

# For Better or Worse?

## The Dynamic Architecture of the Catholic Church of St. Peter, Minnesota

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## Introduction

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I chose the topic of church architecture because I have a passion for understanding it. The more I study church architecture, the more I learn about deciphering the meaning within a given context. As any aspiring student in any area, I am interested in precedence—history surely has much to say in how things were designed and how they were redesigned to greater fit their purpose. In order to go into depth about church architecture, it is necessary to establish an understanding of what I believe architecture is. I will analyze the level to which the architectural committee of the Catholic Church of St. Peter was successful in redefining the spirit of the new church building, using the criteria I establish for effective church architecture.

The Bible describes ideal places of worship. Accounts of model sacred spaces are first found in the Old Testament, when it speaks of Abraham and the many altars he built for the Lord.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Exodus orders specific guidelines regarding the precise layout of the tabernacle.<sup>2</sup> The tabernacle was pivotal to worship; it included the place of sacrifice—where the most reverent of acts were performed. There is a strong case for the importance of the tabernacle because at least two books of the Bible are largely devoted to the specific instructions for its construction as well as guidelines for its use.<sup>3</sup> In addition, several other texts discuss design of other temples.

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 13-22. This reference and all subsequent biblical references, unless otherwise noted, come from the New International Version of the Bible.

<sup>2</sup> Exod. 26.

<sup>3</sup> The books of Leviticus and Numbers also heavily discuss instructions for sacrifice and worship.

Christians believe that Jesus, also referred to as the Lamb of God, died as the final sacrifice.<sup>4</sup> From that point on, the absence of sacrifice altered the shape of religious structures. There is an analogous scriptural connection between Jesus and the tabernacle, compared with sacrifice and the location of sacrifices. There is reasoning behind Christian church layout being close to Jewish temples; each week there is a reenactment of the act of sacrifice through Holy Communion. This parallel likely resulted in the naming of the tabernacle in a Catholic church as the host of communal bread and wine.<sup>5</sup>

There are multiple ways to be in communion with God. The resurrected Jesus Christ lives within us. According to the Bible, the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus Christ.<sup>6</sup> God designed these “temples” in a manner that allows the soul to be in touch with the divine. Likewise, churches are designed with the intent to provide a means for souls to be in communication with the Almighty. In this way a church building can be symbolic of a temple of the Holy Spirit.

The essence of architectural design is driven by the symbolism chosen by the architect. An important factor to consider when designing buildings is the context, or architectural character of the surrounding area. An architect has a lasting effect on the community for which a building is designed. Consequently, the relationship between the building and the people within the community is substantial. The effectiveness of church architecture, more specifically on its relationship with the surrounding community, is even more delicate. It expresses a deeper meaning through the use of symbolism. The following account is an example of architectural symbolism accomplished through the use of sacred numbers: “By *one*, the Unity of the Deity was understood: by *two*, the

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<sup>4</sup> Heb. 10:1-18.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. 9:11-26.

divine and human Natures of the Saviour: by *three*, of course, the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity: by *four*, the doctrine of the Four Evangelists: by six, the Attributes of the Deity: seven represented the sevenfold graces of the Holy Spirit....”<sup>7</sup> Such simplistic symbols can certainly be integrated into church architecture – often unnoticeable to the layperson. Numeric iconography was frequently used in the design of churches during the Middle Ages. As will be shown in Chapter Three, numerical symbolism maintains a prominent presence in church architecture today.

Although society undergoes major shifts from generation to generation, certain things remain at the core of humanity. By nature, humanity associates itself in groups. For important holidays, our tendency is to flock to family festivities. It is interesting to note that people distinguish themselves by using characteristics they share with other people in order to describe their own “unique individuality.” Because of this anthropocentric worldview, God may be shoved to the wayside. People have to realize the importance of community. It is necessary for humankind to realize that “For where two or three come together in my [God’s] name, there am I with them.”<sup>8</sup> God exists in community, and the presence of God is especially felt in church congregations.

Architecture and liturgy shape the congregation’s theological interpretation. The structure of the liturgy forms the worship experience the way the architecture defines the mood of a space. The architecture defines the way sound reverberates off the walls and is received by the congregation. Liturgy and architecture play off each other; literally, in the case of music bouncing off of the walls. The visual effects of the architecture when

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<sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. 6:19.

<sup>7</sup> William Durandus, *The Symbolism of Churches and Church Ornaments* (London: Gibbings & Company, 1906), xxxvi-xxxvii.

<sup>8</sup> Matt. 18:19-20.

inside a church can be overwhelming. In some cases, the utter vastness of space can take a person's breath away. Architecture brings a sense of amazement to the worshipper. In other cases, architecture can instill a sense of peace through flowing or sweeping architectural forms.

Architecture is a form of art used to serve a purpose of worship in the case of Christian churches. Figure 1 (see Appendix) illustrates how architecture inspires creativity through the example of architect Steven Holl's Chapel of St. Ignatius, in Seattle, Washington.<sup>9</sup> It can also instill a completely different creative style of lavish decoration in the case of the famous Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris (see Figure 2).<sup>10</sup> By simply glancing at pictures of the two churches, one can begin to get an idea of the many different possibilities there are in church architecture. Architecture comes in different forms but serves the same purpose.

Although they drastically differ in design, churches definitely share one thing in common—they provide a place for worshipping God. Churches are places for humans to reflect in, and also for God to abide in. At a recent conference I attended, architect Steven Holl stressed the importance of the experiential element of the interior of the architecture.<sup>11</sup> Some of the most interesting churches I have witnessed are not recognizable as a church from the outside. Once inside, however, I felt a sense of awe, as though I was more connected with the Holy Spirit than before I had entered the church.

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<sup>9</sup> "Steven Holl Architects: Chapel of St. Ignatius, Seattle, Washington." Online source: <http://www.stevenholl.com/pages/stignatius.html>

<sup>10</sup> "FreeFoto.com: Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France." Online source: <http://www.freefoto.com/pictures/france/parnotre/index.asp?i=4>

<sup>11</sup> Steven Holl, "Great Conversations: Visionary Architecture," Lecture at University of Minnesota Campus, Minneapolis, MN, 19 Feb. 2002.

### *The Human Experience of a Holy Space*

The architecture of a church defines the space that humans perceive as holy. This is important because the architecture itself creates a three-dimensional area; it embraces the holy space. It is static, not dynamic. Although air, people, light and sound move through the space, the character of the space remains the same. The character of the space is as constant as God is. However, it can change in the face of natural disaster, as in the case of the tornado that devastated the town of St. Peter. God moves through time and place in a way we cannot comprehend, yet God remains constant. People view their church as the House of God and turn to it for many spiritual necessities.

To emphasize the importance of architectural structures, consider the following extreme example. The Bible recounts the story of Jesus healing two blind men.<sup>12</sup> The very fact that Jesus wants humans to be able to see provides a case for incessant need for light. Without light, there would be no vision. Since vision and light are important, it is reasonable to acknowledge the importance of visual aesthetics. Although it may be argued that it would make no difference to a blind person, one must recognize the significance of Jesus' mission to allow people to see. Surely, form and space are thus important contributors to the architecture of worship.

Architecture, more specifically, religious architecture, plays an important role in the lives of people. Many do not recognize its significance. It is now the time for that to change. I will use the specific case of the Catholic Church of St. Peter to paint a picture of the importance of architecture in worship. A tornado struck the town of St. Peter four years ago. Suddenly, St. Peter residents realized the value of architecture in their lives—

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<sup>12</sup> Matt. 20:29-34.



unfortunately, through its absence. To simply have a home is an invaluable thing. And that is just what the Catholic Church of St. Peter needed—a new home.

Decisions had to be made about the style of that new home and what it should represent. The resultant plans for the new church home were in a completely different architectural style from the previous church. My thesis is not simply about the fact that there is a change in architecture. Through in-depth descriptions regarding the changes, I will show the dynamic relationship between architecture and the rituals of the liturgy and worship styles. Ecclesiastical architecture has an experiential aspect to it, which can only be felt in that particular place. In fact, words cannot truly express the spiritual connection felt with a place. The architectural changes resulting from the new worship center for St. Peter's Catholic Church made a significant impact on worship and the congregation's theological interpretations. The examination of the change from old to new demonstrates the interconnected relationship between liturgy and architecture.

