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"But, is it Catholic?"

The debate on Catholic design

Peachtree United Methodist Church

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Contents

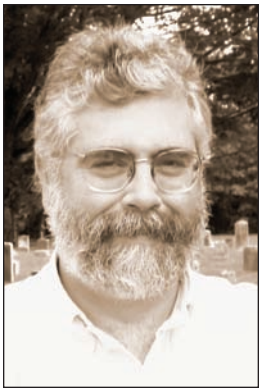
Features

Departments

On the cover:
Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dodge City, Kansas, R.D. Habiger & Associates, Architects. Photo: Rob McHenry, Photographer.

Directory of Advertisers

EDITOR'S PAGE



By *Michael J. Crosbie*

There is a controversy in the Catholic Church—and it's not just the one that has been grabbing headlines for the past year. This controversy is about architecture and design. It is about vocal protests over the renovation of old churches and the design of brand new ones. It is the subject of heated debates among those on building committees and parish councils, between the clergy and laity, and at conferences about religious architecture.

Design changes over the past generation, in the wake of Vatican II, are now being questioned by what some might see as a "reactionary" wing in the Church that wants to return Catholic church design to its pre-Vatican II state. Much of the controversy centers around exactly what the Second Vatican Council called for, how it should be interpreted, and how the Church adjusts to broad changes in society. The movement against contemporary church art and architecture can also be viewed as a surrogate battle for some Catholics to express dissatisfaction with an institution that they believe has diluted the liturgy and removed its mystery.

In this issue, we present a range of views from individuals familiar with the controversy—some have been at its very center. Michael Rose has written a number of books about what is wrong with contemporary Catholic church design, and how it can be remedied. He is an outspoken critic of a select group of liturgical consultants who, he contends, are destroying Catholicism's great built heritage.

Steven Schloeder believes that the problem with Catholic architecture today is that it has lost its connection to the body and the ancient roots of its historical forms. A church of his own design is presented in this issue's portfolio of recent Catholic churches.

Andrew Ciferni examines the changes in Catholic church design and some of the dismal results. Ciferni suspects that the problem has less to do with Vatican II, and more with a failure of art and architecture. Perhaps modern architecture was a dry well from which to draw designs that could capture the richness and mystery of the Catholic tradition, while making it new.

In his in-depth report on a series of conferences about Catholic worship spaces, Lawrence Madden sensitively articulates a wide assortment of views and beliefs on critical questions of church design, and how they might be resolved through consensus.

Readers who are not Roman Catholic may recognize in these articles similar tensions in their own faiths. Other denominations and sects are questioning their core beliefs, and if contemporary art and architecture truly reflects them.

The debate is evidence of art and architecture's power to shape and transform us. We are what we build. This controversy is not about style—Gothic versus Romanesque versus modern. It is about how belief is molded by the places in which we worship, and how design makes manifest what we believe. The passion that clergy, congregants, architects, and artists bring to the discussion affirms that design is not benign.

CHURCH ARCHITECTURE'S THREE NATURAL LAWS

By Michael S. Rose

Why do the Catholic churches built over the past three or four decades look the way they do? Why are they so different from churches of past ages, which all seemed to be built in a similar arrangement, using familiar elements and forms most people immediately associate with a church building? Why are our modern churches so ugly, so banal, so uninspiring?

Is it just a matter of taste?

Or is something more fundamental at stake?

Successful, authentic church architecture reflects the doctrines of the faith it represents. A Gothic cathedral no more reflects the faith of the Quakers than the Quaker meetinghouse reflects the truths of the Catholic faith. What, then, can we say about modern Catholic church architecture?

Misreading Vatican II

Since the common man - Catholic or not - experiences modern churches as banal and uninspiring, why do parishes continue to build such edifices? Creators of these banal structures often justify their work by appealing to the Second Vatican Council, a meeting of the world's bishops to discuss the state of the Roman Catholic Church at that time and to recommend a pastoral course to follow in the 21st century. When the bishops met in Rome from 1962 to 1965, the Church's patrimony of sacred architecture was rich. The universal Church was blessed with beautiful churches that gave glory to God and were conducive to public worship and private devotion. Catholic churches, even the most modest of structures, could be readily identified for what they were. Most lay Catholics had at least a passing familiarity with the churches of past decades and centuries. They appreciated the other-worldly feel of their interiors, the familiar signs of the spire and bell tower, statues and stained glass, pews and crucifix, high altar and tabernacle, pulpit and confessional. When they walked past one of these houses of God, they knew well that inside they would find sanctuary from the busy outside world, respite from the profane, and a quiet and prayerful atmosphere in which they could meet God in a unique way: through Holy Mass, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and various devotions. These churches were understood as sacred places where you could stand with the angels and saints, adoring Christ, and honoring His Blessed Mother.

Such sacred places still made visible the Church there amid the world. Its spire or dome, surmounted by the cross, contrasted with the varying forms of secular buildings in most places, and its bell tower was a welcome sign to pilgrims and tourists, locals and merchants. Its bells resounding through the city square or the neighboring farmland served as both a timepiece and a call to prayer. In short, the church was a recognizable structure, its function well known. It was a sacred place conducive to worship, to intercessory prayer, a place where you could repent, confess, and reconcile. This was the common understanding of a church building as the council fathers gathered to discuss *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, the first document of the Council, promulgated by Pope Paul VI in 1963.

Although most Catholics in the pews wouldn't even know of the existence of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* until years or even decades later, this document was used to justify the reform of Catholic church architecture in the years immediately following the council. It's an understatement to say that *Sacrosanctum Concilium* was falsely used as the catalyst for such a reformation.

Even well before the council, churches of previous centuries had been deemed "irrelevant" by certain Church liturgists who were more interested in the innovative architectural theories that produced much of the stark, minimalist public architecture of the 20th century. Traditional architectural elements and furnishings were disparaged, and a new model was born, based on architectural modernism with its divorce from traditional models, its cold, hard lines, and its overemphasis on utility.

At a time when the council documents were rarely consulted and not readily available, the laity were willing to put their trust in these authorities, whom they expected to have the best interests of the Church at heart. If a pastor, a bishop, or a priest-liturgist explained to parishioners that their church building had to change or that a new stark, uninspiring church was required, the laity accepted it–begrudgingly perhaps–because such plans were said to be predicated on directives from the council fathers. Proponents of this new architecture took great liberties with the council documents, and little was called into question.

Many of the changes in church architecture, for instance, were said to reflect *Sacrosanctum Concilium's* idea of promoting "active participation" in the Liturgy. In fact, many beautiful churches were destroyed in the name of active participation; many uninspiring and ugly edifices were erected under the same pretense. In older churches, under the pretense of fostering active participation, the altars were often moved into the midst of the people, causing the disfigurement of their former sanctuaries. In the name of active participation, statues, tabernacles, high altars with beautiful reredos structures, communion rails, baldacchinos, and aisle shrines were removed; murals and mosaics were whitewashed or covered with paneling–all because these things were said to distract people from active participation in the Mass. This line of reasoning reached the height of absurdity when, a few years later, pews were ripped out. They, too, were a kind of distraction, and all that kneeling was said to be misplaced and impeded active participation–the ideal supposedly

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set forth by the Second Vatican Council. Active participation, however, was simply an abused concept. It was used to justify some of the radical theories that are still being promoted widely in the 21st century.

Church Architecture's Natural Laws

Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris exemplifies the best in church architecture.

It is easily recognized as art in the noblest sense, architecture of the highest order, a building established as a "sacred place"–a sacred place that is first of all, a house of God, a place of His earthly habitation, wrought in the fashion of heavenly things.

But what makes it so?

First, Notre Dame is a permanent structure - massive and durable, meant to withstand the violence of man and the brutality of nature. It has served as a silent witness to the tumultuous history of France over the past 800 years in the heart of its grand capital. It has stood as a survivor of many epochs, witnessing to the permanence of the Gospel and Christian society, despite the secularization of almost everything around the great cathedral. The edifice has transcended both time and culture–not an easy feat: it is a *permanent* structure.

Second, the heavenly and eternal is evoked through the soaring heights of the cathedral's interior spaces, made possible by the many elements of the Gothic structural system (pointed arches, flying buttresses, and vaulted ceilings, for instance). Thus, it is a *vertical* structure.

Third, the grand cathedral is "brought to life" as a gospel in stone through its many works of sacred art, those beautifully crafted representations, both figural and symbolic, that point well beyond themselves to religious truths. In other words, Notre Dame presents an *iconographic* architecture. The pilgrim can almost hear the patriarch Jacob, after his dream of angels ascending to and descending from Heaven, announcing, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of Heaven."

One basic tenet that architects have accepted for millennia is that the built environment has the capacity to affect the human person deeply–the way he acts, the way he feels, and the way he is. Church architects of past and present understood that the atmosphere created by the church building affects not only how we worship, but also what we believe. Ultimately, what we believe affects how we live our lives. It's difficult to separate theology and ecclesiology from the environment for worship, whether it's a traditional church or a modern church. If a Catholic church building doesn't reflect Catholic theology and ecclesiology, if the building undermines or dismisses the natural laws of church architecture, the worshiper risks accepting a faith that is foreign to Catholicism.

Architecture isn't inconsequential.

That's why the Church's *Code of Canon Law* explicitly defines the church building as "a sacred building destined for divine worship." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* reiterates this point and goes further by stating that "visible churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place, the dwelling of God with men reconciled and united in Christ."

This is a tall order, to be sure, and the architect today naturally wonders how a mere building can accomplish so much. Fortunately he doesn't stand alone in a perilous vacuum but has at his command more than 1,500 years of his craft on which to reflect.

When he turns to the great architectural heritage of the Church, he discovers that from the Early Christian basilicas in Rome to the Gothic Revival churches of early 20th-century America, the natural laws of church architecture are adhered to faithfully in the design of successful Catholic churches–buildings that serve both God and man as transcendental structures, transmitting eternal truths for generations to come. Indeed, it's remarkable that churches of every century–grand and small, in large cities, small towns, and rural settings–have achieved what Notre Dame has achieved through faithful adherence to these natural laws.

Yes, the results are manifested in individual styles, products of a particular time and place, each of which the Church has gladly admitted into her treasury of sacred architecture. Yet each also serves as a house of God that looks to the past, serves the present, and informs the future.

How do they achieve this?

In every case, these successful church buildings firmly establish a sacred place to be used for worship of the triune God, both in private devotion and in public liturgy, and they make Christ's presence firmly known in their surroundings.

In every case, they conform to the three natural laws of verticality, permanence, and iconography, as exemplified in Notre Dame.

These natural laws are perhaps taken for granted by many, yet, for those who seek to understand how Catholic churches ought–and ought not–to be built, they're the most obvious starting points, primarily because these qualities create the proper atmosphere for worshiping God.

SACRAMENTAL ARCHITECTURE: BODY, TEMPLE, CITY

By Steven J. Schloeder

The present state of Catholic church architecture is both complicated and contentious. The parish building project has become a battleground between "progressives" and "conservatives." In a recent project interview, one architect suggested that with the intrinsically controversial process of church design, there would inevitably be losses of parishioners, and that such losses were acceptable. Of course, the parish did not choose that firm!

