

# THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL and modern architecture. PART II by Bernard Lauwyck

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interior of Cathedral in Brasilia

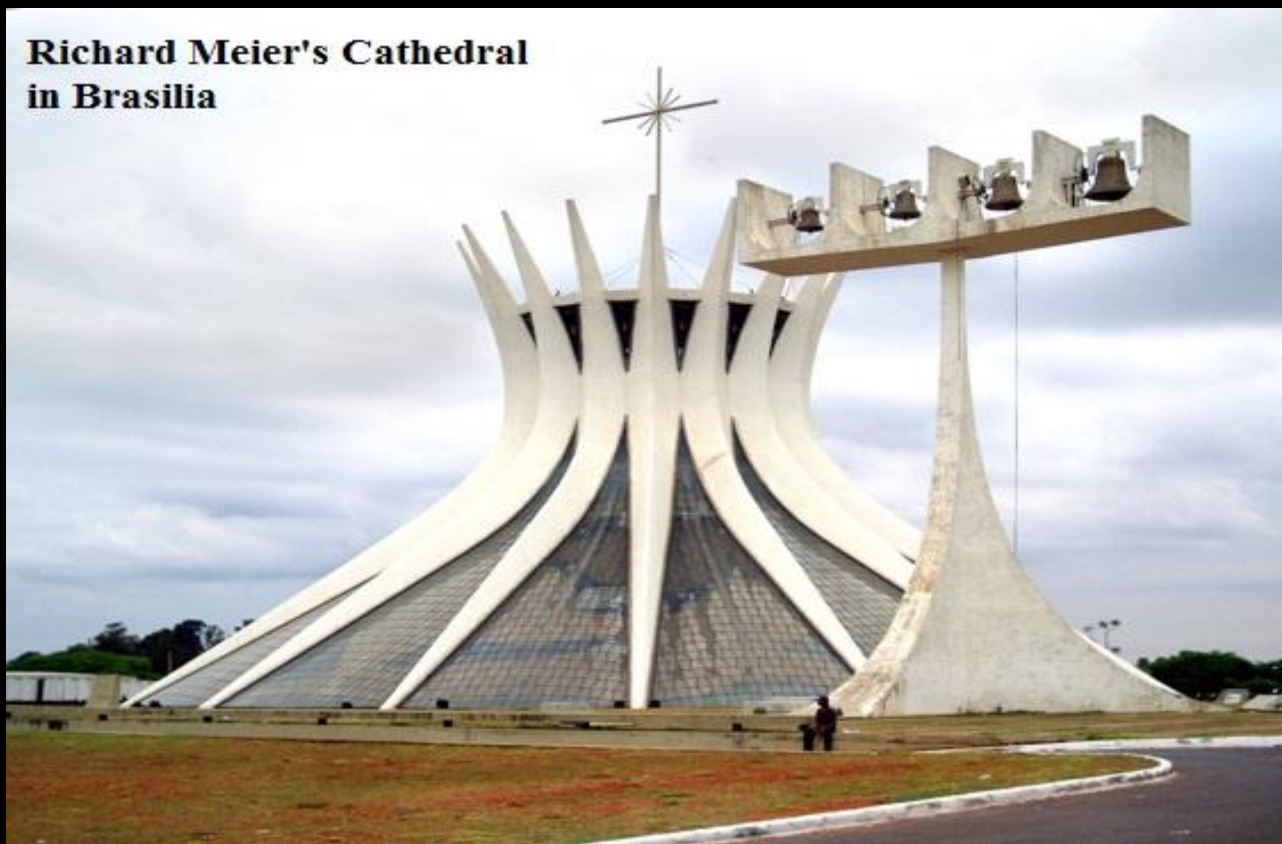
The first part of this article has generated comments for which I am extremely grateful. It feels good to have an intelligent discourse or discussion on matters of importance, something we lack all too often in the public domain in Dominica.

