



Good day Worthy Knights,

In this part 111, the seven steps pyramidal superaltar

Wikipedia, Division of Surrey

A Passion Cross is set on a seven stepped pyramidal superaltar, the upper three steps being red and the lower four white. The number seven is a significant number in the Bible, however in this context it seems more likely that it refers to the seven corporal Works of Mercy:

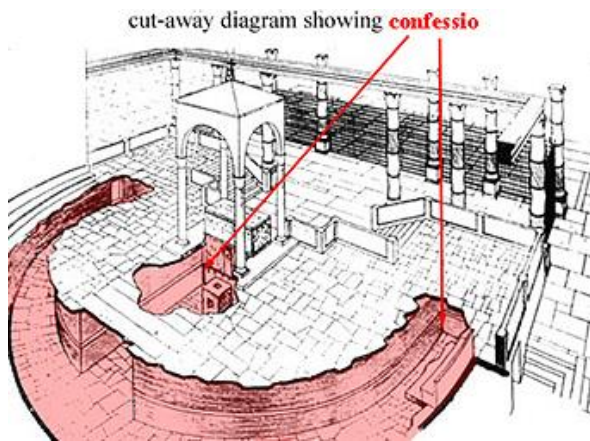
Feed the hungry.
Give drink to the thirsty.
Shelter the homeless.
Clothe the naked.

Ransom the captives.
Visit the sick.
Bury the dead.

The reason for the steps being a combination of red and white is that red represents the shedding of Christ's blood and white represents His spotless purity and innocence. This colour combination is also seen in the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley which are contained in two vases placed on the lower step. These flowers are mentioned in the Song of Solomon and traditionally are taken to represent figurative names for Jesus Christ.

The sixteen candles on the steps represent the sixteen letters of the mystic words:

In Hoc Signo Vinces.



In the beginning altars were not erected on steps. Those in the catacombs were constructed on the pavement, and in churches they were usually erected over the *confessio* or *μαρτύριον*, the place where the remains of martyrs were entered. At present the number of steps leading up to the high altar is usually three, five, or seven, including the upper platform (*predella*).

The most famous *confessio* crypt during the Middle Ages was that of Saint Peter's old church in Rome, which contained the tomb of Saint Peter.

Later, the number of steps was increased. It became the norm that the main altar of a church should be raised above the level of the sanctuary by three steps. The papal altar in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican is approached by seven steps.

An odd number was always chosen. Since it was considered proper to use the right foot in taking a first step, this ensured that the priest, having ascended the first of the steps with his right foot would also enter the *predella* with his right foot. The same rule applied to pre-Christian temples, as indicated by Vitruvius in his *De architectura*. "The Satyricon" attributed to Petronius also mentions the custom of *dextro pede* (right foot first).

The Number Seven

Used 735 times (54 times in the Book of Revelation alone), the number seven is the foundation of God's work. If we include with this count how many times 'sevenfold' and 'seventh' is used, our total jumps to 860 references, including for example the seven days of creation, the seven loaves and fishes multiplied by Jesus, the seven phrases spoken by Jesus from the Cross, the seven churches in the Book of Revelation or the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Seven is the number of completeness and perfection (both physical and spiritual). It derives much of its meaning from being tied directly to God's creation of all things. The word 'created' is used seven times describing God's creative work (Genesis) with God's Sabbath on the seventh day.

The Bible was originally divided into seven major divisions. They were:

The Law
The Prophets
The Writings or Psalms
The Gospels and Acts
The General Epistles
The Epistles of Paul
The Book of Revelation.

- The fact is that, historically, the number seven has played a significant role in society, culture, religion, and even psychology and here are some reasons we are so drawn to the number seven.
- It has been significant since ancient times. It was prominent in many ancient cultures. Most famous of all were the seven wonders of the world which comprised the Great Pyramid of Giza, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Mausoleum at Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes, and the Lighthouse of Alexandria.
- It has had significance in almost every major religion. In the Old Testament the world was created in six days and God rested on the seventh, creating the basis of the seven-day-week we use to this day. In the New Testament the number seven symbolizes the unity of the four corners of the Earth with the Holy Trinity.
- The number seven is also featured in the Book of Revelation (seven churches, seven angels, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven stars). The Koran speaks of seven heavens and Muslim pilgrims walk around the Kaaba in Mecca seven times. In Hinduism there are seven higher worlds and seven underworlds, and in Buddhism the new-born Buddha rises and takes seven steps.
- It matches our memory capacity. In 1956, George Miller of Harvard University wrote what is today considered one of the classic papers in psychology in which he demonstrated that most people can retain roughly seven items of information in their short-term memory. That is why phone numbers tend to have seven digits (area code not withstanding).
- It is a prime number. Prime numbers are those that can only be divided by themselves and by the number 1 and have long been considered special to mathematicians and non-mathematicians alike. Seven is considered by some to be the most 'prime' number within the first 10 numbers as you cannot multiply it within the group, making it a kind of optimal-prime.

Works consulted:

<https://www.pitt.edu/~medart/menuglossary/confessio.htm>

<http://www.redcrossofconstantine.co.uk/Downloads/RCC-Booklet-2019.pdf>
Red Cross of Constantine, Division of Surrey.

<https://www.biblestudy.org/bibleref/meaning-of-numbers-in-bible/7.html>

- Copyright 2015 Guy Winch, Ph.D., licensed psychologist, and author of *Emotional First Aid: Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure, and Other Everyday Hurts*. Posted June 27, 2015. Reviewed by Gary Drevitch.
Website: www.guywinch.com

Isaiah 19:19 (Jubilee Bible 2000) In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pyramid titled "To the LORD" at the border thereof.