# 1

## Developing Criteria for the Evaluation of Church Architecture

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Language exists in realms other than the spoken. People currently recognize sign language, body language, and computer, or “e-language,” as valid means of conveying messages or connecting multiple components of society. The symbols of the letters on this page point to something greater: a language, which can evoke the thought processes to comprehend this sentence. It is easy to forget that such a process must take place in order to understand written language. It is commonly said that a person truly knows a language when they have dreams in that language. Similarly, after studying architecture long enough, one is able to understand the two-dimensional plans by visualizing them in three dimensions. People often overlook the fact that within architecture exists a language, which I will attempt to present and translate to the reader. The language of architecture exists because the realm of architecture has its own unique, distinct culture. Understanding and utilizing architectural language is key in deciphering the symbolism in the architecture at the Catholic Church of St. Peter; it will ultimately create clearer insight into the current state of St. Peter’s Catholic community.

In both the literal and the figurative senses, an ecclesiastical building creates a box around the interior architecture. The outer shell of this “box” limits the perceptions people have of God from the interior, because the exterior walls mark the boundaries of its finite physical space. At the 1978 United States Catholic Conference, in Washington, D.C., it was concluded that “Faith involves a good tension between human modes of expressive communications and God...whom our human tools can never adequately

grasp. God transcends. God is mystery. God cannot be contained in or confined by any of our words or images or categories.”<sup>13</sup> According to this statement, God comes to us in a mysterious manner. Religious architecture is a prime example of a human mode of expressive communication that allows this to occur. In theory, sacred space creates its own projectile of prayer, radiating to infinity in the spiritual dimension.

### *The Aesthetics of St. Thomas Aquinas*

Theologians have struggled for centuries to put the concept of God into human terms within their own respective cultures. Among the greatest theologians is Saint Thomas Aquinas, whose theology was in the context of Catholicism in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. A significant part of his writings concern artistic aesthetics. Although many theologians have succeeded in putting God into human terms, such definitions put limits on God. Language cannot encompass the true essence of God because language has boundaries, but God does not. In addition, God is an experiential being—one which must be realized through an encounter or acts.

In the *Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, St. Thomas writes a chapter that he calls “How the Human Soul Knows What is Above Itself.” An excerpt from that chapter tightens the connection between St. Thomas’ theology and the importance of church architecture:

In our present state we cannot know separate immaterial substances as they are, either by the active or the possible intellect; for the natural intellect bears an essential relation to the nature of material things. Consequently it understands nothing except by turning to phantasms.... We arrive, however, at a certain knowledge of God through creatures, as

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<sup>13</sup> Bishops’ Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1978), 7.

the apostle says to the Romans: "The invisible things of God are known by those which are made."<sup>14</sup>

Within the context of church architecture, the "separate immaterial substances" St. Thomas refers to in this chapter represent God and humans. The "essential relation to the nature of material things" corresponds to the architecture itself. This means he believes that one knows God through material objects. According to St. Thomas, piecing together such mental representations of real objects, or phantasms, must be attained through understanding their metaphysics.<sup>15</sup> Building on the thoughts of St. Thomas, I argue that in the case of church architecture it is not necessary to be conscious of the level to which the architecture meets criteria: architecture itself creates a channel into the realm of the divine.

In his next chapter, St. Thomas writes, "Since the soul, when separated from the body, has a different mode of being from that which it had united to the body, although its nature remains unchanged, it has also a different mode of understanding."<sup>16</sup> In other words, the soul has a special way of grasping spiritual subjects, as opposed to the method the body uses when intellectualizing something. Thus, the soul must be in tune with God in a different way than the mind is. One venue that allows for the human soul to know what is above itself is church architecture.

### *The Philosophy of Church Architecture*

In addition to theologians, a myriad of artisans have expressed religious perspectives utilizing a variety of mediums. For example, the great Michelangelo was

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<sup>14</sup> Father Wilfrid Lescher, trans., *Compendium of the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas* (New York: Benziger Bros., 1906), 225.

<sup>15</sup> "Phantasm," *Merriam-Webster Online*, Online Source: <<http://www.m-w.com>>.

commissioned by the pope to paint the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican, in Rome. Undoubtedly, his “Creation of Man” scene has made an impression upon many visitors over the five centuries of its display. In a much different way, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the architect Antoni Gaudi produced amazing artwork and also glorified God using his own Expressionistic style of architecture in the design of La Sagrada Familia, in Barcelona, Spain (see Figure 3).<sup>17</sup> Gaudi believed, “Nothing is art if it does not come from nature, as from nature come the most beautiful and extraordinary shapes. Furthermore, nature is the masterpiece of the Creator.”<sup>18</sup> This line of thinking reasons that in order for architecture to be considered art, it must come from nature because only nature can inspire exquisite designs. Taking it a step further, since architecture comes from nature and the Creator is the source of nature, then in a way, God inspires the design. Although Gaudi’s point makes sense in the case of being inspired by God, it would be a stretch to say that God designed a specific church building. It would make sense, however, to say that the church as a body of believers was designed by God.

Since people are of varying intellectual levels, it makes more sense that God would use something in addition to knowledge-based venues to reach the individual. The language of architecture is one such way—everyone is given the same potential to experience God and is thus on the same page. Successful church architecture is not about glamour and glitz, it is about providing a vessel which allows a channel to link God and individuals. It exists beyond human consciousness, yet the level to which the criteria are met can be determined on a conscious level.

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<sup>16</sup> Lescher, *Summa Theologica*, 226.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Elford, “Pictures at the Sagrada Familia,” Online Source: <http://www.pcez.com/~elford/Europe/barcelona/sagDoorB.jpg>.

Immanuel Kant, a respected philosopher writing during the latter half of the eighteenth century, made statements regarding what he deemed to be an ideal church. According to Kant, “the ideal Church should be an ‘ethical republic’; it should discard all dogmatic definitions, accept ‘rational faith’ as its guide in all intellectual matters, and establish the kingdom of God on earth by bringing about the reign of duty.”<sup>19</sup> Clearly, Kant is referring to the people who comprise the church. Yet, I believe Kant sets the stage for a discussion of church structures. His statement discarding all “dogmatic definitions” is relevant to the case of the Catholic Church of St. Peter because the decision to build new was taken advantage of to a large degree. I will elaborate on the architectural changes, which respond to variations in spiritual beliefs in the Church of St. Peter, in the final chapter. By building on Kant’s philosophy, one can see that it is important to determine the type of architecture that provides the best environment for the *ideal church*.

Further examination of Kant’s philosophical meanings help to define churches as vessels for hosting the Holy Spirit. In this sense, free of human sensory perceptions, church architecture has the unique ability to surpass the necessity of a preceding journey through the mind; this means the religious symbolism and spirituality conveyed through the architecture can be in direct contact with the soul and vice versa. As “an intellectualist in aesthetics, reducing the beautiful to elements of intellectuality,” Kant believed that, “the highest use of the aesthetic faculty is the realization of the beautiful

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<sup>18</sup> “The Temple of La Sagrada Familia,” Online Source:  
<http://www.sagradafamilia.org/eng/sfamilia/gaudi/vida.htm>.

<sup>19</sup> William Turner, “Philosophy of Immanuel Kant,” *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, Volume III (Online posting: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08603a.htm>: 1999), 21 Feb. 2002, 7.

and the purposive as symbols of moral good.”<sup>20</sup> Interpreted in terms of architecture, he is saying that there is more to architecture than beauty; there is an intellectual side that the mind evaluates.

Expanding on Kant’s theory of the enjoyment of the beautiful, which is not solely intellectual, we find architecture as a vehicle to the soul. Examining Kant’s dualistic notion of external adaptation and internal adaptation reinforces this abstract view.

