

St. Joseph of the Holy Family

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This project began with design and consultation meetings with the pastor, Reverend Philip Kelly, and a renovation and building committee from the parish. Their two main requests were to stay within budget and to respect the African-American heritage of the congregation. The parish was founded by German immigrants, and the church was built to emulate the churches they left behind. The new congregation wanted a shift from this pseudo-European design to something "Afro-centric." Renovata Studios researched the art and furniture of several African tribes including Zulu, Yoruba, and Swahili, which inspired a design direction for the new liturgical elements.

The budget of \$75,000 was extremely tight, as it included painting the sanctuary with a new color scheme and extending the altar platform. The liturgical furnishings were designed with forms and details that could be fabricated at low cost. Renovata built all of furnishings in its studios. The total cost for the liturgical furnishings was \$43,300, including the altar, ambo, celebrant's chair, tabernacle with a throne, and tabernacle doors, along with processional candle stands and a crucifix.

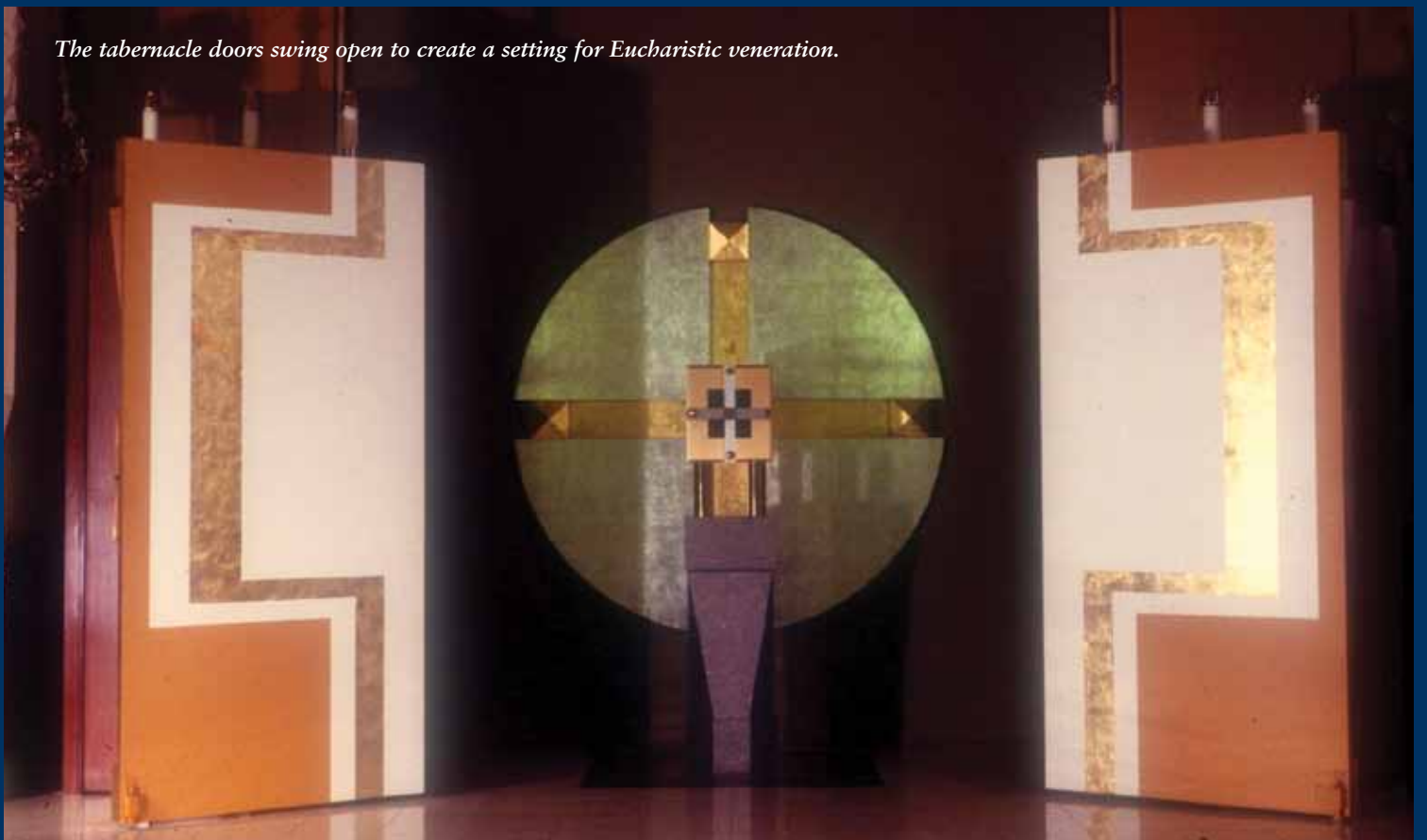
The solid granite altar was affordable thanks to its simple yet sculptural forms. The ambo, celebrant's chair, and tabernacle screen are of African wood veneers, Bubinga and Anegre, on plywood construction, which is both easier to use than solid lumber and more stable in large fabrications such as these. The great symbol on the tabernacle doors was created on birch plywood decorated with a combination of aluminum, copper, and imitation gold metal leaf. The imitation leaf is nearly as lustrous as the real 23-karat gold leaf, but must be treated with a sealer to preserve its brightness. The effect is a shimmering backdrop that visually separates the tabernacle from the Eucharistic ritual. When opened, the doors are decorated with a radiance that accentuates the tabernacle for devotional worship after mass. All of these methods are visually effective without breaking the bank.



Detail of the tabernacle.



The new sanctuary is decorated with themes derived from African art.



The tabernacle doors swing open to create a setting for Eucharistic veneration.