Two comments, as quoted below, reveal the principal issues I want to deal with.

*“This is an extremely interesting article and I enjoyed reading it. It's amazing to even consider that the buildings in the photos are actually churches. They do nothing to inspire faith through sight. As a Catholic I personally find the design of the old churches complete with the stained glass, the alcoves, the aisles to be awe inspiring and certainly contribute immensely to the conviction of being on holy ground.”*

Local architect Bergis Stoute from Nuvision Architecture wrote *“I read your latest article in the news paper where you spoke on a topic that is dear to me. I happen to love modern architecture so I felt it necessary to provide you with information on a few churches done in the modern style that are actually quite beautiful. Churches like the Jubilee church done by Richard Meier, Cathedral in Brasilia by the recently deceased, Oscar Niemeyer and of course Ronchamp Chapel by the great Le Corbusier. These are just a few but there are any more. We will agree that Architecture and the interpretation of it will always be a subjective thing the question that always has to be asked is has the Architect been successful in*

*portraying the message that wanted to convey. I share this information to provide a different opinion on the subject.”*



I agree with both comments and want to dig a little deeper into this issue which affects us locally. I personally love (not all, mind you) modern art and architecture. I love the iconic buildings mentioned by Mr. Stoute: the sculptural design, the clarity of line, the faithfulness to the materials used, the use of modern materials. I reject the notion that 20<sup>th</sup> Century art and architecture, modern or contemporary music have no positive religious contribution and have no place in our catholic liturgical spaces or liturgies.

The Catholic Church is very clear that it does not favour any particular style. The GENERAL INSTRUCTION OF THE ROMAN MISSAL no. 289 states : *"At all times, therefore, the Church seeks out the noble support of the arts and welcomes the artistic expressions of all peoples and regions. Even more, 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. It strives as well to promote new works of art that appeal to the contemporary mentality."*

*"In commissioning artists and choosing works of art that are to become part of a church, the highest artistic standard is therefore to be set, in order that art may aid faith and devotion and be true to the reality it is to symbolize and the purpose it is to serve."* And I stress here on the words "may aid" and "to serve" !!

It is indeed true and clear to everyone that Catholics who live and worship in Dominica *"in the twenty-first century celebrate a liturgy that is the same as that of earlier generations in all its essentials but significantly different in its language, style, and form. Recent shifts in the visual arts and in building styles as well as the development of new materials and sound amplification systems have created both opportunities and challenges for those engaged in the building and renovation of places for worship."* ("Built of Living Stones" by the USCCB).