Progressives – those professional clergy and liturgical consultants schooled in 1960s and '70s liturgical modernism (the roots of which go back significantly earlier) – advocate a particular liturgico-architectural implementation of "the spirit of Vatican II." The conservatives are typically the lay folk who don't understand why a millennia-old liturgical arrangement suddenly changed so radically; who were never enamored with the "litur-tainment" of folk masses and talk-show dynamics; and who find the aniconic atmosphere, displaced tabernacles, and forced "gathering 'round the altar" as alienating if not manipulative.

One notes that the progressive agenda is promulgated by *professional* religious and clergy (including several now-lay ex-religious liturgical consultants), and is challenged by educated and devout laity, architects, academics, and journalists. Perhaps in response to the authentic "spirit of Vatican II," wherein the laity is called into leadership roles, lay folk around the U.S. are becoming more vocal and even aggressive when their places of worship are threatened with "wreckovations," or when they desire more meaningful, beautiful, and traditional new churches. This ought to give the professionals pause to consider that merely being an expert in liturgy does not make one an expert in how people meet God.

It is now argued that the tired old agenda of the liturgical modernists has failed to engender a vibrant liturgical praxis or a robust architecture. Numerous groups are calling for a "reform of the Reform."[1] The dream of "full, conscious, active participation" has failed to materialize on the terms the Liturgical Movement promoted. Attempts to engage the faithful through removing altar rails, moving the altar into the nave, theater style and vesica-shaped seating arrangements, the large hot-tub style baptisteries at the entrance, the proud display of the Holy Oils in jewelry shop cases, and the removal of "cluttering," "conflicting," or "distracting" items such as the tabernacle and traditional sacred art have proven effete. Much of this furniture rearranging has only cemented the lay faithful backsides into their chairs as spectators waiting to be entertained. Clearly, something has been lost.

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Loss and Recovery

The loss of meaning in church architecture has a complex history, and is beyond the scope of this short article. Issues of iconicity are bound with matters of aesthetics and epistemology; liturgical arrangement with politics, philosophy, and consciousness theory; adaptability and architectural expression with post-war production economics and modern science; and austere liturgical environments with germ theory and modern sanitation. Matters far beyond the strict dictates of liturgy have, for better or worse, significantly affected Catholic church design in the past century. For instance, if the programmatic reduction of the church function to assembly-table-ambo-chair-font treats the sacred building as "a machine for praying in," it should not be surprising given that Edward Mills' seminal 1956 book, *The Modern Church*, was preceded by his 1951 *The Modern Factory*.

The sentiments for austere, Spartan, purportedly functional, and centralized worship spaces were best expressed, and strategically advanced, in the 1978 *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* -wherein it is stated that the church need not even look like a church, and all that is needed is "a skin for a liturgical action."[2] Now, 25 years hence, those who once promoted that vision are looking for a recovery of memory, imagination, and complex symbolic engagement. When the progressive former archbishop Rembert Weakland openly called into question the liturgical excesses of the post conciliar period,[3] when the theme of one of the national liturgical conferences called for a return to "mystery,"[4] and when *Modern Liturgy* changed its name, began showing traditional churches on its cover, and contained articles on the deep symbol structure of the liturgy,[5] one might well sense a sea change.

Fr. Richard Vosko, for instance, notes that "Today many Catholics will observe that their churches do not look or feel like churches" and concedes that "the claims that the past has been forsaken...cannot be discounted." He correctly points out that "If a religious building does not reveal the narrative...one wonders what the purpose of the place is," and further suggests that "the place of worship should be planned to stir the imagination."[6] It is a telling indictment of the 20th-century liturgico-architectural agenda that such concerns must even be raised. Our typical recent church buildings are so devoid of signification that even *Time* magazine is given to ask "What does a church look like?"[7] A hundred years ago, the question would have drawn quizzical looks.

What Does a Church Look Like?

Formulating an acceptable answer to this question is difficult. John Buscemi argues that while we all need liturgical symbols, the "old" symbol system is cliché, worn-out, and somehow no longer speaks to us. Yet a complex and multivalent sacramental symbol structure cannot be reworked over a weekend. Furthermore, his bizarre proposals for

chthonic holy water fonts evocative of the uterus of the earth mother, and his "birth passage crucifixes" are hardly the stuff of normal Catholic piety.[8] On the traditionalist side, the proposals for a classical revival advocated by the architecture faculty at Notre Dame University may yield a more humane architecture. Yet one does not sense that stylistic revivalism is a particularly robust response to the vision for the Second Vatican Council to engage the contemporary condition.[9]

In another attempt to recover a meaningful approach to church design, Michael Rose argues for a "natural law" of Catholic architecture (an interesting choice of words for an *artificial* project). Rose's criteria of verticality, permanence, and iconography is a loose reading of Vitruvius' *utilitas*, *firmitas*, and *venustas*. However, many entirely valid historical Catholic churches do not contain these aspects: Cistercian, Syro-Malabar, and Armenian churches tended to be spare and aniconic; the Norwegian stave churches and 19th-century Carpenter Gothic lack "durable" materials; and smallness and a lack of soaring verticality does not seem to inhibit the sacral qualities of many northern Iberian Mozarabic and Asturian churches. And to the contrary, the new Los Angeles cathedral has all three!

A careful analysis of that cathedral shows it satisfies the majority of Rose's checklist items – a bell tower; sited as a "city set on a hill"; an entrance atrium/garden and a symbolic and ornamented main portal; the placement of the baptistery with an image of John baptizing Jesus; a cavernous nave; the dedication to the Virgin; the cruciform floor plan with lateral rows of pews; depictive sacred art; traditional alabaster windows; the sanctuary set apart "as the holiest place" with the altar as "the focal point of unity, reverence, and worship"; and a large and realistic crucifix showing the suffering Christ.[10]

The building has all these features, yet in Rose's estimation it still fails as a church and is labeled a "concrete monstrosity, which is not only unidentifiable as a Catholic cathedral but is by objective standards an ugly building."[11] If it can be argued so strongly that this building fulfils the vast majority of Rose's criteria, should Rose not reconsider his system? Sacred architecture cannot be reduced to a checklist of items – neither to the functionary altar-ambo-chair-font-assembly of the modernist, nor to Rose's criteria.

A Sacramental Answer: Body, Temple, City

How then, can we construct an adequate theory of and praxis for contemporary Catholic architecture? Given the space limitations, I will briefly lay out an understanding of Catholic church design that transcends matters of style, that respects the deep traditions, and is yet fully contemporary. I ask the reader's indulgence to allow a shorthand explication.

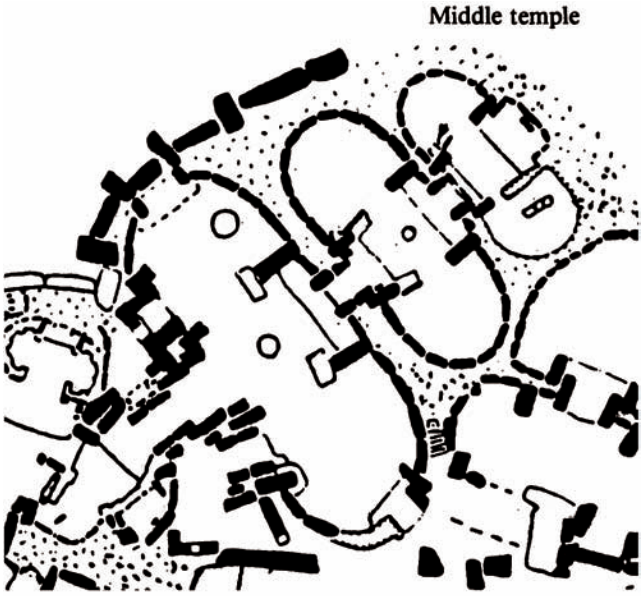
The church building is intended to express something of the faith – it is primarily intended to express the E*cclesia*, the "Church" properly called.[12] Yet, the Ecclesia is not a "thing," it is not an "object" in and of itself. Rather it is a relationship – those "called together" in Christ. How is this relationship best expressed?

This question has been with us from the start of Christianity. Christ used a series of parables, metaphors, and poetic images to explain the Kingdom of God – indeed, the *kingdom* is one such analogical figure. Throughout scripture we find three dominant models for understanding the Ecclesia – the body, the temple,[13] and the city. Each are part of a revealed symbol structure, and each are still found in contemporary documents such as L*umen Gentium* and the R*ite of Dedication*. These perennial themes predate scripture in the deepest recesses of human religious consciousness, and have been consistently used to explain both the Ecclesia and the church building.[14]

These three themes are deeply interwoven. The body is a type of house – it is a house for the soul. The house is a shelter, a "sanctuary" safe from the elements, animals, and marauders. This human need for

Photo: Steven J. Schloeder

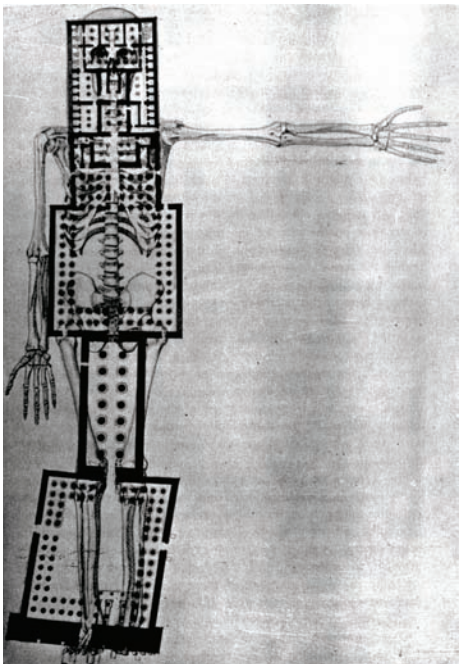
Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, nave.



Votive figure, Malta (7000 B.C.) *and plan of the Middle Temple at Tarxien.*

shelter precedes and even informs religion. Thus, the temple is a type of house, it is a house for the gods; and the primitive house was an intrinsically religious place dedicated to the family religion of ancestor worship.[15] The city is a house writ large, primitively as the house of the tribe, the "body politic." The king dwelt there, as did the gods. Primitive cities were often both palace-cities and temple-cities, such as Nineveh and Jerusalem.

Such themes as temple as body or city are found in many sacred architectural traditions-notably the Hindu, and these may be seen as adumbrations of the Christian revelation – yet for the Christian, these themes are specifically eschatological. In the great "ecclesiophany" in Revelations 21, these metaphors of body, temple, and city come together symphonically, giving insight for the necessarily multivalent, ambiguous, and complex symbol structure of sacramental architecture as expressive of the Ecclesia.

