

# Tempo

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 1996

CN

## HEALTH & SCIENCE

### Little togetherness

...ss' counselors stress the health  
...s of building and sustaining  
...al relationships.



## ARTS WATCH

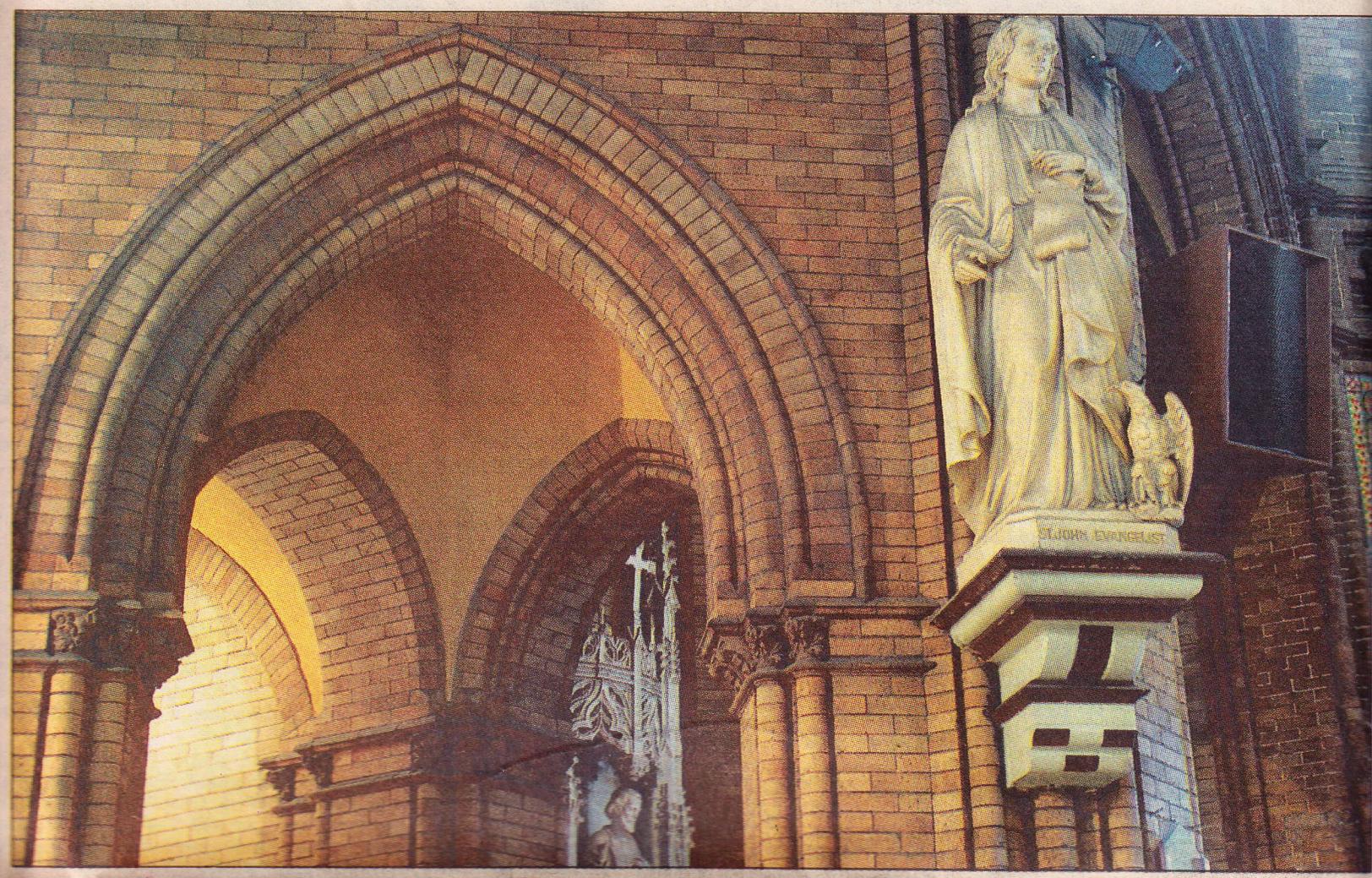
### Well, how was it?

