**THE SISTINE CHAPEL**

**A picture containing person, man, wall

Description generated with very high confidence**

### **Baccio Pontelli (?) architect, *Sistine Chapel,* exterior view to entrance, commissioned by Pope Sixtus IV, 1477-81, between the Papal Palace and Old St Peter’s, replacing 14th C ‘Great Chapel’**



***Peter Stuart***

Today Phyllis and I are going to explore the Sistine Chapel with you. So first, some quick facts about it:

### It’s in Rome, or to be precise, in the Vatican City, an independent state surrounded by present-day Italy, all that remains of the Papal States on the peninsula.

* The Chapel was built and decorated in the turbulent time of the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter Reformation.
* It’s within the Apostolic Palace complex, where Popes live.
* It’s the Pope’s chapel, where many official acts of the Papal Household take place; and the Conclave of Cardinals meets there to elect a new Pope.
* Outwardly it’s a very undistinguished building, as you can see.
* Inside, it’s anything but.
* 6 million people visit it every year. (Hands up those of you who have been there?)

So now to the interior.

***Kamppi Chapel*, Helsinki, Finland**

[](http://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjA7Kqb9u_ZAhWEebwKHRKpC_gQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=http://www.discoveringfinland.com/destination/the-kamppi-chapel-of-silence/&psig=AOvVaw1bZC49ip2pEJiIr_dRtqIK&ust=1521257975631153)

This…..is not the interior of the Sistine Chapel. It’s the Kamppi Chapel, in Helsinki, Finland. I’ve been there, and it’s serenely beautiful.

***Phyllis Mossman***

***Rothko Chapel,* Houston, Texas, United States**

[](https://positive-feedback.com/audio-discourse/morton-feldman-rothko-chapel/)

Nor is this the interior of the Sistine Chapel. It’s the Rothko Chapel, a celebrated space in Houston, Texas.

***Sistine Chapel,* interior view , looking towards the altar wall**



***This*** is the Sistine Chapel (seen from the entrance, looking towards the altar). By contrast with the Kamppi and Rothko chapels, here we’re overwhelmed by pictures.

***Peter***

The Sistine Chapel is a confident statement that the Church has Divine truths to teach, and that ***images*** are a primary way to communicate those truths. And this Chapel was painted during a period when there was a massive cultural swing in Europe towards the printed word. And two things were happening – the Bible was being translated from newly-recovered earlier manuscripts into the languages of the people, and the new printing press technology was helping to distribute those translations. The Protestant Reformation was well under way. Amongst Protestants, images were increasingly suspect (whether two-dimensional pictures or three-dimensional statues and sculptures).

What was happening at an even deeper level was that the balance between Word and Sacrament was changing. The Ministry of the ***Word*** is the reading of Scripture aloud and the teaching of its truths, in words, through which God speaks. The ***Sacraments*** are the visual symbolic acts like Baptism or the Eucharist, ‘outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace’, through which God acts. Visual art isn’t itself a sacrament, but can be a natural handmaid of the sacramental system.

An unnecessary ‘either/or’ choice between Word and Sacrament often emerged during the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter Reformation. That false polarisation between Word and Sacrament impoverished both. Fortunately, that polarisation has hugely diminished today.

***Phyllis***

Back to the Sistine Chapel. What’s actually there? a classic series of fine paintings by select Renaissance artists, supremely Michelangelo, but not only him.

On the side walls we see two Biblical narratives: the *Life of Moses*, life under the Law, along the left wall [POINT]; and the *Life of Christ*, life under Grace, along the right wall.

These were painted in the 1480s by a group of Florentine artists, including Botticelli and Perugino, for Pope Sixtus IV.

The ceiling with its narratives from the book of Genesis, of Creation and Noah, was painted some 20 years later by Michelangelo for Pope Julius II.

Then the altar wall with its *Last Judgement* scene was painted by Michelangelo some 25 years after the ceiling, for Pope Paul III.