“External adaptation, he taught, exists between the organism and its environment....”<sup>21</sup>

In this case study, the congregation of St. Peter’s Church is the organism; the building itself, the environment. Furthermore, “Internal adaptation exists among the structural parts of the organism, or between the organism and its function.”<sup>22</sup> In this instance, the structural parts of the organism are the individual members or other persons that use the church space. Using the latter part of the definition of internal adaptation, the organism would remain the congregation and its function would be worship. Internal adaptation would thus include a shift in the style of worship (the function) relative to the intentions of the members, such as the transformation experienced when the new church was built.

To illustrate the way church architecture is in tune with God, let us now look at a metaphorical example. Think of eating a pear for lunch – the stomach breaks it down into many substances, including the glucose that balances the level of sugar in the blood. Holding a pear next to one’s skin will not transfer the glucose into the body; it must first go through a process. There must be enzymes to break down the food into particles that may provide nutritional value. In a similar manner, church architecture speaks to the soul and acts as a link between humans and God. The sanctuary is like the stomach in the

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<sup>20</sup> Turner, “Philosophy of Immanuel Kant,” 7.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, “Philosophy of Immanuel Kant,” 6.

pear example, and the digestive material that allows the process to happen is the architecture itself. In this sense, the architecture enables meaningful worship to occur. Without the proper architecture, communication with God will not reach its full potential. The appropriate architecture may thus invoke worship that spiritually feeds the soul. In both cases, there are possible bonuses—the pear can be sweet to taste and the architecture can be beautiful to see. This metaphor should not limit God because it is simply an illustration of the relationship between humans and God by means of architecture; it is not an exclusive example, but a way to better understand this important connection.

This one possible way to understand church architecture helps us realize that there is a certain feeling one obtains from being within the enveloping presence of a church building. I will be looking at how the differences in the architecture of the Catholic Church of St. Peter affected the style of worship and how the previous style of worship in the old church affects the architecture of the new. This happens on two levels. The first level is the intellectual level. The presence is recognized amidst the architecture and one makes sense of the situation intellectually through deductive reasoning. On a second level, one inevitably decides whether he or she enjoys the experience of the space. It will have a big part in whether one returns to this place. For some, this happens on an intellectual level; they analyze the space and decide whether or not they are comfortable within its perimeter. Since visitors determine its beauty on their own scale, it is difficult to make everyone feel welcome. Yet, this feeling plays an important factor in determining the success of the church architecture. This lends the need for setting criteria for church architecture. Space can be sacred—belief acknowledges the power of the place. If a person does not resonate with a place as being holy or worthy of worship, he

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<sup>22</sup> Turner, "Philosophy of Immanuel Kant," 6.



or she is likely to go elsewhere for that function. In this sense, it seems appropriate that the Church of St. Peter's Building Committee had a greater focus on the important functions of the church than on its form.

### *Form Follows Function*

In the case of the building of the new Church of St. Peter, the underlying principle that the Building Committee used was "form follows function."<sup>23</sup> From merely interpreting the terminology of "form follows function," one would guess that the shape of the building is less important than its purpose. It is an appropriate architectural method with which to design a church. Robert Ousterhout, author of "The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy," writes, "Functionalism was a major concern of the Modernists."<sup>24</sup> Ousterhout contends that Louis Sullivan's dictum "form follows function" has commonly been misinterpreted and overquoted. He believes that "What Sullivan meant was that the outward appearance of a building should reflect its structural system, but for most of the Modernists, functionalism was related to usage."<sup>25</sup> Deeper investigation into this theory allows for a better understanding of the true meaning of "form follows function." "Moreover, a building does not just house events: its form may amplify, sanctify, comment upon, and interact with the functions it houses, and both form and function can be empowered by the interaction."<sup>26</sup>

The way function is portrayed in a church is key to determining one's identification with it. It is a very arduous task finding a church home. The first thing

<sup>23</sup> Father Harry Behan, 2002. Interview by author at the Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn., 2 March.

<sup>24</sup> Robert Ousterhout, "The Holy Space: Architecture and the Liturgy," in *Heaven on Earth: Art and the Church in Byzantium* (University Park, Penn.: Penn. State UP, 1998), 81.

<sup>25</sup> Ousterhout, "The Holy Space," 81.

people are likely to find is the spaces the congregation designates for various functions; they also are spoken to through the architecture. This should be applied to the architecture of St. Peter's new Catholic Church. In defining the method to be used to measure the success of religious architecture, it is important to follow the same principle as what is best for the whole congregation. This means that the architectural critics must set aside their own personal biases as to the beauty of the architecture. This is because if people were to throw out their biases, they would be unable to appreciate the architecture by assessing its value to them, which is a part of corporate assessment—it is simply less of a priority in the corporate realm (congregation). According to a member of the Building Committee for the present Church of St. Peter, the committee put the greatest emphasis on taking care of all the needs of all the people, which amounted to the fact that you “can’t use your own ideas – you have to study liturgy books and look for ideas of different liturgy that best fits the needs of everyone from the congregation.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Setting Criteria for Church Architecture*

Keeping in mind what has been discussed, it is essential to establish criteria for church architecture using a simplistic, yet meaningful framework. Crucial to understanding the architecture specific to the Church of St. Peter will be developing criteria for an architectural aesthetic. The vastness of open space in a large church typically creates a sense of awe of the power and glory of God. The presence of the divine is also conveyed through the exterior architecture. There are no limits to which God's holiness can radiate outward into space through the external architecture; this

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<sup>26</sup> Ousterhout, “The Holy Space,” 81, from Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 18-19.

concept is generally a bit easier to swallow than visualizing the ability for God's holiness to radiate internally, from the internal architecture. This is often most visible through tall spires that shoot off into the sky. Take, for example, the local Christ Chapel at Gustavus Adolphus College—the spire radiates an extravagant amount of light into the surrounding area at night, creating the notion of a glorious and maybe even glamorous concept of God. Given the significance of the ambience of church architecture, one aspect of design criteria to be considered is the overall effectiveness of the architecture in creating an appropriate church environment.

Finding another method that separates good religious architecture from bad religious architecture requires the analysis of lighting and its contribution toward building community within the church. One of the aspects in church architecture that contributes to the feeling within is the appropriate use of lighting. The use of natural light is a major component of this; it can be energy conscious and respectful of God's creation. The symbolism of light in a church has multiple levels of meaning. The basic principle is that the absence of light would denote darkness. In this case, the effectiveness of architecture would be nullified, ridding what was previously contended an important venue for experience of the divine.

The incorporation of light as an aspect of the church's design contributes to the success of church architecture by enhancing the spiritual relationship between God and users of the space. The notion of light as a metaphor for God comes up time and again in the Bible. A prominent example is found in Matthew. The author of Matthew made note of Jesus saying, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand,

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<sup>27</sup> JoAnne Stangler, 2002. Telephone interview by the author, 28 April.

and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”<sup>28</sup> Although the “city on a hill” referred to in the original context was not St. Peter, Minnesota, it certainly works in this case.

Light has even been incorporated in biblical passages pertaining specifically to the design aspects of worship spaces. Psalm 19 (a Psalm of David), written for the director of music suggests an appropriate atmosphere for worship:

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens he has pitched a tent for the sun, which is like a bridegroom coming forth from his pavilion, like a champion rejoicing to run his course. It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is hidden from its heat. The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes....<sup>29</sup>

This example of an ideal atmosphere for worship puts a large emphasis on light. The Psalm also says “there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.”

Returning to the language of architecture discussed earlier, Psalm 19 utilizes the language of light within the liturgical setting to illustrate God’s revealed glory. The Psalm even specifies the commands of the Lord as “radiant, giving light to the eyes.” The great success of the light extends to more levels. The light of God allows people to see each other. In turn, they are enabled to see God in other people while they experience the divine. This emphasizes community and encourages people to go and be lights for the world.

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<sup>28</sup> Matt. 5:14-16.

<sup>29</sup> Ps. 19:1-8.

