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A NEO-RICHARDSON ROMANESQUE CATHEDRAL BY EDWARD L. BARNES

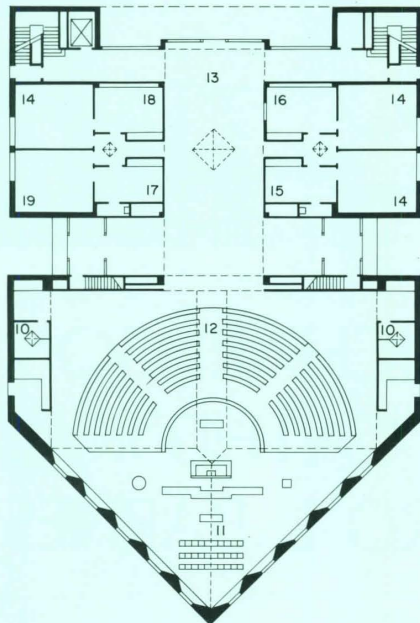


Like all good architects, Edward Larrabee Barnes has most of the architecture of the past in his head—an inexhaustible source of metaphorical forms to be drawn upon as needed. When he begins to design a building, he selects, recombines and transfigures functionally and symbolically appropriate forms, translating them into the language of modern technology and building economics. For the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Burlington, Vermont, Barnes turned for inspiration to Burlington's most beautiful building—Henry Hobson Richardson's Billings Library at the University of Vermont (left). By inviting this building to teach him, he reminds us of the power and beauty of New England's Neo-Romanesque style. While designing a new Catholic church which is rooted in this style, he has nonetheless created an original work of art with its own metaphorical life. —*Mildred F. Schmertz*

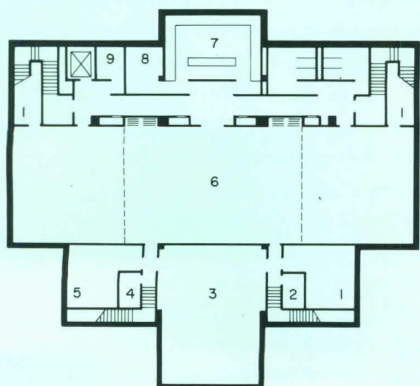
- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Storage | 11 St. Patrick Chapel |
| 2 Janitor | 12 Main church |
| 3 Mechanical | 13 Narthex and concourse |
| 4 Pump room | 14 Meeting room |
| 5 Electrical | 15 Sacristy |
| 6 Multi-purpose | 16 Office |
| 7 Kitchen | 17 Vestry |
| 8 Food storage | 18 Library |
| 9 Elevator machine room | 19 Choir rehearsal room |
| 10 Confessional | |



MEZZANINE



GROUND FLOOR



BASEMENT

Vermont towns—notably Burlington, Rutland and Montpelier—share a splendid heritage of late 19th-century masonry architecture. Neo-Romanesque buildings designed as libraries, classroom buildings, town halls or fire and police stations abound; and most of them, in spite of their secular functions, are religious in expression. Their forms and ornament are direct quotes from the great 8th-12th century churches of southern France. In winter these towered, turreted, apsed and arched monuments to Christian faith are enhanced by snow—a sight undreamed of by the pre-Gothic masons of Vezelay, Poitiers, Angoulême and Arles.

These buildings are more resonant than their gentler neighbors constructed in styles which historians have traditionally defined as part of the New England vernacular—Georgian, Classic Revival and Queen Anne. Barnes could have taken his cues for the new Burlington Cathedral from any of the less assertive styles, except for the fact that he was designing a small church to replace a large one on a site that lacked beauty or drama.