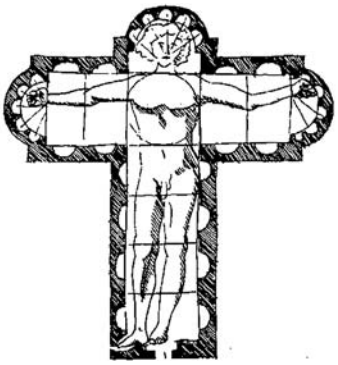


Temple of Luxor, from Schwaller 1977:23.

The body is the primordial symbol – Chauvet calls it the "arch-symbol," since everything else is built upon this great mystery.[16] I will therefore concentrate on the recovery of this symbol, since the house/tent/temple/basilica and city images are built on it. Some of the earliest specifically religious architecture, such as the Neolithic hypogea in Malta, seem to model closely the contemporaneous fertility votive images such as the Maltese "Sleeping Lady" or the "Venus of Willendorf." Axiality, procession, differentiation of chambers, symmetry, and proportion all seem to suggest affinities between the body and the early earth temples. R.A. Schwaller's investigations show similar and intriguing correspondences between the body and temple in ancient Egyptian architecture.[17] Thus, it ought not be surprising that Christ likened his body to the temple, or that St. Paul develops the "Body of Christ" as the central metaphor for the Church. Yet what does this mean architecturally? Are there deeper reasons that, at least since the time of St. Ambrose, churches have been ordered in the shape of the Lord's crucified body – that the cruciform basilica has pride of place in this sacramental language of church architecture?

Keeping in mind that sacred architecture involves a complex analogy, we need to first recover some basic language of the body in order to understand the "Church as the Body of Christ," let alone the church building as representative of the Ecclesia. To understand the body, we should consider that the body is a unified and identifiable organism – it is "one thing," yet comprised of many parts.

Each part has its own function, form, location, and meaning: the heart, the hand, the ears, the heel. Each part does its own specific thing, in concert with the entire body, and the function is intrinsically bound with its form or shape, and its location. The hand, for instance, as a complex sense organ and grasping tool, is optimally configured with a large pad with sensitive nerve endings, hinged digits, and opposable thumb. It is also optimally placed at the end of the arm to maximize reach – thus demonstrating a fitting interconnection between function, form, and location. We also naturally ascribe meaning to the body, and poetical language to its diverse parts. We speak of "having spleen," or of "knuckling under," or "weak knees," or a "tongue lashing," or "carrying the weight of the world on the shoulders." These are not accidental poetic tropes, but are intrinsically bound into the function, form, and locations of the body parts.



Church as the Body of Christ (*after de Giorgio Martini*)

Photo: Steven J. Schloeder

Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles, exterior.

Like a body, a properly designed church also has an identifiable unity, while being comprised of many individual parts: narthex, nave, sanctuary, campanile, baptistery, baldacchino, pulpit, chantry chapel, tomb, side aisle, ambulatory, sacristy, roof, walls and columns, floor, doors, and windows. The baptistery is optimally placed at the entrance; the apse as the place of glory is the traditional seat of the bishop, and the altar is traditionally appointed with a civory or tester. It was only with the modernist vision for undifferentiated "universal space," and the 1960s fascination with "multi-functionality," that the church has been gutted of specified and articulated spaces expressive of the wondrous "unity in diversity" that the Church contains.

Other concerns come to mind when we consider the relationship between the body and the church-as-body, and we can appreciate failed experiments in respect to these concerns. For instance, the body is axial, symmetrical, hierarchical, and proportioned. When these determinants are neglected, the church building suffers. One reason why the various experiments with centralized churches fail iconically is their form is more akin to amoebae and paramecia than the human body. The Body of Christ is not best represented by a protoplasmic one-celled organism.

Another key issue is the quality of frontality – the body has a face, and it is primarily through the face that we know the person. I would submit that churches that don't "look like churches," such as the L.A. cathedral, probably fail on this essential account. Our Lady of the Angels lacks a significant façade through which the pilgrim or passerby is engaged. The cathedral designers failed in this most essential semiotic category, to present a "face" to the city by which it can be known as a church, and so it is variously described as looking like a performing arts center, a shopping mall, or a government building.

The loss of architectural significance has been devastating in the past century. We have now been through the radical changes of philosophical, liturgical, and architectural modernism. Whether or not we are really in a "postmodern" era is not germane. What is central for the Catholic (and those of other apostolic and liturgical communions), is to engage in the deep sacramentality of church building. We are providentially supplied with this traditional and even revealed vocabulary of body, temple, and city. Today, we need to re-appropriate these terms, and find new ways to express this reality of the Ecclesia in our contemporary situations. In this way we may achieve an architecture that is, in the words of Augustine, "ever ancient, ever new."

[1] *Witness the counter movements such as* Society for Catholic Liturgy, Adoremus, *and* Centre Internationale d'Etudes Liturgiques (CIEL).

[2] EACW 42. A *more responsible implementation of* EACW *would have included a concern for the fully engaged human person* (5, 35), *including aspects of memory, imagination, and traditionally received forms* (5, 10, 33), *the preservation of historic treasures* (8), *working against the reductionism and aesthetic of efficiency* (14, 16), *the necessarily hierarchical aspect of the liturgical assembly* (37), *and an appreciation for the manner in which past architectural forms accomplished the goals of the document* (50, *thinking of the baldacchino*).

[3] *Weakland*, R.G. *"Liturgy and the Common Ground" in* America (20 *November* 1999).

[4] Form/Reform 1995. *San Diego, California. Sponsored by Georgetown Center for Liturgy.*

[5] E.*g., Yeater*, R. *"Cycles of Life and Light: the Cosmic Origins of Liturgy and Architecture" in* Ministry and Liturgy (*May* 2000).

[6] *Vosko*, R. *"A House for the Church: Structures for Public Worship in a New Millennium" in* Worship 74.3 (*May* 2000): 194-212. *Also Vosko*, R. 1996. Designing Future Worship Spaces. *Meeting House Essays No. 8. Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications; and Vosko*, R. 1998. *"Contributions to Religious Art and Architecture: Looking through a Rear View Mirror" in* Finding Voice to Give God Praise. K. *Hughes, ed. Collegeville* MN: *The Liturgical Press*: 14-22.

[7] Time (2 *September* 2002): 64-66

[8] *Buscemi*, J. 1993. Places for Devotion. *Meeting House Essays No. 4. Chicago: Liturgical Training Publications.*

[9] *Stroik*, D. Statement on Church Architecture, *Draft* 2: 5 *November* 1997. *Also, cf.* Catholic Dossier *May-June* 1997.

[10] *Rose*, M. 2001. Ugly as Sin. *Manchester* NH: *Sophia Institute Press. Chap* 2-3.

[11] *Rose* 2001: 202.

[12] *Without getting into the tendentious, unscholarly, and unnecessary hairsplitting of the modern liturgist about the church building as* domus Dei *versus* domus ecclesiae, *we should all be in agreement that the building should somehow symbolize the "Church."*

[13] *This includes the house, the tent, and the basilica.*

[14] E.*g., by Eusebius, Hugh of St.-Victor, and Durandus of Mende.*

[15] *Cf. Fustel de Coulanges*, N.-D. 1874. *The Ancient City. Boston: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard; and Rykwert*, J. 1972 On Adam's House in Paradise. *New York: Museum of Modern Art; and Rykwert*. J. 1976. The Idea of a Town. *Princeton: Princeton University Press.*

[16] *Chauvet*, L-M. 1995. Symbol and Sacrament. *translation by Patrick Madigan*, SJ. *Collegeville* MN: *The Liturgical Press.*

[17] *Schwaller de Lubicz*, R.A. 1999. The Temple in Man: The Secrets Of Ancient Egypt. *Brookline* MA: *Autumn Press.*

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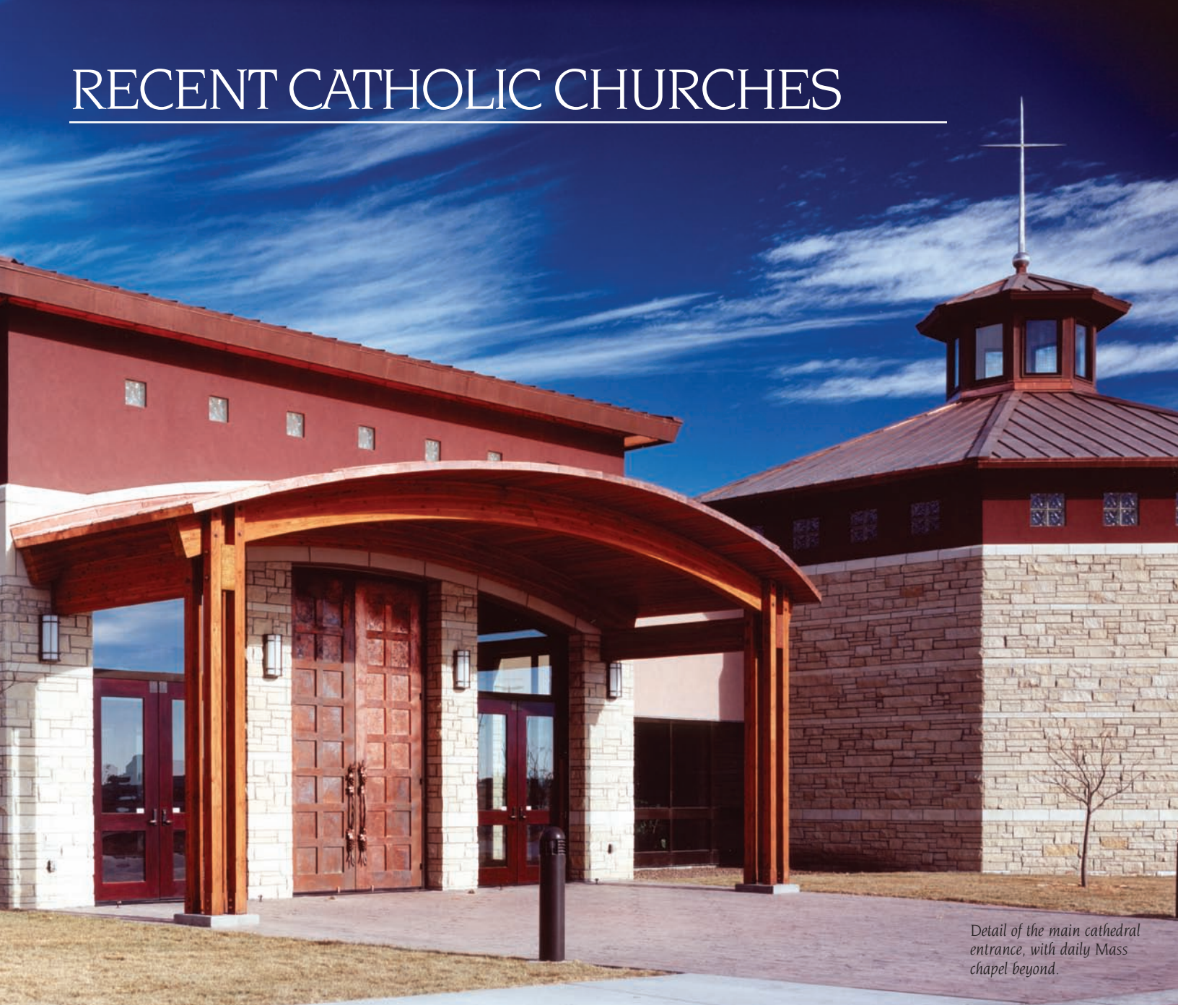
RECENT CATHOLIC CHURCHES



Detail of the main cathedral entrance, with daily Mass chapel beyond.

Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Dodge City, Kansas

R.D. Habiger & Associates, Albuquerque, New Mexico
(Architect and Liturgical Consultant)

Ken Griesemer, Albuquerque, New Mexico
(Liturgical Consultant)

Three vertical elements – bell tower, daily Mass chapel, and worship space – form a building composition that juxtaposes the cathedral structure against the prairie and the sky. The cathedral entrance faces southwest. On the east side of the cathedral is a mediation garden. Through a large vestibule, one enters an inviting and expansive gathering space. From this location access is available to the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Chapel of the Sacred Heart, or to the cathedral worship space.

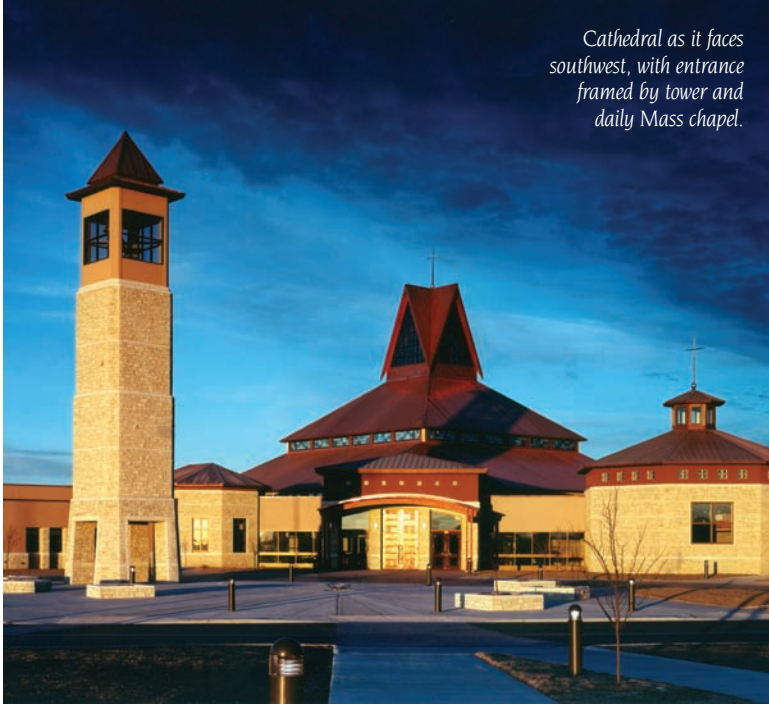
Upon entering the worship space one is confronted with the water of baptism, overflowing from the font like an artesian well. Materials are bronze and granite. Two niches flank the font: on the left is the ambry for oils, on the right are enshrined sacred books.

Symbolically an octagonal shape was used to envelope this central plan worship space, which seats 1,450 comfortably, with standing room for 400 additional. The sanctuary is an island, surrounded by the multitude gathered in Christ's name. At the sanctuary the primary focus of the liturgy occurs at altar and ambo.

The structural framework was designed as two pairs of parallel trusses set perpendicular to each other, springing from the eight corners of the octagon. All other roof framework is attached to these four principal trusses, 119 feet in length and 15 feet deep, which visually dominate the space. The central roof structure has been elevated and inserted with a continuous horizontal band of windows. The effect is a floating roof, hovering above. At the very center of the worship space a cupola extends the numinous experience. Capturing sunlight during the day and acting as a lantern at night, the significance of being both elevated and gathered around the liturgy is marked by the placement of the processional cross at the exact center of the worship space.

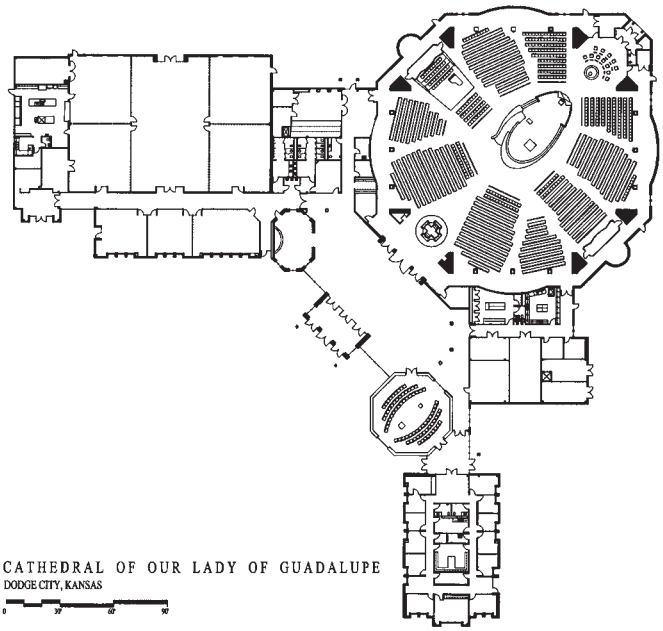
All photos: Rob McHenry Photographer

Baptismal font welcomes visitors, who pass it en route to the worship space.



Cathedral as it faces southwest, with entrance framed by tower and daily Mass chapel.

Overview of sanctuary from ambulatory, looking southeast.



CATHEDRAL OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE
DODGE CITY, KANSAS

All Saints Catholic Church, Walton, Kentucky
Duncan G. Stroik Architect LLC, South Bend, Indiana (Design Architect)
Clarisey Frank Architecture, Cincinnati, Ohio (Architect of Record)

The designers drew upon several different Catholic churches as inspiration for this new, $4 million structure: Palladio's Church of the Redeemer in Venice, Vignola's Church of the Gesu in Rome, the Church of Santo Spirito (also in Rome) by Antonio da Sangallo, and two churches local to All Saints: Mother of God in Covington, Kentucky, and Old St. Mary's in Cincinnati. Architect Duncan Stroik describes the design approach as a "humble attempt to re-look at architecture through the gaze of tradition."

The rich red brick church features an 80-foot-tall bell tower, with copper bells cast in Holland, and a façade with elaborate stone carvings. Two of these large limestone carvings—the papal coat of arms and an adaptation of the Ghent altarpiece in Belgium—are the work of stone carver Richard Young, who used only the traditional tools of a hammer and chisel.

Near the narthex entrance are found confessionals and the baptistery, just below the bell tower. This large octagonal space has at its center a silver and gold baptismal font from St. Joseph Church in Crescent Springs, Kentucky. All Saints' 600-seat interior is dominated by a 60-foot-high barrel-vault ceiling. The nave gains natural illumination from clerestory windows found above a prominent cornice that encircles the space. Niches in red, contrasting with the interior's light yellow walls, are intended for devotional shrines. The nave's design emphasizes the prominence of the altar and tabernacle, found in the apse end. The sanctuary space, raised three feet above the nave floor, is distinguished by Carrara white and Bardiglio gray marble flooring, upon which stands a Bianco Perla marble altar. Rising above it is a 21-foot-tall baldacchino supported by four green faux marble columns.

The placement of the three-foot-tall bronze tabernacle directly behind the altar ensures that this sacred object remains the focal point of the church's interior. Its location is a clever solution to the design challenge of keeping the tabernacle central to the celebration of the Mass and also providing a place for secluded veneration of the Eucharist. Directly behind the wall on which the tabernacle is placed is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, where visitors may view the Eucharist through the twin-sided tabernacle's door.

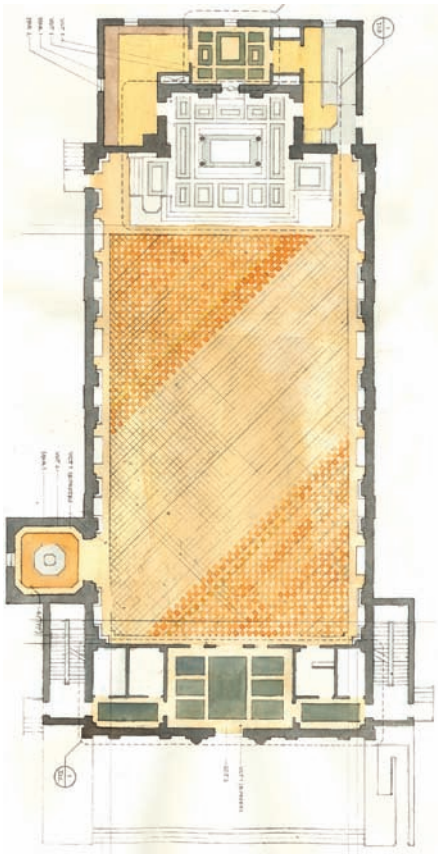
All photos: Duncan G. Stroik Architect LLC

View of the front entrance, based on classic, Renaissance church design.

Axial view of the nave, under the barrel vault roof.

Detail of carving of Pope John Paul II's coat of arms, found in the tympanum of the front façade.

Celebrants gather under the baldacchino over the altar.



Twin-sided tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

Parish Church and Diocesan Shrine of St. Therese, Collinsville, Oklahoma
Liturgical Environs/Steven J. Schloeder, Berkeley, California (Architect)

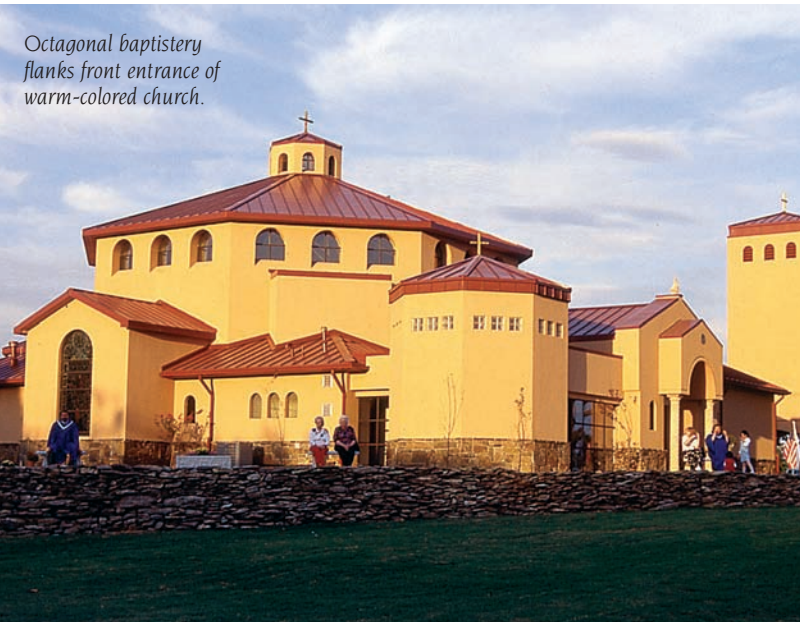
While this design is rooted in the traditional forms of Catholic church architecture, it also addresses local climactic and vernacular issues, and materials, technologies, and a program suitable for a parish community growing strongly into the third millennium.