As important as I think aesthetics and architecture play into the role of worship, I do believe the Trinity and the Bible to be most important. In order to convey this message in terms of architecture, the goal of the church architect must be defined so that she or he may create a space that is:

- (1) fitting and pleasing to the congregation by surveying and attending worship, if possible;
- (2) providing a space which conveys a message that one may encounter God;
- (3) architecturally conducive to the liturgy and worship of the congregation; and
- (4) "practical" considering cultural relativity.

Once an architect has met the above criteria, he or she will have designed an atmosphere in which individuals may experience biblical truths.

## 2

### Structural Developments in the History of the American Roman Catholic Church

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Most people view the Roman Catholic Church as an extremely traditional institution. The term *traditional* has both positive and negative connotations. Since the Roman Catholic Church is well established, many of the architectural features of its churches were built in a time when liturgy was something different than it is today. Times change and so do people. When people change, so do their ideas of admirable art and architecture. Measures have been taken within the American Roman Catholic Church regarding architecture, which help it successfully adapt to changing times. For example, the official declaration of Pope Pius X to end the status of America as missionary territory in 1908 marked the beginning of a new stage in Catholic America.<sup>30</sup> It transformed American Roman Catholic Church focus more toward sending out missionaries instead of constituting mission territory.

In this chapter, I will define liturgy through the language of architecture. I will further expand upon the developments in American Roman Catholic Church architecture, emphasizing the great growth in a sense of community. Furthermore, I will describe the way that movements in the American Catholic Church during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century have had a significant impact on the style of worship. It will become apparent that changes in architecture impact the worship experience a great deal within the Roman Catholic

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<sup>30</sup> John Whitney Evans, "Catholic Church in Minnesota," *Encyclopedia of American Catholic History*, 930.

tradition. A closer look at Vatican II and its liturgical impositions on the greater church body will assist in illustrating the close relationship between the architecture and liturgy.

### *Environment*

Seeking the origins of the environment of religious architecture, it is best to go to the beginning of the religious tradition. Relatively shortly following the death of Jesus Christ was the birth of the Roman Catholic Church. Christians began clandestine meetings in which they practiced the Sacrament of Holy Communion. This was the first form of liturgy; the most common space to perform this sacred act of Communion was within homes. L. Michael Wright, author of *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture*, refers to these meetings as the *domus ecclesiae* ("the house of the church").<sup>31</sup> With beginnings as community-based as this, it is understandable why harboring fellowship is a major function of the church.

Following worship in homes, the format of a typical church changed considerably. One aspect that remained central to worship, however, was the idea of community. The practice of the Lord's Supper continued to be highly coveted and served as a catalyst to communal worship.

When Christianity was officially recognized by Constantine in 313, the basilica was adopted as the standard church type. It was a building type that had no specific religious associations, and the Christians wanted to set themselves apart from the pagans. A pagan temple was regarded as a house of the divinity: the interior was the residence of the god and was off-limits to most mortals. A Christian church was simply a meeting hall, where large congregations could gather for communal worship.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Steven J. Friesen, "Building on *Building God's House*: Architecture and the Social Settings of Early Churches," *Religious Studies Review* 27, no. 3 (July 2001): 223.

<sup>32</sup> Ousterhout, "The Holy Space," 87.

It then developed from being a bare hall into one that housed artistic expressions in the form of music and art.

The environment of a worship space is vital to the practices that occur within, no matter if it is in a home or in a church. In the case of the church, environment encompasses areas such as art, architecture, and music within the church. Together, they can create an environment of lavishness, restless activity, or even peace. The Roman Catholic Church has often attempted to express God as mysterious.<sup>33</sup>

A mystery to the human mind is the ability of God to precede the limiting factors of time. One thing to consider is whether God can be constant in a church that changes. It changes even though it is based on the same Bible, yet new interpretations constantly arise. Even though the language that the liturgy and worship speaks to the congregation changes, the meaning behind it all is the same. This goes for the architecture as well. Although there have been great changes in the architecture of American Roman Catholic Churches in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the messages can still get across the same spiritual truths while using different methods with which to accomplish this objective.

Architecturally, this has done many things for the church in America. It culminates the notion of attending church strictly being a Sunday activity. The new form of architecture speaks to something different; it encourages a personal relationship with Jesus Christ—not in the same way as within a charismatic church, but one appropriate to the Roman Catholic tradition. This personal relationship with Jesus Christ comes through recognizing the divine at work through other people, and by sharing in the feast of the bread and wine, remembering Jesus Christ together. From an analytical standpoint,

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<sup>33</sup> Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment and Art*, 7.



it seems a bit more complex than the charismatic form by simply professing a belief in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Whether this is good or bad is debatable.

The many changes resulting in new architecture also emphasize ecumenical relations through its multipurpose use; community is key. It takes the architectural focal point from within and reverses it, sending it in an outward direction. This coincides with the notion of the mission of Catholicism in America being established well enough to be able to now focus more outside the church itself, into the field of missions.

The radical changes in American Roman Catholic Church architecture in the last hundred years is significant. In fact, it seems a bit overwhelming considering that it has taken course over two complete generations. Accordingly, the way grandparents of college students today worshipped within the American Catholic Church differs drastically from the way parishioners are worshipping today. Yet, when minding the rapid development of the internet within the past decade, and the great impacts it has had on society, it is no doubt the Church has undertaken such drastic changes in the last hundred years.

### *Liturgy and Worship*

Liturgy is the order of worship. The architecture and the liturgy blend to create the ambience of worship in every church. This is why it is so important for the architect to keep the liturgy in mind when designing the worship space. The last major liturgical movement began in Europe in the 1840s, with the efforts of Dom Prosper Gueranger. One such effort was to restore the Benedictine Abbey of Solesmes, France (see Figure

4).<sup>34</sup> I experienced the liturgy first hand at the Benedictine Abbey. There was such order and reverence that it was interesting to learn that Solesmes is where a major aspect of the liturgical movement began.

Virgil Michel, a monk of St. John's Abbey, is generally viewed as the founder of the liturgical movement in America. "Benedictines in America—at Conception Abbey in Missouri, and at the Abbey of St. John the Baptist in Collegeville, Minnesota—were probably connected to the movement...as early as the 1890s."<sup>35</sup> Michel developed a plan that was based on three publication goals: (1) "a popular liturgical library" of pamphlets and leaflets, (2) translations lending a view of European liturgical scholarship, and (3) a periodical, bringing unity through communication of diverse ways of practicing liturgy. This work in the 1920s set the stage for later changes in the American Catholic Church in the rest of the century. The aim was to better understand the "'spiritual importance of the liturgy' because a 'sympathetic understanding of the liturgy would affect' the life of Catholics and the corporate life of the Church's 'natural social units.'"<sup>36</sup> The changes in worship and liturgy in a church have a significant impact on the community.

Since faith plays an important role in life, arguably the most pivotal, the way in which worship is carried out in a particular location has a shaping quality to the surrounding community. The 1977 National Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C. resulted in the compilation of a handbook with suggestions for the art and aesthetics of the church setting. Since the heads of the Church drew many conclusions regarding the appropriate environment and art in Catholic worship, the book was appropriately titled *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*. These guidelines

<sup>34</sup> "Abbey of Solesmes," Online Source: <[http://www.solesmes.com/anglais/ang\\_solesmes.html](http://www.solesmes.com/anglais/ang_solesmes.html)>.

<sup>35</sup> "The Liturgical Movement in America," *Encyclopedia of Catholic American History*, 807.

have played a large role in the architecture of Catholic churches in America. It is important to note that

the reason for offering principles to guide rather than blueprints to follow was stated clearly by the Council fathers: "The Church has not adopted any particular style of art as her very own; it has admitted styles from every period according to the natural talents and circumstances of peoples, and the needs of the various rites...The art of our own days, coming from every race and region, shall also be given free scope in the Church, provided that it adorns the sacred buildings and holy rites due reverence and honor; thereby it is enabled to contribute its own voice to that wonderful chorus of praise...."<sup>37</sup>

Clearly, the conference resulted in a program for building churches, which placed a large emphasis on embracing any and all cultures.

