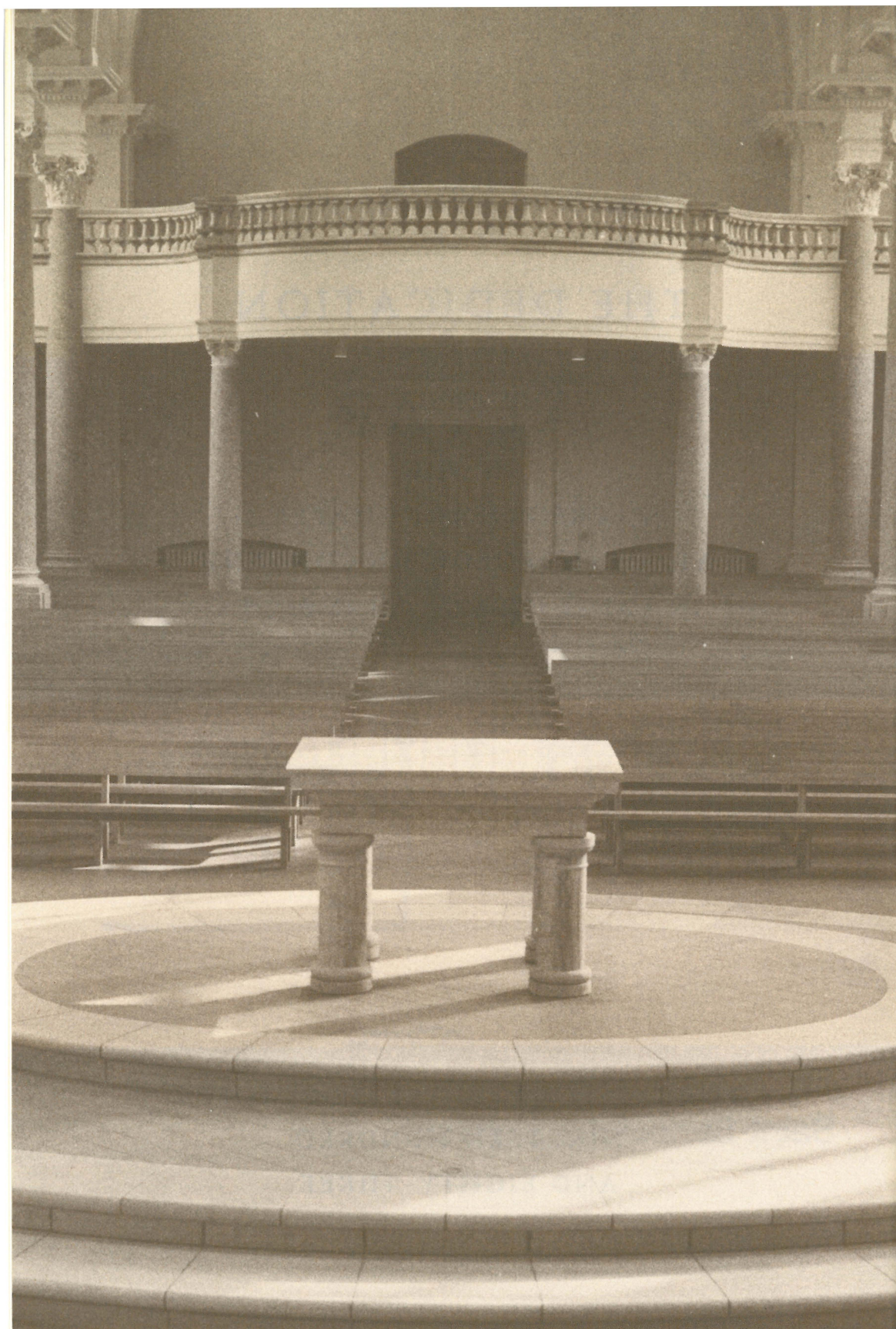


Saint Benedict's Convent

THE DEDICATION
OF THE
ALTAR
IN THE
SACRED HEART CHAPEL
AT SAINT BENEDICT'S CONVENT
IN SAINT JOSEPH, MINNESOTA

TWENTY-FOURTH DAY OF OCTOBER
NINETEEN HUNDRED
AND EIGHTY-THREE



A SOURCE OF UNITY AND FRIENDSHIP

"It is in keeping with the eucharistic mystery that the Christian people should erect a permanent altar for the celebration of the Lord's Supper." This instruction comes to us in *The Rite of the Dedication of an Altar*. Assembled here on this twenty-fourth day of October, nineteen hundred and eighty-three, to participate in the dedicatory ceremonies of the newly installed altar of Sacred Heart Chapel, we hear the bishop:

This is a day of rejoicing: we have come together to dedicate this altar by offering the sacrifice of Christ. . . . Bless this altar built in the house of your Church. . . . Make it a source of unity and friendship, where your people may gather as one to share your spirit of mutual love.