The client wanted a design that both "works as" and "looks like" a Catholic church. Above all was the desire to build a church that was respectful of the great models of the Ecclesia. This led the architect to consider the building as analogous of the body, the temple, and the city. "Each of these models involves integrated relationships between parts and the whole," Schloeder explains, "the body, the house, and the city (in their primitive senses) have certain formal traits that by analogy can be applied to the question of church design." Each element of the building is therefore articulated in a harmonious integration of form, creating a true sense of "church" both as "community" and as "sacrament."

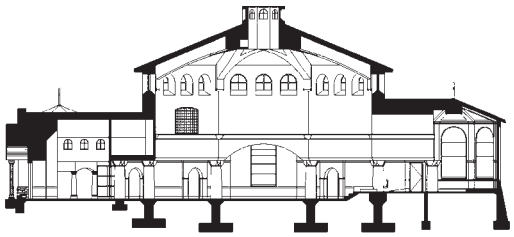
The plan is generated from the octagon, a symbol of the resurrection, over which is laid the cross to recall the redemption gained through Christ's suffering. These forms simultaneously evoke the immanent centrality of early Christian buildings, and the hierarchical transcendence that speaks to the "Body of Christ." The 12 columns that define the nave and sanctuary signify the Apostles, while the 24 clerestory windows allude to the Elders around the throne.

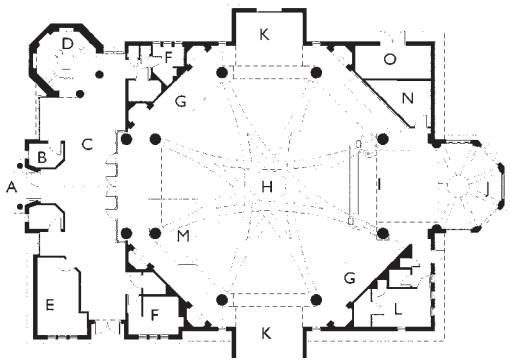
One of the distinguishing features is the ambulatory around the nave, which accommodates both circulation and private devotional spaces, and leads to the Eucharistic Chapel in the apse. Since the church is dedicated to St. Therese, the "Little Flower" whose emblem is the rose, the nave ceiling has a subtle allusion to her patronage.

The massing of the forms at St. Therese gives clear definition to each separate part — entry, baptistery, bell tower, nave, cupola, apse — thus allowing for the church to be read as an organic and integrated whole. "By respecting this 'language' of form, function, location, and symbolic meaning," explains Schloeder, "we are able to design a 'church that looks like a church,' which participates in the tradition of Catholic architecture while being very much of our age."



Octagonal baptistery flanks front entrance of warm-colored church.





Plan Key
A. Entrance
B. Reconciliation
C. Narthex
D. Baptistry
E. Bride/ Meeting
F. Toilet
G. Ambulatory
H. Nave (360 seats)
I. Sanctuary
J. Tabernacle
K. Side Chapel
L. Sacristy
M. Choir
N. Storage
O. Mech / Elec

View through the nave toward the altar, with clerestory windows above.

Detail of ceiling decoration, which suggests a rose motif appropriate to St. Therese.

Front entry of the church faces to the right, with bell tower beyond.

Tabernacle is a model of the church.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF BEAUTY AND CONVERSION

By Andrew D. Ciferni, O.Praem.

Photo: Richard Vosko

Archbishop Weakland incensing the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. John the Evangelist Cathedral.

Recently I saw a photo of then-Archbishop Rembert Weakland, O.S.B., incensing the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of the renovated St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The open doors of the tabernacle suggest that the photo was almost certainly taken during the Rite for the Rededication of the cathedral. The image was a pleasant surprise since the controversy surrounding the renovation of the Milwaukee Cathedral generated heat from Wisconsin to the Vatican and back again, with reports on the debate appearing even in *The New York Times*.

Nonetheless, the image was immediately alluring because it demonstrates what Catholics seek in regard to a space conducive to Eucharistic worship outside Mass:[1] a space whose quiet light and acoustics, proportion, detailing, and appointments provide the conditions for the possibility of devotional prayer. This image is a good starting point for setting forth some of my own thinking on the current state of design of Roman Catholic worship spaces and their appointments because it illustrates some of what both sides of the current debate are searching for. "Liberals" prefer the placement of the reserved Blessed Sacrament in a separate, quiet devotional space so that the focus of the liturgical center may clearly be on the act of celebration. "Conservatives" want spaces that attend to beauty, to fine detailing, good materials, and traditional iconography. The Blessed Sacrament Chapel in the Milwaukee Cathedral seems to satisfy both of these desires.

Contrary to the aggressive rhetoric of "liberal" and "conservative" with which the issue is often taken up, I myself am not convinced that the present debate is only about two conflicting visions of Church. Issues of ecclesiology, and therefore of the nature and shape of liturgy, are indeed an integral part of the discussion (to which I will return). But I am increasingly convinced that the divide is more precisely between good and bad church design. The debaters would otherwise have little more in common than their own identification as Roman Catholics.

When I view images of the new or renovated Roman Catholic churches excoriated by critics, I often tend to agree with the criticism.[2] Where I disagree is in the critics' attribution of the cause of bad design to the liturgical reforms after Vatican II, or to subsequent documents about worship promulgated by the Vatican and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. More helpful in the present discussion would be a work on church design with a method and style such as that by Edward Foley and Mary McGann on liturgical music.[3] Foley and McGann lay out a short but accurate review of the history of vernacular liturgical music in the U.S. since Vatican II. Their summary makes one both wince and smile at the same time, for one realizes that pop music styles, not far from "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore," were inevitable because church musicians were so ill-prepared for the sudden introduction of the vernacular in the wake of Vatican II. As in all revolutions there was an almost violent reaction to what had gone before. With time, pastoral reflection, scholarship, and the marshalling of creative gifts both within and outside the Catholic

ANDREW D. CIFERNI, O.PRAEM., PH.D. *is liturgy director and rector of the Daylesford Abbey Church in Paoli, Pennsylvania. He is a frequent consultant on the renovation and new building of Roman Catholic worship spaces.*

community, texts and music that were capable of bearing the weight of the mystery of Christ's death and rising were brought to the heart of Catholic worship. A similar review of the post-Vatican II experience of Catholic church building would be helpful to put the present discussions into a critical and less accusatory context.

Although the type of methodology in Foley and McGann's work on Catholic liturgical music could be usefully adapted and applied to Catholic church design, the evolution of music and church design are not similar in all ways. Unlike radical changes in liturgical music before Vatican II, those in church architecture had begun long before the council. Dissatisfaction with many of the Catholic churches built between the end of World War II and the end of the Vietnam War is shared by many who appear to be in conflict over the present state of liturgical design. My own experience over the last 25 years has led me to the conclusion that, in general, I would rather work with a community renovating a late-19th or early-20th century worship space than a church built in the 1950s or '60s. The post-World War II churches are frequently thin on openness, light, craftsmanship, detailing, and malleable materials that might render them apt candidates for the kind of reordering demanded by a renewed liturgy. But the earlier churches often have detailing, natural materials, stained glass, and a cruciform plan that makes them easily adaptable and reshaped to enable the movement through and around the spaces and furnishings - font, chair, ambo, altar - necessary for the full celebration of renewed Catholic rites. Perhaps this is why I often find the renovation projects of designers such as Frank Kacmarcik, Robert Rambusch, William Schickel, and Richard Vosko as successful as (and sometimes more successful than) some of their newly built churches.

The success of many renovations is largely rooted in the ability of these designers to understand the deep structures of Roman Catholic worship and to appreciate the genius of what was built before them. Yet an appreciation of the past does not necessarily demand a slavish reproduction of it. The sort of revelation of basic building structure that resulted from Schickel's work at the Trappist Abbey at Gethsemane, Kentucky[4] is every bit as worthy of praise as Vosko's adherence to the building style of St. John the Evangelist Cathedral in Milwaukee.[5] Though not a parish church, Schickel's barn-chapel at Loveland is as deeply rooted in American vernacular architecture as it is in a profound understanding of Roman Catholic Eucharistic celebration as radically processional.[6]

Bauhaus influence when employed by a master such as Schickel and by a community such as the Gethsemane Cistercians can produce buildings as attentive to light, openness, craftsmanship, and elegant detailing as the best of revival design.[7] On the other hand, the Bauhaus influence evident in Gethsemane when applied with less sophistication and understanding can produce far less happy results.

Throughout the U.S. one finds Roman Catholic churches designed by architects who seem to have believed that the International Style simply freed them from attention to detail. Often these architects were hired by socially and economically established Catholic suburban communities that, unlike the older immigrant communities who gave even from the little they had to build spaces that were centers for much of their social and religious life, were unwilling to give sufficient funds for good design and materials. The result was (and sometimes still is) Catholic churches poorly designed and shoddily built.

A summary review of American Catholic church design, especially from the late-1940s on would reveal, I suspect, an unsophisticated adherence to the International Style and a lack of knowledge and understanding about the Liturgical Movement, which resulted in idiosyncratic plans, inflexible configurations of the assembly and its ritual foci, harsh uses of light, a lack of detailing, and bad acoustics. Such church design was fundamentally inimical to the reform of the liturgy begun with the restoration of the Easter Vigil in 1951. The architectural parallels to "Michael, Row the Boat Ashore" are fan-shaped carpeted and/or terrazzoed sanctuaries of blinding maximal fenestration and omni-directional sound amplification that challenge the skills of the best designers intent on assisting communities desirous of renovating them today. Unfortunately, unlike the evolution of liturgical music, liturgical design often seems stuck.

One response to this state of seeming sclerosis is a return to revival styles. I must confess to having little experiential sense of the success or failure of these buildings as spaces that enable the full spectrum of normative Catholic worship, e.g., a full church celebrating the Easter Vigil with baptism of adults and the distribution of communion under both kinds. I find much contemporary revival design more attractive as architectural drawing than as built reality.[8] However, the questions raised for me by this approach are more structural and theological.

In terms of structure, is it, in fact, possible to build in our times an authentic Italian Renaissance church? Acousticians tell us that the quality of sound produced in a true Romanesque, Gothic, or Renaissance building is due, *inter alia*, to the thickness and weight of the stone walls. No one that I know is building walls from stone in parish churches in our age. I will not even attempt to begin addressing the questions raised by designing and building in revival styles for communities who insist on fixed seating! So is the attachment to a style simply a matter of taste? Why this style and not another? Why is San Lorenzo superior to Vézelay or Vézelay to San Giorgio in Velabro; St. Patrick Cathedral in New York City to Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles? This leads to a theological question.

Theologically, one can prove anything one wants from historical precedent. What determines at any one point in history what previous historical periods, if any, are raised up as contemporary models? The planners and implementers of the liturgical reform called for by Vatican II seem to have looked to the classic Roman rites of the 4th to 6th centuries as their model for reform in our times. Why did they not look to the High Middle Ages or the Baroque? It seems to me that the deepest discernment question for communities and their designers is the question of what will best carry the weight of Christ's dying and rising. In other words, how does architecture, the visual arts, texts and music serve conversion?