Reviews of Tennessee Williams' "Small  
Craft Warnings" at Mary-Archie Theatre  
and the Chieftains at Ravinia.



'WE'VE LET CHURCHES COLLAPSE. IN EUROPE WE'D BE RUNNING TO LOOK AT THEM. WHY NOT HERE?'

ART HISTORIAN ROLF ACHILLES



ST. PAUL ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Tribune photos by Charles Osgood

Nearly a century old, St. Paul's on West 22nd Place is all brick, a Gothic-derived work of art featuring German stained glass and Italian mosaics.

# HIDDEN TREASURES

Many old Chicago churches double as 'living museums' — but they could use a guardian angel

By M.W. Newman  
SPECIAL TO THE TRIBUNE

Chicago churches fascinate Rolf Achilles and often they devastate him. He's a walker in the city, a rubbernecking art historian, a town crier sounding alarms about the physical state of some of Chicago's finest art treasure churches.

He puts a foot in many countries and cities, but Chicago is his home and he's out walking here every day possible.

"To see the city, you have to walk," Achilles says. He

rarely passes a church without a close look at it and its neighborhood. He walks in, introduces himself, looks around. Achilles reads Chicago religious buildings as the story of a city and its people.

It is an occupation, a preoccupation for a man educated in DeKalb, Ill., and in Munich, Heidelberg and Rome.

His Chicago is the Rust Belt giant "that didn't collapse" but whose neighborhood churches, like many neighborhoods, are often rundown and in urgent need of corrective surgery.

"New York," he says, "is quantity. Chicago is quality *and* quantity. But we've let churches collapse.

"These older churches are living museums without a subsidy or admission fee. In Europe we'd be running to look at them. Why not here?"

Achilles was born in Germany 49 years ago and lived as a child in Brazil before arriving in this country. He teaches at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and at Columbia College and often conducts tours of historic buildings and not just in Chicago. Achilles is on the road in New



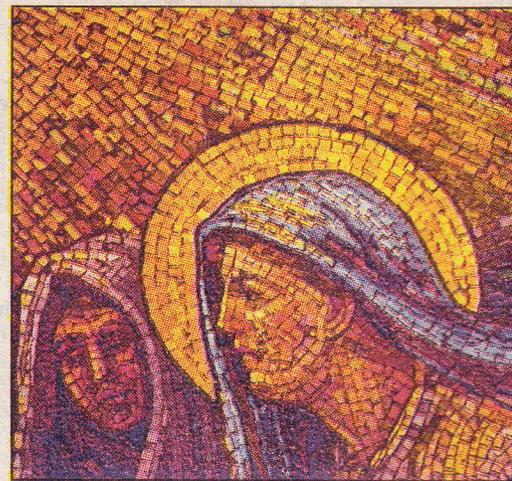
Art historian Rolf Achilles sees Chicago's religious buildings as the story of a city and its people.

SEE CHURCHES, PAGE 9



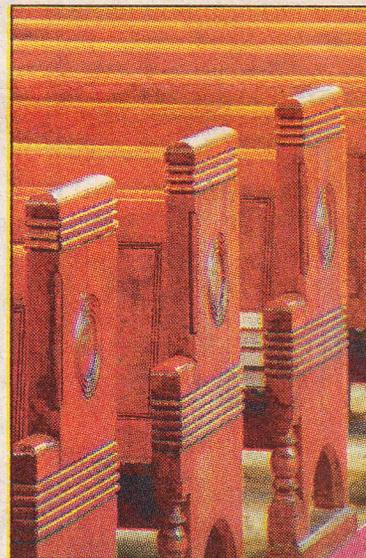
ANGEL GUARDIAN  
CROATIAN CHURCH

Stained glass "battle windows" honor Henry II, an 11th Century Holy Roman emperor, at Angel Guardian on North Ridge Avenue.



CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY

With its elaborate mosaics (above) and hand-carved cherry wood pews (below), the 111-year-old Church of the Epiphany, at Adams and Ashland, is a classic.



# Church

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

York, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, Savannah, Houston, Dallas.