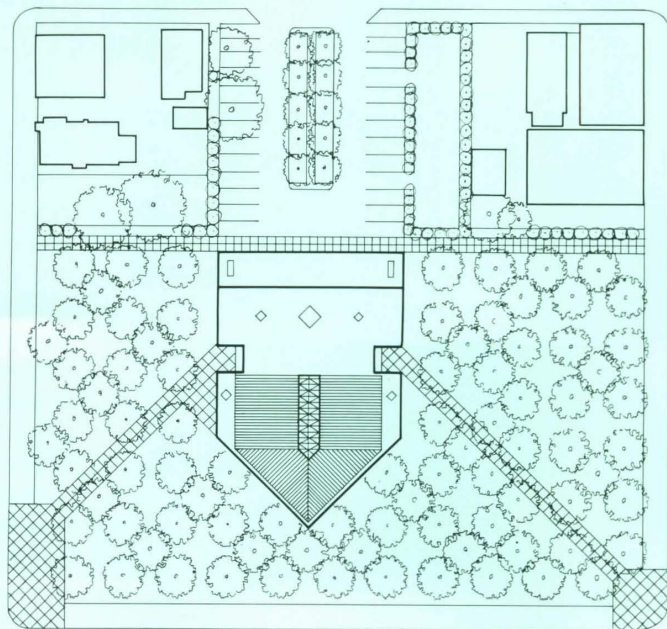
The earlier church had become too big for the dwindling Irish Catholic population of Burlington (the French Catholics have their own church) and when it burned several years ago, the congregation chose to replace it with a building to seat 450 people in the sanctuary and another 350 in an adjacent space. The site consists of approximately three-fourths of a city block (plot plan below) with miscellaneous small buildings on two of its corners. The entire block is hemmed in on all sides by buildings in many sizes, shapes and styles including a parking garage in weathering steel, part of Burlington Square—a recent downtown development designed by the Office of Mies van der Rohe (December 1977, pages 102-103). The new church, like its predecessor was to be a cathedral—not a big church but important in the diocesan sense as the seat of the local bishop. But it

had to *look* strong and pre-eminent in spite of its small size and unfortunate site. Resonance was needed.

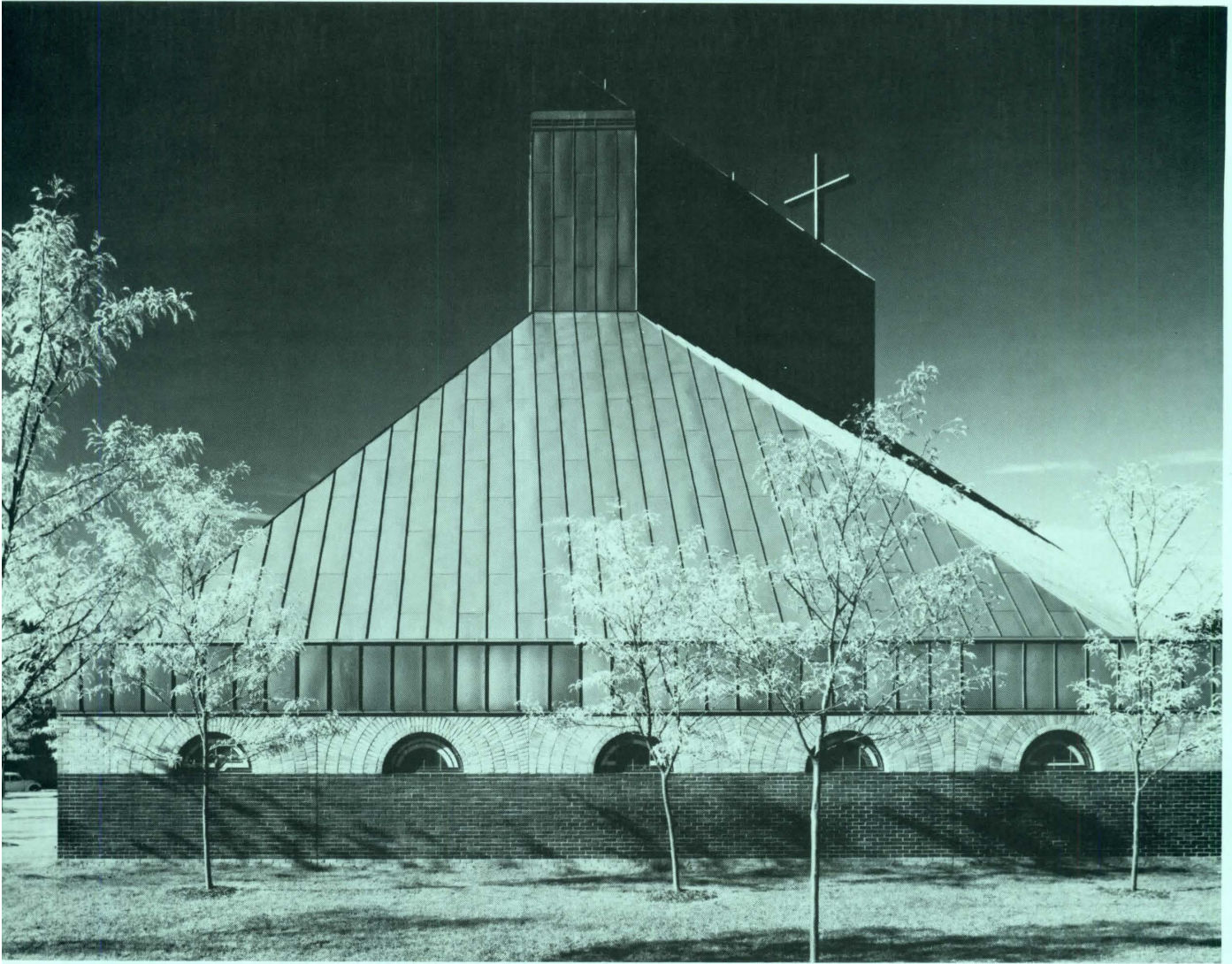
The Richardson building, Barnes' model, was never a church. Nevertheless, it is rich in its Christian symbolism with particular references to an 11th-century church in Poitiers, the famous Notre Dame La Grande. No longer a library, it is now a friendly yet elegant student union—proof that space need not be "universal" to serve changing needs and that the symbolic content of forms can change. Forms which in the 11th century signaled "place of worship" and became metaphors for "library" in the 19th-century have come to mean "dignified but cozy student gathering place" today. Barnes has made them mean "church" again.