A beautiful example of a church that incorporates nearly every aspect of the above quote is from the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation in South Dakota. It is a stunning church at the site of a Jesuit Mission that was built new after a fire in the original church building within the last decade. Local children from the affiliated school were allowed to participate in the design of the stained-glass windows, which contained a Native American theme (see Figure 5).<sup>38</sup> Famous Native American artists also designed the Stations of the Cross that are on display around the perimeter of the sanctuary. It was quite possibly the most beautiful display of the incorporation of the native heritage into the Christian belief system.

Such an example shows that "God does not need liturgy; people do, and people have only their own arts and styles of expression with which to celebrate."<sup>39</sup> This simply illustrates how limiting humans are of God by assuming God has to be worshipped in a

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<sup>36</sup> "The Liturgical Movement in America," 807.

<sup>37</sup> Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, 9.

certain way. It makes us realize that we limit ourselves by placing restrictions on God.

At the same time, it is liberating to think that whatever style of worship pleases humans also pleases God. It only makes sense that God would desire for us to rejoice in the ability to worship and praise God.

With this as criteria, it is only fair to evaluate architecture by determining whether it is helpful to the congregation in terms of providing an atmosphere conducive to Christian worship. One thing to integrate in the architectural design is local culture. This provides an atmosphere conducive to community, which leads to build communion with God. With this as a foundation, Chapter Three will utilize the construction of the new Catholic Church of St. Peter to demonstrate a specific example of the way the liturgical movements in the Catholic Church have affected the styles of church architecture.

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<sup>38</sup> The author spent the summer of 2000 on the Pine Ridge Native American Reservation, working as a camp counselor. He participated in religious practices that comprised an integrated belief system—that of the Native American traditional religion and the Christian tradition. Photo taken by the author, July 2000.

<sup>39</sup> Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, *Environment and Art in Catholic Worship*, 8.

### 3

## Development of Catholic Community in Saint Peter, Minnesota

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In order to effectively evaluate the church architecture of the Church of St. Peter, it is important to have an understanding of the roots of the church. St. Peter, Minnesota has changed greatly since 1840; prior to the tornado of 1998, its Roman Catholic community had possibly been one of the most static aspects of the community. At the same time, however, it has undergone some significant steps in its evolution. These changes are most visibly apparent through the changes in the church architecture, yet are quickly felt through worship. It all began with the work of missionary Father Augustine Ravoux, when he settled in the area in 1841.<sup>40</sup>

Meetings began in a local home in 1855, much like the humble beginnings of the Church soon after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Eventually, a church was established and a church structure was built. An interview taken from McGuire with an older gentleman who was a child at the time of the first church recounts:

“It was unplastered and unfinished inside. The pews for many years were rough planks placed on kegs. Many times there were broken windows, for the boys were as mischievous then as they are now. It had no belfry, nor bell, nor vestry, and was little more than four square walls with a crude altar, but it was a start, and from it sprung the two splendid churches St. Peter has today.”<sup>41</sup>

This suggests the structure provided a worship environment, which felt crude and rugged. It seems appropriate for a time when pioneers were journeying by caravan, across the rawness of nature.

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<sup>40</sup> David B. McGuire, *The Catholic Community of St. Peter, Minnesota, 1856-1996: The First 140 Years* (St. Peter: Nelson Printing, 1996), 6.

As will be shown later in this chapter, church members of today testify that the current church feels light and inviting. Since the two accounts of the original church and the present church are like night and day, it is no surprise that many steps have been taken along the way. Since the first church building, there have been four others. The first church was abandoned and built new. It was the new home of the Catholic Church of St. Peter, until 1889, when the congregation split into two.<sup>42</sup> Yet another church was built, this time because of growing numbers and the urge to separate into groups by native tongue, so that homilies could be given in both the German and Irish languages. The next major change occurred when a new church was needed to accommodate the growing congregation at St. Mary's Catholic Church. A prominent architect, Emmanuel Louis Masqueray, was hired.<sup>43</sup> The two parishes continued to remain separate, yet they worked together for many years until their final merge in 1991.<sup>44</sup>

An interview with Kay Osborne, Pastoral Associate and Liturgist at the Church of St. Peter, shed light on the attitudes with which the new church was built. She was quick to point out that they went from a traditional rectangular church to a radically different, contemporary setup. She also pointed out that even though they had plans to renovate prior to the tornado that devastated St. Peter in 1998, the church Building Committee was under a completely different program than the average church Building Committee; they had to deal with the tragedy of the tornado. Within two weeks of the ungodly destruction, the church Building Committee made their decision to build new. According

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<sup>41</sup> McGuire, *Community of St. Peter*, 12.

<sup>42</sup> McGuire, *Community of St. Peter*, 14.

<sup>43</sup> McGuire, *Community of St. Peter*, 15.

<sup>44</sup> McGuire, *Community of St. Peter*, 14.

to Osborne, “The building didn’t come with a manual on how to do liturgy in it.”<sup>45</sup>

Communion distribution was their greatest challenge. They had to completely reconfigure their plan for the liturgy – particularly Communion. She focused on how to make the liturgy come alive in the new building. It was not an easy task, considering the old church had three aisles and the new has six.<sup>46</sup>

Upon entering the existing Church of St. Peter, one is immediately welcomed by the light within (see Figure 6).<sup>47</sup> Natural lighting seeps into the sanctuary in many places. There are points of entry for the light above the altar, from the windows on all four walls. It is also present in the architectural motif. There is a theme of a sun rising or setting displayed on the upper portions of the walls as rays bouncing in multiple directions. The light beams radiate in every direction within the complex, shedding light into the heart of the church.

Light is integrated into the architecture in a different manner as well. It is accomplished by encouraging members of the congregation to go out and be lights for the world. The orientation of the interior of the sanctuary toward the exterior prompts a theme of missions (see Figure 7).<sup>48</sup> The resultant sharing of the Good News can be carried out in many ways; that which seems the least difficult is probably the most influential—simply living a Christian life and not being afraid to be proud.

The contemporaneous service and liturgy at the Church of St. Peter reflect the spirit of ecumenism. On Sunday, March 17, 2002, mass contained a highly ecumenical feeling, which was shaped by the liturgy. Father Harry’s wording during prayer was

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<sup>45</sup> Kay Osborne, interview by author, St. Peter, MN, 25 March 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Osborne, interview.

<sup>47</sup> Photograph by Charles Hendrickson, organ designer, n.d.

<sup>48</sup> Milo Thompson, “Church of St. Peter: Sanctuary Plan,” 14 October 1999.

inclusive – he proclaimed that we lift our prayers together with Christians around the world.<sup>49</sup> There was no deliberate specification to unite with *Catholics* around the world. The thing that best exemplified the church's idea of ecumenism was the practice of open communion. There are various doctrines and principles within Catholic theology that make obtaining this practice within Catholic churches a difficult task. It was not so much a surprise as much as it was a blessing to feel a part of their Christian community, especially because Lutherans are often a bit apprehensive due to preconceived notions about Catholic liturgy and worship. These are simple illustrations of the welcoming environment of the ecumenically oriented Church of St. Peter.

The changes in architecture from the old Church of St. Peter to the new have made significant impacts on the feeling within the spaces. Interviews with members of the congregation of St. Peter help to illustrate this point. Three women who attend Morning Prayer services in the new chapel reflect upon the previous church as being “home.” They have been attending the church for decades and claim to build a sense of family—a family that shares a common meeting ground—the Church of St. Peter. In addition to prayer services and mass, they have been attending many functions such as funerals, weddings and baptisms for their children. They have had difficulties at times as they adjust to their new setting. Some other words they used to describe their old church include “beautiful, sacred and familiar.”<sup>50</sup> Despite the challenging transition, they have a positive outlook on the new setting.