In Chicago, he keeps a worried eye on such treasures as the Church of the Epiphany and the First Baptist Congregational Church, both on Ashland Avenue; St. Paul Roman Catholic Church, 2127 W. 22nd Pl. in the Pilsen area; St. Joseph's on North Orleans Street bordering the Cabrini-Green project; Second Presbyterian with its luminous Tiffany windows at 1936 S. Michigan Ave.

Most of them need healing. So do two-thirds of Chicago's other older churches, according to Neal Vogel of Inspired Partnerships, consultants on church art and building. For many, the fixup bill could run to hundreds of thousands of dollars each, or more.

It's a painful tale. The old churches lose pieces of themselves and can't afford to replace them. Families move away. Congregations change color and class and sometimes language.

Some churches are down to a tenth of their former membership. There's little spare cash for church upkeep, although religious faith is an irreducible strength in holding people and communities together.

Achilles senses that Chicago doesn't realize how rich it is in religious stained glass, mosaics, carved woods, statuary, murals and, of course, the quality of its church buildings themselves. Sometimes the city rouses itself only at the last moment, and the costs can be daunting.

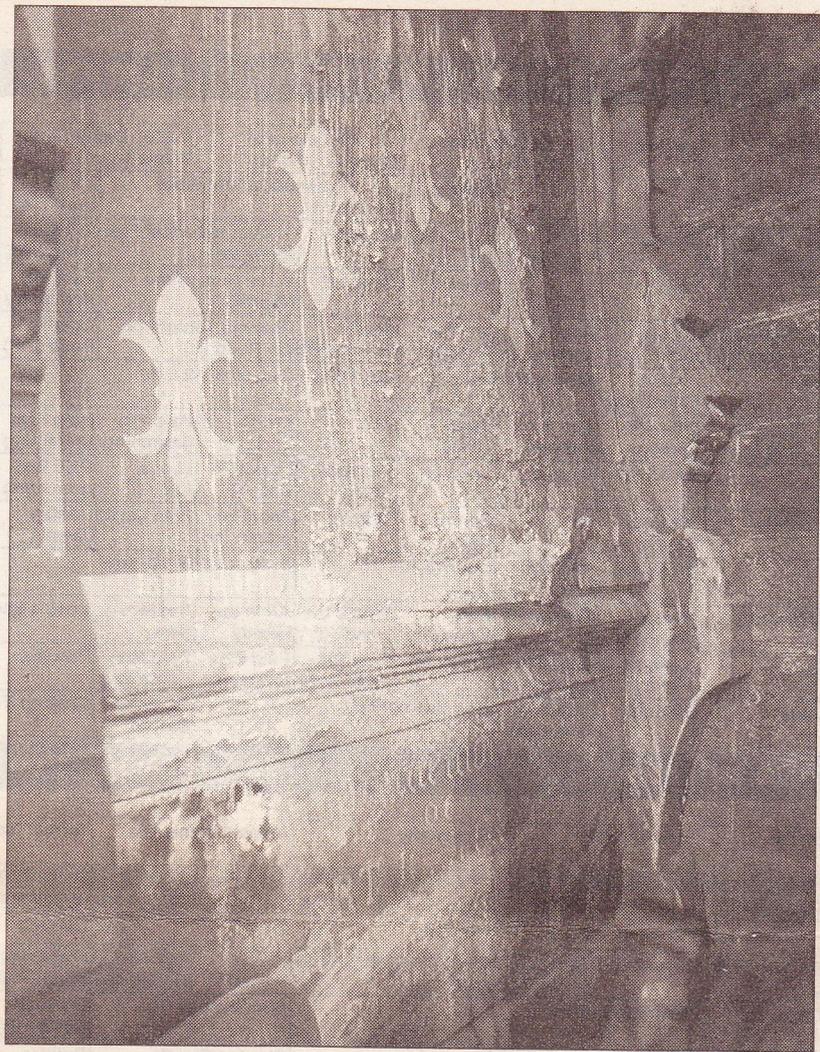
Historic Holy Family Church at 1080 W. Roosevelt Rd. was a near ruin a few years ago. An inspired fundraising campaign has saved it, and it glows with freshened carvings and statuary and stained glass and wall stenciling that was hidden under paint.

