the focus, as it is in St Colman's.

It is true that there is debate within the Church about different liturgical styles and preferences. This is why it is vitally important to establish the probity or otherwise of the *liturgical necessity* of the proposals for reordering the Cathedral in the eyes of the competent ecclesiastical authority – the Congregation for Divine Worship.

As a liturgical scholar, I do not hold that the liturgical "requirements" set out by the Diocese of Cloyne are in fact required by the Church's liturgical law. I maintain that they are simply the preferences of one style of a generation liturgists and ecclesiastical architects originating from the 1960's and 1970's. Today the Church is moving beyond that approach, as recently published works on Catholic church architecture demonstrate.³

² Cf. Congregation for Divine Worship, Instruction: *Redemptionis Sacramentum*, no. 27.

³ See: Steven J. Schloeder, *Architecture in Communion: Implementing the Second Vatican Council Through Liturgy and Architecture* Ignatius Press, 1998; Michael S. Rose, *Ugly As Sin: Why They Changed Our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Spaces and How We Can Change Them Back Again*, Sophia Institute Press 2001 and *In Tiers of Glory The Organic Development of Church Architecture Through the Ages*, Mesa Folio, 2004.

C. Conclusion

I submit that the proposal for the reordering should not be allowed. It should first be submitted to the Holy See and tested through due process. Until the proper, public judgment of the Holy See is to hand I believe it would be premature, indeed precipitous, to grant approval for the reordering to proceed.

Alcuin Reid, B.Theol., Dip. Ed., Ph.D.

1st March 2006

Appendix I

Academic Papers and Publications by Dr Alcuin Reid

A Selection of Published Writings:

Books:

- *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and their Relation to the Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement prior to the Second Vatican Council*, St Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough 2004 & Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2005 [2nd edition with a preface by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger].
- Adrian Fortescue, J.B. O'Connell & Alcuin Reid, *The Ceremonies of the Roman Rite Described*, St Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough 2003.

Books Edited:

- *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference*, St Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough 2003.
- *A Pope and a Council on the Sacred Liturgy: Pope Pius XII's 'Mediator Dei' and the Second Vatican Council's 'Sacrosanctum Concilium' with a comparative study 'A Tale of Two Documents' by Aidan Nichols OP*, St Michael's Abbey Press, Farnborough 2002.
- *A Bitter Trial: Evelyn Waugh and John Carmel Cardinal Heenan on the Liturgical Changes*, The Saint Austin Press, 1996 & 2000.
- Adrian Fortescue *The Early Papacy: to the Synod of Chalcedon in 451*, The Saint Austin Press, 1997.

Booklet:

- *General Sacramental Absolution: an historical, canonical and pastoral perspective* The Saint Austin Press, 1998.

Article:

- *A Feast for the Famished (Pope Benedict XVI & Liturgical Reform)* The Catholic Herald 29 April 2005, p. 10

Papers Delivered:

- "The organic development of the Liturgy before, during and after the Second Vatican Council: some principles and some concerns," Pembroke College, Oxford, 15th February 2006.
- CIEL (*Centre International d'Etudes Liturgiques*) Tenth International Colloquium on the Liturgy "The Rise and Fall of the Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement: Some Lessons for Liturgical Renewal Today" Rome 3rd November 2005

- CIEL UK Annual Conference “Do we need a new Liturgical Movement?” London 15th May 2004
- The Gregorians “Catholic Liturgy: What happened? What needs to be done?” University of Cambridge 6th March 2003
- CIEL Ninth International Colloquium on the Liturgy “Active Participation and Pastoral Adaptation” Paris 20th November 2003
- Parents’ Concern, “Religious Education: What can be done?” London, 4th March 2000
- Postgraduate Seminar, King’s College, London - “Twentieth Century Liturgical Reform - Some Background” - 1st March 1995

Papers Forthcoming:

- Liturgy Symposium of the English Benedictine Congregation: “Looking again at the liturgical reform: some general and monastic considerations;” Downside Abbey, 19th April 2006.
- The Research Institute for Catholic Liturgy: “How Do the Fathers of the Second Vatican Council Assess the Liturgical Reform?” and “*Sacrosanctum concilium* and the *Ordo Missae*: What Did the Council Mandate?” The Inn at St John's, Plymouth, Michigan, USA, 4th June 2006.

