

Westminster Cathedral – Key Stage 4

# Architecture and Orientation





# Context

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# The Act of Uniformity

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The architecture of Catholic churches in England varies greatly. This is largely due to the Reformation and the incorporation of Catholic churches into the Church of England from 1534. For over two hundred years after the Act of Uniformity (1559) it was illegal for Catholics in England to practise their faith.





# The Rise of Catholic Churches

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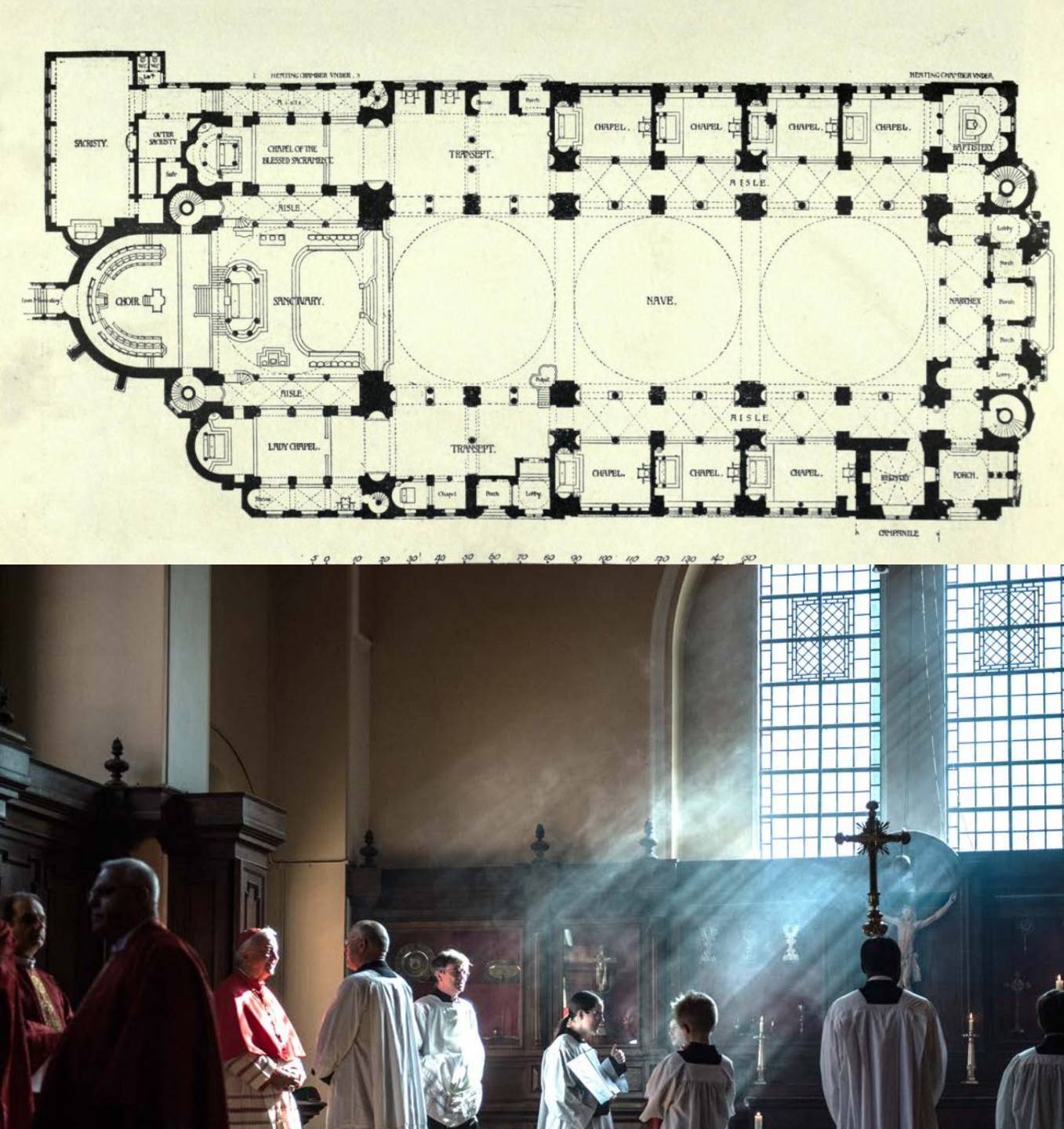
The building of Catholic churches did not start again until the end of the 18th century and then more were built after the Catholic Emancipation (1829) and the Restoration of the Hierarchy (1850). In the 20th century there was a growth in the number of Catholic churches that were built, especially between the 1950s and 1960s, due to an increase in Catholic immigration. Vatican II and the changes it made to the Mass were also key in shaping the architecture of Catholic churches built at this time. As a result, the architecture of most Catholic churches in England is relatively modern.



# Church Positioning

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Where possible Catholic churches face towards the East, as Christians traditionally have regarded the dawn and rising sun as symbols of the Risen Christ bringing light into the world.







# Westminster Build

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Although an Archbishop for the Westminster Diocese was appointed in 1850, there was no Cathedral, so plans had to be made to build one.

However, it was not until the 1890s that the third Cardinal, Herbert Vaughan, asked John Francis Bentley, an eminent Victorian architect, to draw up plans for a new Cathedral.





# Cathedral Style

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Cardinal Vaughan desired a basilican form, following the shape of ancient Roman meeting houses, used by Christians when they were first officially recognised and allowed to practise their faith in 313 AD.

Bentley agreed, but took his inspiration from later Byzantine architecture, retaining adaptations to allow for liturgical and congregational requirements, such as processions.





# Byzantine style Advantages

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Such a style had three advantages:

- 1) It was quick to build. It only took eight years to construct the Cathedral in brick (over 12.5 million were used). Internal decorations could be added in later years.
- 2) There are no columns to obstruct the view, so the altar is clearly visible to all the congregation.
- 3) The Byzantine style made the Cathedral very different from the two other important church buildings in London, Westminster Abbey (Gothic) and St. Paul's (English Baroque).



# Tasks

1. Explain how catholic beliefs influence the Architecture and orientation of churches.



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