***Sistine Chapel,* north wall, painted in the 1480s from left: *Baptism of Christ*, Perugino et al; *Temptation of Christ*, Botticelli; *Vocation of the Apostles*, Ghirlandaio; *The Sermon on the Moun*t, Rosselli (attributed); *The Delivery of the Keys*, Perugino; *The Last Supper*, Rosselli**

[](https://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwjy_P2L8LPaAhUKNrwKHXD9CV0QjRx6BAgAEAU&url=https://www.artbible.info/art/sistine-chapel.html&psig=AOvVaw1nxN8qcvMXwOcZHNMQLBMm&ust=1523592880065503)

Here’s the north wall, with its bottom row of scenes from the Life of Christ. You can see the *Baptism of Christ* on the far left, through to *The Last Supper* on the far right.

***Sistine Chapel,*** **ceiling, 1508-12, fresco, 13.7 x 39 metres**

[](https://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj-l4fx7bPaAhUIWLwKHaAsDdMQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=https://www.simplepastimes.com/pd-the-sistine-chapel-ceiling-1000-piece-panoramic-puzzle-by-eurographics.cfm&psig=AOvVaw0K1gJIulLO2V385WOgumuE&ust=1523592092361278)

And this is the famous ceiling painted by Michelangelo. It took him four years.

Michelangelo’s portrayal of the *Last Judgment*

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8qLTNYQi86fDI=)

And here’s the great altar wall, Michelangelo’s portrayal of the *Last Judgment*.

Architecture or sculpture is not what brings the six million visitors every year. It’s these paintings.

***Peter***

So that’s the broad outline of the Chapel. Some of its images are now deeply embedded in Christian tradition – and in the minds of those people of many faiths or no faith at all –who’ve encountered them.

It’s a complex artistic creation which can be read on several levels:

* as part of the rebuilding of Rome in the last quarter of the 15th Century and into the 16th Century to help strengthen the authority of the Roman Church and its Papacy; ***and***
* as a visual presentation of the teaching of that Church, in the key location of Christendom; ***and***
* as an attempt to brace the Roman Church for its own reformation in response to the Protestant Reformation; ***and***
* as propaganda for the individual Popes who commissioned it.

Artistically, this is the peak of High Renaissance style - a grand expression of the Christian Faith, as it was understood by the Catholic Church of that time.

**Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam and Eve and the Fall* (three creation scenes together)**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi86ejo=&source=ppt)

Think especially of these Creation scenes on the ceiling, painted by Michelangelo:

* The *Creation of Adam* at the bottom
* the *Creation of Eve* in the centre
* and the *Temptation* & *Fall, and Expulsion from Paradise* at the top.

Along the sides are ancestors of Christ, and Sybils and Prophets foretelling his coming.

Let’s look more closely at a few scenes.

**Michelangelo, *The Creation of Adam***

[](https://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwj_6dv3u9faAhXDwrwKHVfuCJgQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Creation_of_Adam&psig=AOvVaw1HXDhCWnN4LjqvE1GoWgW3&ust=1524815870612681)

First, the classic picture of the Creation of Adam. Two male figures, by the way, one of them the grey-bearded older man in the sky – an abiding image of God for so many, even today. Note also the idealised ‘perfect’ body of Adam, emphasised and monumentalised to teach the perfection of God’s creation.

**Michelangelo, *The Temptation & Fall; and Expulsion from Paradise***

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi86ejs=&source=ppt)

Now, two stories in one picture: on the left, *The Temptation and Fall*, and on the right, *The Expulsion from Paradise.*

On the left, Adam and Eve are idealised with superior beauty - a beauty we perhaps read as coming from innocence and an unbroken relationship with God. On the right, driven out of Paradise, they are realising their separation from God. Their expressions are grimacing and ugly, their skin withered, and their poses hunched - the opposite of beauty.

***Phyllis***

Do these paintings convey the truths of Scripture? Does the written word ‘reveal’ the mystery of God any more fully or truthfully? Anyway, there’s always a subtle balance between mystery and clear definition, whether it’s word or image that’s doing the defining. And what images come into our own minds as ***we*** read Scripture?

**Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, fresco, 1532-1541, altar wall**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8qLTNYQi86fDI=)

After the rich ceiling, we turn to the altar wall, to Michelangelo’s *‘The Last Judgment’*. This blows the Chapel wide open. Unlike the neat frames and controlled Biblical narratives of the side walls and ceiling, we now witness an emotion-laden, anguished rendering of the Day of Judgement.