**The Cathedral of  
Christ of LIGHT  
Oakland  
California**



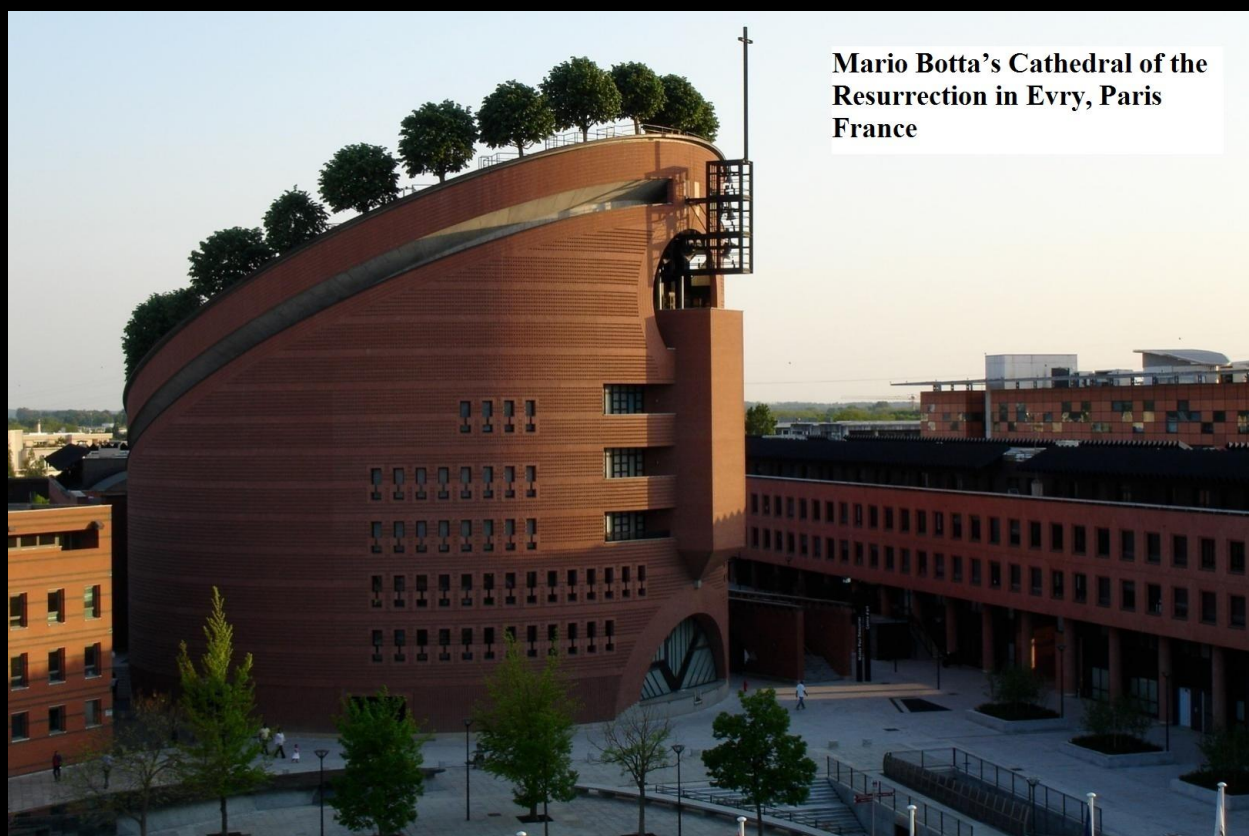
**INTERIOR of the Cathedral of Christ of LIGHT  
in Oakland, California**

Dividing good architecture from bad is of course extremely subjective and divisive. We also need to take into account that some of these bland or ugly exteriors might contain very beautiful interiors. We might ask ourselves if a beautiful interior is the only requirement for a good catholic liturgical space ? Is the architectural expression of an artistic vision or abstract idea sufficient for a

church building? Should the designer not take into account the requirements and guidelines of the Catholic Church? Is the building designed for the worshipping community it will serve? One community is so different from another. Do these interiors serve and aid the present day liturgies that take place in them? A cathedral, church or chapel is unlike a museum or an auditorium.



**Mario Botta's  
Cathedral of the  
Resurrection in Evry**



**Mario Botta's Cathedral of the  
Resurrection in Evry, Paris  
France**

Somehow I have no choice but to agree with some of the arguments in, but not the title of, Michael Rose's book "UGLY AS SIN - Why they changed our churches from Sacred Places to meeting spaces?" Like the first commentator cited above, Michael Rose points out the absence of inspiration to faith through sight, lack of awe, mystery and the feeling of being on Holy Ground. Some of my previous articles on "a glimpse of heaven and colours, shadows, light in our Roseau

Cathedral have made you understand some of the architectural elements involved. We will explore more in the next issue. In order to do this, I would like to invite comments from the faithful from Goodwill and Canefield on our two modern catholic churches in Dominica; St. Alphonsus church in Pottersville and St. Martin de Porres church in Canefield. How does it feel to worship in a modern building like this? Would they be good cathedrals ? What do you like ? What do you dislike ? Is anything missing? What can we do to improve or adapt it?

