

COUNTDOWN TO BISHOP LOPES' VISIT AND THE CONSECRATION OF OUR NEW ALTAR: 8 WEEKS!

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

THIS WEEK:

THE CHANCEL SCREEN

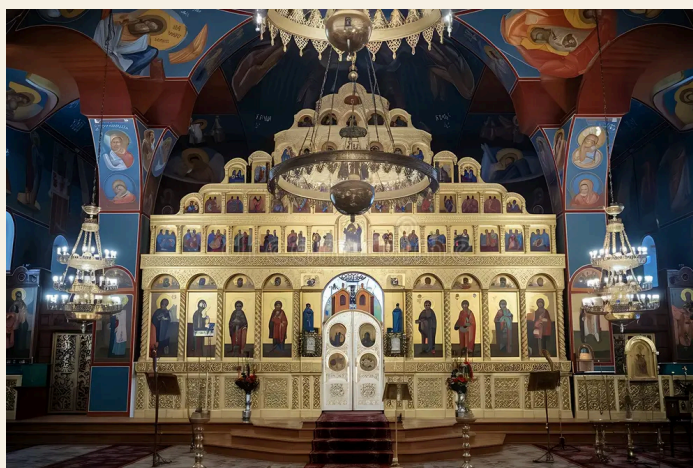
A chancel screen is an ornate architectural partition that separates the public seating area (the Nave) from the sacred altar and choir area (the Chancel) in a church. Theologically, it follows the Jewish Temple:

- 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.

All this was a mere shadow of the good things to come: when Christ our High Priest would give his life on the Cross, rise from the dead and ascend into heaven where he continually offers himself to the Father in the true temple of heaven. Every time we follow his command to celebrate the Eucharist, the heavenly temple is joined to earth so that every Church becomes a temple, and every baptized person who receives the Eucharist also becomes a temple.

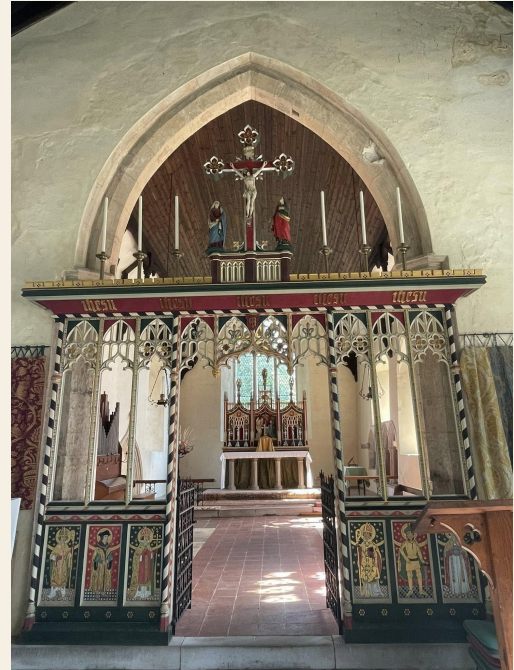
“Holy” means set apart, therefore we consecrate our Churches and Altars, as they become true temples of Jesus our great High Priest. That is why in the earliest centuries of church building, there was a “chancel barrier” separating the Nave from the Chancel, where the priest offered the Sacrifice of the Mass.

Over the centuries, these barriers grew in both East and West both in size and beauty. Images of our Lord, our Blessed Mother and the Saints were added. In the East, this developed into what we know now as “Iconostasis” - with the Altar completely hidden, emphasizing the mystery of our Divine Worship. In the West wooden tracery or elaborate stonework abounded, but the screen never completely blocked the view of the Altar. Below is pictured on the right an example of an English Screen (St. Giles on left) and Eastern Iconostasis (right).



In the West, crosses, called “rood” in Old English, were eventually added to the top of the screens in many churches so that the screen became known as a “Rood Screen.” While this was common in larger churches on the continent, in England the Rood Screen could be found in even the smallest country parishes by the 15th century.

With the English “reformation” in the 16th Century, much of the color and iconography and statues were destroyed by Protestants. Yet the screen itself most often remained. In Catholic countries, the renaissance and baroque influence favored a direct and unobscured line of vision to the Altar, so while Altar Rails remained, most of the medieval Rood Screens were removed. Therefore in modern times, Anglican and Episcopal Churches became known for their beautiful new or restored Rood Screen, while they have fallen almost entirely out of the memory of the rest of the Catholic West. See below for example of a common example of a surviving Rood Screen after the Reformation (All Hallows, Great Mitton (Lancashire) and a restored medieval Rood Screen (St. Mary’s, Kettlebaston, Suffolk, right), both in small English country parishes.



In chapels where the ceiling height did not allow for a “Rood,” the screen is simply known as a “Chancel Screen.” When the Chancel is not large enough for the monastic choir stalls many Anglican Churches are known for, the Altar Rail can be integrated as a part of the Screen as will be the case with St. Edmund’s new Chancel Screen (pictured below). Our screen will also have the pulpit and lectern masterfully crafted into it.

BUILT BY LITTLE WAY IN KATY, TX

The chancel screen is being built by Little Way Construction in Houston, TX. Little Way Construction was started in April 2021 by Scott and Gina Bergeron. Little Way Construction is named in honor of St. Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face, a Catholic Discalced Carmelite nun from Lisieux, France. St. Thérèse, often called the “Little Flower,” lived with childlike simplicity and complete surrender to the everlasting love of God. Her life is a lasting example of trusting God to provide the everyday inspiration and direction needed to succeed.



The reredos above our altar (which will frame our triptych) and the pulpit which will be incorporated into the chancel screen are also being built by Little Way Construction.