When this was painted, the Protestant Reformation in Northern Europe was not only questioning but by now seriously threatening the Catholic Church. Paul III had become Pope, and saw the urgent need to set ‘his’ Church in order from within. His reign marks the beginning of the Catholic Counter Reformation. This painting should be viewed in that light.

Remember also that the threat to the Roman Church was not politely academic; the city of Rome had recently been sacked by the soldiers of the French king, including German mercenaries, most of them image-hating Protestants. They destroyed much Christian art in the city’s churches. The mood had become if not apocalyptic at least fraught and threatening.

The figures here are floating in space; in fact the work appears space-less – there’s chaos rather than order, with daring differences in proportions and foreshortenings that break normal artistic rules.

**Michelangelo, *The Last Judgment,* detail: The Day of Resurrection**

A picture containing book, text

Description generated with very high confidence

On the bottom left of the fresco we see the Day of Resurrection

**Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, detail*:* Chosen people of God received into Heaven**

A picture containing indoor

Description generated with high confidence

…with the chosen people of God being received into Heaven

**Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, detail: Jesus and Mary, saints and martyrs**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi87eD8=)

Jesus (actually in the centre of the *whole* fresco) is drawing the blessed towards him and rejecting the wicked with his raised arm. Mary is with her son, no longer in her traditional intercessory role, but sheltering beneath his arm.

Around Jesus and Mary are all the saints with their symbols, St Lawrence with his gridiron (on the left); below is St Bartholomew with his flayed skin, and above is St Peter with his keys, and so on.

**Michelangelo, *The Last Judgement*, detail: Seven angels from the Revelation to St John, & Charon with his boat, Minos and the abyss**

A picture containing indoor

Description generated with high confidence

Here, the Seven Angels from the Revelation to St John - the Apocalypse – are seen on the top left, with trumpets calling the dead to judgement. On the right are the condemned souls being dragged down to eternal punishment.

Below them, Charon waits with his boat to deliver the damned to Minos to be dragged into the bottomless pit, the fiery abyss. Here Michelangelo uses artistic licence to introduce Charon and Minos to make his message even more vivid; these are figures from classical mythology, not the Bible.

# ***Peter***

***Sistine Chapel,* interior view, with the Papal conclave 2013**



# And what was the response to this dramatic picture? Apparently Pope Paul III, on first seeing it, fell to his knees and said *“Lord, charge me not with my sins when you come on the Day of Judgement”.* The painting was and remains a sobering backdrop to the Cardinals when they come together here to elect new Popes. (This photo is of the Conclave of Cardinals who elected Pope Francis.) Yet the subject of the painting would have been no novelty to Cardinals, then or now. The Last Judgement was also portrayed in many other churches of that time, usually over their exit doors, so that the faithful would go out to live their daily life in the light of that ultimate reality. Do ***we*** have the same sense of accountability to God for the way ***we*** live ***our*** lives?

The Chapel was designed to accommodate the ceremonies of the Papal bureaucracy, with all its officials, clerical and lay. It was and remains a key location for the Roman Catholic Church as an institution.

Buildings send messages. The Sistine Chapel wasn’t only an expression of the Christian Faith. It was an expression of one sort of relationship between the Christian Church and power. In this instance, the ecclesiastical power of the Popes over the worldwide Catholic Church - and also the secular political power of Popes as sovereign rulers of the Papal States in Italy. However, let’s not draw too sharp a distinction between those two forms of power: the Papacy tried to establish Rome as a sort of earthly capital of Christendom. The rebuilding of Rome itself around this time was to help further this goal. So too was the building of St Peter’s Basilica.

***Phyllis***

The Sistine Chapel deliberately reproduces the proportions of Solomon’s Temple. Pope Sixtus IV was explicitly comparing King Solomon’s authority over Israel to his own right as Pope to rule Rome and Christendom: a spiritual sovereignty extending into the temporal.