The fixed altar, which the *Rite* specifies "should be placed in a central position which draws the attention of the whole congregation," is a symbol of Christ whom Scripture calls 'the head cornerstone.' Symbolically too, according to the words of the *Rite*, "All who offer petitions to God and present sacrifices of supplication are the living stones from which the Lord Jesus builds the Church's altar." The 'house of the Church' in which we are now convened is the result of more than a century's evolution. On this memorable occasion its history and the history of its builders deserve to be told.

THE BUILDERS*

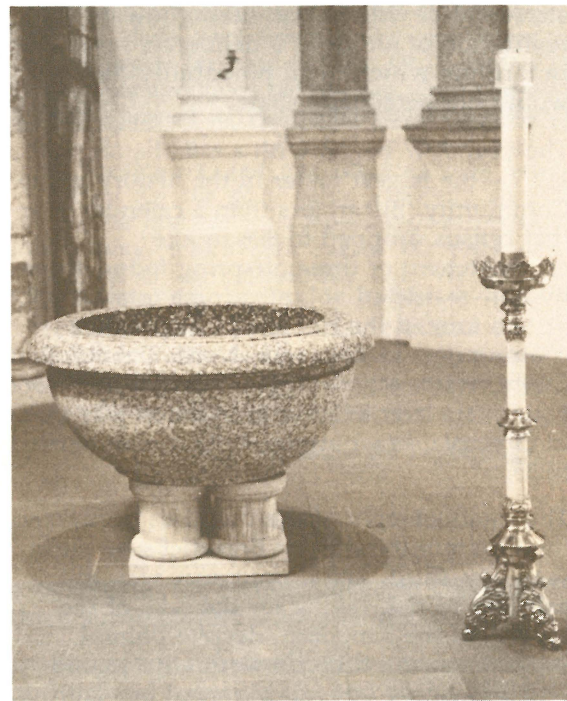
On July 3 in the summer of 1857 a Mississippi steamer, the Northstar, brought to St. Cloud

** The story of the "Builders" was prepared for a brochure recently published by the Community Representatives for the Benedictine Appreciation Event.*

not loss or decline. More than fourteen centuries of monastic history make unmistakable that Benedictine communities have always regarded the making of new foundations as one of their principal works.

This purposeful aim intrigued a resident artist-craftsman who at one time had his workshop on the grounds of Saint Benedict's. As he was engaged in designing an insignia for the Convent, he wanted to express the replanting idea in symbol. Of the many symbols which he considered, the strawberry plant became his final choice. Because the vine takes root at its joints, it produces new growth without discontinuity. He was convinced that the strawberry should be part of the crest.

Such new rootings from Saint Benedict's Convent are taking place in 1983. Six



groupings of Sisters are now in locations working toward the development of autonomous foundations. Four of these are outside the continental United States; two of them are outside the Western Hemisphere.

Today's population roster, exclusive of the Sisters in dependent priories, reads 624. These are the Sisters who made the decision, as Ecclesiastes would express it, 'to throw away stones and to gather up new ones' by renovating and extending Sacred Heart Chapel which had served the Community for 72 years. Through several previous decades the Community's gathered stones had been used in many ways. Building facilities, both at home and abroad, were provided for health care, child care, and secondary and higher education. The time had come to go forward with long-deferred renewal plans at Saint Benedict's, the center of all the Sisters' lives. By ballots cast on *October 25, 1980*, they signified their wish that the chapel be the focus of first attention.





THE BUILDING

A CENTURY OF GROWTH

Since coming to Saint Joseph, the Sisters worshiped in four different chapel spaces. These have ranged from a small room in their first convent building (1863) to a large room located in the wing of the second convent building (1881). This latter room, however, was not only inadequate to a simultaneous seating of Sisters, academy pupils and orphans but had also to serve as study hall as well as chapel. Nineteen years later (1892) a newly constructed addition to the convent provided a two-story space with a seating capacity of 300 exclusively for use as a chapel. The first separate building to serve solely as a chapel was erected twenty years later (1912). This structure is the present Sacred Heart Chapel, originally designed to accommodate 550 people; the recent renovation has enlarged that capacity to a possible 736.

The erection of Sacred Heart Chapel in 1912 was preceded by an extensive study of ecclesiastical architecture. The incumbent prioress, Mother Cecilia Kapsner, and procurator, Sister Priscilla Schmitbauer, traveled through seven states to acquaint themselves with existing chapel and church structures to see whether any would model the needs of the Saint Joseph community. None was found. Lacking an existing model, the Sisters engaged George P. Stauduhar, an architect from Rock Island, Illinois, to prepare a design. His Roman Renaissance-style draft was approved. Its execution made the chapel the third domed church in Minnesota. The dome rose then as it rises now 135 feet above the 157 x 60-foot nave with its 110-foot transept.