Barnes' quotes from the Richardson building are not direct and he has translated them into his own language. They consist of a way with circular forms, of bringing light into interiors, of pitching roofs, arching windows, introducing horizontal bands at window sills and accenting cornices. He has been influenced by Richardson's manner of accenting the coming together of different materials and the latter's use of color. This last resemblance is as important as the others.

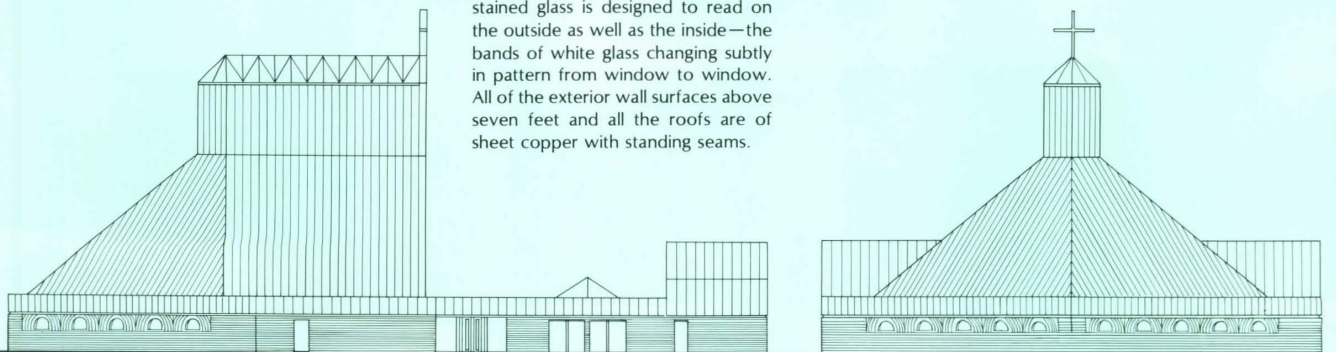
"Color in architecture" has lately come to mean the juxtaposition of large, flat areas covered with bold primary reds, blues, yellows and greens. By this standard, New England Neo-Romanesque buildings—in gray and purple granite with wine red brick and dark orange ornamental terra cotta—are colorless. And so is the Burlington Cathedral. In truth, of course, Barnes' church, like the building which inspired it, is rich and subtle in color from the meticulously studied semi-circular stained glass windows to the carefully selected green and brown tones of the banded brick. When the raised-seam copper roof turns dark green and the locust trees grow big and leafy this church will look even more wonderful. —M.F.S.