**Perugino, *The Giving of the Keys to St Peter,* 1481-82, fresco, 3490 x 5700 mm**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi86ezk=&source=ppt)

Here’s a scene from *The Life of Christ* on the Chapel’s side wall: Perugino’s portrayal of *The Giving of the Keys to St Peter.* The medieval Catholic Church came to understand the Apostle Peter, founder of the first Christian community in Rome, as the first Pope, able to pass his authority on to future Bishops of Rome as his successors.

In the central background of this painting by Perugino, on either side of a building representing the Temple of Solomon, are two triumphal arches. Their inscriptions (which are really propaganda for the patron) read, “You, Sixtus IV, unequal in riches, but superior in wisdom to Solomon, have consecrated this vast temple”.

This is vigorous propaganda for the Roman Church in general, as well as for the particular pope who commissioned it.

***Peter***

**Map of the Italian Peninsula during the Renaissance with extent of the Papal States**

[](https://www.google.co.nz/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjDkLXCprTaAhVE2LwKHYU2AuoQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=https://www.pinterest.com/pin/127437864430124462/&psig=AOvVaw1qm98VDL_VY6Iqc99Nh_d6&ust=1523607526666933)

Medieval and Renaissance Popes did exercise direct political rule over a significant part of Italy: the Papal States.

How the Papacy came to have these States is a complicated story going back well over a thousand years. Essentially, the Papacy stepped bit by bit into the political vacuum caused by the collapse of the Western Roman Empire. By the time of the Renaissance, the Papal territory was expanding greatly. A Pope was not only the head of the Catholic Church but had also become one of Italy's most important secular rulers, signing treaties with other sovereigns, and fighting wars.

**Raphael, *Portrait of Pope Julius 11,* c.1511-12, oil on panel, 1080 x 800 mm, London: National Gallery**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi86ezg=&source=ppt)

For example, this is Raphael’s portrait of Pope Julius II, who employed Michelangelo to decorate the Chapel’s ceiling. He might not look it here, but Julius was known as the "Warrior Pope" leading military ventures around the Italian peninsula to defend or extend the Papal States.

So think now of the Renaissance Vatican buildings as the palace of one of the most powerful Renaissance princes in Italy. ***All*** these rulers had castles and palaces, and they ***all*** had personal chapels – and they competed with each other in making them as impressive as possible. Pope Julius II was making not only a religious statement but also a secular princely statement when he commissioned the painting of his chapel. But remember also that other princes weren’t claiming to be the Vicar of Christ on earth; this title was strictly the Pope’s claim to unique authority.

The Papal States lasted until about 150 years ago, when the unification of Italy reduced them to the tiny territory we know as Vatican City in the heart of Rome. That tiny ‘city’ still remains a sovereign state with world-wide diplomatic representation, including in New Zealand, and one of our Ambassadors in Europe is accredited to the Holy See. And the Papal Palace remains. However, the present Pope, Francis I, was uncomfortable about living in the palatial Papal Apartments. On his election he immediately took up residence in simpler surroundings, in the Vatican guesthouse for visiting clergy. Pope Francis was saying, ‘I’m no Renaissance Prince’. Buildings send messages about the institutions and people who use them.

***Phyllis***

Pope Francis still continues to use the Sistine Chapel for its basic religious purpose: namely worship, and formal acts of the Papal household. But being Pope Francis, he also uses it to relieve poverty. The car manufacturers, Porsche, achieved a world first in 2014 when they hosted a corporate event within the walls of the Sistine Chapel. Pope Francis allowed the Chapel to be hired out as a venue, and money was given to the poor.

**Archbishop Konrad Krajewski, the pope's chief alms-giver, talks to the homeless visitors in the Sistine Chapel.**

A group of people standing in front of a building

Description generated with very high confidence

Then in 2015, Pope Francis welcomed a group of 150 homeless people for a VIP private tour of the Vatican followed by a sit-down dinner. Here they are in the Sistine Chapel with the Archbishop who wanted the city’s homeless population to see its beauty. He and Pope Francis believe it belongs to everyone, including the unfortunates living in poverty.

This is a far cry from the select and mainly male élite of Renaissance Europe who visited the chapel for their various political and ecclesiastical motives. However, these modern poor are dwarfed by the six million tourists every year mainly seeking to tick another box on their tour of Italy, and certainly unable to pray there, even if they wanted to.

