

## **From Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship, USCCB**

### **The Disposition of Works of Art No Longer Needed for Sacred Use**

§ 166 § Sacred art that is no longer useful or needed or that is simply worn out and beyond restoration deserves to be treated with respect. To ensure the protection of worn or used sanctuary furnishings, vessels, vesture, and other liturgical artifacts, many diocesan bishops have issued directives about their proper disposition when they are no longer suitable for worship. In addition, with the closing or merging of parishes, vessels and vestments can be available for the use of other parishes and missions. In disposing of such artifacts, pastors should consult the diocesan worship office or chancery to learn what directives or procedures are in effect.

§ 168 § Objects of great artistic or historical value or those donated to the Church through a vow may not to be sold without special permission of the Holy See. When such objects are not to be sold but disposed of in some other way, the diocesan bishop should be contacted so that the concerns of donors and the requirements of canon law are fulfilled.

### **Preservation of the Artistic Heritage of the Church**

§ 253 § The coexistence of past and present called for in renovating and restoring church art and architecture is not without rich, multilayered and successful precedent. "The Church is intent on keeping the works of art and the treasures handed down from the past and, when necessary, on adapting them to new needs." In many parishes, even those whose churches are not considered historically, architecturally or artistically significant, it is possible to find worthy works of art such as art glass, furnishings, wood and marble structures, and musical instruments that are of aesthetic and artistic value. Parishes, therefore, are encouraged to undertake an assessment of their artistic works and furnishings to determine their value. The architect, artist, and liturgical consultant, as well as diocesan personnel, are indispensable collaborators in discerning works that are considered part of the sacred heritage of the Church's art. "Many people have made unwarranted changes in places of worship under the pretext of carrying out the reform of the liturgy and have thus caused the disfigurement or loss of priceless works of art."

§ 254 § "Care should be taken against destroying the treasures of sacred art in the course of remodeling churches." When it is necessary to relocate or remove artistic pieces in the interest of the liturgical reform, they can be appropriately cared for and placed in a location "befitting and worthy of the works themselves."