

## Definitions OF TERMS USED IN DESCRIPTION OF THE CATHEDRAL

*Researched and Prepared by Carol Hogan, Cathedral Docent*

- Cartouche:*** In architecture, usually a sculptured ornament in the form of a scroll unrolled, which often appears on cornices. The cartouche is frequently used as a field for inscriptions, and as an ornamental block in the cornices of house interiors; conventionalized shield or oval; an ornate frame.
- Trompe l'oeil:*** (pronounced: trump loy) Deriving from the French meaning 'deceive the eye'. The manner in which the subject (i.e., a still life, marble surface, etc.) is painted is intended to trick the viewer into thinking it is real. The first painter said to have used this technique is the ancient Greek artist, Apelles, whose paintings were considered so real that birds would try to pluck fruit from his still lifes.
- Stencil:*** The cut-out pattern in paper, cardboard, or metal of a letter, number, symbol, illustration, or any other shape to which paint is applied resulting in a painting of the pattern of the stencil on the underlying surface.
- Roundel:*** A small bull's-eye or circular ornamental panel.
- Mandorla:*** (Italian, "almond") The almond-shaped field of radiance and splendor that entirely surrounds a holy personage, such as the Virgin Mary, or Christ in a Last Judgment scene; an, often pointed, oval surrounding the figure of a sacred person in iconography mantling (also lambrequin): the drapery of a coat of arms
- Pendentive:*** Triangular segments of a sphere, which taper to points at the bottom and spread at the top to establish the continuous circular or elliptical base needed for the dome; a constructive device permitting the placing of a circular dome over a square room or an elliptical dome over a rectangular room and which can support the weight of the dome, concentrating it at the four corners where it can be received by the piers beneath.
- Monstrance:*** **(Symbol of the Eucharist)** A vessel with transparent sides of crystal or glass in which the Blessed Sacrament (Eucharist) is exposed for adoration, or which can be used in the veneration of a relic. The word monstrance comes from the word monstrare, meaning, "to expose." The word "monstrosity" may have originated from these sometimes large and highly elaborate vessels built in ancient times.
- Two Keys:*** **(Symbol of Penance)** The two Keys are the two parts of absolution. The Golden Key is the Divine authority given the Church to remit sin; it is 'the costlier' because it was bought at the price of God's Passion and Death. The Silver Key is the unloosening of the hard entanglements of sin in the human heart: and this needs great skill on the part of the Church and her priesthood when administering the sacrament of Penance. (Commentary on Canto IX of *Purgatory*)
- Urn:*** **(Symbol of Sacrament of the Sick, Extreme Unction, Last Rites)** The Sacrament of anointing those who are gravely ill or injured with holy oil (the special olive oil

used is blessed by the bishop of the diocese at the Chrism Mass he celebrates on Holy Thursday). Anointing of the Sick gives grace for the state into which people enter through sickness. Through the sacrament is given a gift of the Holy Spirit that renews confidence and faith in God and strengthens against temptations to discouragement and anguish at the thought of death. It thus leads to spiritual healing and, sometimes, bodily healing as well.

The actual definition of "urn" is: a pottery vessel, usually rather large, deep, and without handles. Urns were (and still are) most often used for holding the ashes and bones of the dead and were sometimes buried.

**Dove:** **(Symbol of Confirmation)** Confirmation is the time when a baptized person makes a public affirmation of his/her faith, commitment to the responsibilities of his/her baptism, and is anointed with the words, "Be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit." Traditionally, the dove represents the Holy Spirit.

**Two Rings:** **(Symbol of Marriage)** A covenant, by which a man and a woman establish a partnership for life ordered toward the good of each other and the procreation and education of offspring; this covenant between baptized persons has been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament. Traditionally, two rings are exchanged: the perfect circle of a ring symbolizes eternity

**Chalice and the Book of Gospels: (Symbol of Holy Orders)** Holy Orders is the sacrament through which the mission entrusted by Christ to his apostles continues to be exercised in the Church until the end of time: thus it is the sacrament of apostolic ministry. The word order in Roman antiquity designated an established civil body, especially a governing body. The chalice is a vessel used for the celebration of the Eucharist.

**Shell:** **(Symbol of Baptism)** Baptism (either the pouring or sprinkling of water on the head or immersion) constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." Throughout Christian history, the shell has been symbolic of Christ's baptism.

**Oculus:** Circular opening in a roof or on a wall, such as the oculus in the center of the dome of the Pantheon. Oculus is the Latin word for eye.

**Jerome:** Jerome (b. 340, d. 420), (full name Eusebius Sophronius Hieronymus) is best known as the translator of the Bible from Greek and Hebrew into Latin. Jerome's edition, the Vulgate, is still the official biblical text of the Roman Catholic Church: recognized by the Vatican as a Doctor of the Church.

**Augustine:** Augustine (b.354, d. 430) was born and educated in Roman provinces in northern Africa, he studied philosophy extensively; turned to religion after a profound mystical experience while in his early thirties, went on to become the Bishop of Hippo and one of the most influential Catholic theologians Two of his most important

books are the *Confessions* and the *City of God*: recognized by the Vatican as a Doctor of the Church.

**Ambrose:** Ambrose (b. 340, d. 397) was a Roman priest who became bishop of Milan; the first Church Father born and raised in the Christian faith; composer of hymns; imposed orthodoxy on the early Christian church and built up its secular power; a saint and Doctor of the Church

**Gregory the Great:** Gregory the Great (b. 590, d. 604) became pope and gained control of Rome; organized Rome and its surrounding territories into a system of government known as the Papal States. Gregory successfully converted England and many Germanic peoples to Christianity by sending missionaries abroad. Gregory is also well known for his correction to the Julian calendar. The Julian calendar provided for an extra day each February; Gregory amended the calendar to the current system in which certain years do not have leap years based on a fixed schedule that allows the calendar to stay synchronized with the seasons to a very high degree of accuracy.

**St. Thomas Aquinas:** Thomas Aquinas (b. 1225, d. 1274) lived at a critical juncture of western culture when the arrival of the Aristotle's writings in Latin translation reopened the question of the relation between faith and reason, calling into question the *modus vivendi* that had obtained for centuries. In two stints as a regent master for the Dominican Order, Thomas defended the mendicant orders and, of greater historical importance, countered both wholesale acceptance of Aristotle teachings and the unquestioning rejection of Greek philosophy. The result was a new *modus vivendi* between faith and philosophy. Thomas's theological writings became regulative of the Catholic Church and his close textual commentaries on Aristotle represent a cultural resource which is now receiving increased recognition.

**Nave:** (From the Latin *navis*, meaning ship) The nave is the large, long hall, which runs through the central length of the Roman basilica plan and Christian churches, which were influenced by it. The nave extends from the entrance or Narthex, to the apse; flanked by side aisles.

**Transept:** The crossing point of a cathedral: a cathedral is always a cross when viewed from above—so the four arms of the cross meet at the *transept*.

**Apse:** A part of a building projecting outward, usually semicircular in shape. When it is part of a church, it is located at the eastern end.

**Narthex:** The western section of the Church; also called the Vestibule or Porch.

**Clerestory:** The upper part of the nave above the side aisles of a church; a row of windows in a horizontal area of a wall placed above the side aisle is used to illuminate the nave.

**Reredos:** An altar screen with architectural frame painted with images of the saints or statues of the saints placed in niches in the façade.