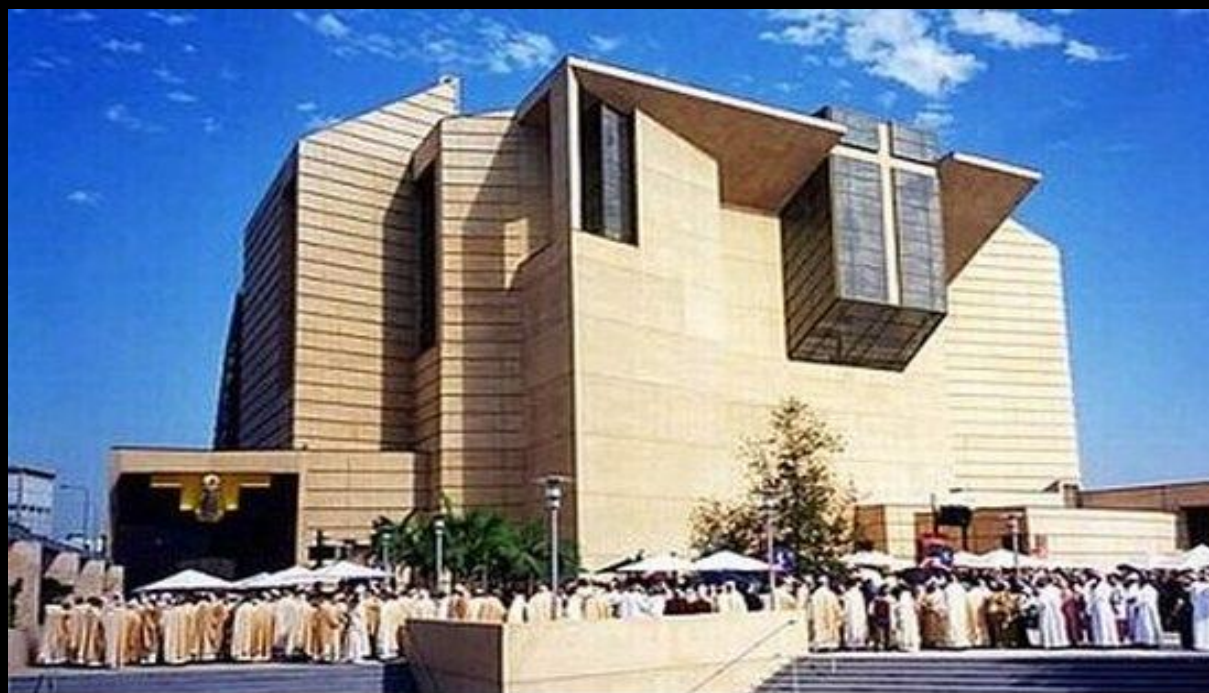
I hope you join me next week in the CHRONICLE .

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### **For the internet version**

#### **Quote “Meditating in an Alabaster Cathedral in Los Angeles, California**

*In the early morning, and especially in the late afternoon when the California sun turns the sky to reds, and pinks, and yellows, the window shafts and Spanish alabaster panels of Our Lady of Angels splay golden light amidst the interior shadows of this unabashedly modern cathedral. At those moments even nonbelievers are moved by the intimacy of this eleven-story sanctuary. Finished in 2002 and designed by Spanish architect and Pritzker winner Rafael Moneo, the cathedral is an architectural sanctuary; its angular interior softened by tapestries and cherry wood panels and pews. A maze-like mausoleum lies beneath the cathedral, hosting earthly remains as diverse as Saint Vibiana and Gregory Peck. Small galleries for meditation and art and history are located throughout. “*



**The Cathedral of Our Lady of Angels in Los Angeles**



**INTERIOR of Our Lady of Angels Cathedral  
in Los Angeles US**

Padre PIO pilgrim Cathedral completed in 2004



**INTERIOR PADRE PIO CATHEDRAL Italy ( 2004)**



**San Padre PIO Cathedral in S.Giovanni Rotondo ITALY**