

COUNTDOWN TO BISHOP LOPES' VISIT AND THE CONSECRRATION OF OUR NEW ALTAR: 7 WEEKS!

Each week we will look into the details of one of the aspects of our sanctuary renovation.

THIS WEEK:

THE TABERNACLE



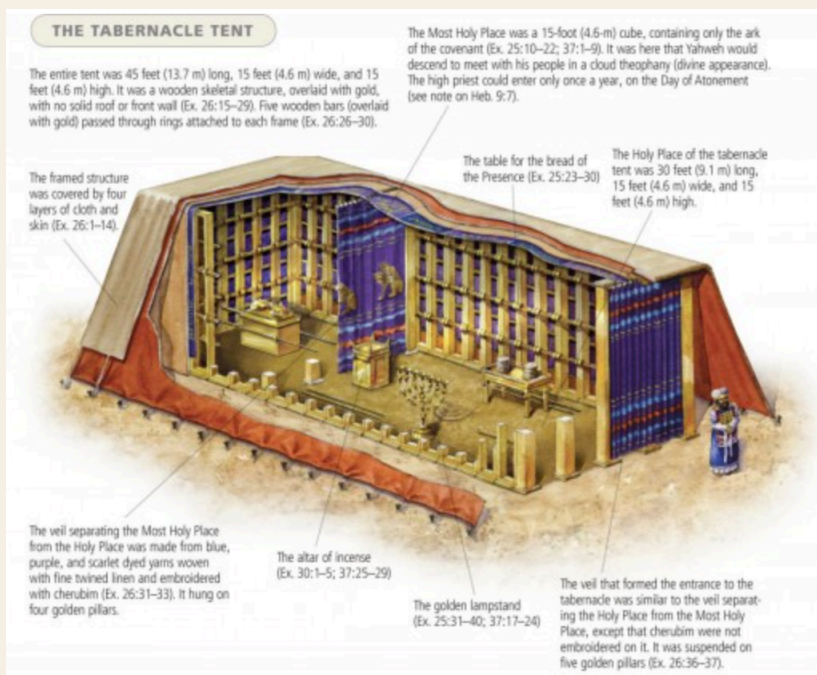
Last week, our look into the sanctuary renovation details explained that a chancel screen separates the public seating area (the Nave) from the sacred altar and choir area (the Chancel) in a church; theologically, this follows the Jewish Temple:

- The courts: where the worshipers / pilgrims gathered
- The Holy Place: priests offering sacrifice
- The Holy of Holies: behind the curtain, the place of the Ark of the Covenant, where the priest entered only once a year on the Day of Atonement.

The origins of this Temple layout can be found in Exodus, beginning in Chapter 25. "The LORD said to Moses...let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the pattern of the **tabernacle**, and of all its furniture, so you shall make it." It was in this tabernacle that God dwelled with the people of Israel in the desert, the Glory Cloud on the mercy seat in the Ark of the Covenant, an "ark of acacia wood...overlaid with pure gold within and without". (Ex 37:1-2) The original Hebrew word translated as tabernacle is mishkan, which literally means a "dwelling place" or "residence." The tabernacle in our church is where Christ, truly present in the Eucharist, dwells with us. In keeping with the original description of the Ark of the Covenant, our tabernacle is gilded inside and out with gold leaf.

The door of the tabernacle has been carved with "The Pelican in Her Piety" (the formal term for artwork depicting the mother pelican nesting and feeding her young with blood from her chest). The symbol frequently appears carved into marble altars, painted on tabernacle doors, or etched into stained-glass windows and liturgical vestments. St. Thomas Aquinas famously referenced the symbol in his Eucharistic hymn Adoro Te Devote, writing: "Pie Pelicane, Jesu Domine, / Me immundum munda tuo sanguine" (O loving Pelican, Lord Jesus, cleanse me, the unclean, with your blood).

The Legend of the Pelican: Ancient legends claimed that a mother pelican would pierce her own breast with her beak to feed her starving or dying offspring with her blood during a famine. Some versions say she revived her dead young on the third day with her blood. Early Christians adopted this story as an allegory for Jesus. Just as the mother pelican supposedly wounds herself to give life to her chicks, Jesus shed His blood on the cross and gave His life to redeem humanity. The "third day" aspect of the legend also mirrors Christ's Resurrection.



The Pelican in Her Piety - Key Theological Meanings

The Eucharist: The pelican represents the Holy Eucharist, where Christ continually feeds the faithful spiritually with His own Body and Blood.

The Passion and Crucifixion: The wounding of the pelican's breast corresponds to Christ's side being pierced by a lance on the cross.

Atonement and Charity: It stands as the ultimate icon of selfless love, charity, and total sacrifice (agape).

TABERNACLE PAINTING, GILDING, AND DOOR CARVING BY WESLEY BAKER OF CONTRASTS WOODCARVING, LTD, OHIO

The tabernacle, originally made in Belgium in 1875, is a Gothic-style solid wood design (original top left picture below). The tabernacle was acquired through Fluminalis Church Interiors in Holland and sent to Wesley Baker of Contrasts Woodcarving, Ohio, who carved and gilded a new door for the tabernacle, gilded the interior, and painted the exterior (pictures below). The new colors of the tabernacle, which are taken from the rich color palette of medieval art, match the colors of the triptych. The tabernacle is now with Little Way Construction in Katy, TX, who will incorporate it into the triptych reredos above the altar.