But after a \$3.5 million work-over, another \$500,000 is needed to finish the job, says Rev. George Lane, father figure of the funding. He is confident of raising the dollars, but church-saving doesn't come cheap after years of aging, neglect, deferred upkeep or simple inability to meet ongoing costs.

## Dowager duchess faces ruin

A \$3 million restoration, and perhaps more, faces the 111-year-old Church of the Epiphany at Adams and Ashland Avenues. This dowager duchess of a building "deserves to be saved from ruin," says its Episcopal pastor, Rev. William K. Gros.

Epiphany came out of the 1880s, when Ashland Avenue was full of people who were fashionable and wanted the world to know it.



Tribune photos by Charles Osgood  
Water-damaged walls are just part of the problem at the Church of the Epiphany, which faces a \$3 million restoration tab.

the Midwest," says Achilles.

"Look at those hand-carved cherry wood pews. You can't find wood like that anymore. This church reflects Chicago as the lumber capital of the 1880s. We've saved some of the lumber barons' homes at great cost, but what about churches?"

Epiphany betrays the scars of time. In the 1970s it lost some of its stained glass to thieves. Now there are sinister cracks in the roof trusswork. The church is so leaky that pieces of its elaborate terra cotta paneling are crumbling.

Epiphany has kept going bravely, anyway. It opened in 1885, the same year as the Home Insurance Building two miles east on LaSalle Street. A pioneering skyscraper long since razed, Home Insurance is in the history books: a first. Ever since, Chicago has been known for its topleless towers of Illinois. Seldom has it received its due for its notable churches.

Architect John Vinci, who supervised renewal of Holy Family Church, has been commissioned to reclaim Epiphany. Raising the dollars is the challenge.

Three blocks away First Baptist

Union Park. The senior pastor, Rev. Arthur D. Griffin, is leading the community's inspiring comeback struggle.