Appendix II

Objection to the Re-Ordering of Saint Colman's Cathedral Cobh, Co. Cork

By Rev. Father Gabriel Burke, CC
Macroom, Co. Cork

Reference no. 05/52040

This objection is divided into the following sections:

1. The Current Liturgical Requirements of the Catholic Church
2. Relevant Theological and Pastoral Issues
3. Other Issues

Conclusion

1. The Current Liturgical Requirements of the Catholic Church

A. Introduction

i. In their application of 15th July 2005, McCutcheon Mulcahy state that “the planning authority is...required to respect the liturgical requirements of the cathedral as a place of worship when considering this application.” Professor Cathal O’Neill, in his letter of 14th July 2005, states that his designs are based on the need “to meet the requirements of the Cathedral as a place of worship.” Professor O’Neill appends his July 2005 *Report on the Re-Ordering of the Sanctuary and Other Works* which evinces similar liturgical rationales for the proposal, and a document by Rev. Father Daniel Murphy, *Liturgical Requirements*, which carries the approval of the Cloyne Historic Churches Advisory Committee.

ii. The central question here is without doubt what is *required* for the correct celebration of the Liturgy in the cathedral. For if the cathedral as it stands lacks an essential *requirement* for Catholic worship, such a lack must be supplied (as sensitively as possible). However, if there is no “compelling need” to alter the cathedral as it now stands, then changes to the interior of the cathedral’s liturgical arrangements, even though some people may *prefer* them, ought not to be made, for the cathedral is a building of significant historic, architectural and cultural value, and significant changes to it would detract from that value.

iii. Preferences are not requirements. The documents written by Professor O’Neill and Father Murphy express many preferences but very few if any genuine liturgical requirements which justify altering the cathedral as proposed. I shall examine these documents in detail below.

iv. The preferences expressed in the documents submitted come from a somewhat dated school of liturgical thought which has been subject to considerable scholarly criticism in recent years.⁴ It should be noted that our new Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has himself written and spoken a great deal in this area,⁵ and that neither Professor O’Neill nor Father Murphy, nor the documents they cite in their submissions,⁶ seem to have taken into account the latest in liturgical thinking.

B. O’Neill & Associates – Report on the Re-Ordering of the Sanctuary and Other Works

i. In the section headed “Design Analysis” this report states that “the central theme of the liturgy is that of a congregation gathered around the altar.” It goes on to assert that a “close” and “dynamic” “relation” with the “sacrifice” is the “main thrust” of the “liturgical guidelines.” This language is lacking in specific content.

⁴ See: K. Gamber, *The Reform of the Roman Liturgy: Its Problems and Background* (1993); A. Nichols OP, *Looking at the Liturgy* (1996); S. Caldecott, *Beyond the Prosaic* (1998); K. Gamber, *The Modern Rite: Collected Essays on the Reform of the Liturgy* (2002); T.M. Kocik, *The Reform of the Reform?* (2003); A. Reid OSB, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy* (2004); U.M. Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer* (2004). It should be noted that Cardinal Ratzinger wrote prefaces endorsing the books by both Reid and Lang and the work of Gamber.

⁵ As Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI wrote: *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy* (1986) and *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (2000). He also discusses current liturgical issues in chapter 9 of *The Ratzinger Report* (1985). More recently he convened and spoke at a conference at the French abbey of Fontgombault, the discussions at which are published in English in: A. Reid OSB, *Looking Again at the Question of the Liturgy with Cardinal Ratzinger: Proceedings of the July 2001 Fontgombault Liturgical Conference* (2003). Cardinal Ratzinger has also written many articles that touch on liturgical questions, though the substance of his thought is present in the books referred to above.

