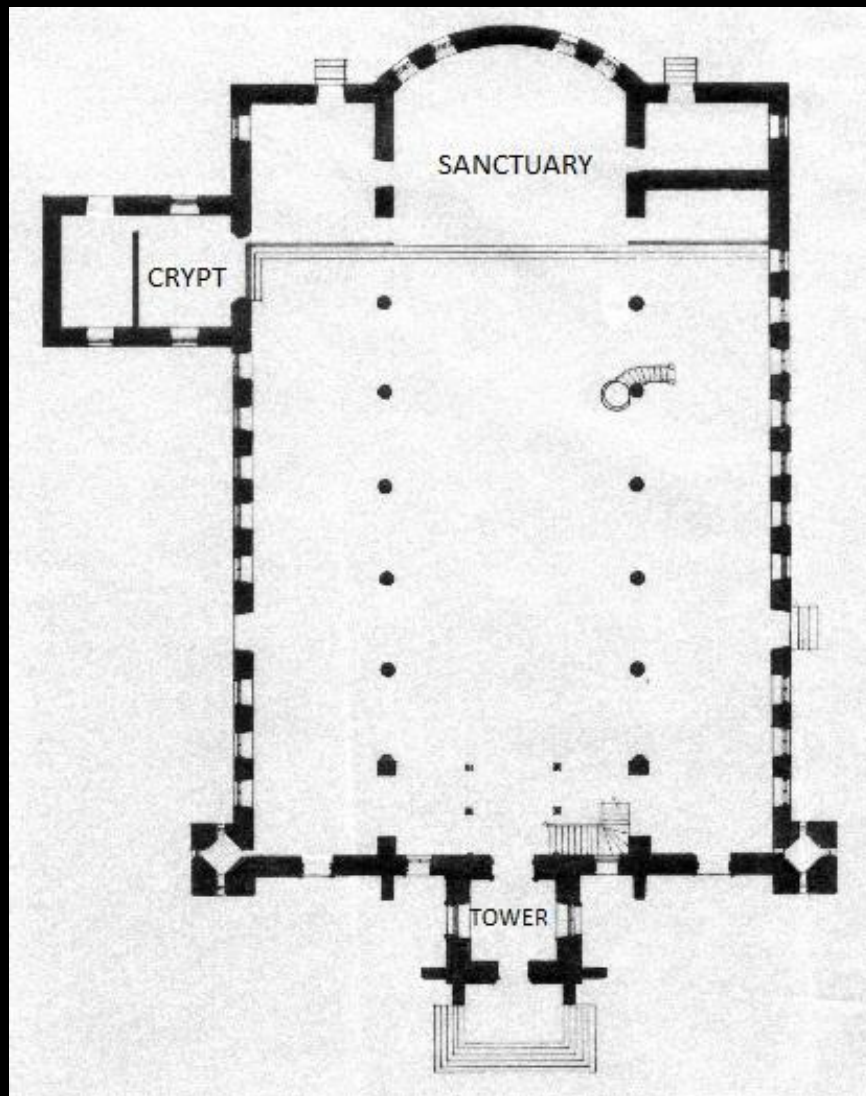


ARCHITECTURE AND SYMBOLISM : THE MANDORLA IN THE ROSEAU CATHEDRAL

By Bernard Lauwyck, May 20, 2012

THE PRESENT FLOOR PLAN OF ROSEAU CATHEDRAL



Life is full of surprises !

The Roseau Cathedral building is full of surprises and hidden secrets.

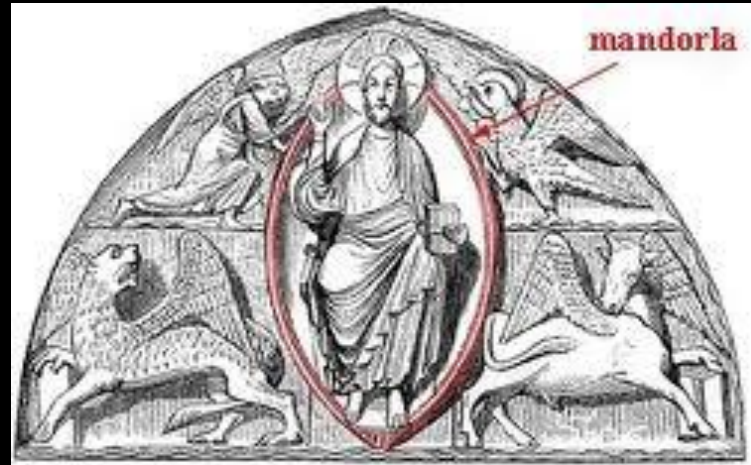
You will appreciate that a whole lot of research is going in these articles on the Roseau Cathedral. The help of many priests, friends and Dr. Honychurch have been invaluable. And I encourage each of you to share your Cathedral stories with me. Mr. Augustus Parker, stone mason on the Cathedral, provided me with some new information, which I will use in a subsequent article.

