**Edward T. P. Graham: The Italian Lineage of an
                              American Sacred Architecture**

Edward T. P. Graham (1872-1964) had every advantage of a distinguished education in architecture from Harvard University before he even set foot in Italy.   After receiving his Bachelor of Science, he was awarded the very first Austin Traveling Fellowship. He traveled and studied throughout Europe for two years, but his strongest affinity was to church projects in Italy of the mediaeval period.

St. Paul Church, Harvard Square
Image from Parish Website

Twenty-five years after his "Grand Tour" and with a sizable body of architectural work already completed, he remarked, "As to style in architecture, I believe that the free mediaeval styles offer the best field for further development of architecture in any country, our own included. There is formalism in the Renaissance and all since attempted in its manner, which is crippling, and restricting. Structure, dressed in transparent rather than opaque robes, is what should be followed in building."

This musing gives glimpses into his creative work over his long, fruitful career as a designer of Roman Catholic Churches in Boston, Massachusetts and Cleveland, Ohio. Cleveland is an exceptional setting for churches and these have long been strong cultural as well as spiritual landmarks for the people here.

At this very moment in time, the body of Mr. Graham's work in the Cleveland area is in peril. The Cleveland diocese is growing smaller at the same rate the entire urban area is shrinking in population.   This area of Northeast Ohio will be reduced by fifty-two parishes by closings and mergers within the next two years. Three of the four outstanding churches designed by Mr. Graham have been slated for closure. One, St. Ignatius Church, has been granted a brief reprieve, but must meet several prescribed economic provisions to stay open. The churches are fundamentally sound structurally.

The Italian architectural forbears of the Graham churches are immensely powerful buildings. They are located throughout Italy, but several are centered quite near to Rome. A careful study of these would serve as a bridge to the preservation of their American successors, and would raise awareness of local civic and spiritual leaders and everyday people alike. Parishes could potentially be reinvigorated. At the very least, the churches would be given all the respect they are due should a time and circumstances arise for them to be adaptively reused.

The study I will undertake while in Rome is outlined as a series of abbreviated schematic Historic Structure Assessments of these forbears. (It is duly noted that they are distinctly different in structural systems - bearing masonry versus modern steel). I am familiar with the HAS format, which is utilized by many states for historic building documentation, and have in fact both written many of these and assigned them to my students. I will discern the history and use of each building, assess the condition of each, and study forms, plans, and details. I would bolster each report with my watercolor sketches and high dynamic range photographs.

My work in Rome will benefit my community, and the experience will solidify the core of my practice. My scholarship at the American Academy at Rome will broaden my appreciation of history, and enrich all my future sacred space and preservation projects.   I also foresee a great opportunity to share the knowledge I gain through the Academy with my students back home.

The Cleveland area churches considered, and their Italian predecessors, are depicted on the ensuing pages.

Saint Mary's Church, Akron. 1915-1916. The expressive scrollwork and flourishes here show Graham's dexterous hand with the elements of the Italian Renaissance.   The interior is a basilica plan with ionic columns, decorated gable trusses, and an apse with a depiction of Mary and angels. But the overall form and tower are rooted deeper in history than the Renaissance, and find their origins in the 1483 Basilica of St. Aurea in Ostia, by Florentine architect Baccio Pontelli.

Saint Mary's, Exterior and Interior
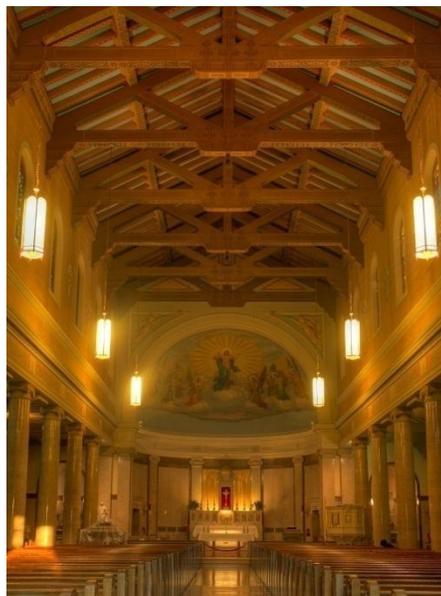
St. Aurea, Ostia