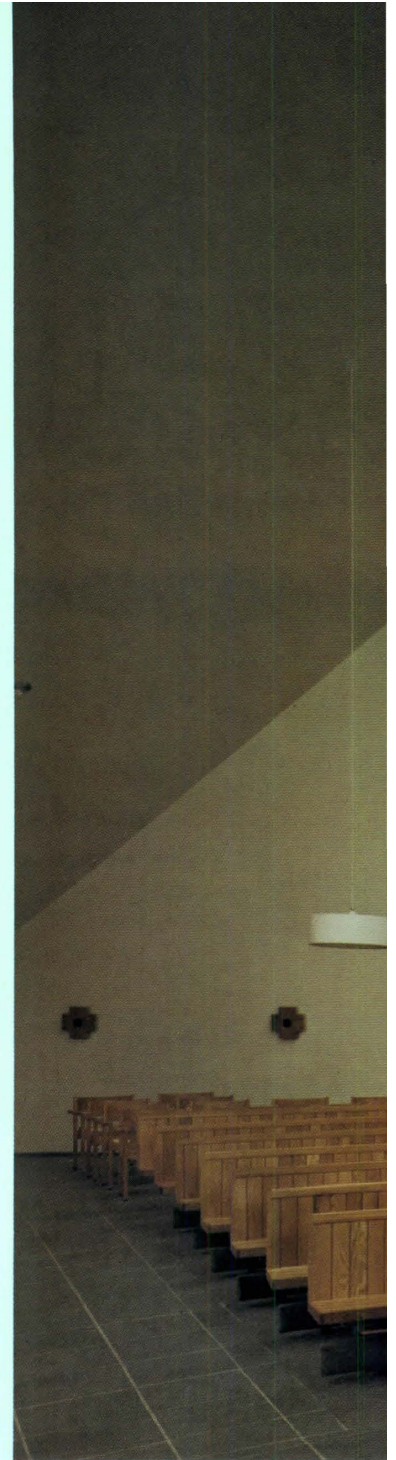




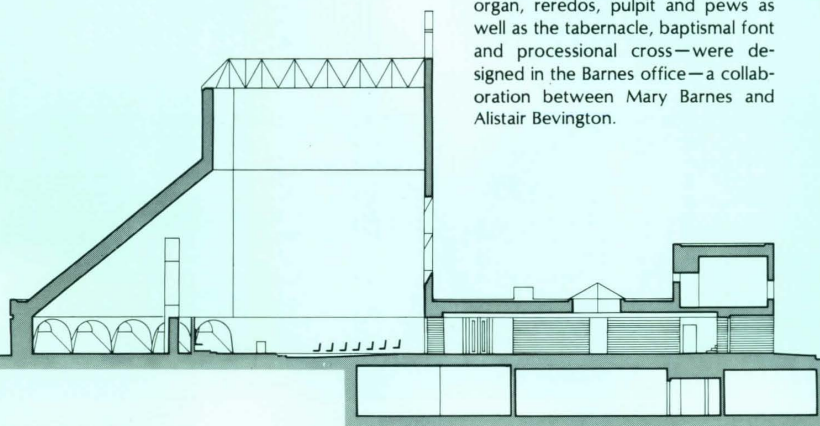
The exterior veneer consists of double-fired glazed brick in shades of green and brown in three continuous horizontal bands. The two upper bands continue through the entrances and form the wall surfaces of the interior concourse. The semi-circular windows have two completed arched tiers of ornamental brick work and four incomplete ones. The arch motif recalls Neo-Romanesque masonry construction but its interruption tells us that the voussoirs are ornamental, not structural. The stained glass is designed to read on the outside as well as the inside—the bands of white glass changing subtly in pattern from window to window. All of the exterior wall surfaces above seven feet and all the roofs are of sheet copper with standing seams.

