

Client: The Roman Catholic Church
Location: The Apostolic Nunciature, Wimbledon, London
Brief: Design and produce furniture for Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Britain

Being only the second Papal visit to Britain by the head of the Catholic Church in more than 500 years, (the last being over a quarter of a century ago), much was made of Pope Benedict's four day visit to Britain in September 2010. Yet despite his many public engagements, understandably little came into the public domain about the Pontiff's seclusion whilst here in the UK. However, following kind permission from the Papal Nuncio, in Wimbledon, we are able to provide details of our involvement with this momentous visit.

During Pope Benedict XVI's visit, The Holy Father resided with his envoy to Britain at the Apostolic Nunciature in Wimbledon, London. To commemorate his visit, N.E.J. Stevenson was commissioned to design and produce 6 specially selected pieces for use during his residency in Britain.

Given a fairly open design brief we were asked to produce six contemporary pieces, an altar, lectern, tabernacle stand, two Server chairs and the Celebrants chair, which were to be used in a traditional setting. Three separate schemes were proposed for each item of furniture, settling on one that observed The Holy

Father's personal taste in furniture, and giving due respect to the ethical origins of the raw material. The selected one was then refined by the use of photo realistic CAD renders, a process we use to digitally transmit design imagery to the client, regardless of their location.

The majority of the material was Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) European Oak, a timber that has a natural appearance and possesses great durability, making it ideal for quality furniture applications of this type. To complete the appearance inlaid lines of Ebony were used; etched into the glass were the arms of the Vatican on the front panels, the arms of the Knights of Malta on the altar side panels and Pope Benedict's arms on the Celebrant's chair.

There were a number of technical challenges to overcome in making the chairs structurally robust with a floating slatted back. This was resolved by connecting the chair arms with an additional dovetailed section across the back, which formed a structural brace.



Specification

Materials: European Oak
Ebony
Toughened glass
Leather
Finish: Polyurethane lacquer

Contact information

If you feel we could help you with the design and production of your bespoke furniture requirements please contact me, Neil Stevenson, Managing Director, NEJ Stevenson on 02476 544662 or email me at neil@nejstevenson.co.uk