⁶ In particular, it seems that the most recent edition of *The Place of Worship: Pastoral Directory on the Building and Reordering of Churches* (1994) needs to take account of recent developments in liturgical thinking, and indeed of recent liturgical legislation (the GIRM of the *Missale Romanum* of 2002 and *Redemptionis Sacramentum* of 2004) and alter some of its preferences accordingly.

ii. An attempt at supplying content is made in the assertion that “the present separation of the sanctuary from the assembly...does not facilitate the active and full participation of the laity in the liturgy.” There are two issues raised here; firstly one of separation (presumably by the altar rails); and secondly that of active participation in the liturgy. These two matters will be dealt with below.

iii. In respect of the “separation” of the assembly, one can observe that no document of the Second Vatican Council or of the Holy See has required the removal of altar rails. This is a fashion, a trend, that began in the years after the Council, but which is simply not required. The words of the current Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome, delivered in 2003, should be kept in mind:

Some people think that liturgical renewal means the removal of kneelers from church pews, the knocking down of altar rails or the positioning of the altar in the middle of the sitting area of the people. **The Church has never said any such thing.** Nor does liturgical restoration mean iconoclasm or the removal of all statues and sacred images. These should be displayed, albeit with good judgment. And the altar of the Blessed Sacrament should be outstanding for its beauty and honoured prominence, otherwise in some so-called restored churches one could rightly lament: "They have taken my Lord away, and I don't know where they have put Him" (Jn 20:13).⁷

Indeed, far from removing the altar rails in the cathedral, it may well be time to rediscover their meaning and to return to their use, for as our new Holy Father has written:

It may well be that kneeling is alien to modern culture – insofar as it is a culture, for this culture has turned away from the faith and no longer knows the One before whom kneeling is the right, indeed the intrinsically necessary gesture. The man who learns to believe learns to kneel, and a faith or a liturgy no longer familiar with kneeling is sick at the core. Where lost, kneeling must be rediscovered...⁸

Hence, using talk of “separation” to assert that the altar rails create a “barrier” which should be removed misses the point of their *current* and *future* value, both liturgically and artistically, and therefore spiritually, and risks destroying something at the very time the Church is being called to rediscover their liturgical value.

iv. The Second Vatican Council called for “active participation” in the Sacred Liturgy.⁹ It should be noted that so too did Pope Saint Pius X in 1903, and indeed all of the Liturgical Movement of the Twentieth Century leading up to the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰ This concept is not something new. It has a specific context and content. The Second Vatican Council’s *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: Sacrosanctum Concilium* uses the Latin term *actuosa participatio*, which when translated “actual participation,” is less misleading than the usual English rendering “active participation.” This underlines that the participation in the liturgical rites and prayers is *primarily* through mind and heart and *secondarily* through external actions or through physical proximity to one another.¹¹ Cardinal Arinze warned in 2003:

⁷ Francis Cardinal Arinze, Address to the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 8th October 2003. Emphasis added.

⁸ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 194. It should also be noted that the Congregation for Divine Worship stated in 2003 that the faithful have the *right* to kneel to receive Holy Communion if they wish (26th February 2003; Prot. n. 47/03/L).

⁹ Cf. Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no 14.

¹⁰ Cf. chapter 3 of A. Reid OSB *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*.

¹¹ Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, pp. 68ff; G. Shirilla, *The Principle of Active Participation of the Faithful in Sacrosanctum Concilium*, (1990) pp. 356-357.