The fully completed edifice was blessed by Bishop James Trobec on March 25, 1914. It was consecrated by

Bishop Peter Bartholome on October 24, 1943. Today on the fortieth anniversary of that consecration Bishop George Speltz solemnly dedicates its new altar.

OVERVIEW

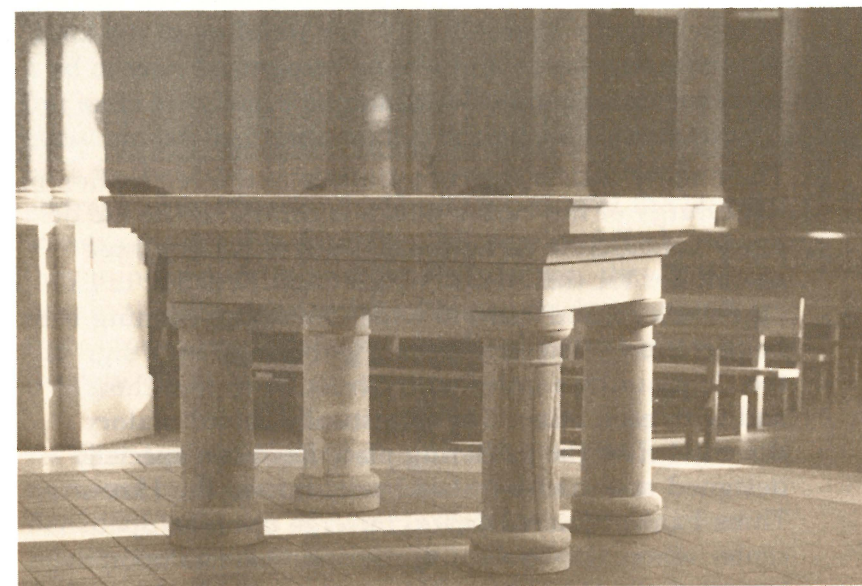
The only manner in which the chapel proper has been changed structurally is the removal of the spacious and elevated sanctuary. Floor leveling has made possible the recommended central position of the altar. That position places the altar directly beneath the dome where it is accentuated by the maximum natural illumination which the nave offers. The leveling has also disposed of the former predominantly longitudinal seating. The present four-directional seating creates an enlarged visual contact of worshipers with one another, thereby emphasizing the unity of the assembly. The reconstructed sanctuary likewise makes possible the realization of the ideal that the musicians be part of the assembly.

The homespun linen altar cloth was made in 1920 by Sisters Albina and Petrina Hoeft, who learned their craft as girls in Bavaria. They planted the flax, harvested it, thrashed it, retted it in Lake Sarah in the Sisters' woods, dried it in the sun, broke it, scutched it, and spun and wove it into the linen cloth which is covering the altar today.

Additions to the chapel include a narthex, a Blessed Sacrament Chapel, a gathering place, and an oratory. The purpose of the narthex is to facilitate processional entrances for the celebration of the Eucharist. Processions entering through the great doors will pass the fountain of moving waters, reminding the participants of their initial entry into the Church through Baptism.



Sister Albina Hoeft at her spinning wheel. She and her sister, Sister Patricia Hoeft, wove the linen cloth which covers the altar today.



The Blessed Sacrament Chapel was designed in accord with the recommendations of the encyclical, *Mysterium Fidei*. "The place in a church or oratory where the Eucharist is reserved in a tabernacle should be truly a

place of honor. It should also be suited to private prayer so that the faithful may readily and to their advantage continue to honor the Lord in this sacrament by private worship. Therefore, it is recommended that as far as possible the tabernacle be placed in a chapel set apart from the main body of the church."

The gathering place responds to the spatial principles set forth in *Art and Environment in Catholic Worship*. "Special attention must be given to the unity of the entire liturgical space . . . the space should communicate . . . a sense of being the gathering place of the united Community. Planning for a convergence of pathways to the liturgical space in a concourse or foyer or other place adequate for gathering before and after liturgies is recommended. Such a gathering space can encourage introductions, conversations, the sharing of refreshments after a liturgy, the building of the kind of community sense and feeling recognized now to be a prerequisite of good celebration."

