

The vision of Vaughan and Bentley was for a cathedral richly decorated in mosaic work, as Bentley had seen on his travels; and for the first few decades of the building's life, this artwork was painstakingly – and expensively – installed. Bentley had died in 1902, but not before drawing some of the mosaic designs – and now the building was complete, many other artists got involved. William Christian Symons was one of the first; the Arts and Crafts artist Robert Anning Bell created the tympanum above the main entrance, and another of his pieces depicted the Virgin and Child. One little-known fact about the cathedral's mosaics is that much of the work was done by a woman called Gertrude Martin, who also worked on pieces for the Palace of Westminster. The 1930s were the heyday for the cathedral's interior artwork: more mosaics were installed in those five years than at any other point in its history – including the Tree of Life mosaics inspired by San Clemente in Rome and the sanctuary inspired by a fourth-century apse, also in Rome.



In the 1960s, though, the work ground to a halt. Cardinal Heenan had become Archbishop of Westminster and he felt money should be spent on development and justice work, rather than the fabric of the cathedral. However, one more mosaic was installed in 1982, to mark the visit of Pope St John Paul II to the UK.

The Stations of the Cross are believed by many art historians to be among the finest works of Eric Gill. The side chapels are one of the most fascinating elements of a visit – these include St Andrew's Chapel, which celebrates all things Scottish, and a chapel/shrine dedicated to St John Southworth.

Today Westminster Cathedral is the fiftieth biggest church in the world. Its splendid campanile – two were originally envisaged but only one was built – offers some of the finest views across London.

AN UNFINISHED BYZANTINE MASTERPIECE – WESTMINSTER CATHEDRAL

Houses of God

By the end of the nineteenth century the Catholic hierarchy had been restored in Britain for some years and there was a growing optimism that it could play a full part in the nation's life after centuries of persecution. To mark the public mood, the then Cardinal Herbert Vaughan decided that what London needed was a large cathedral that would establish the role and also the character of Catholicism in Britain. The land for it was already earmarked: it was the site of a former prison in Westminster and it had been bought a few years earlier by Vaughan's predecessor, Cardinal Manning.

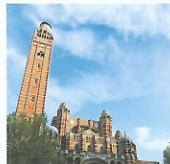


Today Joanna Moorhead considers the history, art and architecture of the mother church of the Catholic Church in England and Wales.

What was needed, said Vaughan, was a building that would be immediately different from the Anglican church down the road, Westminster Abbey. That church, of course, had originally been constructed by the pre-Reformation Catholic community; but to make the contrast now, the new church was to be Italianate in character. The architect Vaughan hired for the job was John Francis Bentley, and to prepare for the task he went to Italy to tour the best examples of Byzantine architecture, spending six weeks in Rome and being much taken by St Mark's in Venice in particular.

Work began in 1895 and the building was opened in 1903; one of the first services held there was the funeral of its founder Cardinal Vaughan, although since the cathedral had not been consecrated he couldn't be buried there and was interred at St Joseph's Missionary College in Mill Hill – it would be another century before his body would be returned to the cathedral he was responsible for building.

Today Westminster Cathedral is one of the most distinctive landmarks on the London skyline, with its red brickwork striped with white stone bands. The interior has three domed areas with an even larger dome above the sanctuary: it's cavernous, and there's a striking contrast between the lights and marble of the lower space and the vast unadorned brickwork of the ceiling. That wasn't, though, how it was meant to be.



17 OCTOBER 2021

29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

YEAR B

DIVINE OFFICE WEEK I

Mass text

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

To you I call; for you will surely heed me, O God;
turn your ear to me; hear my words.
Guard me as the apple of your eye;
in the shadow of your wings protect me.

FIRST READING Isaiah 53:10-11

PSALM Psalm 32

RESPONSE May your love be upon us, O Lord,
as we place all our hope in you.

1. The word of the Lord is faithful and all his works to be trusted. The Lord loves justice and right and fills the earth with his love. R.
2. The Lord looks on those who revere him, on those who hope in his love, to rescue their souls from death, to keep them alive in famine. R.

3. Our soul is waiting for the Lord. The Lord is our help and our shield. May your love be upon us, O Lord, as we place all our hope in you. R.

SECOND READING Hebrews 4:14-16

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION
Alleluia, alleluia!
The Son of Man came to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. Alleluia!

GOSPEL Mark 10:35-45

COMMUNION ANTIPHON
The Son of Man has come to give his life as a ransom for many.

Next Sunday's Readings:
Jeremiah 31:7-9
Hebrews 5:1-6
Mark 10:46-52



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