

***Laudato Si'* Garden**
Our Lady of Good Counsel
Hythe, Kent



Foreword by Fr. Jim

The cover photograph explains, in visible form, the structures of two pagodas, the Altar and its covering Baldacchino:

We see God the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us and the Holy Spirit who sanctified and sustains us.

The Skull of Adam is buried in sin: green for jealousy, yellow for greed and red for envy. Sins evident in Cain's murder of his brother Abel. And evident in our destruction of mother earth.

Above this grave is the cross of Jesus the Christ of God and his crown of thorns.

Behind this image is another Cross, the Cross of triumph of the Resurrection.

In Baptism we are made one with Christ and his mystical body the Church as the immaculate hearts of Jesus and Mary Mother of God and Mother of the Church.

“Awaken our hearts and purify them in faith” - this quote of Benedict XVI is placed at the entrance of our *Lauato Si’* garden in the hope that one’s faith is renewed and strengthened in the believer’s own operant theology as each acts and loves in the world.

The garden is structured as a gift to the divine essence which constitutes all creation and is a living and vibrant witness to all who nurtured and maintain its existence.

There are three structures: two pagodas and the Altar where all are invited to contemplate and be at one with each other.



The first structure is the tallest of the two pagodas and symbolises the nature of the God known and unknown, for the community of faith in whose grounds the garden is situated.

It symbolises the God of Abraham, the God of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Two white climbing roses have been planted and, when fully grown, will represent the purity of heart of all people of good will who live the golden rule, the universal bond of empathy between nations and peoples of the world.

Uniting ourselves spiritually to the only begotten Son where “heart speaks to heart”.



The second pagoda symbolises the ascending and descending nature of Jesus as son of man and Son of God.

The first panel has a gold Latin cross with the Lamb of God symbolising the risen and glorified Lord. To its right is the star of David. Further to its right is a green crescent moon with an Islamic star. To its

far right is an Orthodox cross, with Greek and Cyrillic writing, on which our Saviour died.

Moving further round to the right is the Chi Rho symbolising the first two letters of Christ's name in the Greek text. To its right, is the book of the Old and New Testaments with the Greek Alfa and Omega letters carved into it. Immediately above this symbol, fixed to the East support is a Chalice and Host - the Eucharist, the body and blood of Jesus the Christ of God who redeemed us and shares His Divinity with us.

To the left of chalice are two hearts: the hearts of Jesus on his cross of suffering and Mary's heart with a scar reminding us of the words of Simeon: "So a sword will pierce your heart so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." (Lk.2:35).

The image above the hearts symbolises the triumph of the cross.

The chains holding the cover symbolise our attachment to sin and the material world, they also remind us of Jesus's words: "Come to me all you who labour and are overburdened and I will give you rest." (Mt.11:28)

The three climbing's Jasmine plants which will eventually cover the top of the pagoda symbolises the Triune God's Sovereignty over all that is and all that will be.



Standing at the gold cross, on its left, is the letter M with a cross. This symbolises Mary as Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. The wide wing has a bulge symbolising the Churches call to evangelisation. The Church, like Mary, is called to be pregnant with children. Note the flower bed in the shape of an egg with 24 timbers representing the hours of the day when the Churches Liturgy and prayer are represented to God the Father. The two hearts now symbolise the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary, her Assumption and his Ascension into Heaven. These hearts are overlooked by a Shrine with two

statues of Jesus and Mary reminding us they are present and guiding us, the Children of God, in His ways, where: “In the beginning was the Word and Word was God”. (Jn 1:1)

The Stations of the Cross allows us to walk in union with Jesus and Mary as their sorrow turns into Joy, a joy to which we are heirs when we are present at his Altar of Atonement and Redemption.



The Altar, where the eternal sacrifice is offered stands above a marble Greek cross symbolising the life, death and resurrection of Christ, with the Altar representing God the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us and the Holy Spirit who sustains his Church to be effective witnesses and disciples of his only begotten Son our Lord and Saviour and of his handmaid Mary, the new Eve, Mother of the Church and Mother to all.

The baldacchino which covers the altar is supported by four pillars with their own carved image dedicated to: unity of the Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (front left), Mary *Theotokos* (back left); Chi Rho (back right). And, on the front right pillar, the descent of the Holy Spirit on our community. The back pillars are 9ft high and 10ft apart. Nine being the biblical number of judgement and ten a perfect number meaning divine order as in the Ten Commandments. The front pillars are 11ft tall. This number represents our imperfections and our acknowledgment of them, we are the contrite of heart. The distance between the front and back pillars is 12ft. Twelve is a judicial number: Jesus has Twelve Disciples, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, our elder brothers and sisters in faith.

Other images and their meaning:



The Altar stands upon marble slabs in the shape of a Greek cross, the cable stones and the concrete paving slab marks the threshold between heaven and earth. The entire cobbled area forms the chalice and host consecrated upon the altar of sacrifice; the timber stepping stones represent the cosmic nature of God's sovereignty.

“The liturgy is celebrated in the expanse of the cosmos, encompassing creation and history. The Redeemer, to whom we pray, is also the Creator and, thus, that the liturgy also always contains a love for creation and the responsibility for it.” (Benedict XVI).



Creation and history are depicted in the handrail painted sky blue with white clouds. The yellow represents how we perceive the sun on earth; as the handrail moves towards the sacred hearts and the chalice, the yellow fades away as Christ becomes the Light that illuminates creation and his mystical body the Church. The white, red and yellow balustrades, with a cross of Baptism, celebrates martyrdom of the Saints in Heaven. The yellow celebrates all those who lived and still live out their discipleship in the Parish of Our Lady of Good Counsel.

This last image reflects Jesus's call to repentance and a complete change of heart.



The two crosses behind the Altar represent the two thieves. Note the chamber cut on the reverse of the other. The one on the right veers towards the Altar. The other turns away reminding us that, as exiles, we, His Church, are in the constant of departure and return from Him who gives us a share in His Divinity and Life Eternal.

The panel to which the two are attached reminds us that our true destiny is to share in the Divinity of Jesus the Christ of God. The cross above the baldacchino represents the world's suffering of our day and was partially constructed by those seeking freedom from environmental, religious and political conflicts.

May our garden inspire us:

“Let us care for one another and be loving Custodians of Creation.” Pope Francis.