Church architecture also influences active participation. If a church is built and the seats are arranged as in an amphitheatre or as in a banquet, the undeclared emphasis may be horizontal attention to one another, rather than vertical attention to God. In this sense the celebration of Mass facing the people demands from the priest and altar servers a high level of discipline, so that as from the offertory of the Mass it be seen clearly that both priest and people are turned toward God, not toward one another. We come to Mass primarily to adore God, not to affirm one another, although this is not excluded.¹²

So it is a mistake to assert – as do the submissions in this proposal – that the desire for physical closeness or “visual participation” *require* the reordering of existing churches and cathedrals. Certainly those people making these proposals seem to *prefer* this style of Liturgy. However, as the Church does not *require* this, reordering the cathedral is not justified.

v. This *Report* asserts that the present sanctuary is not large enough for the “great liturgical celebrations.” With fewer clergy today, and no foreseeable increase in vocations, this argument does not appear to have validity. There have been “great occasions” in the past (the Second Vatican Council did not invent the ones listed) and the cathedral has dealt with them adequately to date.

vi. The *Report* speaks of the “temporary altar.” It is right to consider this a problem. However the liturgical thinking of the *Report* ignores the guidelines published by the Congregation for Divine Worship in 1993:

3. The placement of the altar *versus populum* [facing the people] is certainly something in the present liturgical legislation that is desirable. It is not, nevertheless, an absolute value over and beyond all others. It is necessary to take into account cases in which the sanctuary does not admit of an arrangement of the altar facing the people, or it is not possible to preserve the preceding altar with its ornamentation in such a way that another altar facing the people can be understood to be the principal altar. In these cases, **it is more faithful to liturgical sense to celebrate at the existing altar with the back turned to the people rather than maintain two altars in the same sanctuary. The principle of the unicity of the altar is theologically more important than the practice of celebrating facing the people.**¹³

It may come as a surprise for us here in Ireland, for like many people we have thought that ‘Vatican II brought in Mass facing the people,’ but there is absolutely no need for Mass to be said (from the offertory onwards) facing the people. Cardinal Ratzinger has spoken of this at length.¹⁴ The 2002 edition of the *Missale Romanum* does not *require* it.¹⁵ And, in the light of the principles of the Congregation of Divine Worship (cited above), it would in fact be more faithful to current liturgical norms for the cathedral to remove the temporary altar and to return to the liturgical use of the high altar. Clearly the proposal of putting in a new second altar in the crossing, in line with the high altar, is contrary to the principle of unicity of altar.

vii. The *Report* proposes to put in a new bishop’s chair. The principle of unicity of altar may be applied also to the bishop’s chair *mutatis mutandis*. I know of no serious liturgical scholar who would approve of *two* bishop’s chairs in the same cathedral – the duplication of the symbolism would be intolerable. However, I understand that the existing choir stalls, cathedra (bishop’s chair) and sedelia are all the subject of an agreement between the trustees of the cathedral and the chapter and the

¹² Francis Cardinal Arinze, Address to the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions, 8th October 2003.

¹³ Emphases added. The Italian original may be found in *Notitiae* (the journal of the Congregation for Divine Worship) no. 332, Vol. 29, No. 5, May 1993, pp. 245-249.

¹⁴ Cf. *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 74-84.

¹⁵ See the detailed discussion of its provisions, and of the subsequent clarification issued by the Congregation for Divine Worship in chapter 1 of U.M. Lang, *Turning Towards the Lord: Orientation in Liturgical Prayer*.

Heritage Council by which they cannot be changed or altered. Even if that is not the case, the existing cathedra is of artistic merit and should not be removed. In the light of this, in accordance with sound liturgical practice, a new cathedra cannot be introduced.

viii. A similar argument may be made about the pulpit. As its removal is out of the question, it should once again be used as the table of the Word. Processions to it for the gospel would enhance the quality of liturgical celebration in the cathedral. The presence of a second table of the Word (lectern/ambo) as proposed in Professor O'Neill's designs is simply an intolerable duplication of primary liturgical symbols that would be countenanced by no serious liturgist.

ix. The *Report* asserts that “the extension of the sanctuary...” is “inevitable if the primary needs of the Liturgy are to be fulfilled.” This is simply not true. The official web site of the Cathedral states: “The Cathedral...accommodates the celebration of all Liturgy as envisaged by the revised rites of the Catholic Church.”¹⁶ There exists a perfectly usable altar, pulpit and bishop's chair, none of which prevent the active participation called for by St Pius X or by the Second Vatican Council. That some liturgists and architects have preferences for another style of sanctuary design is not sufficient reason substantially to alter our cathedral as it has been handed on to our generation.

x. The proposal to remove the marble predellas in front of the altars in the two transepts will preclude the possibility of Mass ever being offered on them. This violates their liturgical integrity and is unnecessary. If circulation is truly a problem, a pew might need to be removed.