***Peter***

***I*** couldn’t pray there, I wasn’t able to - and I couldn’t get a good look at the art either!

Yet the Sistine art is a profound expression of Christian faith at the time of the Renaissance at its peak. It was painted ***by*** Christians ***for*** Christians as well as to impress other Italian princes. Michelangelo especially was a man of deep spirituality.

Renaissance artists were well aware of the changes and challenges of the times. By all accounts Michelangelo began his life as a sort of Christian philosopher-poet, portraying human beauty as a reflection of divinity (as seen in his *Creation of Adam,* with its idealised human form reflecting God’s perfection).

**Left, *The Last Judgement*, detail of St Bartholomew, Fresco, 1532-1541, Sistine Chapel altar wall**

**Right, Daniele da Volterra et al, *Bust of Michelangelo*, 1564 - c. 1570, bronze, 59 cm, Casa Buonarroti, Florence**

[](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4SJcGT8oKjNdQi87eD8=&source=ppt) [](http://www.artstor.org/library/secure/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCciJy8laCt2KngqVXkhf1Vweg==)

By the time of the painting of *The Last Judgement*, Michelangelo – this is his bronze portrait - had come into contact with a group known as the ‘Spirituali’. From then until his death, his letters and poems express his deepening Christian faith and the tension he felt about his own unworthiness in the eyes of God.

In the centre of *The Last Judgement* we can see Michelangelo’s own image, there on the flayed skin of the martyred Saint, St Bartholomew [POINT]. It’s one of anguish - perhaps guilt about his spiritual condition, feelings paralleled in his poetry. Michelangelo wrote in a poem later in his life that creating art was secondary to his wish to worship God:

**There’s no painting or sculpture now that quiets**

**The soul that’s pointed toward that holy Love**

**That on the cross opened Its arms to receive us.**

***Sistine Chapel,* interior view , looking towards altar**



Renaissance artists were not only Christian themselves; their art spoke spiritually to those Christians who contemplated it. We’ve already heard about the great picture of the Last Judgement being so powerful that at its unveiling, Paul III, fell to his knees in awe, and prayed for mercy.

Let’s move on to today. What church (of whatever size) have we ourselves found most spiritually powerful, resonant, evocative, engaging...? Where have ***we*** been brought to our knees - and why?

***Phyllis***

**Byzantine mosaics, *Christ Pantocrator*, The Cathedral of Monreale, Sicily**

A close up of a church

Description generated with very high confidence

For me it has to be the enormous 12th century cathedral of Monreale in Sicily. While the Sistine is impressive for its narrative paintings on the walls and ceiling, Monreale has splendid colourful glass mosaics on a gold ground covering the whole of the interior. These have both Old and New Testament scenes, like the Sistine chapel. Here you can see **Christ Pant*O*crator,** the all-powerful Christ, in the apse of the cathedral.

**Byzantine mosaics in the Cathedral of Monreale – scenes from the Book of Genesis - Palermo - Sicily**

A picture containing building, outdoor, large

Description generated with very high confidence

And here from the side walls of the nave, scenes from the *Book of Genesis .*

They are powerful in their immediacy as well as their absolute beauty.

The power of image in communicating Christian scripture and faith; a timeless and overwhelming clarity and beauty that leads to faith.

***Peter:***

***Mariendom*, Neviges, Germany**



When I thought about which church has most moved me, I came up with an answer which surprised me. It’s the Mariendom at Neviges, in the Ruhr Valley, in Germany’s west. It was built in the 1960’s in 20th Century Brutalist style, one I normally don’t respond to. This church did bring me to my knees, and moved me at a depth I’ve been reflecting on ever since. It speaks to me of my brutal century, which has stripped so much away. It speaks to me of mystery, the mystery of God, the ‘cloud of unknowing’ which we enter by faith and which a multiplicity of words and images can never ever adequately capture. It speaks to me of the crucified Christ in the midst of the external and internal ruins of the post-War world, especially Europe. It speaks to me of Mary’s maternal love in the midst of bleakness. It comes out of my century (however comfortably I rode that out in New Zealand) – just as the Sistine Chapel comes uniquely out of Renaissance Italy.

