

## **Parish Guidelines for Commissioning, Purchasing, or Accepting Donations of Religious Art for the Worship Space**

1. Read and Study *Built of Living Stones (BLS)* and/or other documents your faith tradition may use regarding art and environment for worship.
2. New artwork should be aesthetically consistent with the church's architecture.
3. New artwork should complement and not overwhelm or detract from the actions of worship and liturgy.
4. Be aware of the distinction between religious art and fine art and between personal taste and religious/liturgical art values. (see *BLS*)
5. Be committed to the equitable treatment of artists:
  - Do not expect artists to do work for free during the design stage.
  - Be prepared to pay for work and design as well as for finished pieces of art.
6. When purchasing an existing piece of art be cautious of ordering art from a catalog. "The integrity and energy of a piece of art produced individually by the labor of an artist is always to be preferred above objects that are mass produced." (*BLS* ¶147)
7. When considering the acceptance of donations of religious art be clear that the art must meet certain criteria for religious/liturgical art such as the criteria identified in *BLS*.
  - Write and publish a parish policy regarding art donations.
  - Be wary of donations with "strings attached."
  - Make clear that once art donations are accepted they become the property of the church to be used as the church determines.
8. If a donation of artwork appears to be of historic value locate and contact someone who can offer guidance for the restoration, display, protection, and registration of historic art pieces.
9. If the parish's faith tradition has an "office of worship" or its equivalent, contact the office with questions and help in choosing religious/liturgical art for the worship space. The office may also be able to provide sample artist contracts and a list of recommended artists, as well as architects and liturgical design consultants.

*Adapted with permission for interdenominational use from guidelines developed by the  
Environment & Art Subcommittee of the Liturgical Commission, Office of Worship  
of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Santa Fe New Mexico*

\* *Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship* is the most recent statement on art and architecture for churches, chapels, and oratories in the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. Much of the wisdom of *Built of Living Stones* may be helpful to Christian faith traditions. *Built of Living Stones* is available for viewing at [www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/livingstones.htm](http://www.nccbuscc.org/liturgy/livingstones.htm) .