On the other hand, some people were not as satisfied with the outcome of the new church building. One such person said, “It is a beautiful conference center. It was such a

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<sup>49</sup> Father Harry Behan, “Fifth Sunday of Lent,” 17 March 2002, Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.



jolt from the old stained glass windows, statuary, and icons...it was like going from a sauna into ice water.”<sup>51</sup> When asked for an opinion about the ecumenical emphasis in the new architecture, Doe responded, “ecumenism is great but there is tradition to bind to as well—it is important to maintain identity.”<sup>52</sup>

Ardis Schroepfer added some interesting comments as well. She said that in the new Church of St. Peter “there is a sense of homecoming because of the people here.”<sup>53</sup> She explained that the sense of homecoming is because of community. Schroepfer went further to say that the feeling of community “does not really have anything to do with the architecture, I guess.”<sup>54</sup> Returning to the plan of the sanctuary (see Figure 7), allows one to see the seating in the round, which undoubtedly reinforces community. After analysis, one can see that architecture has a lot to do with community.

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<sup>50</sup> Jean Germscheid, Marianne Vogel and Pat Weinzerl, interview with the author, Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn. 26 March 2002.

<sup>51</sup> Jane Doe, interview with the author, St. Peter, Minn. 26 March 2002. The author chooses to keep the interviewee anonymous because of the delicate nature of handling dissenting opinions.

<sup>52</sup> Doe, interview.

<sup>53</sup> Ardis Schroepfer, interview with the author, Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn. 26 March 2002.

<sup>54</sup> Schroepfer, interview.

## 4

### Assessment of St. Peter's Catholic Church Using the Previously Established Criteria for Church Architecture

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In addition to St. Thomas' principle of radiance, the Church of St. Peter envelops the principles of wholeness and harmony, which work together in this case. Harmony is exemplified through the way the entire building is planned. Look at the floor plan for the Church of St. Peter (see Figure 8). It all works together – the floor plan shows the emphatic structure of symmetry, which highly resembles a monastic society. It provides order and insinuates order into the lives of congregation members, particularly the school children. This is done through the regiment instilled through monastic plan, observable through symmetrical emphasis. Harmony reverberates off the walls in the sanctuary; the individual parts combine in a manner that works when viewed as a whole. I will utilize principles such as form follows function, appropriate lighting, emphasis on community, and the encouragement of missions as a means for an in-depth evaluation of the new Church of St. Peter. The church experienced by plan, from the inside, and from the outside offer entirely different ventures, yet come together in one harmonious experience to parallel the Holy Trinity. This chapter will give an in-depth evaluation of the church architecture of the Catholic Church of St. Peter using the previously established criteria.

#### *Let There Be Light*

The repetitive theme of light is very appropriate for the Church of St. Peter. Revisiting the theories of one of the fathers of the Catholic Church, St. Thomas Aquinas,

it was stated that three key components are harmony, wholeness, and radiance.<sup>55</sup>

Whether intentional or not, the architect of the Church of St. Peter, Milo Thompson, accentuated the principle of radiance. To extend beyond the obvious portrayal of radiance through the sunrays on the walls, the door placement and orientation of persons toward the outside world have highly succeeded in acting as purposive symbols, suggestive that individuals might go out and share the Good News (see Figure 9).

The new Catholic Church of St. Peter provides an environment for worship that is very different from the previous space. It immediately welcomes you with light and a warm atmosphere. I believe it does a better job at portraying the message of the Gospel, whereas the former Church of St. Peter simply encouraged reverence and orderly conduct. The message of the Good News is emphasized in the new church by creating an atmosphere more conducive to Jesus' teaching of the greatest commandment of love. 1 Corinthians 13 also puts great value on this message. It states, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrong."<sup>56</sup> The beliefs that one establishes within the church shape a value system to carry with her or him out into the world. I see three major themes within the new Church of St. Peter:

- (1) God is light;
- (2) God is love; and
- (3) Community is an important aspect of God.

There are two main ways that God as love is shown in the new church setting. The first is the emphasis on the cross in the front of sanctuary. The message portrayed is that

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<sup>55</sup> Donald G. Palmgren, "Space Upon Space: The Liberal Connection," *Art & Academe: A Journal for the Humanities and Sciences in the Education of Artists* 1 (spring 1989): 51.

everything radiates from the cross. We are remembered of the ultimate sacrifice—that which claims us as God’s own through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—and the incredible amount of love God has for us which is evident the death of God’s own Son. Even though love it is not possible for the architecture itself to have feelings, architecture does have the ability to instill emotional feelings. A second display of God as love is found within the new church. It is a bit more indirect because it requires the people who attend the church. God is love through the interaction with others, especially found in the sharing of the peace. It is also in the *Our Father* through the way all worshippers join hands and the people on the ends raise their hands toward God. This is a wonderful example of how the architecture meets the needs of the liturgy. The altar placement closer toward the congregation than in the old church also encourages community. The most commonly practiced rite within the Catholic Church is the act of Holy Communion. This is significant because parishioners gather near the altar to receive the bread and the wine; since this rite is so pivotal in Catholic community, it makes the placement of the altar even more meaningful. The sense of community comes in multiple ways. One comes through feeling there is something worth sharing with others beyond the walls of the church.

The previous church had a theme of God as mystery. One way in which the architecture and liturgy worked together to convey this message was that the organ and choir loft were in the rear of the nave and the worshippers could not see the origins of the music while sitting in the pews that faced in the opposite direction (see Figure 10).<sup>56</sup> The dim lighting in the former church also added to the mysterious ambience. When

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<sup>56</sup> 1 Cor. 13:4-5.

<sup>57</sup> Photo by Charles Hendrickson, n.d.

reflecting on the environment of the old church, current Building Committee member, JoAnne Stangler, clarified that the original architect, Emmanuel Masqueray, did not plan for the church to have stained-glass windows. Rather, he planned for frosted glass, which was originally installed but later replaced with stained-glass windows.<sup>58</sup>

From an architectural point-of-view, the symbolism of the entrance to the new Church of St. Peter adequately conveys a message that God may be encountered within (see Figures 11-12).<sup>59</sup> There are four observances of which I would like to note. The first is that the four doors are representative of the four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The pediment above the front entrance doors is composed of a triangle—the most powerful of shapes—that represents the Holy Trinity. Naturally, pediments are used in other forms of architecture, but it is especially important in the context of church architecture. There is substantial symbolism found in the lantern, as well. Each of the four sides of the lantern has six windows, totaling twenty-four windows. Twenty-four elders are commonly referred to in the book of Revelation.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it is though the elders are watching over the Church of St. Peter and acting as filters—only allowing good influences to enter the space.

Since the roof of the lantern that sheds light into the sanctuary mimics the form of the pediment, the eye is drawn upward toward the fourth and most important element of the entrance—the cross. It is the most forthright sign that Jesus Christ is worshipped here. The sign of the cross, in connection with the entrance below, suggests one is welcome to enter and encounter God in this place.

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<sup>58</sup> JoAnne Stangler, telephone conversation with author, 28 April 2002.

<sup>59</sup> Photos taken by the author, n.d.

<sup>60</sup> Rev. 11:16.

## Conclusion

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God can be encountered in experiences such as revelations, worship, or prayer, which play a significant role in how we understand God. The experience of God can be exemplified by the phrase “God is love.” God can be realized through interactions with other people in a community setting. The church is one place this can occur. The church environment also extends another means to knowing God—through its architecture.

Well-known and respected Catholic theologian, St. Thomas Aquinas writes:

For the human intellect is not able to reach a comprehension of the divine substance through its natural power. For, according to its manner of knowing in the present life, the intellect depends on the sense for the origin of knowledge; and so those things that do not fall under the senses cannot be grasped by the human intellect except in so far as the knowledge of them is gathered from sensible things.<sup>61</sup>

Surely, architecture is one such way that humans can know the divine. In fact, until September 11, 2001, “architecture was defined as being the most ‘permanent’ of the arts...dance was the other extreme.”<sup>62</sup> This is greatly similar to the lessons learned regarding the Catholic Church of St. Peter and the devastation it saw from the tornado in March of 1998.

