



PHOTOGRAPH BY BUD MARTIN, ST. PAUL PIONEER PRESS

PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS who campaign in the Twin Cities are protected from huge crowds these days. Such was not the case, however, when Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, the Republican Party’s nominee, paid a visit to St. Paul and Minneapolis on September 16, 1952. The World War II hero received a tumultuous welcome that was more like a coronation than a campaign stop.

This wonderful photograph shows Ike, as everyone called him, in full campaign mode—standing tall, arms held high, that famous smile turned up like the bright beams of a headlight—as his motorcade plows through dense crowds along Nicollet Avenue in downtown Minneapolis. School children let out for the day follow behind Eisenhower’s convertible, where his wife, Mamie, is just visible in the back seat. “Bronzed by the sun, smiling and completely at ease, the general was jovial and informal,” said the *Pioneer Press*, which went on to describe the day’s events as “one of the greatest mass demonstrations ever given a public figure in the Twin Cities area.”

Eisenhower had begun his three-hour visit in St. Paul, where his motorcade drew big crowds along Kellogg

Boulevard and Robert Street. At the newly completed State Capitol Mall, he paused to deliver a speech in his best populist manner. “All I ask,” Eisenhower said, “is that at the end of four years in office the people will say to me: ‘The fellow’s fair. He is just. He is decent. He is honest. He is our friend.’”

Afterwards, Eisenhower’s triumphal tour of the Twin Cities continued. His 44-car motorcade, packed with local Republican office holders happily “drafting” on the general’s powerful coattails, made its way down University Avenue and south to Minnehaha Parkway before finally reaching Nicollet Avenue.

Eisenhower’s personal and political popularity translated into a huge win at the polls seven weeks later. He demolished the eloquent but overmatched Democratic candidate, Adlai Stevenson, winning 39 of the 48 states, including Minnesota.

—LARRY MILLETT

Larry Millett is the author of Strange Days, Dangerous Nights: Photos from the Speed Graphic Era (2004) and numerous books and articles on architectural history.

FOR CENTURIES, religious architecture looked to the past for inspiration, and well into the twentieth century the Romanesque churches and Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages remained favored models for liturgical design. Yet there is nothing even vaguely Romanesque or Gothic about the design of the abbey church at St. John's University in Collegeville—nor is there another church quite like it anywhere else.

The decision to depart from tradition was a carefully considered one. In 1950 the brethren of St. John's, one of the largest Benedictine monasteries in the world, found themselves in need of a larger abbey church. At the same time, they questioned why religious architecture in mid-century America reflected less of its contemporary setting than of a long-ago and far-away world. The design of their church, they resolved, would speak not only of the here and now but also of their religious beliefs.

Such a nontraditional concept required the services of a visionary architect. The brethren sought one who could “think boldly and cast our ideals in forms which will be valid for centuries to come, shaping them with all the genius of present-day materials and techniques.”* They selected Marcel Breuer, a Bauhaus-trained, Hungarian-born architect known for his modern, expressive concrete buildings, and Breuer rose magnificently to the challenge.

