RCIA Tour of the Church

A Catechetical Tour of Saint Mungo's Church
Introduction

Saint Mungo's Church is not only a place of worship but also a catechism in stone, wood, and stained glass. Built in 1869 by George Goldie, who also designed Saint Mary's in Greenock, its design and furnishings embody the truths of the Catholic faith and the devotional life of the Church. Every feature within the church teaches, inspires, and points us toward Christ.

Blessing Ourselves with Holy Water
At the entrance, Catholics bless themselves with holy water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This simple act recalls our Baptism, by which we were cleansed from sin and made children of God. Each time we make the Sign of the Cross, we renew our baptismal promises and entrust ourselves to Christ.

Genuflecting

The History and Meaning of Genuflecting: Kneeling Like the Magi

1. The Magi's Adoration

- In Matthew 2:11, the wise men "fell down and worshiped" the Christ Child, offering gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.
- This act shows Jesus is not only a baby, but **God Incarnate**, worthy of divine worship.
- Their kneeling sets the pattern for Christian reverence: bending low before the King.

2. Ancient Origins of Reverence

- Across cultures, kneeling or prostration signified humility before rulers or gods.
- Scripture ties kneeling to worship: *"Come, let us bow down… let us kneel before the Lord"* (Ps 95:6); *"At the name of Jesus every knee should bend"* (Phil 2:10).

3. Adoption in the Early Church

- By the Middle Ages, influenced by feudal customs, kneeling became an expression of loyalty and **adoration of Christ the King**.

4. Eucharistic Worship and Genuflection

- By the 11th–12th centuries, devotion to Christ's Real Presence deepened:
- The faithful genuflected before the **Blessed Sacrament** in the tabernacle.
- Kneeling became central at **Mass** during the consecration.
- The Council of Trent confirmed genuflection as a visible sign of belief in the Real Presence.

5. Today's Practice

- Catholics genuflect when entering or leaving a church where the Eucharist is reserved.
- One knee touches the ground fully, accompanied by the Sign of the Cross.
- A deep bow may replace genuflection for those unable to kneel.

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Genuflecting Contd

6. Catechism Teaching

- "To adore God is to acknowledge… the 'nothingness of the creature'… as do the Magi who 'fell down and worshiped him'" (CCC 2097).
- "In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ… by genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration" (CCC 1378).

7. Pastoral Reflection

Genuflecting is more than custom. It is **faith made visible in the body**. Each time we bend the knee, we join the Magi in Bethlehem, professing with humility and love: *"My Lord and my God."* In a world that often forgets reverence, this simple gesture proclaims our belief in Christ's living presence in the Eucharist.

The Tabernacle

At the heart of the church is the **tabernacle**, where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved. It is the dwelling place of Christ Himself, truly present—Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity—in the Eucharist. The light of the sanctuary lamp reminds us of His abiding presence, calling us to adoration and prayer.

The Confessional

The confessionals stand as a visible sign of God's mercy. Here the faithful encounter Christ in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where sins are forgiven, grace is restored, and the soul is strengthened to live a new life in Christ.

Rear Altars

- **Our Lady's Altar**: Honoring Mary, Mother of God, this altar reminds us of her constant intercession and her role in leading us to Christ.
- **Saint Joseph's Altar**: Patron of the universal Church, Saint Joseph is remembered here as the faithful guardian of Jesus and Mary, and a model of quiet strength and obedience.
- **Sacred Heart Altar :**The Sacred Heart of Jesus is one of the most beloved Catholic devotions. It represents Christ's divine love for all humanity, symbolized by His heart, crowned with thorns, aflame with charity, and often bearing the cross.
  The Church celebrates the **Feast of the Sacred Heart** on the Friday after Corpus Christi.
- **St Paul of the Cross Altar:** St. Paul of the Cross was the founder of the **Passionists**, a religious order dedicated to preaching Christ crucified and promoting devotion to the Passion of Jesus here in Saint Mungo's.

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Statues of the Saints

- **Saint Mungo and Saint Enoch**: The patron saint of Glasgow and his mother are honored here as witnesses of faith in Scotland's earliest Christian heritage.
- **Saint Paul of the Cross**: Founder of the Passionists, who serve at Saint Mungo's, his statue recalls the charism of proclaiming Christ's Passion as the path to salvation.
- **Saint Gabriel of Our Lady of Sorrows**: A young Passionist saint who died at 24, he is a model of youthful holiness and devotion to Our Lady.

The Stations of the Cross

Along the walls are painted **Stations of the Cross**, inviting us to walk with Christ on His journey to Calvary. Praying the Stations unites us with His suffering and love, and teaches us the depth of His sacrifice for our redemption.

The Pietà

This statue of Mary cradling the lifeless body of Jesus after the Crucifixion is a powerful image of compassion and sorrow. It draws us into the mystery of suffering and the hope of resurrection.

The High Altar and Sanctuary

Above the altar are the words: *"We Preach Christ Crucified"* (1 Cor 1:23), the motto of the Passionist Congregation. Here, the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary is made present in the Eucharist. The Calvary scene above the altar with Christ on the Cross, flanked by Our Lady and Saint John, reminds us that every Mass is the one sacrifice of Christ offered for our salvation.

Catechism Summary

The signs and symbols we see around Saint Mungo's like every other Church we refer to as Sacramentals:

- The **holy water** recalls Baptism.
- The **tabernacle** proclaims the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist.
- The **confessional** offers God's mercy in Reconciliation.
- The **side altars and statues** inspire devotion to the saints.
- The **Stations and the Pietà** remind us of Christ's Passion.
- The **high altar** proclaims the central mystery of our faith: Christ crucified and risen.

Pastoral Reflection

A Catholic church is more than a building—it is a living catechism, a place where faith is taught through word, sacrament, and sacred art. Saint Mungo's invites us not only to admire its beauty but to enter more deeply into the mysteries of our faith. As you walk through this church, remember that everything here points to Christ, who is present, who teaches, and who calls us to follow Him more closely.