C. Father Daniel Murphy – Liturgical Requirements

i. *Liturgical Requirements* depends heavily upon *The Place of Worship: Pastoral Directory on the Building and Reordering of Churches* (1994). As was noted in the introduction above, this document requires updating in the light of later liturgical legislation and thinking. In many ways it expresses preferences which the Church seems to be questioning today.

ii. *Liturgical Requirements* shares the same errors of understanding about active participation as does the *Report* (see above).

iii. The section “Communal and Inclusive Worship” lists many items that are seen as a “must” for a place of worship. Whether or not these are a “must” for places of worship is arguable. Many seem in fact to be the *preferences* of some liturgists. What is clear is that this section of *Liturgical Requirements* does not establish any *requirements* for the cathedral.

iv. Other sections of the document seem to reflect the sort of “emphasis [that] may be horizontal attention to one another, rather than vertical attention to God” of which Cardinal Arinze has spoken (above). This fashion in liturgical thinking seems to be on the way out now, which makes the liturgical theology of *Liturgical Requirements* questionable in some aspects.

v. The specific “Liturgical Requirements within St Colman's Cathedral, Cobh” include many *preferences*, as if one were free to redesign an existing worship space accordingly. But none are *requirements* justifying the disruption or cost of a total re-ordering. Some suggest areas in which improvement may be justifiably made. Specifically:

- The current entrance is adequate; if improved disabled access is required, let it be done without prejudice to the current liturgical uses of the building.
- The proposal for a new baptistery is an *ideal* but not a requirement. The new rite of Baptism envisages a procession to the font for the baptism; the visual participation of all at this part of the rite is not a liturgical requirement.
- A new vesting room is not required, however desirable, particularly if it involves the loss of existing chapels. Other arrangements can be made for the once a year needs of catechumens.

¹⁶ As at 11th August 2005.

- Movable seating is not envisaged in Professor O'Neill's proposals. Why this discrepancy? It does not seem necessary.
- The distribution of Holy Communion under both species is not a *requirement*. If it is deemed pastorally desirable, the faithful can approach the Chalice at the front of the cathedral as it is presently ordered.
- Improved lighting can be introduced without reordering the cathedral.
- Improved amplification can be introduced without reordering the cathedral.
- The issues in respect of the altar, ambo, cathedra and the need for proximity have been dealt with in the section above.
- Wheelchair access in these situations would be truly exceptional and could be facilitated by the provision of temporary ramps.
- The supposed need for the removal of supposed "barriers" (presumably the altar rails) has been dealt with above.
- An adequate choir loft exists. The tendency to put the choir and musicians in a prominent place so that they appear to be 'performing' in fact mitigates against the active participation of the congregation because they can feel that should watch others perform. Here, 'visual participation' of the congregation in the ministry or cantors and choir should be avoided to enhance the people's actual participation in the Liturgy.
- Better restrooms, improving the existing sacristies and the addition of hot water are good ideas that do not require the reordering of the cathedral.
- Private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament is possible both in the cathedral as it is now, and in the chapel of Perpetual Adoration.
- There is no liturgical *requirement* to take the architectural focus off the tabernacle as it now stands. Indeed, if the high altar is once again used for Mass, this focus will be on the place where Mass is celebrated.
- The two confessionals that were originally shrines could be returned to that use without prejudice to the cathedral's architectural or liturgical integrity.
- The existing Marian shrines do not compete visually or liturgically. Valid pastoral reasons may exist that suggest they be retained.
- There seems to be no need to alter the current use of either the pieta or mortuary chapels. Curiously, *The Place of Worship: Pastoral Directory on the Building and Reordering of Churches* (19.1-3) would seem to support the current arrangement in the cathedral, with the proximity of the mortuary chapel to the baptistery, and not any change to this arrangement.

