

ATRIUM TOUR

(10) Altar Furniture

The altar furniture handcrafted by Josef Otmar V includes the following:

Altar

The altar is the most sacred part of a Catholic church, symbolizing Christ Himself as the “living stone” and serving as the center of Eucharistic worship. It represents both the table of the Last Supper and the sacrificial altar of Christ’s offering on the Cross, made present at every Mass. As the focal point of the liturgy, all the actions of the Mass are centered on the altar. Its rich symbolism draws from both the Old and New Testaments.

A long-standing tradition in the Church is the placement of relics within the altar, rooted in the early practice of celebrating Mass over the tombs of martyrs. This reflects the communion of saints and the unity of Christ’s sacrifice across time.

The chapel altar contains the relics of the following saints:

- **St. Francis of Assisi**, founder of the Friars Minor (Franciscans) and patron saint of ecology, animals and the environment.
 - In 1209, Francis composed a simple rule for his small group of followers focused on literal obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ. Pope Innocent III gave informal approval to the Order of Friars Minor (the Franciscans) later that year.
 - During the Fifth Crusade in 1219, Francis traveled to Egypt to preach peace and engage in a historic, respectful dialogue with Sultan Malik al-Kamil.
 - Francis is credited with staging the first recorded living Nativity scene in Greccio, Italy, in 1223, utilizing live animals to help people visualize the birth of Christ.
 - In September 1224, during an intense period of prayer and fasting on Mount La Verna, Francis became the first recorded person in history to receive the stigmata (the wounds of the crucified Jesus Christ on his hands, feet, and side).
 - Suffering from severe blindness and illness, Francis died on October 3, 1226, at the age of 44. He was canonized less than two years later on July 16, 1228, by Pope Gregory IX. His feast day is celebrated globally on October 4th.
 - Francis viewed all of creation as a mirror of God, famously composing the Canticle of the Sun. He referred to the sun, moon, and animals as his brothers and sisters. Because of this, Pope John Paul II declared him the patron saint of ecology.
- **St. Maria Goretti**, patron saint of young women, is an Italian virgin martyr and one of the youngest canonized saints in history.
 - On July 5, 1902, 20-year-old Alessandro Serenelli attempted to sexually assault 11-year-old Maria. Maria fiercely resisted, screaming that it was a

ATRIUM TOUR

mortal sin and warning him that he would go to hell. Enraged, Alessandro stabbed her 14 times. Maria survived for 24 hours in a hospital. Before passing away, she publicly forgave Alessandro, stating, *"For the love of Jesus, I forgive him, and I want him to be with me in paradise."*

- Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years of forced labor. For years, he remained angry and unrepentant until he experienced a powerful dream. In the vision, Maria appeared in a garden and handed him 14 white lilies, which transformed his heart. Upon his early release 27 years later, his very first act was to beg Maria's mother (Assunta Goretti) for forgiveness, which she willingly granted. He spent the rest of his life as a peaceful lay brother associated with the Order of Friars Minor Capuchin.
- Maria Goretti was canonized on June 24, 1950, by Pope Pius XII. The ceremony drew a record-breaking crowd of more than 500,000 people and was held outdoors in St. Peter's Square for the first time because of the immense number of pilgrims in attendance. In one of the most moving moments of the event, Maria's elderly mother and her repentant murderer sat side by side among the faithful, offering a powerful testimony to the Christian ideals of forgiveness, repentance, and redemption. Today, St. Maria Goretti's feast day is celebrated on July 6, and her life continues to inspire countless people through her courage, purity, mercy, and unwavering faith.
- **St. Berard**, along with his companions, are considered the Franciscan Protomartyrs.
 - Born into a noble family in Umbria, Italy, he was personally received into the Order of Friars Minor by St. Francis of Assisi in 1213. Because Berard was fluent in Arabic, St. Francis selected him to lead a missionary expedition to North Africa to preach the Gospel.
 - In 1219, St. Francis sent Berard alongside two other priests (Peter and Otho) and two lay brothers (Accursius and Adjutus) toward Morocco. After traveling through Spain, the group reached Morocco and began boldly preaching the Christian faith in public marketplaces, openly denouncing Islam.
 - The local Almohad authorities arrested the friars and ordered them to leave the country multiple times. Each time, they evaded guards and returned to continue preaching. Outraged by their persistence and their refusal to accept material bribes to renounce Christianity, the Sultan of Morocco personally executed them by beheading them on January 16, 1220.
 - Upon hearing of their deaths, St. Francis famously rejoiced and proclaimed, *"Now I can truly say that I have five Friars Minor!"* Their relics were brought back to Coimbra, Portugal. Seeing their remains deeply moved a young Augustinian canon there, inspiring him to join the Franciscans and change his name to St. Anthony of Padua.
 - St. Berard and his companions were officially canonized by Pope Sixtus IV in 1481. Their feast day is celebrated on January 16th.

