Guideline

Building and Renovating Churches, Chapels, and Oratories

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney



Contents

[1. GUIDELINE 1 1](#_Toc141797744)

[2. GUIDELINE 2 1](#_Toc141797745)

[3. GUIDELINE 3 1](#_Toc141797746)

[4. GUIDELINE 4 1](#_Toc141797747)

[5. GUIDELINE 5 2](#_Toc141797748)

[6. GUIDELINE 6 2](#_Toc141797749)

[5. Appendix 1: Application Form 3](#_Toc141797750)

[6. Appendix 2: Important Considerations 4](#_Toc141797751)

[7. CLASSIFICATION 5](#_Toc141797752)

# GUIDELINE 1

The Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney recognises the importance of the role of sacred art and sacred furnishings for the authentic experience of the liturgy of the faithful. Therefore, it is committed to approving, fostering and promoting all expressions of sacred art and architecture that fruitfully contribute to the edification of the Christian people about the mysteries of the Catholic faith contained in the liturgical celebrations of the Church.

# GUIDELINE 2

The main point for reference in architectural matters in the Archdiocese of Sydney are two documents officially approved by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference: *And When Churches Are to be Built…* [AWCAB] (2014) and *Fit For Sacred Use* [FFSU] (2018). A careful study of those sources should be the first step in the process of planning of building new churches and chapels, and in renovations of the existing ones. Of particular importance is “The Christological Principle” which places Christ at the centre of all our liturgical and architectural endeavours (see AWCAB par. 99-107).

These two Australian documents should be read in light of the official documents issued by the Holy See for the universal Church, including *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (especially chapters V-VI), *Instruction Redemptionis Sacramentum* (especially chapters V-VI) and the praenotanda to the *Dedication of a Church and an Altar*.

# GUIDELINE 3

The Liturgy Office of the Archdiocese of Sydney should always be contacted regarding any changes to the existing churches, chapels and oratories, as well as approving projects of new buildings and spaces. The Liturgy Office works in cooperation with the Archdiocesan Liturgy Commission and its subcommittee on Art and Architecture.

In some cases, the final decision regarding an architectural matter may be left to the Archbishop of Sydney.

# GUIDELINE 4

Building new churches, chapels and oratories, as well as renovating existing ones, should normally be the initiative of the local parish and should be coordinated by the local pastor. In all cases the local parish priest needs to be consulted in the process of building of any chapels or oratories that would be located in the territory of his parish, including places of worship in schools, aged care facilities, hospitals and other entities of such kind.

# GUIDELINE 5

Approvals for building/renovating churches, chapels and oratories will normally be granted after a process of consultation with the Liturgy Office. The first steps of this process include:

* Contacting the Liturgy Office and filling out the Application Form (Appendix 1)
* In due course, providing a project brief, including the statement of intent. In preparing it, *And When Churches Are to be Built* par. 571-597, and *Fit For Sacred Use* par. 1311-1347 should be consulted.

# GUIDELINE 6

It is necessary that renovations of existing churches and chapels are planned in consultation with an architect who knows and understands the principles of the Catholic vision of the sacred liturgy and sacred space. The parish, the architect and the Liturgy Office should work together from the very beginning of the process.

# Appendix 1: Application Form

Building of New Churches, Chapels and Oratories, and for Renovations of Existing Sacral Buildings

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Parish: |  |
| Please briefly describe the project in question |  |
| What are the reasons for undertaking this project? |  |
| What is the budget? |  |
| What is the timeline? |  |
| What process is in place to inform and educate members of the parish? |  |
| Please briefly explain how the proposed changes align with the official guidelines for sacred architecture in Australia: *And When Churches are to be Built*… (2014) and *Fit for Sacred Use* (2018) |  |
| Has an architect been appointed? If so, who? |  |
| Further comments or questions? |  |
| Signature |  |
| Date |  |

# Appendix 2: Important Considerations

Important Considerations for Planned Building and Renovation Work of Churches/Chapels/Oratories

*Administration matters:*

* Local Parish Priest – is he informed and supportive?
* Register of celebrants – Working with Children Check, safeguarding training, etc.
* Possible return to the secular use only by permission of the Bishop

*Architectural matters:*

* Doors / narthex / entrance: AWCAB 203-216; FFSU 943-965.
* Symbol of Christ (transitional experience)
* Place for the assembly: AWCAB 217-243; FFSU 966-999.
* Unity with the sanctuary
* Not an auditorium
* Seats / pews should allow movement, seating, and kneeling
* Electronic screens, if used, must be integrated and unobtrusive
* Sound system
* Provisions for people with reduced mobility
* Windows: distinguished from the outside, not clear glass
* Ceiling: symbol of heaven
* Sanctuary: AWCAB 265-281; FFSU 1028-1055.
* Distinctive, preferably elevated, appropriately ornamented
* Large enough to fit all ministers
* Not a stage
* Chair: AWCAB 282-300; FFSU 1056-1073.
* Not a throne, but sufficiently prominent to indicate the role of the presider
* Should correspond with the altar, the ambo and the rest of the sanctuary
* Ambo: AWCAB 301-320; FFSU 1074-1102.
* Should correspond with the altar
* Elevated, preferably fixed
* More than a lectern
* Altar: AWCAB 321-347; FFSU 1103-1183.
* Preferably fixed and made of stone
* Natural centre of attention
* Relics? (authenticated and recognisable as part of human body)
* Altar cross
* Credence table (preferably on the right side of the celebrant)
* Tabernacle: AWCAB 348-377; FFSU 1134-1163.
* Placed in a part of the church that is “truly noble, prominent, readily visible, beautifully decorated, and suitable for prayer”
* Permission from the Bishop is needed for tabernacles in chapels
* Mass needs to be celebrated at least twice a month
* Precautions for the protection of the Blessed Sacrament (key to tabernacle)
* The church should be open every day for visits
* Veil / lamp
* Baptismal font: AWCAB: 378-399; FFSU 1164-1187.
* Mainly in churches, less likely in chapels
* Freestanding and visible
* Holy water stoops
* Penance: AWCAB 400-413; FFSU 1188-1207
* Should meet the current guidelines of the Archdiocese of Sydney (available by request)
* Devotional shrines: AWCAB 417-440; FFSU 1208-1229
* Images and sculptures – encouraged, but in the right order and proportion
* Stations of the Cross
* Votive candles
* Sacristy / vestry: AWCAB 449-471; FFSU 1242-1270
* Mirror
* Sink
* Sacrarium
* Liturgical books, vessels and objects (candles, thurible, holy water, cloths and altar linen, processional cross, monstrance, etc.)
* Vestments
* Music space: AWCAB 224-264; FFSU 1000-1027
* Importance of the organ
* Flexible space
* Not a stage
* Preferably facing same direction as the rest of the assembly
* Some other considerations:
* Lighting and ventilation
* Sound system: discrete, but efficient
* Security
* Parking and other facilities
* Space for children?
* Air conditioning?

# CLASSIFICATION

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