

## ATRIUM TOUR

### (9) 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. This altar contains relics of:

- **St. Francis of Assisi**, founder of the Friars Minor (Franciscans) and patron saint of ecology, animals and the environment
- **St. Joseph Vianney**, patron saint of parish priests
- **St. Maria Goretti**, patron saint of young women

#### 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.

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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.

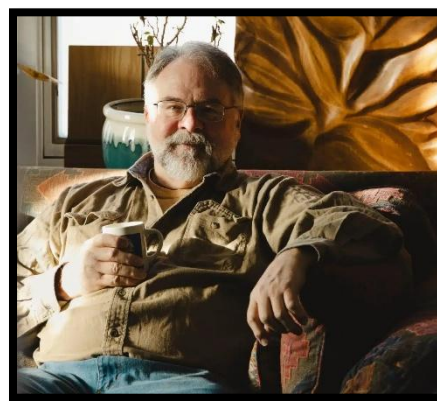
### Credence Table

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.

### 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

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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 Craftmanship”  
[November 4, 2025](#)
- “Work of Our Hands”  
[March 3, 2026](#)