This is why I suggest that the most significant criterion for judging a Catholic worship space is its ability to create the conditions for the possibility of the full normative celebration of the Easter Vigil (outside assembly around the fire, procession of light, full gospel procession, baptism of adults by immersion, communion under both forms for all) with every seat filled. This criterion, it seems to me, gets beyond style but not beyond beauty. Obviously this is not a criterion shared by all working in and critiquing contemporary Catholic church design. Might it betray a misunderstanding of and/or reluctance to adhere to the demands made by normative celebration of the renewed rites of the Catholic Church? Why wouldn't designers who understood rites renewed on the model of late classical Roman liturgy not choose, for example, Augustine's fourth century

North African plan[9] rather than an Italian Renaissance one? Are there other responses to the present conundrum?

It seems to me that all engaged in the current discussion are seeking to reappropriate traditions of good design, building, and theology – all of these in service to healthy pastoral care. The partners in the dialogue do not seem to agree on how to go about this. However, there are two areas in which there seems to be a remarkable convergence of agreement – at least in theory. First, the retrieval of iconography and, second, the use of more traditional building materials and construction methods. In fact, I would hypothesize that the seeming abandonment of iconography in Catholic churches built in the past four decades had less to do with the agenda of liturgical reform than it did with the not always critical adoption of the International Style. Perhaps more intriguing is the current growing interest in traditional iconography, a genre of sacred art integral to liturgical worship in the Eastern churches.

As in all matters of faith – and architecture is an expression of and a shaper of our faith – *how* we engage in dialogue around difference is as much at the heart of the matter as the *what*. The product (the what) of a new building or renovation project is a community of Faith changed by the process (the how) of programming, discerning, and deciding what to build. When that process becomes mean-spirited, vituperative, or accusatory, then all engaged become perpetrators and/or victims of a violence at diametric cross purposes to every baptized person's call to reconciliation. As *Built of Living Stones* makes clear, the process of renovating or building anew is "[o]ne of the most significant and formative expressions in the life of a parish community...." [10] The process must engage the entire assembly in some way – otherwise there will be little if any incentive to support the capital campaign that makes the work possible. Those who design and lead this process must see themselves as pastoral ministers equipped by the Spirit for deep listening and an openness to perhaps even abandon some of their own most cherished ideas in order that the communion of the church might be strengthened by how and what it builds. Perhaps those engaged in the current discussion need to be looking for more examples such as the Blessed Sacrament Chapel of St. John the Evangelist Cathedral, where at least some of the desires of all seem to be satisfied. We are searching for built examples of common ground where God is speaking to all.

[1] See *The General Instruction of the Roman Missal* (1974) *and Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* (1978), *as in* The Liturgy Documents: A Parish Resource, *third edition* (*Chicago*: *Liturgy Training Publications*, 1991): 37-104 , 313-338; *and* Built of Living Stones: Art, Architecture, and Worship, Guidelines of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops *nos.*70-80 (*Washington* DC: *United States Catholic Conference*, 2000): 28-30.

[2] *An example would be Michael* S. *Rose*, Ugly as Sin: Why They Changed our Churches from Sacred Places to Meeting Spaces, and How We Can Change Them Back (*Manchester* NH: *Sophia Institute Press*, 2001).

[3] *Edward Foley and Mary McGann*, Music and the Eucharistic Prayer, *American Essays in Liturgy* (*Collegeville*: *Liturgical Press*, 1988).

[4] *Gregory Wolfe*, Sacred Passion: The Art of William Schickel, *Beauty of Catholic Life series* (*Notre Dame*: *University of Notre Dame Press*, 1998): 57-74.

[5] *Richard Vosko*, *St. John the Evangelist Cathedral*, *Milwaukee*, *Wisconsin*.

[6] *Wolfe*, *note* 4, *pages* 45-53.

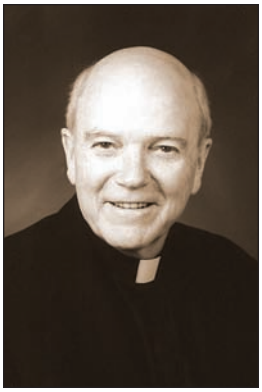
[7] *On Bauhaus design*, *see*, *for example*, *Tom Wolfe*, From Bauhaus to Our House (*New York*: *Farrar Straus Giroux*, 1981). *On revival design*, *see*, *for example*, *Spiro Kostof*, A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals (*New York and Oxford*: *Oxford University Press*, 1985): 571-693.

[8] *See*, *for example*, *Immaculate Conception Parish*, *Clinton*, *New Jersey*.

[9] *Richard Krautheimer*, Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture. *The Pelican History of Art edited by Nikolaus Pevsner* (*Baltimore*: *Penguin Books*, 1965): 139-145, *here Figure* 85:142.

[10] Built of Living Stones (*as above*): 1.

DESIGNING SPACE FOR CELEBRATING EUCHARIST



By *Lawrence J. Madden, S.J.*

Since the implementation of the reform of the Roman Catholic liturgy in the mid-1960s almost every church and chapel in the U.S has been renovated. Some estimate that even today in most dioceses at least one new church is constructed each year and that many more than that are renovated annually. In short, the Catholic community has invested vast amounts of money in church building projects.

Since the question of the proper architecture for a Catholic church has caused a certain polarization in the church, the Catholic Common Ground Initiative, in order to clarify the issues, to promote understanding, and to help pastors and parishioners deal better with this complex matter, held a two-session dialogue on the question: "How Do We Seek Common Ground About Holy Ground?" This article explains in some detail the content of the discussions and the outcomes of the sessions.

The Participants

The group numbered 27, including a facilitator. Present were two bishops, liturgical designers, architects, pastors, theologians, liturgists, an art historian, and an editor of a magazine dealing with Christianity and the arts. Four representatives of the Catholic Common Ground Initiative were among the participants. Three institutes joined the Catholic Common Ground Initiative in sponsoring the sessions: the Liturgical Institute at the University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois; the Georgetown Center for Liturgy in Washington, D.C.; and the Center for Religion and Culture at Holy Cross College in Worcester, Massachusetts.

The group included people whose opinions on the topic covered a wide range from "conservative" to "liberal," to use inadequate terms. That there were fewer representing the conservative side initially created problems which were, however, substantially overcome through use of a fishbowl technique that redressed the imbalance. In this exercise, a smaller group of equal numbers of conservatives and liberals occupied an inner circle of dialogue with the rest of the group listening to the conversation. The outer circle had occasional opportunities to intervene and participate.

After days of interaction, the uniqueness of each person's position became clear. Whether their opinions would be characterized as "left" or "right" on a particular issue, each person's position gradually took on nuance; the rest of the group realized that labels of "liberal" or "conservative," "left" or "right," only worked in a general way. The sessions included field trips to churches with opportunities for the group to pray together in those spaces, slide presentations showing design work by some group members, and homework that asked each member to describe what he or she meant by "full, active participation" in the liturgy; what church configuration, in their opinion, would promote that participation; and whether or not they think there is a "Catholic style" of architecture.

The more liberal majority did not dispute the fact that some bad church buildings have been built since the Second Vatican Council, but they pointed out that no new church building style has ever appeared full-blown and that the church has been in a learning situation during the past 30 years. One wrote: "If Romanesque architecture had been seen as perfection, and architects discouraged from experimenting with the Gothic style, the Gothic movement would have died before the hundred years it took to perfect the style. At 30 years, the new liturgical style is still in its infancy, still self-correcting." Another said: "Growth is always messy and organic." These participants pointed out that one of the reasons for the simplicity of many of the newer churches, in addition to the adoption of some aspects of modernism, has been the effort of the architects to emphasize the key liturgical symbols: assembly, altar, ambo, font. They rejected the accusation of manipulating people in parishes, saying that education is not manipulation.

The Position of the Assembly Versus the Altar

While all of the participants would agree that the assembly should be arranged in a manner that facilitates full, conscious participation, it quickly became apparent that not all gave the same meaning to those words.

For most of the participants this statement implied that no member of the assembly should be too far from the altar, that all should have clear sight lines to the action, that the acoustics be good, that adequate lighting for the assembly be provided, and that there be sufficient space for processional movement to the altar. In addition, these same people would maintain that the assembly's seating should be to some degree gathered around the altar because the assembly is an agent with the priest in celebrating the Eucharist. Therefore the space itself should invite people to participate in the celebration.

One bishop made the point that special efforts at hospitality need to be made today because of the mobility of the American people. He went further and stated that a space with seating "gathered" around the altar helps to draw people in more than

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a rectangular space with rows of "processional" seating. A pastor whose parish regularly worships in two spaces, one gathered and the other processional, said that he experiences a stronger sense of church in the gathered community. A college chaplain added that he believes a sense of hospitality in the worship space is very important for college students because they are seeking community.

A few of the participants said that they would not place a high priority on the design elements listed above; in fact, some would even vigorously oppose them. One architect from this group brought the floor plan of a church he had designed. The plan was a long rectangle more than 40 pews in length; no assembly seating was gathered around the sanctuary. The space was designed to promote a sense of transcendence and solemnity, and to be a clear invitation to interior prayer.

The same people were very wary of the language of "community" and especially of "intimacy." One member said that the parish should address the issue of community in other rooms of the parish and not in the worship space. While most of the group agreed that the object of the liturgy is not the promotion of intimacy, they also wanted to emphasize that good liturgy should foster a commitment to a common journey and to these people with whom one is worshipping.

Full, Active Participation

The discussions made clear that different designs point to different understandings of what full, active participation means and what the celebration of the Eucharist means. While most would agree that we still have much to learn about the meaning, everyone agreed that full participation must include both interior and exterior involvement. There were, however, significant differences in emphasis when individuals explained their positions.

The majority of the group would say, as one participant wrote, that participation needs to be "proactive" and "bodily," not "reactive" and "cognitive." "While participation includes response and cognition, it demands – even more fundamentally-embodied performance, an enactment." These people would point to the importance of the influence of externals in shaping one's interior participation as well as expressing it. For example, one participant wrote: "Active participation is limited or at least discouraged by altars far away, dead acoustics, poor sound systems, bad lighting, poorly placed music, far distant ambos." Another wrote: "I would note that people should not be seated in a way that conveys that they are an audience."

Some in the group emphasized interior participation, stressing that participation means "being spiritually engaged in the liturgy." They hold that participation refers to "the union of the faithful with the action of God who offers Himself to Himself in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass." Therefore, participation is "first of all internal – inner, contemplative immersion in the mysteries – but appropriately comes also to external expression in forms both communal and individual…The communal aspect is achieved less by schemes (ritual, musical, or architectural) to 'create' community or stimulate collectivist activity than by concentrating on those realities larger than the local community that are the surest means for sustaining bonds of interconnection, such as: God in Christ, the Trinitarian sacramental life, the communion of saints, the life to come."