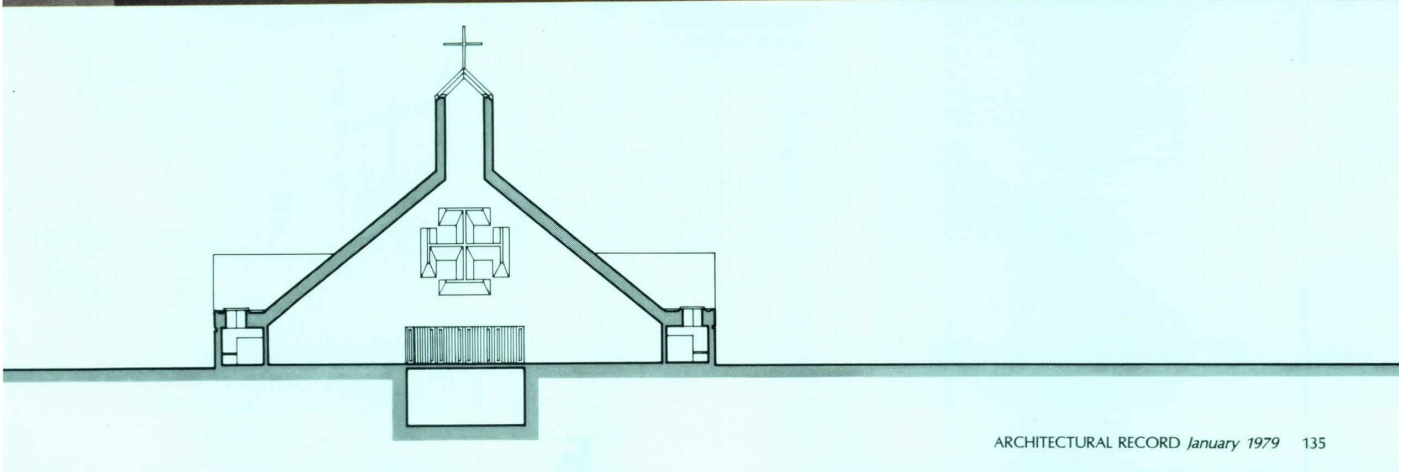


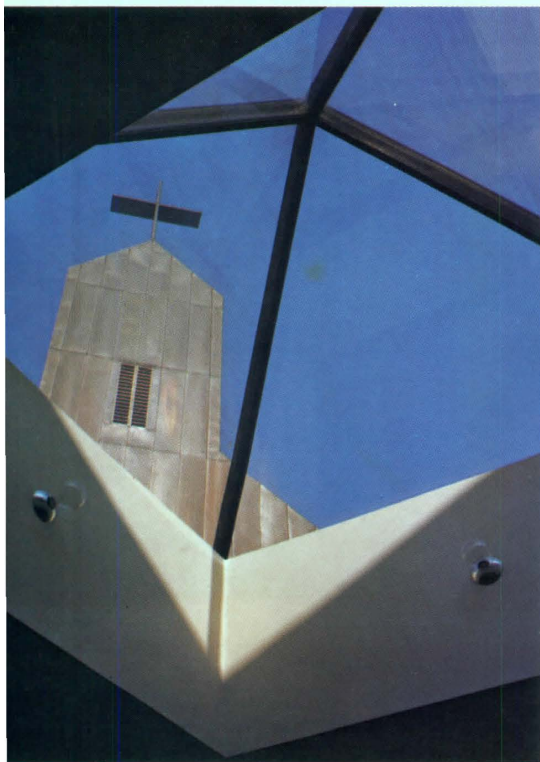
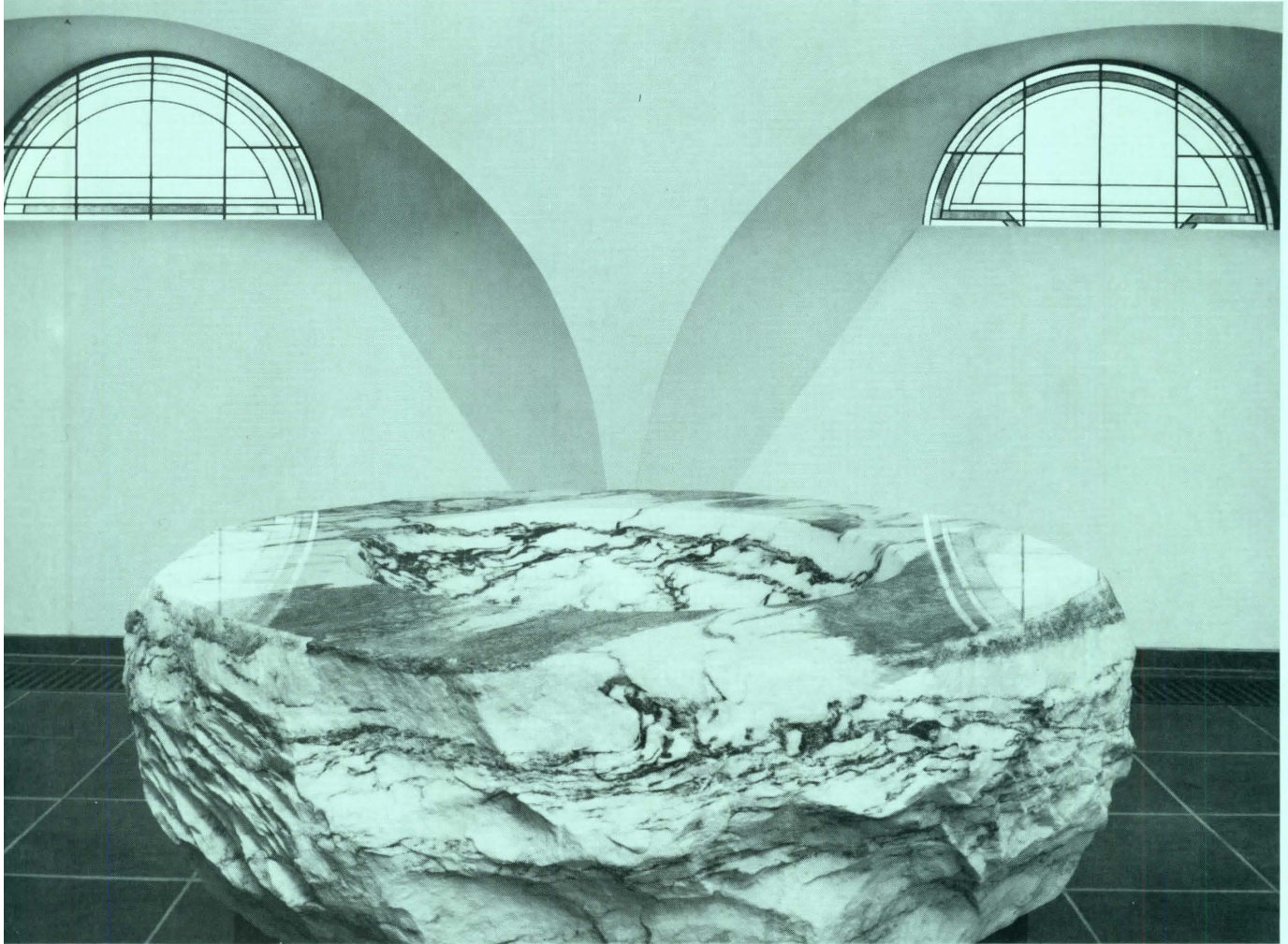