The community’s reaction to the tornado in St. Peter, Minnesota, greatly exemplify the movement toward the church as a community. The tornado was an ultimate test of community—the choice to emphasize community in the new church was a clever and appropriate reaction. Ultimately, this example serves as evidence of the interconnected relationship of architecture and liturgy.

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<sup>61</sup> Anton C. Pegis, *Saint Thomas Aquinas: On the Truth of the Catholic Faith; Summa Contra Gentiles*, Book One: God (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 64.

<sup>62</sup> Brother Richard Oliver, “Re: Senior Thesis,” E-mail to the author, 26 March 2002.

The worship and liturgy that results from the new architecture in the Church of St. Peter has a theme of growing in the loving community of the church, which is made possible by the light of God. Once this is accomplished, the congregation is encouraged to go out into the world and shine their personal lights in the name of the Lord. The music on Confirmation Sunday at the Church of St. Peter encouraged the worshippers, especially the confirmands, to "Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord! We are called to be light for the kingdom to live in the freedom of the city of God! We are called to act with justice, we are called to love tenderly, we are called to serve one another; to walk humbly with God!"<sup>63</sup> The first verse of the song *We are Called*, has much to do with the light and love of the Lord. The idea of missions was then reinforced when during the *Concluding Rites*, the presiding minister said that now our work begins.<sup>64</sup>

There is nowhere near the same feel when the church is empty as there is when there are people worshipping. In this regard, it is similar to a painting. The empty sanctuary surrounded by white walls is like a blank canvas. The painter is God and humans are the subjects in the painting, which come to life in many vibrant colors.

On a mission trip to Costa Rica the author witnessed practical church architecture as an open-air church. It consisted of a corrugated steel roof and a cement slab on the ground. It was one of the most meaningful worship experiences the author had because the people and the beauty of God's creation surrounded the "sanctuary" during worship. Since the human body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, it houses one of the most important

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<sup>63</sup> *We Are Called* (Chicago: GIA Publications, Inc), an excerpt from the church bulletin for 5 May 2002, "The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation," Church of St. Peter, St. Peter, Minn.

<sup>64</sup> The author attended worship on 5 May 2002; it was "The Celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation," at the Church of St. Peter, in St. Peter, Minn.

things. Given this statement, the relationship between church architecture and that of the human body is very close. It must be the discerned sacredness of the human being, which ultimately determines the sacredness of a place.

Although it started out in terror, the results of the tornado have been greatly beneficial in many ways. The greatest benefit has been the build-up of community. The Catholic community of St. Peter has surely benefited from many things from the new church. Given all this, it is a wonder if the tornado really was for better or worse?



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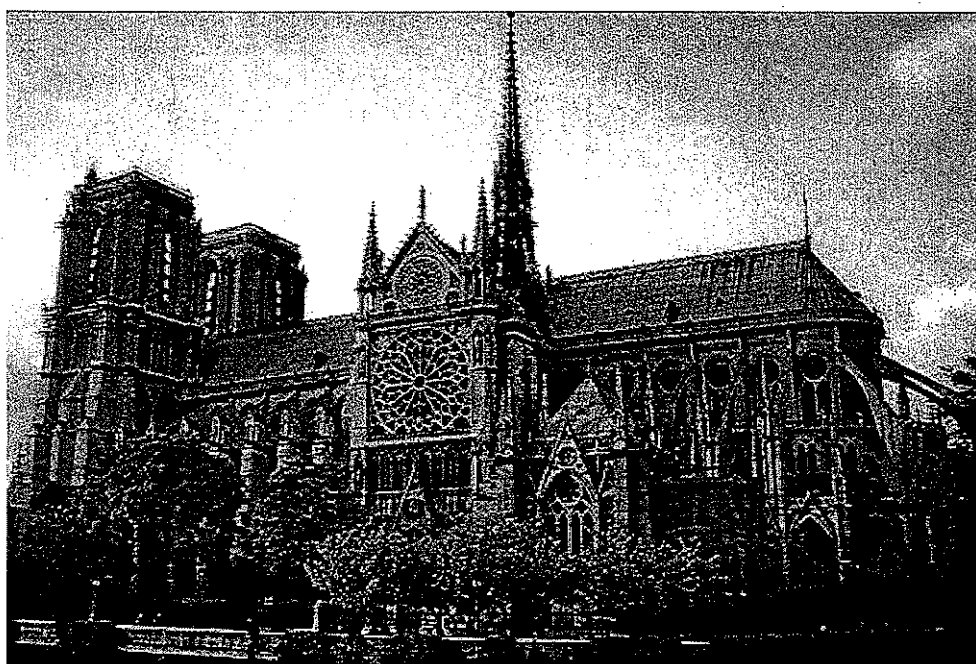
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## Appendix

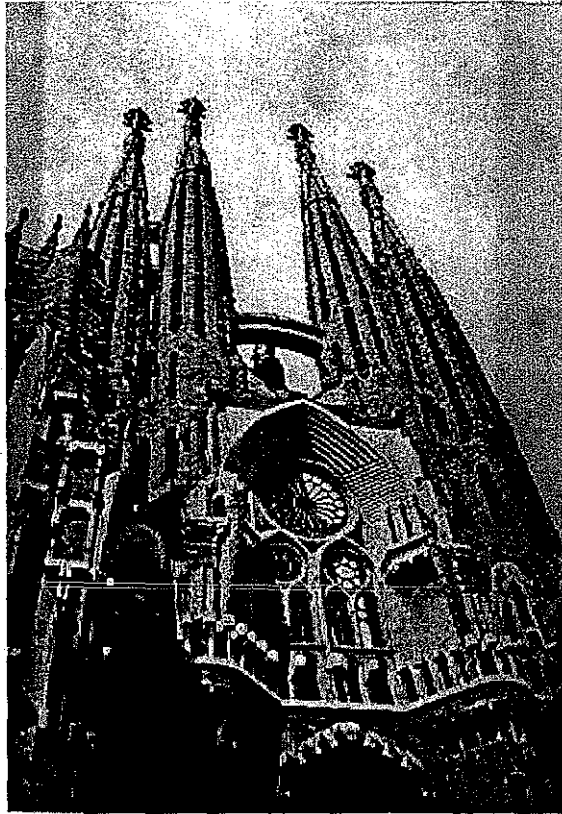
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*Figure 1:* Chapel of St. Ignatius, Seattle, WA. Designed by Steven Holl Architects.



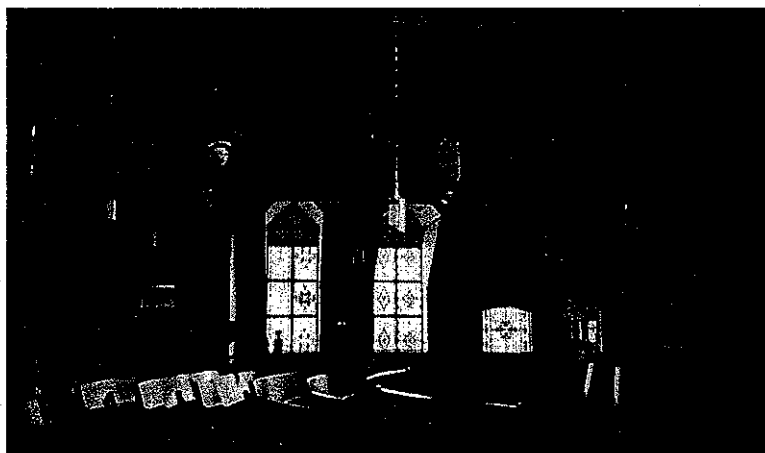
*Figure 2:* Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France. Exterior photograph displays lavishly ornate decoration.



*Figure 3:* La Sagrada Familia, Barcelona, Spain. This Expressionistic church was designed by architect Antoni Gaudi and is still in the construction process.



*Figure 4:* Abbey of Solesmes, Solesmes, France.



*Figure 5:* Interior of the church sanctuary at the Red Cloud Jesuit Mission in Pine Ridge, S. Dakota. Four children worked with elders of the community to design stained-glass windows with Native American patterns. This is an exquisite example of effective integration of the culture of the community and the Christian belief system.