These participants share a suspicion of what they would term "excessive busyness" in the liturgy. One hears their disappointment, and even anger, over some experiences of liturgy in renovated churches in the following: "I disagree with the notion that every strum of a guitar, every possible angle of the altar, and every other face in the church building need be seen at all times because they become a source of distraction from the equally important presence of the rite and the priest and often prevent interior participation. Therefore, within reasonable limits, church buildings may rightly use choir lofts, longitudinal plans, dark corners, Latin, and imagery that reinforces the reality of the rite. It may reject 'gather seating,' choir platforms, overly bright lighting, and denial of imagery as inalienable requirements of new church design."

All agreed that church architecture is "the art of shaping space around ritual"; that the liturgical rites of the church are what determine the shape of the church building. But what was not agreed upon was what constitutes the essential aspects of those multivalent rites. Different emphases in the rites dictate different physical spaces for their performance.

For example, one member of the minority wrote that "the architectural setting for the liturgy…will be most conducive to active participation when it orients, in every sense of the term, the faithful toward Christ." He supported the idea that churches should be built on an east/west axis, facing the east. Further, he recommended that the liturgy should be celebrated *ad orientem* (facing east) and noted that "the *oriens par excellence* resides in the tabernacle, the new Ark of the Covenant, and dwelling place of the Shekinah." This architectural style traditionally reflected the belief that Christ, in his Second Coming, would come from the East. Nowhere did this participant mention the presence of Christ in the assembly.

In contrast, those who support gathered seating would allude to the Council of Trent's dictum that sacraments cause grace in the way that they signify, making the point that the shape of the rite itself, i.e. the human event itself, is the avenue through which grace comes to consciousness. Hence, the importance that the community, which participates in the priesthood of Christ, be gathered around the table of the Lord and that an emphasis be placed on the meal character of the Eucharist as well as on its sacrificial character. They would quote Augustine: "It is your own mystery which is on the altar." The transformation of the community, they would emphasize, and through the community, the transformation of the world, is the ultimate end of the Eucharist.

Location of the Tabernacle

A consensus was reached which states: "We believe that people upon entering a Catholic church should be easily aware that the Eucharist is reserved there. The place of reservation should reflect the due honor and reverence the reserved Eucharist deserves. It should be physically accessible to all, quiet and secure." The meaning of the words "easily aware" was not spelled out. For some, a discrete sign indicating the location of the chapel of reservation would be sufficient; for others, the tabernacle itself would need to be visible.

The group also agreed that "during the Mass the ritual action of the liturgy, and specifically the altar table, should be primary," and that "the ambo [should be] given a prominent place related to the altar."

Part of the group preferred that the tabernacle be in a separate chapel adjacent to the main worship space; some wanted it placed somewhere in the sanctuary area but not in

a dominant position, and a few preferred that the tabernacle be a major focus in the worship space.

Most of the participants insisted on some visual separation between the Eucharistic action at the altar and the tabernacle. Adoration of the reserved sacrament in the tabernacle is dependent upon and should lead back to the Eucharistic celebration, but it is also separate from that celebration and should not be confused with it. One of those who wanted the tabernacle in clear sight both when one entered the church and during the Eucharistic liturgy described the Presence as "bleeding into the space and giving it a special feel."

Some who disagreed with that placement (and who could quote official documents to support their views) spoke out of a fear they had. Given the history of Eucharistic devotion in the Church in the centuries prior to Vatican II, they feared that the dominance of the tabernacle would inhibit Catholics from ever coming to appreciate the presence of Christ in the assembly and from learning the true meaning of the Eucharistic celebration. They reminded others that through the efforts of liturgical scholars in the early-20th century, the church recovered a Eucharistic theology that had been lost for centuries.

Prior to the Second Vatican Council, Catholic Eucharistic devotion had centered around adoration of Christ present in the consecrated species either on the altar or in the tabernacle. There was little active participation in the Mass by the laity, their roles having been gradually assumed over time by the clergy. The laity rarely went to communion; rather they practiced a visual communion – a "piety of the worshipful gaze." For centuries in the pre-Vatican II Church there was little appreciation of the Eucharist as a shared meal and certainly no appreciation of the presence of Christ in the assembly or in the Word proclaimed.

The great majority of the participants, spanning a spectrum of views, realized that a recovery of the dynamism of the Eucharistic action was at the heart of the liturgical renewal of the Church and that it would take a long time for the Catholic faithful to be formed in this "new" spirituality of the Eucharist. Many agreed as well that the worship space itself must make a clear statement about the centrality of the assembly's action together with the priest in order to foster a proper awareness of that action.

The group recognized that architects and designers have developed some very successful spatial configurations that serve both aspects of Eucharistic devotion – the Eucharistic celebration and adoration of the reserved Sacrament – well. All agreed on the need for beauty and distinctiveness in the place of reservation and that some linkage be made between altar and tabernacle.

The Role of Iconography

Some of the group stated strongly that the relative absence of iconography in many Catholic churches built in the last 30 years is a serious defect that needs to be remedied. Most of the participants admitted the truth of the observation and gave various reasons for it: the adoption of a modern style of architecture which is plain; the deliberate attempt to highlight the central liturgical symbols of altar, font, ambo, and assembly; and the removal of devotional images from the worship space to enhance that emphasis on key symbols.

As the discussion continued, all agreed that Catholic churches should have devotional as well as liturgical elements and that some iconographic elements should be used. Almost everyone in the room agreed, for example, that a Catholic church should have images of Christ and of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It was clear, however, that if the discussion were to move to concrete details, there would be disagreement among some of the members as to what constitutes iconography and where and how it should be employed in a church. For example, one participant wrote, "Would the iconographic program of a Catholic church always need to include visual representations of Christ, the Blessed Virgin, and the saints? It would seem, of course, that the word 'iconographic' REQUIRES the word 'representational.' But then, I would refer back to the Cistercian architecture of the 12th century. In a sense, the 'iconography' of these spaces is geometric and 'acoustic' rather than representational and 'visual'."

Is There a Catholic "Style"?

The question of a Catholic "style" provoked much debate. After long discussion some agreements were reached – some rather easily. For example, the group agreed that there is a Christian architecture that is distinct from pagan architecture; the pagan temple was primarily to house the god, whereas the Christian church is primarily to house the assembly and its sacramental life.

They also agreed that there is a Catholic architecture that is distinct from some Protestant architecture. Catholic architecture is sacrament- and word-oriented rather than just word-oriented, and Catholic architecture has a strong sensorial dimension that exploits the mediating power of the saints and of material creation. The group seemed to agree that there is no single architectural style that is Catholic, but some of their written homework statements tend to dispute this. Some held that the architecture of certain historical periods has a privileged value for today's liturgy whereas most held that the Church has adapted to major cultures and styles in the past and needs to continue to do so. An example: "No, there is not any one Catholic style." The participant goes on to quote the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: "The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as its very own but has admitted styles from every period, according to the proper genius and circumstances of peoples and the requirements of the many different rites in the church."

Some members rejected modern architecture in particular. One pointed out that a Catholic "style" of architecture "is one which grows organically out of and follows an historical trajectory from the whole TRADITION of Catholic liturgical architecture…The churches of a new era grow ORGANICALLY from what has gone before…The problem with modernist architecture is that it does not stand in ORGANIC CONTINUITY with the 2,000-year-old tradition of Catholic architecture. It is a church architecture 'from scratch.' Indeed it has self-consciously rejected the historical tradition of Catholic architecture."

The same person sees hope in the New Classicism and the more tradition-oriented types of postmodern architecture because "their NEWNESS is in what they have done with TRADITIONAL IDIOMS." This opinion was countered by another participant who noted: "Pablo Picasso said, 'Tradition is not putting on your grandfather's hat, but having a baby.' Almost a century after Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple, in Oak Park, Illinois, modern architecture has been a part of that great tradition of incorporating the modern. Architecture today is as identifiably 'religious' as are authentic Early Christian, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque religious architecture."

An architect in the group went even further. He was quite definite about there

being a Catholic style of architecture which, he believed, the Catholic is able to discover and which he identified as the Greco-Roman tradition of architecture. His was a view not shared by many others, but to present it fairly I quote him at length.

"First, the Catholic believes that architecture was created by God, and thus has a nature in and of itself which infinitely exceeds his consciousness of it. Second, the Catholic shuns relativism. As a result, he is able to make value judgments regarding the facts of architectural history. For example, he is able to recognize the general qualitative decline in architectural scholarship and practice from the time of the late Roman Empire through to the Renaissance. More importantly, he is able to draw lessons from the history of architecture for current practical action – for to know and to build good architecture the architect must see examples of good architecture.

"Thus, the Catholic architect seeks constantly to restore a traditional architecture, which embodies substantive principles, while he rejects an architecture that embodies a relativist world-view, as does modernism, for example. The Catholic style, or better, the Catholic tradition, therefore, is perforce the Greco-Roman tradition of architecture for at least two reasons. First, the Greco-Roman tradition arguably embodies with the greatest clarity the substantive content of architecture. And second, the Church was founded at a time and in a place in which the Greco-Roman architectural conventions constituted the received tradition; hence, those conventions, naturally adopted by the Church for the purposes of the transmission of the Faith, are forever bound up with the Faith."

In contrast, another participant wrote: "Catholics have worshipped in churches covering a wide range of styles. The preeminent examples of Catholic spaces throughout the ages, although quite varied in outward appearance, are likely to have several characteristics in common: indigenous to their time and place; honest expressions of the needs of the church at the time they were designed; strength from achieving excellence in the timeless architectural principles of form, light, proportion, harmony, rhythm, tactility; well-crafted details utilizing available craftsmen and materials, and innovative use of existing and new construction technologies."

Most of the participants would agree that a Catholic church should be beautiful and that it should say "church" to those who worship there. They would also agree that the space should strike a balance between transcendence and hospitality, "a balance between the mystery of God and the enduring and accessible presence of Christ in our midst." But where individuals would locate that balance point varies. One participant wrote that the issue "is much more one of quality of art. No matter what the stylistic choice, a successful building demands commitment, inspiration, and some substantial cost."

Conclusion

Although a degree of suspicion remained, the atmosphere in the group was friendly and, at times, warm. The participants testified that they felt that the discussion was worthwhile, that they had reached clarity and agreement on some issues and perhaps, more importantly, clarity on where the disagreements lay. They were appreciative that all ideas had been welcomed in the room. One participant said: "My fundamental ideas have not changed but I can critique them now and I will do so. I will appreciate the minority's voice in parish projects and lead people to honor them. The personal contact was therapeutic. We all had passion."

Notes & Comments

Schuller Honored With AIA Membership

The American Institute of Architects has bestowed an honorary membership on Dr. Robert Schuller, the world-renowned senior pastor and founder of the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California. Honorary membership is one of the highest honors the AIA bestows on a non-architect. According to the AIA, Schuller has been a friend to architecture for decades. He served as public director on the 1986 and 1987 AIA boards of directors, and delivered the unforgettable keynote speech (to a standing ovation) at the 1989 AIA national convention in St. Louis.