D. Other Liturgical Considerations

- i. In interpreting the wishes of the Second Vatican Council, one could wish for no better than the very Fathers of the Council themselves. Bishop Ahern was one such Father of the Council who surely showed, by himself not reordering the cathedral, that there was no liturgical *requirement* to do so.
- ii. Other cathedrals around the world have not seen the need to reorder their cathedrals. In recent years Westminster cathedral has explored various ways of returning to the use of their high altar, realising that the temporary altar they have (like ours) is unsatisfactory.
- iii. A reflection on the liturgical mistake of reordering from the pen of Pope Benedict XVI:

After the Council...new altars were set up everywhere, and today celebration [of Mass facing the people] really does look like the characteristic fruit of Vatican II's liturgical renewal. In fact it is the most conspicuous consequence of a reordering that not only signifies a new external arrangement of the places dedicated to the Liturgy, but also brings with it a new idea of the essence of the Liturgy – the Liturgy as a communal meal. This is, of course, a misunderstanding of the significance of the Roman basilica and of the positioning of its altar, and the representation of the Last Supper is also, to say the least, inaccurate.¹⁷

¹⁷ *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 77-78.

And a specific response from our new Holy Father to the Bishop of Carlow in 1996:

It is certainly true that a great number of churches since the Second Vatican Council have been re-arranged; such changes, while inspired by the liturgical reform, **cannot however be said to be have been required by the legislation of the Church.**¹⁸

With such advice from our new Holy Father, we should not repeat the same mistakes at St Colman's. Rather, we should use the beautiful and liturgically adequate building that has been entrusted to our care for the full celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the other liturgical rites for which it is perfectly adequate.

2. Relevant Theological and Pastoral Issues

a) The widespread opposition to the proposals felt and expressed by significant numbers of people both within the parish of Cobh, in the diocese of Cloyne, and beyond, cannot be ignored. Theologically, this may be seen to be an expression of the *sensus fidei*,¹⁹ of the innate sense of the ordinary faithful as to what is or what is not in accordance with the faith. Such people may not be able to argue against the proposals of architects and liturgists, but they do have a deep sense of what is or is not appropriate for Catholics. Hence, their objections, whilst perhaps simplistic, are nonetheless real. It would be pastorally insensitive to override them.

b) Similarly, neither the faithful whose ancestors' contributions paid for the Cathedral, and whose current contributions help to maintain it, nor the clergy of the diocese, have been informed of the costing of the proposed works, nor of the proposed sourcing of the funds required for this. Thus they have not been able to express any opinion or to enter into any dialogue as to whether such expenditure is justified or proportionate in respect of other needs of the parish or of the diocese as a whole. Surely, when so much is said about the participation of the laity in the life of the Church today, and of collaborative ministry between a bishop and his priests, this should have been done before the planning application was submitted.

3. Other Issues

a) A curious part of the July 2005 *Report on the Re-Ordering of the Sanctuary and Other Works* by Professor O'Neill and Associates is the inclusion of the handwritten letter of July 3rd 1894. This is presented as being almost a prophecy foreseeing the *current* proposed reordering. It must be pointed out, however, that the Bishop Elect to whom the letter is addressed is Robert Browne. Bishop Browne was consecrated in August 1894. He later finished the Cathedral and installed the present sanctuary (as the Cathedral Guide makes clear). The hand written letter, therefore, refers not to the *present* sanctuary but to what ever was there *before* it was installed, and it is this, not what we have now, which the author of this letter is criticising. Therefore, the use of this letter by Professor O'Neill is somewhat disingenuous.

b) i. In July, the Bishop ordered that a pastoral letter dated 6th July 2005 be read out at all Masses in the diocese on the following Sunday, July 10th. In this letter he announced his intention to proceed with the reordering of the Cathedral. The bishop also stated that "The design was submitted by me to the relevant Congregation in Rome and received its approval." This is somewhat curious, as the

¹⁸ Letter to the Bishop of Carlow, 12th June 1996. Emphasis added.