Saint Ignatius Parish Church, Cleveland, 1930. The church is also a classic Roman basilica in form, but by the recommendation of the pastor, Father Thomas A. Hanrahan, Mr. Graham visited St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls in Rome and included some elements and detailing, including the decorative cosmati frieze. The campanile is derived from the Romanesque, but in this case it is thinner, much like a minaret. Graham summons (and perfects) some elements in this tower from the one he designed for St. Paul's Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The rich geometrical carvings appear to be a modern derivation of those in Moorish and Byzantine architecture. The "Tree of Life" mural on half-dome of the apse pays homage to the one in the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome.


St. Ignatius of Antioch Church, exterior

St. Paul's Outside-the-Walls

St. Ignatius, interior
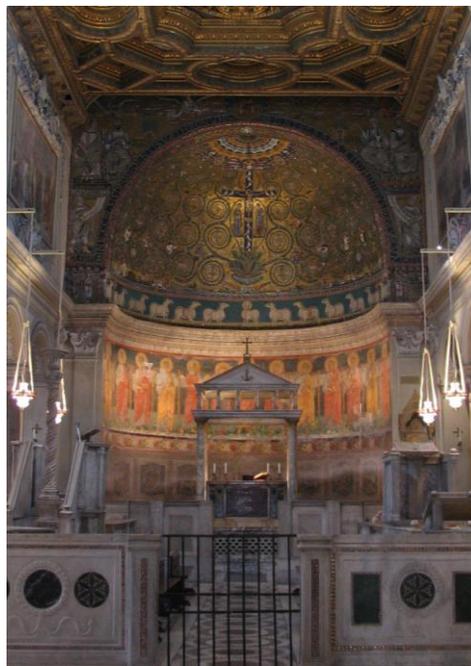
St. Clemente's, Rome

Saints Cyril and Methodius Church, Lakewood. 1931.
This church is again a basilica in form, but is advanced in an early medieval style, Lombard Romanesque. Graham utilizes detail here sparingly.   The blind arcades and grouped columns are derivatives of this style. Other details are sleeker and more streamlined, specifically in the tower.   The deep inset entry arch is common for the period, and occurs on other nearby neighborhood churches.

Ss. Cyril and Methodius Church   San Fedele Church, Como

Saint James Church, Lakewood.   1935. Its exterior massing is loosely based on the Duomo of Calefu, which was built like a fortress in the Norman Style.   There are slightly pointed arches, forerunners of the Gothic style.   The plan and interior detailing of Saint James Church are based on the Cathedral of Monreale. Byzantine, Arabic, and Norman derived decorative arts are all present.

Saint James, exterior
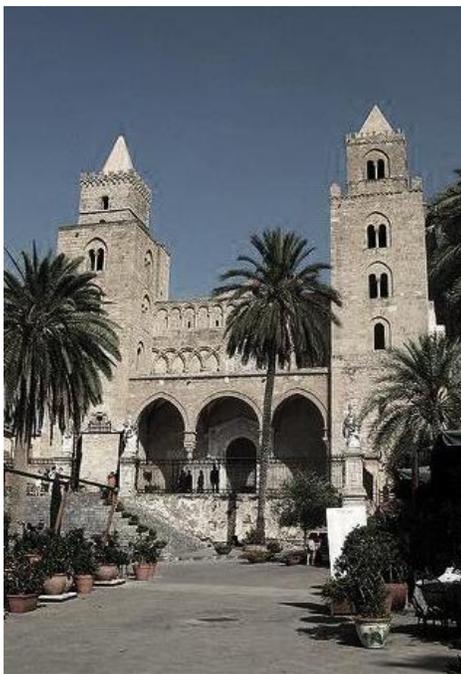
Duomo of Calefu

Saint James, interior

Cathedral of Monreale