

# In this number

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## Visible but Ignored: Perspectives on the Theology of Altar Flowers

Altar flowers tend to take a visible position in the church, their use determined by varying traditions. In another sense, however, they are ignored: there is no written theology of altar flowers. While the aims behind and reasons for resting flowers on the altar remain ultimately unclear, they are nevertheless said to symbolize a sacrificial offering as well as a reflection on the abundance of the Creation. So long as no explicit theology on altar flowers exists, their use is haphazard. This is problematic, as they are, after all, placed on the most holy of places. Furthermore, ethical issues concerning the production of altar flowers have yet to be discussed in Finland. The aim of this article is thus to map out historical, biblical, practical, and ethical perspectives that come into play when developing a systematic theology of altar flowers.

ESKO RYÖKÄS

## The Concept of Caritative Diaconia: The Different Perspectives of Wilhelm Brandt and Hermann Wolfgang Beyer

How the word "diaconia" is understood in the New Testament and in the early Church has changed over recent decades. Almost until the end of the 20th century, the prevailing idea of "diaconia" was that of humble and charitable aid for one's neighbor. This idea is often linked to two influential German studies from the 1930s, a book by Wilhelm Brandt and an article by Hermann Wolfgang Beyer in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. This article demonstrates that there is a significant difference between these two texts that relates to German society and theological trends of that era.

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