



New altar is a happy compromise

The new altar in St. Finbarr's South Church has achieved a very successful compromise between the old and the new. Far too frequently indeed are such attempts failures — if not disasters.

Apart from the requirements calling for the erection of a new altar, there was the difficult decision about the sculptured figure of the Dead Christ that lay beneath the older High Altar. Many might argue that it should be removed to another part of the church or perhaps somewhere within the precincts. This, of course, would deprive the parishioners and others the opportunity of viewing one of Ireland's most outstanding pieces of 19th century religious sculpture.

A VAST IMPROVEMENT

Be it said, therefore, that all credit to the present Administrator, Very Rev. Fr. Crowley, and his curates for presenting a most acceptable solution and indeed a vast improvement on the former position.

The white marble figure of the "Dead Christ," long a feature of the South Chapel, could be seen only at a distance, and thus it merged very much into its immediate surroundings. Now with the siting of the new altar nearer the congregation, all who use the church or visit it, can see this sculpture at closer view-

point. No church in Cork possesses such a masterpiece—as this work by John Hogan (1800 — 1858).

Hogan was born in Tallow, Co. Waterford, of Cork parents, and returned to his home in Cove Street, Cork, in his early infancy. There he grew up with his brothers and sisters and attended Mass in the old "South Chapel." Coincidentally enough on the same street lived his friend, Fr. Theobald Mathew, and another well known Cork painter, Richard Lyster.

Times were not good for ordinary people in those days. Poverty and disease were widespread and Catholic Emancipation had yet to come. John Hogan had a deep affection for his parish, so when his great talent brought him to Rome and subsequent fame, he was delighted to receive a commission for a figure of the "Dead Christ" for the South Parish Church.

He returned to Ireland in 1829 where the "Dead Christ" was exhibited in Dublin and while there, he received the heart-breaking information that the parish could not raise enough money to pay for the work. Influential people, however, secured it for the Carmelite Church in Clarendon St., Dublin, where it can be seen to this day.

SECOND "DEAD CHRIST"

His sorrow was shortlived

because soon after, he received a definite commission for a second "Dead Christ" whereupon "he completed a new cast and improved its design" (Sarah Atkinson).

An interesting story about this second work, tells that on its arrival in Ireland, the head was unfinished. Asked about this, he replied: "Jealous people have said that I received Italian help on my first work, now I'll finish this one before their eyes."

Hogan's intensity of spirit in these matters can be gauged from the fact that before embarking on his original "Dead Christ" he made a week's retreat, in the Irish Franciscan College of St. Isidore's in Rome.

The writer has often thought that Hogan's concept of a "Dead Christ" owes much to the figure of Christ on Michael Angelo's famous Pieta in the Vatican. Hogan's passion for anatomical accuracy must inevitably have drawn him to this timeless masterpiece while he lived in Rome.

PLAQUE SUGGESTED

Perhaps it might be a thought to consider the erection of a modest plaque at the entrance to the church, drawing attention to the presence of this art treasure of the South Parish, indeed many Continental churches have such plaques for less worthy monuments.

Community groups not opposed to

Man fined for assault on garda