ATRIUM TOUR

Ambo

The ambo is the place from which the Word of God is proclaimed. Often referred to as the “Table of the Word,” it complements the altar, the “Table of the Eucharist.” Together, they represent the two ways Christ nourishes the faithful during Mass.

The term “ambo” comes from the Greek *ambon*, meaning “step” or “elevation.” This elevation symbolizes the mountains of Scripture—such as Mount Sinai and the Mount of the Beatitudes—where God revealed Himself to His people.

Like the tabernacle, the ambo is decorated with a Tau Cross, reinforcing the unity and simplicity of the chapel’s design.



Tabernacle

The tabernacle is a secure and beautifully crafted vessel that houses the consecrated Eucharist—the Body of Christ. It signifies the Real Presence of Jesus and serves as a focal point for prayer, adoration, and the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament for the sick.

The word “tabernacle” means “tent” or “dwelling place,” recalling the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament and emphasizing that God dwells among His people. A sanctuary lamp is kept continually burning nearby as a visible sign of Christ’s presence.

This tabernacle is adorned with a simple Tau Cross, a symbol closely associated with St. Francis of Assisi. The cross, often linked to poverty and simplicity, is carved from black walnut—a wood especially cherished by Josef’s father and reserved for a meaningful purpose.



Credence Table

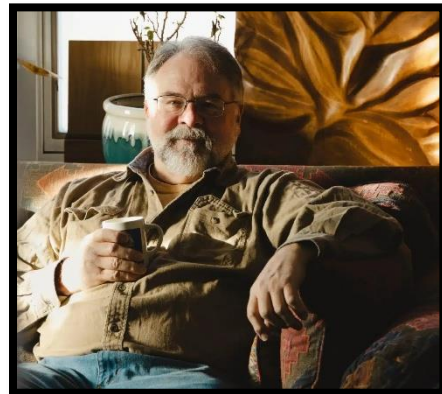
The credence table is a small but essential furnishing in the sanctuary, typically placed to the side of the altar. It holds the items used during Mass, such as the chalice, paten, cruets of wine and water, ciborium, and sometimes the lavabo bowl and towel.

Its purpose is both practical and symbolic: it keeps the altar uncluttered while preparing for the celebration of the Eucharist. The name derives from the Latin *credere* (“to trust” or “to believe”), reflecting an earlier practice of safeguarding and preparing the elements before they were brought to the altar.

ATRIUM TOUR

Josef Otmar V

Josef Otmar V was born in Sydney, Australia, in 1956. He first learned woodworking under his father's guidance before pursuing formal training in Denmark. His experience spans a wide range of craftsmanship, from guitar building to managing manufacturing and retail operations.



His heritage reflects a deep tradition of craftsmanship: cabinetmakers on his father's side in the Czech Republic and coach builders and blacksmiths on his mother's side in Wattle Flat, Australia. This lineage extends back five generations, with skills passed from father to son. After coming to the United States in 1959, Josef continued this tradition with a commitment to excellence and detail reminiscent of 19th-century craftsmanship.

As Josef explains: *"It is precisely our understanding of traditional construction methods and design principles that make us stand out. This allows us to make use of the latest advances in materials and techniques. Keeping with the finest traditions of our craft, we live up to our motto daily that everything we make is 'Handcrafted from the Heart.'"*

In 1992, he founded Otmar's Handcrafted Woodworking in Cincinnati, fulfilling his dream of designing and building his own creations. Today, he produces exceptional wooden functional art and furnishings.

A 1975 graduate of Moeller High School, Josef discovered his artistic talent during his sophomore year. For a Scholastic Art Show, he carved a piece depicting a joyful Christ with outstretched arms. Reflecting on the experience, he recalls a sense of divine inspiration guiding his work. When the piece received an honorable mention—despite judges suspecting adult assistance—it affirmed both his talent and his calling. He still keeps the piece in his home as a reminder of the gift he has been given.

Josef has been featured in *The Catholic Telegraph*, with articles that highlight his faith and craftsmanship:

- "An Offering in Wood: Portrait of Devoted Craftsmanship"
[November 4, 2025](#)
- "Work of Our Hands"
[March 3, 2026](#)