The sanctuary of the church is a tent-like structure similar in feeling to the curved reading room of Richardson's library. The Greek cross over the west door recalls the rose window in Christian churches. Its stained glass is the work of Robert Sowers. The floor, finished in Vermont slate, is bowl-shaped to improve sight lines. The sanctuary arrangements respond to liturgical changes instituted by Pope John XXIII. All of the interior fixtures—the altar, bishop's chair, organ, reredos, pulpit and pews as well as the tabernacle, baptismal font and processional cross—were designed in the Barnes office—a collaboration between Mary Barnes and Alistair Bevington.







The stained glass windows were designed by David Wilson. The interior walls which surround them are constructed of metal lath and plaster. They suggest the deep masonry walls of old churches while reflecting the light and colors of the glass. The baptismal font is of Vermont marble with a smooth finished bowl and edges. The tabernacle is of brass lined with cypress wood. It repeats the cross and window motifs. The view of the pinnacle cross (left) is from a skylight in the concourse.

CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, Burlington, Vermont. Owner: *The Roman Catholic Diocese of Burlington, Vermont*. Architect: *Edward Larrabee Barnes—associate: Alistair Bevington; project architect: Demetri Sarantitis; interior design: Mary Barnes, Toshiko Mori*. Associated architect: *Colin Lindberg (Burlington, Vermont)*. Consultants: *Robert Silman Associates (structural); Hannaham & Johnston (mechanical/electrical); Klepper, Marshall, King Associates (acoustical); Donald Bliss (lighting); Kiley, Tyndall, Walker (landscape); Frank Kacmarcik (liturgical); Robert Sowers and David Wilson (stained glass)*. General contractor: *Wright & Morrissey*.

