



OVERVIEW

For 45 years, the parish family of St. Paul the Apostle in Nassau Bay, Texas, longed to have a permanent worship space that appropriately reflected who they are. Rolf Rohn and his team at Rohn & Associates Design, Inc. finally helped make that happen. Located just outside of NASA's Johnson Space Center, St. Paul the Apostle embraced the theme, "The Heavens Declare the Glory of God," before and during construction of their new church. Reverend Alberto A. Maullon, Jr. expressed to Rolf the desire for the renovated and larger space to provide a sense of community worship where parishioners can actively participate in the liturgies and devotional exercises—a priority being proper sightlines, movement for the celebrations, and proper spacing of the liturgical and devotional areas. Another large concern was the lack of liturgical lighting and scenarios (focal, architectural and specific scenes). It was up to Rolf and his team to create a gracious and harmonious sacred space where art and architecture unite while meeting current Church guidelines to celebrate mass. Over the five years spent developing and implementing the designs, each detail was clearly defined and approved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Rohn team designed a complete liturgical and artistic environment for this vibrant parish, including all sacred art, stained glass, flooring, liturgical furniture, appointments, lighting, finishes and space formation, as well as coordinated all of the architectural and functional details with the local architects, engineers and contractors. They made up an excellent team, focusing on the parish needs as the primary goal.



PROJECT EXECUTION

- Rolf designed the sanctuary, nave, day chapel, reserved Eucharist, baptistry and gathering area with ADA accessibility. As you enter the interior gathering space—now spacious, allowing for people to meet and promoting the desired sense of community—parishioners have a clear sense of our faith journey from baptism to Eucharist, from the baptismal font to the altar table, where the actions of the liturgy are instituted. The baptistry is located just inside the nave entrance doors. Rolf redesigned the day chapel to be set back from the liturgical environment while making it appropriate and aesthetically appealing to promote liturgy of the hours and provide a quiet place for adoration of the Eucharist in accordance with USCCB guidelines. The Reserved Eucharist was set here, behind the sanctuary, yet still beautifully visible from the assembly when lighting and times require its prominence.
- Rolf designed the reredos wall to work in harmony with the new art glass and hand-carved crucifix, creating an appropriate setting for the liturgical actions, speaking as one image of our relationship (as his people) with God: “Christ has died, Christ is resurrected, Christ will come again.”
- Our Liturgical Interior Designer, Kathy Maglicco, developed an interior decoration plan that included complementary paint, finish and material selection and management of the professionals who carried out the work. She chose colors and finishes for active and passive spaces that work with the art glass, statuary and furnishings.
- Rohn Custom Studio designed all new liturgical furniture and seating for 800 in the nave, including the altar, ambo, presider and deacon chairs, cantor podium, lectern, baptistry (font & related systems) and ambry. The exterior red marble of the cross-shaped immersion baptismal font represents Christ’s Passion and the martyrdom of St. Paul, and the black interior reminds us of our need to be cleansed of our sins. The matching red marble altar contains a reliquary of seven saints, including St. Paul. The ambo was also designed to complement the rest of the liturgical furniture to reflect the Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist. In the chapel, we designed the altar, seating, and Reserved Eucharist throne.
- We also designed all of the liturgical appointments, including the Tabernacle with images of a sword depicting the life of St. Paul, sanctuary lamp, paschal candle, torches, and processional cross (based on the life-size crucifix with an exceptional image of a suffering Christ dead on the Cross—to remind us of our redemption—that was fabricated and carved by artists in the Philippines).

PROJECT EXECUTION: continued

- Interior and exterior liturgical artwork and sculptures, Blessed Mother and St. Paul shrines, and devotional Stations of the Cross were also commissioned in the Philippines. A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe, a patron saint of the Americas, portrays her just as St. Juan Diego saw her: wrapped in stars and standing on the moon to represent the Universe.
- Rohn Custom Studio artists designed and painted a life-size mural in the entrance teaching of the life of the church patron saint. He was considered one of the most influential writers of the New Testament and is shown with a Bible and sword to reflect this and the way in which he was martyred.
- Rolf transformed the pastor's vision into a design for the brilliant stained glass window of the Last Supper that greets con-gregants with an image of the first mass as they enter the church, as well as breathtaking art glass depicting the Life of Mary.
- This traditional church also incorporates some surprising elements, including awe-inspiring stained glass windows above the altar from the Orion and Omega Swan Nebula, making it the first Catholic church to use actual images from space taken by the Hubble telescope. The angels in the windows also represent different genders and nationalities to remind us of our diversity and that each of us is made in God's image. Rolf recommended this skylight directly below the fleche and the expansion of the two left and right back clerestory windows to bring a Heavenly light to the interior.
- A state-of-the-art lighting system was designed and installed with custom lighting controls and a dimming system to allow focus on art and liturgical celebrations, including architectural, focal and functional lighting.
- Rolf also introduced a proper location for music ministries, including for the cantor and the organ consul and other instrumentals, making sure that they do not distract from the liturgical actions and sight lines.
- Our team also created detailed fundraising materials showing preliminary designs that were used during parish hall meetings and fundraising events to raise enthusiasm and financial support.
- A prayer garden with space for Easter vigils and gracious entrances that speak of the Catholic faith and clearly indicate a portal to Heaven are designed and ready for implementation at a future date.

ARTISTIC VISION



COMPLETED PROJECT

The parish of St. Paul the Apostle has built a community of believers whose lives are testaments of God's love, mercy and grace, and now they have a permanent house of worship for generations to come. St. Paul's stunning windows also caught the eye of PBS Arts InSight, and were featured in an episode exalting their unique beauty and meaning.





RECOGNITION FROM CATHEDRAL LEADERSHIP

"So much more than simply a gathering space, this church—built on holy ground—is a sign of the Church on earth. Here, art and architecture have united to do the work of the Holy Spirit by helping us prepare our hearts to receive God's word and enter more fully into communion with Him. Here, the heavens declare the glory of God. Welcome home."