This article is very special to me. I made a real discovery.

Years ago I purchased some books on the beautiful Gothic Cathedral of Chartres, which I wanted to visit in 2006. One of them named “Chartres: Sacred Geometry, Sacred Space” written by Gordon Strachan, who taught in the department of Architecture and also Religious Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

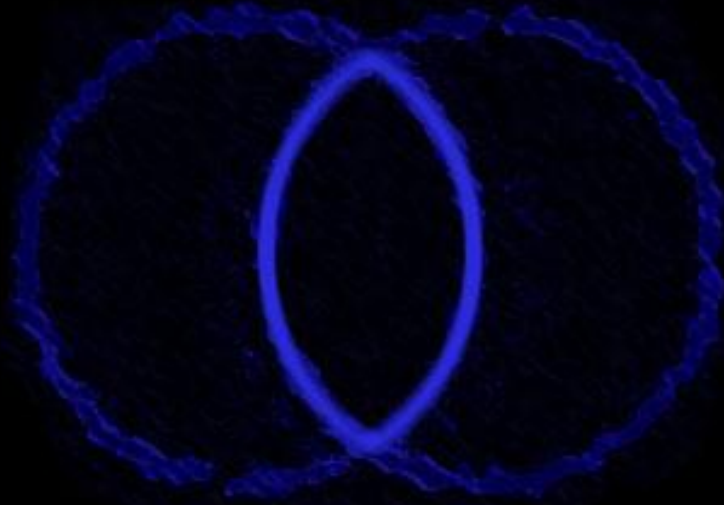
The MANDORLA, as an architectural shape to set out a Catholic Church plan, was revealed to me by this book. This is very old Christian symbolism, which I am about to reveal to you in our Roseau cathedral.

“Symbols of the Christian Faith” describe the mandorla as an almond-shaped aureole or halo that symbolizes the glory surrounding the figures of the Virgin Mary, the Trinity, and Christ in Majesty. The mandorla was especially used in icons and depictions of the Transfiguration of the Lord and the Assumption of Mary.



The 1531 Tilma of Juan Diego, showing to this day Our Lady of Guadalupe, is surrounded by the rays of the sun in the shape of a mandorla.





The mandorla is a unique Christian symbol, being the intersection between two circles whose circumferences passed through each other's centres.

It became known as the VESICA PISCIS, the womb of the fish, as Christianity's main symbol during the early church period. The cross was only adopted after 313AD, after Roman emperor Constantine's acceptance and legalisation of Christianity.

The fish, ICHTHUS or ΙΧΘΥΣ in Greek, being Jesus Christ, God, Son, Saviour

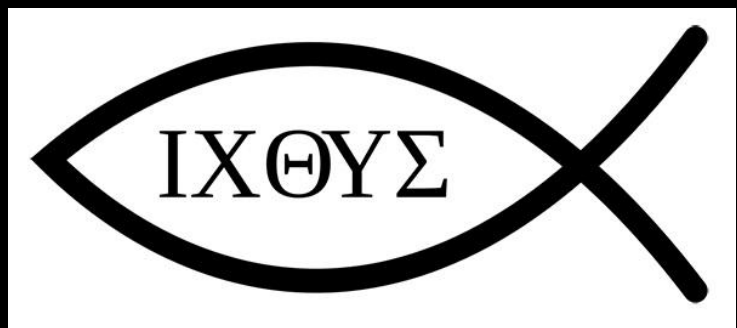
I esous = Jesus

C hristos = Christ

T heou = God

U ios = son

S oter = Saviour



Gordon Strachan explains in his book that, in the traditional understanding, the Oneness of God could only be architecturally expressed as a cube. "The cube alone expressed the perfection of Oneness because it has the ration of 1:1:1."