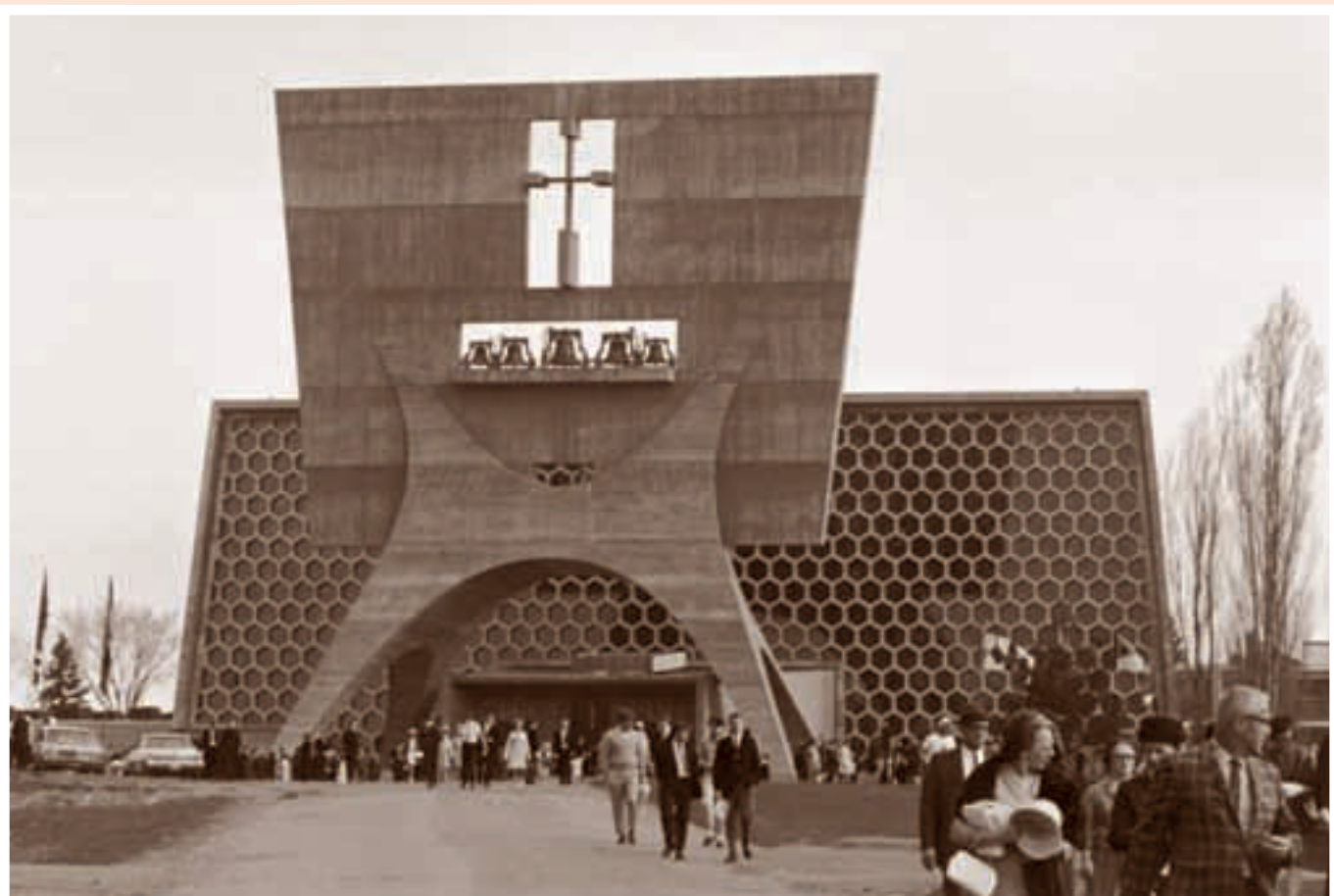
Breuer was a master at shaping concrete—a material that has no inherent shape of its own—into powerful, sculptural structures, and St. John's Abbey is one of his acknowledged masterpieces. He proved equally adept at molding concrete into the monumental, monolithic bell banner that announces entry to the church as he was at coaxing the material into a delicate honeycomb frame for a wall of stained glass.

Architecturally, the 112-foot-high bell banner with its four-legged support is one of the most unusual and distinctive aspects of the abbey church. Yet functionally, it is very much like the soaring façade of a medieval Gothic cathedral. In their command of the surrounding landscape, both serve as ever-constant beacons guiding the faithful to their doors.

—JANE KING HESSION

Jane King Hession is the co-author of Ralph Rapson: Sixty Years of Modern Design and past president of the Minnesota chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians.

*Sources: Victoria Young, “Modernizing the Monastic Quadrangle: Marcel Breuer's Designs for the Abbey and University of St. John the Baptist, Collegeville, MN (1953–1975),” paper, 2004 Midwest Art History Society Annual Meeting, Apr. 2, 2004 (quote); Thomas Fisher, “The Benedictine's Bauhaus,” *Architecture Minnesota*, Jan./Feb. 2002, p. 26–29, 50–51.





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