The oratory fosters the commitment to the celebration of the Liturgy of the Hours which is central to the life of every Benedictine community. Daily there are three assemblies for the Hours, which Saint Benedict calls "the work of God" and to which he says, "nothing is to be preferred." These corporate gatherings are a sign of the Community's unity with Christ, with the Church, and with each other. The acoustically sound oratory directly below the gathering place has been specially designed to enhance the oral recitation of the Hours. Three banks of tiered pews converge upon an open center where the book of the Scriptures rests upon a lectern. From this lectern the readings for the Liturgy of the Hours are proclaimed. The oratory's physical arrangement permits the members of the assembly to see and hear one another; it produces a hospitable setting for the antiphonal recitation of psalms and

canticles, for responding to the readings, and for imparting and receiving the customary blessings. While praying as a community, the members of the assembly do not pray only for the Community. They bear the commitment to be a manifestation of the 'praying Church' which excludes no one from its intercessions, its praise, and thanksgiving.

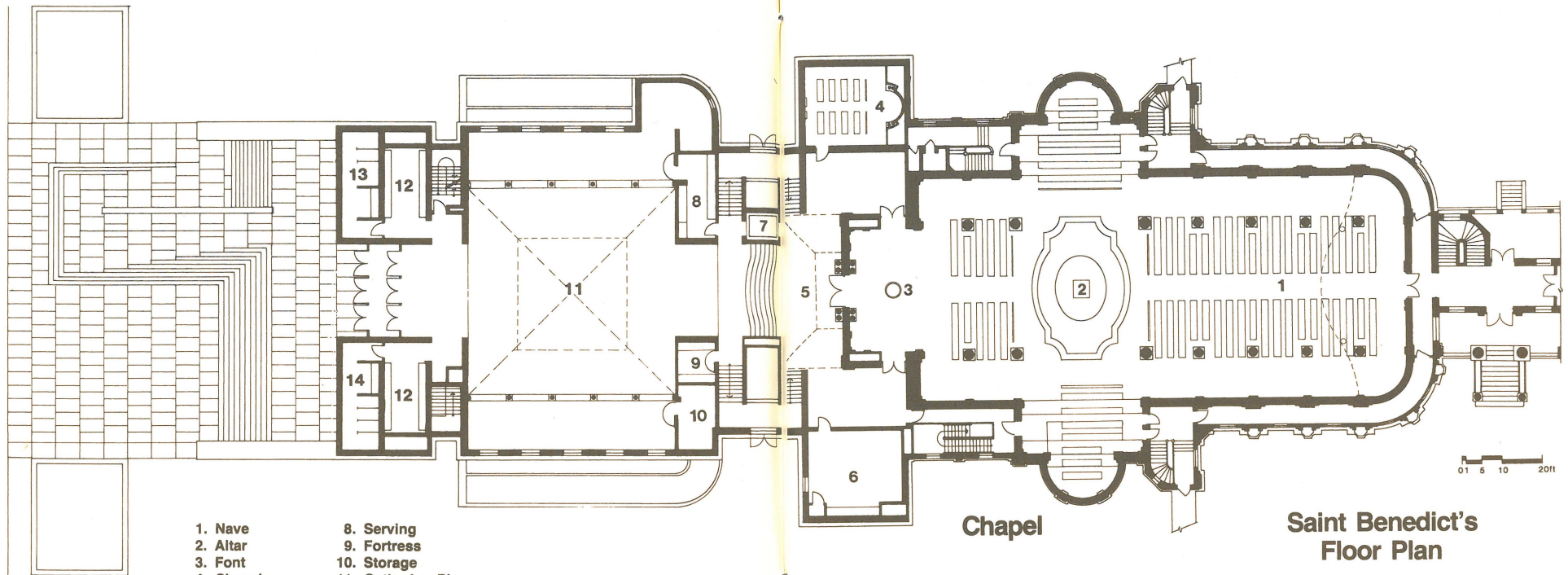
ENDS ARE BEGINNINGS

Planning the structural adaptations and refurbishments of the chapel was, as Ecclesiastes would put it,

*A time for searching,
A time for losing,
A time for keeping,
A time for throwing away.*

But ends are always beginnings. The realization of every envisioned undertaking brings the Community back to that flow of seasons. A fresh search has been addressing another kind of building, that of the living stones who are this Church, 'the people of God.' As they ponder questions about their future, they feel certain that the same spirit of hope which prompted their renovating the chapel will inspire their plans for the future.

As Benedictines planted and rooted in a given place and nurtured by a given history and tradition, the Benedictine Sisters of Saint Joseph, Minnesota, owe fidelity to the spirit of courage, risk-taking, and endurance which was modeled for them in the women who preceded them in the undeveloped territory which is now Stearns County. It is in this same spirit that the Sisters choose to renovate their chapel and erect the new altar which we are dedicating today.



- | | |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. Nave | 8. Serving |
| 2. Altar | 9. Fortress |
| 3. Font | 10. Storage |
| 4. Chapel | 11. Gathering Place |
| 5. Narthex | 12. Coats |
| 6. Sacristy | 13. Men |
| 7. Elevator | 14. Women |

Chapel

Saint Benedict's
Floor Plan

0 1 5 10 20ft