Mariendom is notoriously difficult to photograph, but here are two more pictures of it.





***Phyllis***

When ***you*** look back over your life, which church have you found most spiritually powerful and engaging...? excluding churches important for family associations, which church has brought you to your knees -and why? What was, and remains, its message to you?

For buildings send messages. If we were starting from absolute scratch at Ngaio Street, (which we aren’t), what would we build, how would we shape and decorate its interior to fit today’s spiritual context? What ***is*** that context?

***Peter***

It was interesting what Phyllis and I chose as the sacred buildings which speak to each of us most deeply. Phyllis went back to the 12th Century; I chose one from my century. Neither of us chose the Sistine Chapel. Its aesthetic message is sublime, but its spiritual message seems somewhat dated, and compromised by its history of ambiguous involvement with power. The present Pope struggles with that. The problem perhaps with my own choice is that Mariendom also may become dated, its message frozen in time.

***Chapel in Zollfeld*, Austria, designed by Gerhard Sacher**

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[](http://www.google.com/url?sa=i&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=images&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwizmb78vsDaAhXBlZQKHcmuA7QQjRx6BAgAEAU&url=http://www.marvelbuilding.com/super-minimalist-chapel-clean-modern-design-maria-magdalena-family-chapel.html&psig=AOvVaw3kCxlfZ8G5A6kZfXGuCgTm&ust=1524026418307559)

So what ***would*** fit our spiritual context? Does this little Austrian chapel in the fields fit it? It’s certainly a long, long way from the Reformation and Counter-Reformation clash between word and image. What is ***it*** saying – to its users and to its viewers?

***Phyllis***

Is this all idle academic speculation, irrelevant to the mission of the Church? Listen to the findings of a recent English study, which suggested that levels of Christianity were much higher among young people in Britain than previously thought. And around thirteen percent of teenagers said that they decided to become a Christian after a visit to a church or cathedral.

The influence of a church building was more significant than attending a youth group, or going to a wedding, or speaking to other Christians about their faith. The Church of England’s national youth evangelism officer said his team had been “shocked” by the results: “Things which we would class as old hat methods are some of the more effective ways. It’s a real wake-up call for the church – we’ve got lots of young people who are coming into churches with school groups and that’s a really integral part of them becoming a Christian,” he said.

***Peter:***

I remember a wise Christian social anthropologist who once said to me ‘the most important thing to give children is an experience of the “holy”’ [that is, the Sacred, the Other, the Transcendent], ‘which they cannot explain away as they grow up’.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

***An art sermon presented in the Anglican Parish of Eastbourne on 6 May 2018 by Dr Phyllis Mossman and the Revd Canon Peter Stuart***

**Let us pray for the Church and the world, giving thanks for God’s goodness**

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, we give you thanks for the wonder and beauty of your creation,

Let us bless the Lord ***Thanks be to God***

Holy God, Word made flesh, Risen in glory, we give you thanks for the gifts of creativity you have placed within us all,

Let us bless the Lord ***Thanks be to God***

Holy God, life-giving Spirit, we give you thanks for our heritage of art and the rich witness it has borne to your Truth,

Let us bless the Lord ***Thanks be to God***

And we pray now

For your Universal Church: meeting today in all manner of buildings, great and small, that it may worship you in spirit and in truth ,

Lord, in your mercy ***Hear our prayer***

For your suffering Church: meeting sometimes in secret, or in buildings which attract attacks and expulsions , or struggling in great poverty, that it may have joy,

Lord, in your mercy ***Hear our prayer***

For your expanding Church: where it rides high and builds proudly for its own glory, that it may walk humbly with you, its Lord,

Lord, in your mercy ***Hear our prayer***

For your still sinful Church: compromised by disunity and by collusion with the powers of this world, that it, we, may repent,

Lord, in your mercy ***Hear our prayer***

For your little ones: all those with faith, or seeking faith, or yet to know their need of you, that what we say and do, and what we create and build, may bring them closer to your Embrace

Lord, in your mercy ***Hear our prayer***

Now to God who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or conceive, by the power which is at work among us, be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus, throughout all ages. ***Amen***