

Roman Catholic Church St. John the Baptist, Leonberg (Germany)



Regarding the renovation of the church

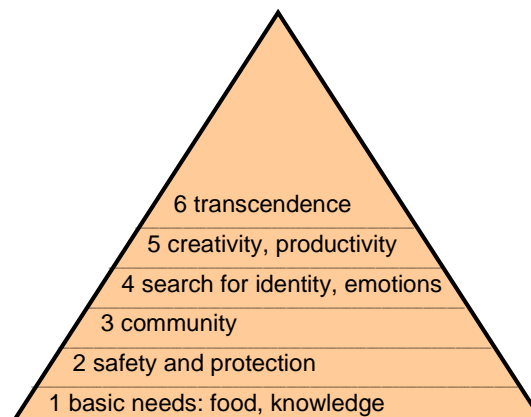
Basic idea of the competition concerning the renovation of our church was the realisation of Vaticanum II (Church as God's people, priest is part of the congregation). Architect Odilo Reutter and artist Matthias Eder obtained the 1st prize in the competition with their idea to set the altar in the midst of the people together with the shaping of a "journey through life". At the axis of urban development in the direction of the nearby metro station the opening of the church towards the world should take shape.

Together with the artist, architect Dietmar Schneck has then realized the ideas of the competition. As a consequence this idea starts in the external area. Entering the forecourt by steps from the pavement visitors are made curious to enter the church. The translucent alabaster portals are very inviting, above all when illuminated in the dark.

Impulses concerning the "journey through life"

The artist Matthias Eder follows Maslow's hierarchy of needs in his artistic realization of the bronze trace boards. The American social psychologist Abraham H. Maslow (1908 – 1970) developed a theory of human needs, very often presented in the different levels of a "pyramid of needs".

The pyramid of needs



What has the artist presented on the trace boards of our "journey through life"?

Board 1: Fountain of life

Life on earth comes from water and our own life has developed in our mothers' amniotic fluid. The board shows the stage of cell division of human life on the third day (morula stage). Thereby a connection to Christ's resurrection on the third day after his death at the end of his journey of life is indicated. In a way, here rises the River Jordan in which John baptized Jesus.

Board 2: Food

The plate shows us the most important basic need of human beings, food. Without food no normal, healthy life can develop. The central position of the plate is meant to show that all human beings should have their share of food supply.

Board 3: Knowledge

Here the word "knowledge" is shaped in braille. Only if you know this script you can understand the meaning of the characters. This is a symbol of our "knowledge" in general. You must acquire knowledge on a certain level of education and culture, otherwise you are not able to exist in the world of today.

Board 4: Family



Two tentpoles symbolize the smallest social unit, the family. The tent defines a protected room, as our families create one for us. Here a child can feel safe and secure and develop its skills and abilities.

Board 5: Expanded space – our town

Our local town sign in original size represents the next larger unit wherein people live. It exactly defines the place where we live, where our church is situated and where our parish has created a place in our town. The standardized size is in itself a symbol of regularities for our living together at any place in Germany. This trace board lies at the join, the link between the external area of our town and the internal area of our church.

Board 6: The world and world religions

The mere suggestion of the globe is our habitat. Concerning the meaning of life the five world religions give quite different and yet related answers: the wheel of teachings, the noble,



eightfold path of Buddhism, the meditative syllable "om" in Sanskrit, the ancient holy scripture of Hinduism, the crescent as a symbol of Islam, the seven-armed menorah as a symbol of Judaism and the fish, this mark of identification of the

early Christians with its encoded message: Jesus Christ, son of god, saviour. The five symbols of world religions are of the same size, none of them tries to dominate the others. Their physical closeness expresses the vision of possible communication in mutual tolerance.



Dedication of the „journey through life“ Dec. 10th 2006

Board 7: Decisions

The slightly indicated beam balance shows that we must take decisions in our lives: “Yes” or “No”. Very often it can be only recognized much later if the decision was right or wrong.

Board 8: Development

The small and the big feet symbolize the development of man from child to adult. And although our children have been born one generation after us, they are in many things ahead of us. The footprints show definite periods of our development (three months – eighteen years), but also signify the never ending mental and physical human development.

Board 9: Emotions



Emotions are in the centre of our personality. Rifts, splits and rejections can be noticed, roughnesses and smooth surfaces. My interior could look like that when I am torn between my incompatible feelings. Emotions are something

wonderful, but sometimes they lead to rising tensions which are hardly to bear.

Board 10: Creativity and productivity

The impression of a tyre allows different interpretations. On the one hand the wheel is one of the most important inventions of mankind and represents creativity and imagination. On the other hand the impression points to a fascinating product of human work with all its light and shady sides. It also draws our attention to the outstanding importance of the car industry in our region.

Altar and lectern



With the altar step we enter a new level. Thereby the striving of man for transcendence is hinted at. Now our look is concentrated at the ‘table of bread’, the altar and at the ‘table of words’, the lectern. The tabletop of the altar is carried by twelve bronze boards – focused at a

central point and symbolizing the congregation of believers. The open centre centralizes our looks on the core of our faith and allows the view of the stele of resurrection.

This symbolism is repeated in the structure of the lectern. At the place where the word of God is preached the top of the table is based on four boards. Thereby the different sources of the biblical message are indicated.

The fountain of baptism



The running water of the fountain of baptism is meant to be seen in direct context to the fountain of life at the entrance of the church. It opens a new dimension: as Christians we are baptized by the water of baptism on the death and resurrection of

Jesus Christ. We are reborn to new life thereby. So a further connection is made to the patron saint of our church: St. John the Baptist who baptized Jesus as a forerunner.



The stele of resurrection

At the end of our journey through life towers the outstanding stele of resurrection. It shows a commemorative picture of Jesus Christ although his body is only indicated. The body is just coming off the cross and is turning into a spiritual dimension. The play of sunlight during morning hours enables a special access to the mystery of resurrection.

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