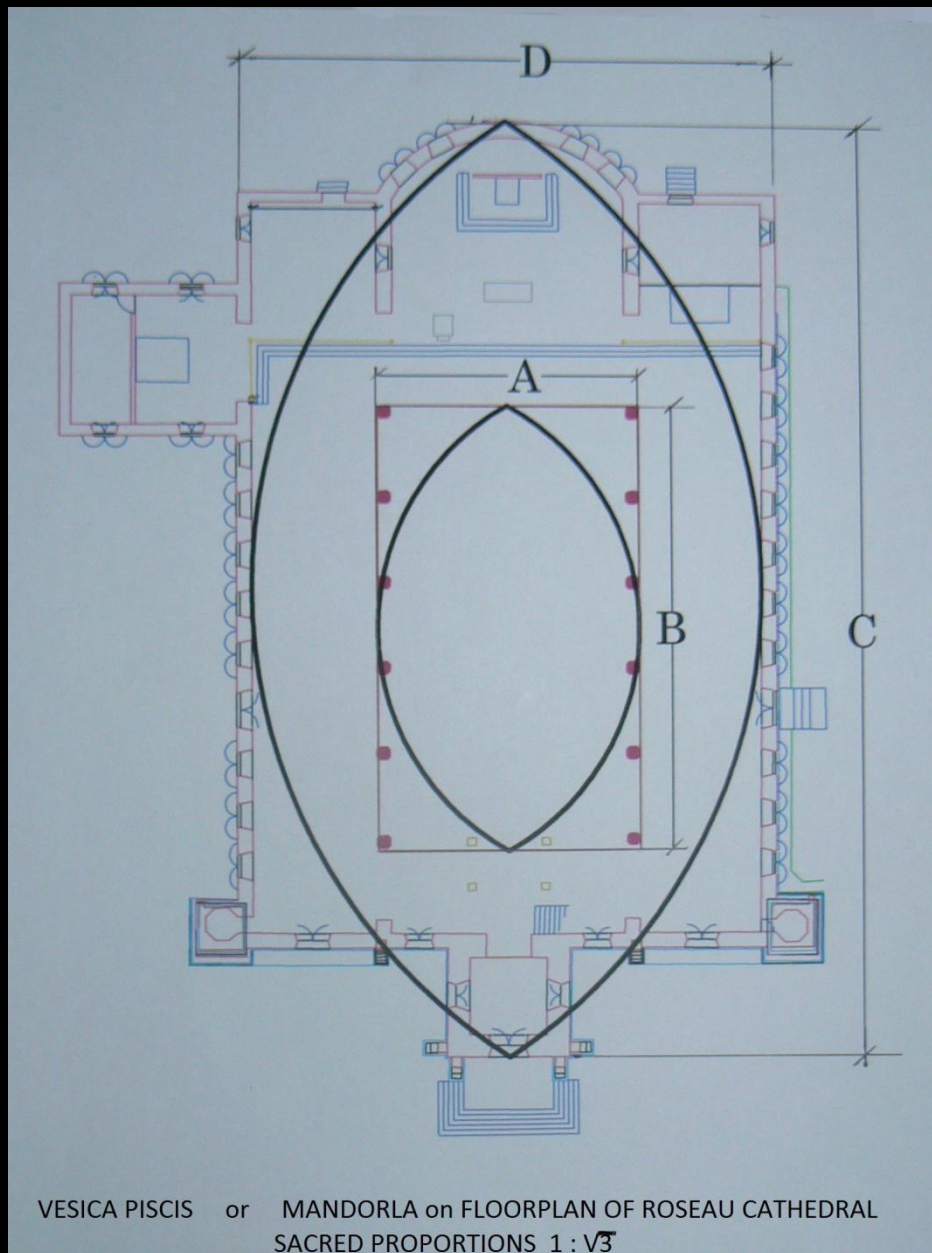
The diagonal of a cube with the side length as 1 is the square root of three : $\sqrt{3}$. This proportion 1 over $\sqrt{3}$, as derived of the cube (God is One) and the vesica piscis provide us with the width and length of the mandorla shape as used in Christian imagery and also in sacred geometry on the floor plan of Chartres Cathedral in France.

My curiosity was awakened. Would the same 1 over $\sqrt{3}$ sacred geometry called "ad triangulum" have been used in our Roseau Cathedral ?

And INDEED SO IT WAS!

As we have at our disposal a recent electronic surveyed Cathedral floor plan “AS IS” on AutoCAD, which was used to design the new roof, we have now accurate measurements and distances between walls and columns.

The positive results of my research have been verified by architect Mr. Bergis STOUTE and can be verified by any architect, as is presented below.



In medieval art Jesus was often depicted above the Cathedral entrance doors, seated in Majesty in the Vesica Pisces, mediating between the two circles symbolising God and man.

In our Cathedral, dedicated to THE VIRGIN MARY (the womb of the FISH) and with Her Assumption as Parish feast, the architecture has all the more meaning.

But the image below will make the meaning more visual and meaningful.

Mandorla of “MARY and CHRIST SITTING IN MAJESTY”
transposed on the sacred geometry of the Roseau Cathedral.