"Apart from his service as a wise counselor, Reverend Schuller is the very model of an enlightened client," said AIA Executive Vice President/CEO Norman L. Koonce, in his nomination statement. "The California campus where his international ministry is housed features the work of three renowned architects: Richard Neutra, Philip Johnson, and Richard Meier." Koonce also points out that in Schuller's 30 books, the author frequently references the power of architecture in enriching human experiences, particularly in worship.

"He always wanted the best possible architecture and materials, and he was unceasing in his efforts to raise the funds to design and build this cathedral. The building is one of my favorites," said Philip Johnson in support of Schuller's nomination. "There is no doubt in my mind that without Dr. Schuller, none of the buildings on the campus of his church would have been designed or built. His enthusiasm and dedication were the driving force for all of us who worked with him."

The honor coincides with the completion of Meier's building on the Crystal Cathedral campus (*photo below*). The International Center for Possibility Thinking is located between Neutra's Tower of Hope and the Garden Grove Community Church, and Johnson's Crystal Cathedral. The four-story building's embossed stainless-steel-panel exterior complements the mirrored glass of the cathedral, while the center's polished concrete is akin to the stone color of Neutra's adjacent building.

"Scatter Me Under the Lilac Tree…"

Growing in popularity, "scattering gardens" have now become a popular alternative to conventional cemeteries. Often selected because their small dimensions make them unsuitable for a burial ground, these plots of land are tended gardens that offer a resting place for cremated ashes. The gardens, most popular in the southern and western regions of the U.S., are frequently filled with a variety of flowers and low-growing trees. Scattering options include placing the ashes a few inches under the soil; raking them under a layer of mulch; or pouring them into a vault below the ground to keep the ashes from exposure. A stonewall surrounding the garden can provide privacy as well as a place to leave a personal message.

Religious Institutions Work To Cut Energy Use

According to an article in a recent issue of the *Christian Science Monitor*, as evidence of global warming mounts, congregations across the U.S. are asking what their faith demands of them in response. With help from a new movement called Interfaith Power and Light (IP&L), religious institutions are cutting back on energy consumption, investing in more efficient heating and lighting systems, buying renewable energy, and joining the effort to build green. IP&L movements are now active in about a dozen states. They aim to help congregations by providing ready access to technical services for efficiency upgrades; information on funding resources; and a means for purchasing solar, wind or landfill gas power.

For example, St. Stephen's Cathedral, a historic landmark in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania,

Buildings by Richard Neutra and Philip Johnson (far left and right in the photo) are now joined by Richard Meier's design for the International Center for Possibility Thinking (center).

Notes & Comments

is undergoing a major renovation that could win it a Gold level designation from the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED program. St. Stephen's benefited from $30,000 of planning and technical services from IP&L of Pennsylvania, which receives funding from the Heinz Endowments. The growing IP&L movement--sparked in California by an interfaith discussion on how to respond to global warming--began in the late 1990s in the Episcopal Church. But some in the pews remain unconvinced that global warming results from human activity, and see this as part of a liberal agenda. Others resist discussing the environment in a theological context.

Spain Opens First New Mosque Since the 15th Century

After being stalled for years by lawsuits filed by local Roman Catholics, the first mosque to be built in Spain in the last 511 years was unveiled in Granada. The $4.5 million building has white brick walls, a red tile roof, and a square minaret. The mosque property, located in the old Moorish quarter of Granada, was purchased with Libyan money in 1981. Situated amongst a convent of cloistered nuns and a Catholic church, the mosque overlooks the Alhambra, the 14th-century palace and citadel from which Moorish Caliphs governed until King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella expelled them in 1492, ending 800 years of Muslim rule in southern Spain. Today, the Muslim population makes up about 1.2 percent, or 500,000, of Spain's 40 million people. Most of the mosques in Spain are makeshift facilities in apartments, storefronts, or garages.

Benjamin P. Elliott, FAIA, 1920-2003

I had a phone call from Ben Elliott some time ago after both of us were retired. He wondered whether I ever traveled to Washington any more, and if I did, would I please call him so we could spend some time remembering the 1960s and the origins of *Faith & Form*. His interest in these things was well placed. He was one of the early proponents of a publication for the Guild for Religious Architecture (now IFRAA). At a 1966 board of directors meeting in the little room in the Dupont Circle Building where the members of the board summoned their courage to embark on the adventurous project, Ben volunteered to commit himself to the major office of publisher, to deal with money, budgets, fundraising, and the duties of printing and distribution. The 12 or 15 people around the table responded right there by collecting $1,500 for him.

Ben lived in Maryland and was in partnership with Ronald Senseman; their work was mainly in the Washington area. They had many church clients and a fine reputation. Ben was awarded a Fellowship in the AIA in 1971.

Faith & Form will soon be 40 years old. A dozen other magazines devoted to the architecture of faith have come and gone. To Benjamin P. Elliott, FAIA, who carried the heaviest burden during the first uncertain years, we owe much honor and our grateful remembrance.

–Edward Sovik

Send Your News to *Faith & Form*

The editors of *Faith & Form* want to bring its readers the latest news of those involved in the fields of religion, art, and architecture. Send press releases and materials to the attention of Michael J. Crosbie, Editor, *Faith & Form*, c/o Steven Winter Associates, 50 Washington Street, Norwalk, CT 06854; fax: 203-852-0741; email: FaithNForm@aol.com.

Book Reviews

Building From Belief: Advance, Retreat and Compromise in the Remaking of Catholic Church Architecture, Michael E. DeSanctis, (Liturgical Press, $19.95), reviewed by Betty H. Meyer.

One becomes immediately aware in reading this book that the author, a design consultant, is both emotionally and intellectually concerned about why there is such inconsistency in the way the Catholic Church speaks of its liturgical arts and the way they are practiced in local churches.

Michael DeSanctis discusses renovation and new design before and after Vatican II with strong criticism that may offend some parishioners, but also offers solutions that are persuasive. Of special interest is his discussion of the popular design-build partnership with construction firms, as well as the role of the liturgical consultant, and the sharp tension between the traditional and the modern. These are problems that must be faced by any religious institution.

"What is lacking today," DeSanctis emphasizes, "is a clear sense of WHY we build. It is a theological problem not a technological one." Therefore the title: *Building From Belief*. "We stand at an historic moment," he writes, "and a real faith will dictate that persistence is necessary to find answers." He challenges architects, clergy, and the laity to open themselves to comprehensive learning.

The problems and solutions discussed in this book with such honesty and brilliant insight should appeal to any individual interested in institutional religion and their relation to it.

Architecture for the Gods: Book II, Michael J. Crosbie, (Images, $60), reviewed by Judith Dupré.

Congregations, architects, and contractors thinking about new spaces for worship should find plenty of inspiration in the pages of Michael J. Crosbie's book, *Architecture for the Gods: Book* II. A sequel to Crosbie's first book on the subject that appeared three years ago, this new edition covers a wide swath of fresh terrain and proves that God is alive, well, and putting together a building committee.

With hundreds of glorious color photographs and floor plans, the book is an indispensable guide that will inspire its readers to think expansively about the possibilities inherent in new construction, additions, restoration, or adaptive reuse. It includes churches, mosques, and synagogues in urban, suburban, and spectacular natural settings that have been constructed or reconfigured to address the traditional needs of ritual as well as social outreach programs. Projects range from the restoration of the intimate Prairie Repose Cemetery Chapel in Illinois to the Potter's House in Dallas, a sanctuary with state-of-the-art broadcast facilities and seating for 8,200. Helpful, too, is the inclusion of project costs, which will allow congregations to budget their dreams.

Crosbie's visual approach is particularly valuable because meaning in ecclesiastical architecture has been, and largely continues to be, conveyed symbolically. Today, with smaller congregations and budgets, architects must make imaginative use of light, space, and materials to create a sense of transcendence. Crosbie has chosen a range of structures—examples include St. John's Episcopal Church in Wyoming, a rough-hewn log basilica that harmonizes with the region's vernacular architecture; the sleek, steel White Chapel at the Rose Ulman Institute of Technology in Terre Haute, Indiana; and the light-filled, minimal Live Oak Friends meetinghouse in Houston—that express the spirituality of materiality in vastly different ways.

Judith Dupré is an author who writes extensively about architecture and design.

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JUST ONE MORE THING. . .

By Betty H. Meyer

Today we are faced with the problem of assessing our own era, and often are confused and emotional because we feel helpless in a world beyond recognition. This is true not only of us as individuals but of institutions as well, particularly religious institutions of all faiths. People are rejecting their faith traditions because they no longer seem relevant to their everyday experiences. Long-held convictions are being challenged and both clergy and laity suffer from a lack of communication.

One is reminded of T.S. Eliot's Little Gidding: "Last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice." But change is slow and can come at great cost. Perhaps one way to begin might be an evaluation of the liturgy and ritual in the worship service. An intermediary who understands the point of view of both the laity and clergy might be called in to help. But if all those assigned to consider change approach the experience with openness and are willing to experience before they judge, they may be surprised at the new liturgy that will emerge from their creative endeavor. This is a subject that interests me.

My Protestant family church in the Midwest had essentially no ritual or liturgy. It was extremely informal: the minister wore a suit, not a robe; there was no organ, only a piano; sermons might be interrupted to ask the opinion of a parishioner; there was no art except a mural of the River Jordan with a deep well in front of it for baptismal immersion. However, I can remember as a child visiting my little friend's Roman Catholic church and immediately responding to the dignity and the beauty all around me. I loved my own church but I sensed that something was missing that would add meaning for me.

Years later, of course I realized that I was groping for form, form that would embody my questions and answers and that would give me a sense of transcendence.

But the years also brought the realization that sometimes form outlives itself and no longer communicates. *Liturgical Arts* magazine was established by the Roman Catholic Church to deal with recurring questions about liturgy. Its editor, Maurice Lavanoux and I became friends and he told me that to care for a fragmented, worshipping community and to encourage its members' participation in a truly humane society would call for a spiritual revolution. Unless we get rid of spiritual poverty, he thought, physical poverty will never leave us.

He was not demeaning liturgy but asking that its psychic energy be renewed and that current experience be included in its expression. We liked to talk about the environment in which the liturgy is practiced and hoped that the architect and artist would be consulted periodically.

Who is to create these new liturgies? Of course they must be created with the help of both the clergy and laity. The latter should realize that they often have knowledge that they are unaware of but which can be brought to consciousness. Edward Robinson, in his book, *The Language of Mystery*, speaks of the art of creation prompting us to "think the unthinkable, to conceive the inconceivable, and to imagine the unimaginable." But at the same time he reminds us that the creative act cannot communicate if it breaks wholly free of tradition. Just so, clergy should determine to listen with more patience and realize that what may be disliked initially may change to a profound appreciation.

But if clergy and laity can succeed in combining the best of traditional liturgy with the truth of current experience, then the new liturgy will be a revelatory experience for both and a source of transformation for the congregation.

More than that, humanity and divinity will converge.

BETTY H. MEYER *is Editor Emeritus of* Faith & Form.

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