



OVERVIEW

Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Visalia, California has now been named “The largest catholic parish church in the United States.” The dedication of the church took place in February of 2023, following almost 390 renderings and a 3D model of a retablo- in just under ten years of planning. The challenge was to define the goals of the four different churches that would be consolidated into one parish, with imagery that is meaningful to all. Artists, supervised by Rolf, worked with Father Alex Chávez, Pastor, Monsignor Patrick McCormick, and the building committee over several months, tweaking the hand-drawn images numerous times just to get them right. This new sacred space now combines Mission-style simplicity with Renaissance art to which each parish can connect.

PROJECT EXECUTION

Liturgical Furniture

Rolf and his team also designed all the furniture to complement the interior and artwork, including the altar, ambo, tabernacle, tabernacle throne, and baptismal font. Italian stone artisans crafted the latter while the rest of the furniture was carved in Mexico with local Cantera stone.

The altar, with a reliquary situated beneath it, also has five crosses to represent the reliques. The altar’s four pillars feature the three apostles to first offer mass and who were present at the Last Supper.

Heaven meets earth in the tabernacle, or the Lamb of God.

From the Ambo—marked with the Chi Ro symbol (Christ and the Incarnate Word), Greek Alpha and Omega letters (the beginning and the end), and two angels (God’s messengers with trumpets)—the Word of God is declared.

The baptismal font echoes the cruciform shape of the church. The upper basin contains five gold crosses symbolizing the wounds of Christ and the grace he obtained for us. The lower basin depicts the Holy Spirit, who descends in Baptism from God to dwell in our hearts.

The Dome

The octagon-shaped dome features the four Evangelists in gold. This reflects the vision of the

parish: the glory of God seen beyond the cosmos while providing an earthly medium for the area's diverse parishioners—Latino, Portuguese, Caucasian, Vietnamese, and Filipino as well as farmworkers, farmers, and professionals—to gather and meet their Lord.

The Retablo Mural

Under Liturgical Designer Rolf Rohn's direction, our artists first sketched the retablo's careful details and then crafted a model prior to executing the artwork to scale. It features images of devotion, including the Holy Trinity, and the Central Valley community.

The 38-foot-tall retablo mural features life-size saints, each with a story behind them. The artists paid close attention to their facial expression, age, posture, garment, and even relationship to the entire composition.

At the mural's center is the powerful image of the Holy Trinity, illustrated by one of our artists based on Rolf's concept.

The Holy Trinity

The breathtaking centerpiece of the Holy Trinity represents one of Christianity's central affirmations. The Trinity defines God as existing in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

With the retablo mural as its backdrop, this is to serve as the focal point of the sanctuary.

Once the church committee approved the drawings, a world-renowned Spanish sculptor hand carved and painted the figures in Lindenwood.

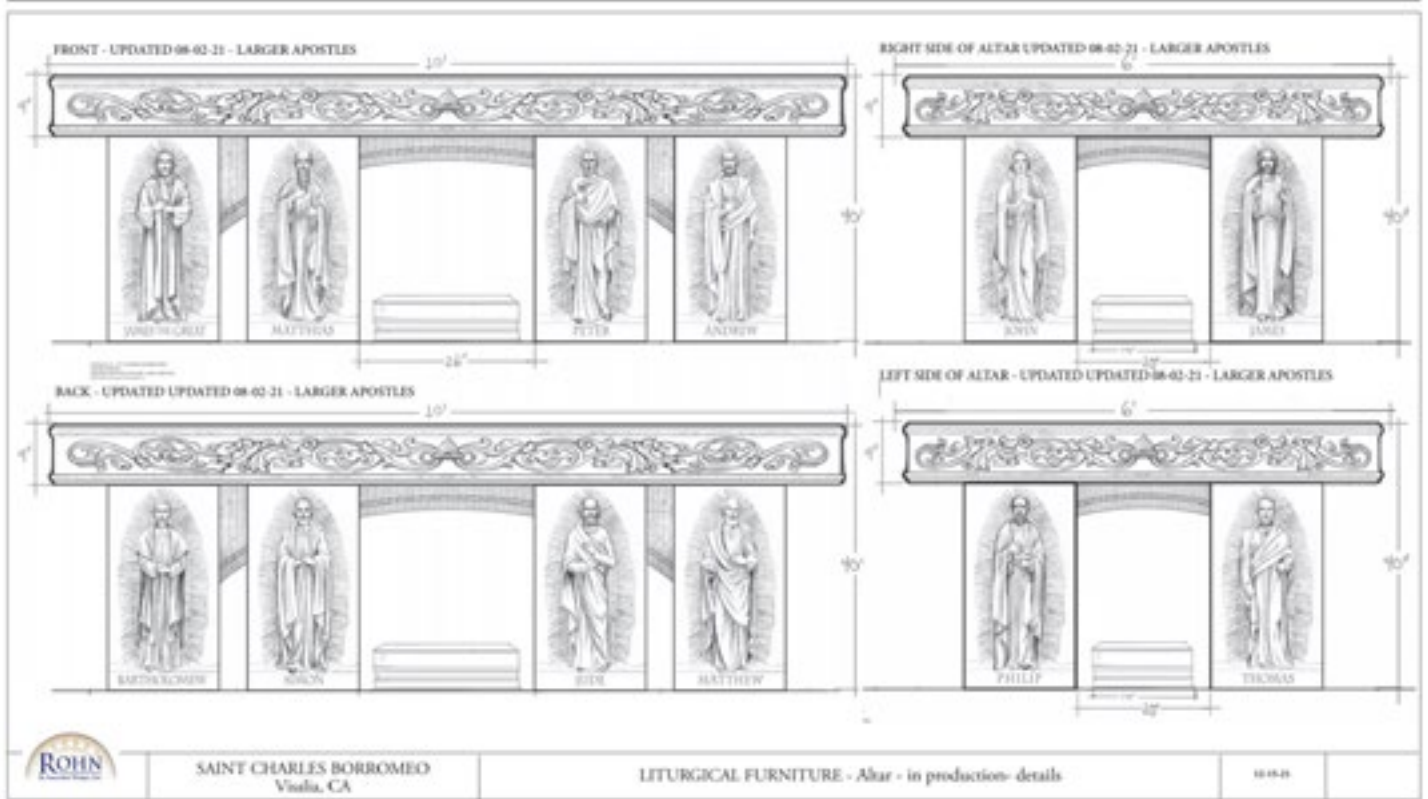


ARTISTIC VISION



Rendering of Retablo Mural

ARTISTIC VISION



Rendering of Altar

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COMPLETE PROJECT

The narthex of the church contains four paintings representing the parish communities and their patron saints that merged to form the new church: Holy Family, The Nativity of Mary, St. Thomas the Apostle, and St. Charles Borromeo.

The agriculture depicted in the retablo mural is actually agriculture that is grown around the location of the church. It represents scenic places that anyone would see just driving through the area.

RECOGNITION FROM CATHEDRAL LEADERSHIP

*"A project of this size and this scope takes on a life of its own and requires a lot of time and attention. This place will be a place of pilgrimage where people from all over the state and world will come to be inspired." -Bishop Joseph Brennan, Diocese of Fresno
-Elisa Navarro, abc30*