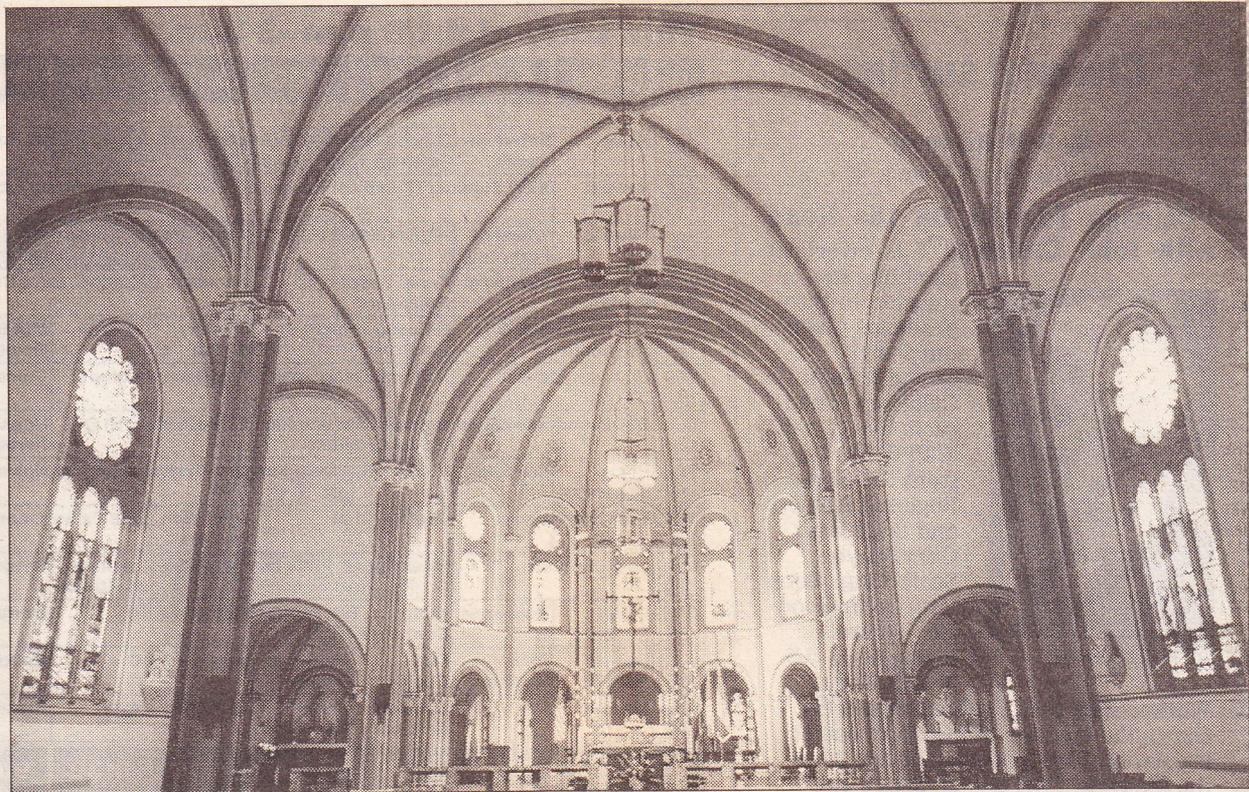
## More setbacks

But earlier this year a windstorm tore out chunks of a 38-foot-high stained glass window over the church's Ashland entrance. The window is partly boarded now. Protective scaffolding stands over the front doors.

"The wood framing around the glass was soft and the congregation had tried to repair it, but you've got to keep checking stained glass," says Achilles. "It may look OK—until it's on the street."

Says Griffin: "The wind was just too much. But the window must be restored. It's part of our history."

The lost sections consisted of background patterns considered fairly easy to match. Griffin foresees a \$40,000 bill. To do it right would run to \$100,000, according to Inspired Partnerships' Neal Vogel, serving as consultant.



The interior of Angel Guardian Croatian Church, where members have preserved their treasures.

"The window was leaking and there was deterioration," he says.

The care of stained glass is a tricky matter. Framing and leading can yield, windows can warp and buckle. That has happened at Second Presbyterian. Its Tiffany windows are priceless, but the 150-member congregation hasn't the means to mend them.

Achilles also keeps an eye on the glass at St. Joseph's Church, 1107 N. Orleans St. The elevated train rumbles by and the building vibrates, he says, and he worries about the window bracing.

On West 22nd Place, the twin spires of St. Paul Roman Catholic Church rise over a Mexican-flavored parish that packs the church for worship, weddings and baptisms. St. Paul's is all-brick, a work of art miles from the shopping-mall tourist trail.

Nearly a century ago the Gothic-derived church was built by its own congregation, which then was German. "Built without a nail," as Ripley's "Believe It or Not" once put it. The design was the masterpiece of architect Henry Schlacks. The stained glass was crafted in Munich. The Italian mosaics are brilliant, although they need a cleaning.

But over the years St. Paul's has lost two smaller towers, crosses, ornament, chandeliers. "Time and remodeling have taken their toll," notes George Lane in his book "Chicago Churches and Synagogues" (Loyola University Press).

And now there's water penetrat-

walls, and peeling plaster on the ceiling. Some walls show signs of buckling, says the pastor, Rev. Joseph Peplansky, despite a \$1.3 million rehab in 1991 when "the Archdiocese of Chicago came to the rescue and gave a lot of help."

Clusters of small, spiky spires were removed at the base of the two main spires to stop leaks and were replaced by tar, according to Peplansky. The leaks persist. He says St. Paul needs \$250,000 in first aid and that the archdiocese is looking at what has to be done.

"But now the twin spires look raw without the smaller ones," says Achilles. "This is a building crying for help."

One of his favorite churches is Angel Guardian Croatian Church, 6346 N. Ridge Ave. Angel Guardian is a guardian angel of stained glass that dates from the days when the church was known as St. Henry in honor of Henry II, an 11th Century Holy Roman emperor.

St. Henry was founded by Luxembourgers and was acquired by its present congregation in the 1970s, says the pastor, Rev. Nick Dugandzic.

"Angel Guardian knows what it has and does it all itself," Achilles says.

That's high praise from a concerned town crier.