¹⁹ Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium*, no. 12.

Congregation for Divine Worship is not normally consulted and its approval is not normally sought for re-ordering churches or cathedrals. One must ask why this was done, if indeed it was?

ii. Also, it is important to note that the full text of this letter has not been disclosed either to the priests of the diocese nor as part of the documentation of the planning application.²⁰ The Bishop's pastoral letter speaks of the Congregation having given "approval." This can only be done by a formal decree of the Congregation, duly protocolled and published. Where is this decree? It must also be noted that if a decree has been issued, such a decree may be appealed through the processes of canon law, and that if appealed, it may not be acted upon before due process has been completed. It would appear that there has been no opportunity to date for anyone to appeal this.

iii. However, if the letter from the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation in Rome to which the Bishop refers is simply a letter and not a formal decree, it has the authority of personal correspondence, and it must be pointed out that an opinion, even of a Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Divine Worship, is simply an opinion and carries no juridical authority in the matter.²¹ One may also ask whether those who object to the proposals were given the opportunity to express their opinions to the Cardinal before his opinion was sought?

iv. Referring to "Rome" as has been done in the pastoral letter tends to move Catholics to obey whatever Rome 'decides.' This is a healthy instinct. But it tends also to stifle dialogue and critical debate in matters that are *not* defined doctrines of the Catholic faith (such as what is best for the cathedral). Certainly, I am aware that such use of authority would tend to prevent priests from expressing their opinion, as they would not wish to be seen to go against what Rome had decided.

c) The consultation meetings held throughout the diocese following the Bishop's pastoral letter in July were very poorly attended. In my own town barely ten people attended, and I understand that attendance at the other meetings was similarly poor. One cannot conclude from such poor attendance that the people of the diocese are interested in or supportive of the reordering of the Cathedral. Indeed, one may conclude that a certain apathy or resignation exists, perhaps because of the impression given in the Bishop's pastoral letter that the re-ordering was a *fait accompli* approved by Rome.

d) The diocesan authorities are well aware that significant opposition exists to the reordering of the cathedral. It must be wondered then, whether it is appropriate to give people a period of fewer than two months – and summer holiday months at that – in which people can learn about, consider and discuss, and if necessary object to the proposals that have been made. The time allowed for all of this is simply too short.

e) The cathedral is without doubt of significant cultural, architectural and heritage value as an organic whole. I presume that various competent organisations will be making their assessment of the proposals known in respect of these issues. I would simply add that altering the existing organic relationship between the various parts of the cathedral as it now stands would result in a compromise that would be to the detriment of the cultural, architectural and heritage value of the cathedral, which themselves have a pastoral and spiritual importance. Such a compromise, given that the reordering is not liturgically necessary, should not be allowed.

²⁰ In 1996 the Bishop of Carlow quoted selectively from a letter to him from Cardinal Ratzinger in respect of the Church's official requirements in the re-ordering of churches. Only later, at the request of a High Court Judge, was the full text of the letter made public (it is cited above). It would seem desirable that the full text of the letter to which the Bishop referred in July should also be made public.

²¹ Such private correspondence differs from the publicly expressed policy of the Cardinal Prefect, such as may be seen in the address of Cardinal Arinze quoted above.

Conclusion

For the reasons advanced above, I therefore submit that the reordering of St Colman's Cathedral applied for by McCutcheon Mulcahy in their letter of 15th July 2005 and by Professor Cathal O'Neil and Associates in their letter of 14th July 2005 is not required by the current liturgical norms of the Catholic Church, and is unadvisable for the pastoral, theological and other reasons outlined. I request that the requested planning permission be refused.

Reverend Father Gabriel Burke, CC
Macroom, Co. Cork
19th August 2005