*Figure 6:* Interior of the sanctuary of the new Church of St. Peter. This photo illustrates an instance when a vast amount of natural light floods the place of worship. The light wood color and warm tone of the floor tiles help create a warm feel, which helps people feel welcome.

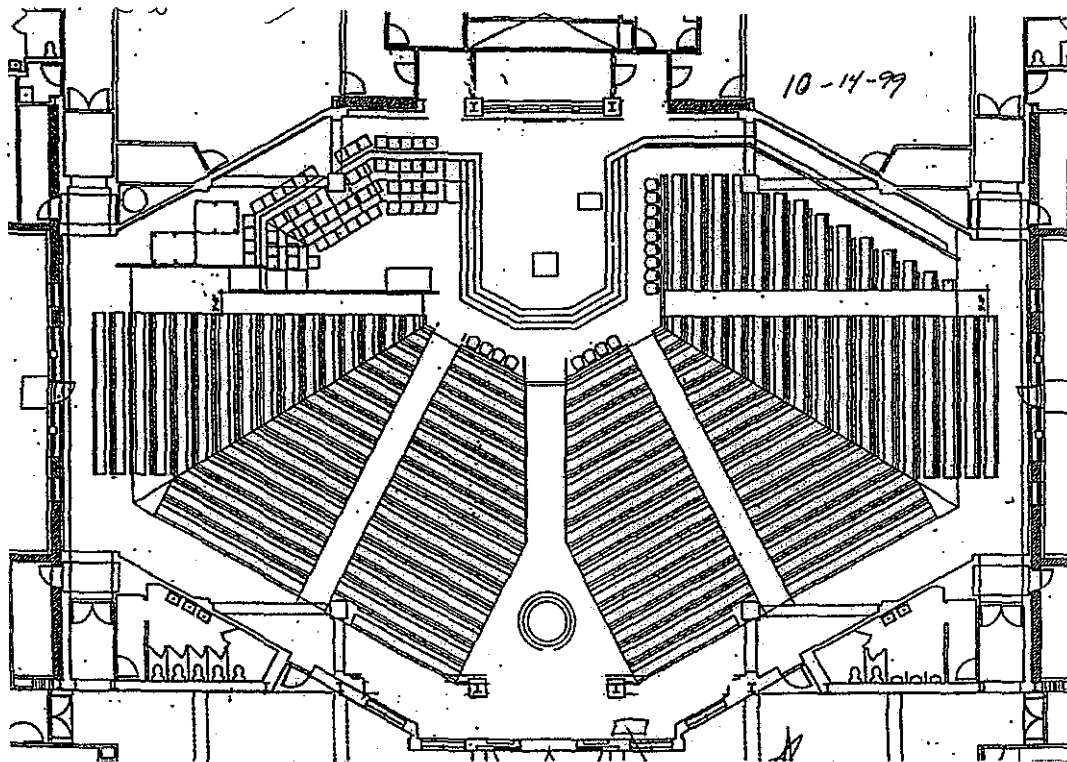


Figure 7: Sanctuary plan for the Church of St. Peter, by the office of Bentz, Thompson, and Rietow Architects. One enters at the bottom of the plan, around the baptismal font, and toward the altar. The seating plan directs all attention toward the center, while at the same time toward other members of the congregation, ultimately enhancing one's sense of community. The plan is also indicative of sending on missions because upon leaving, it guides the congregation toward doors that lead in numerous directions.

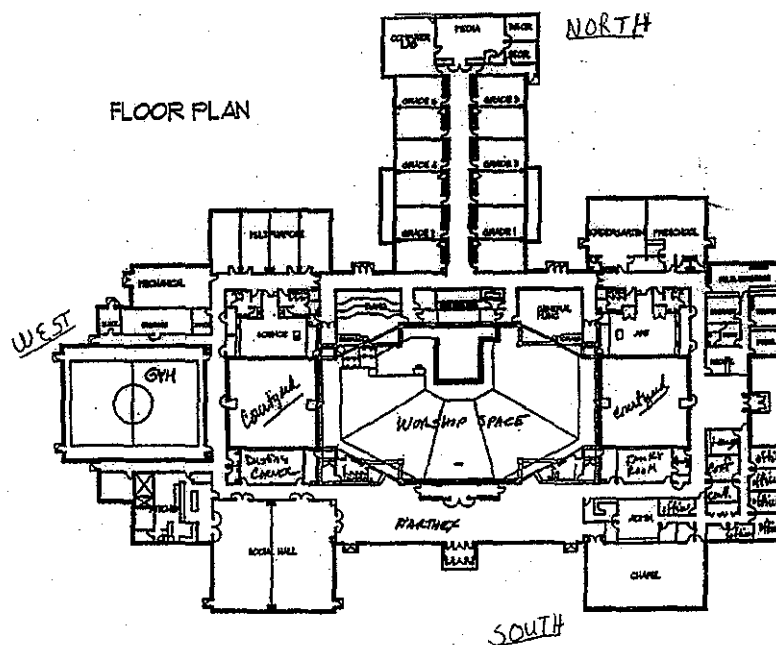
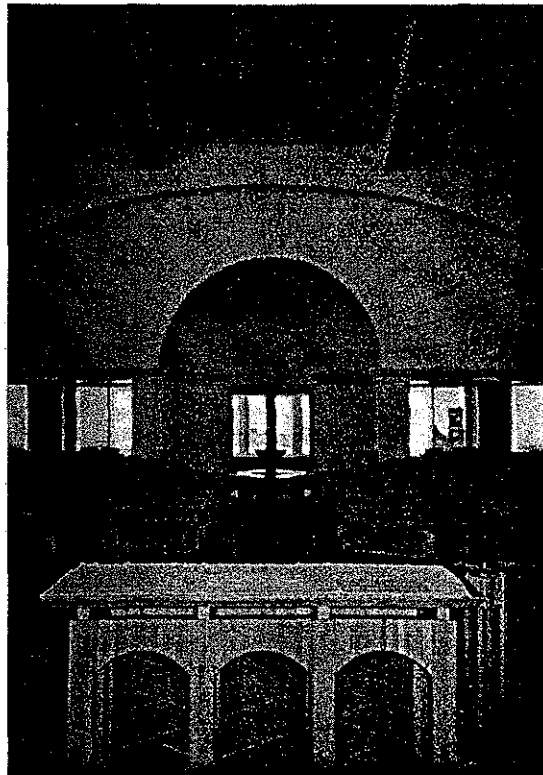
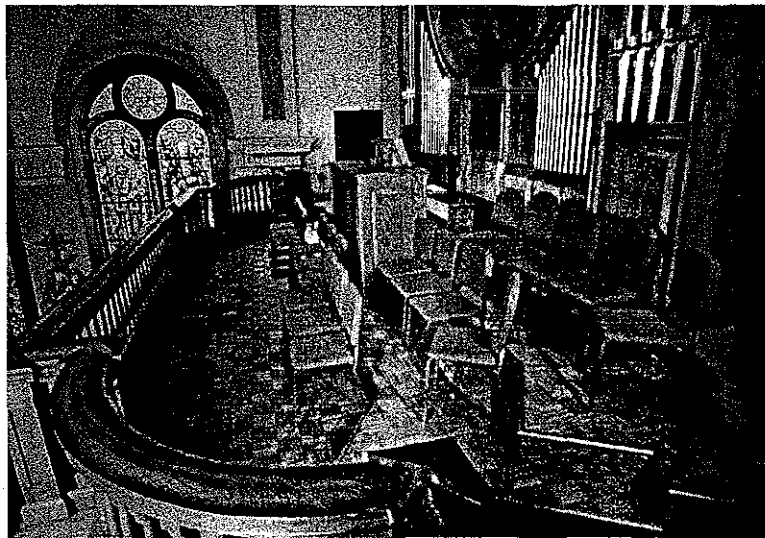


Figure 8: "Floor plan for the Church of St. Peter," By the office of Bentz, Thompson, and Rietow, the plan is very monastic and symmetrical.

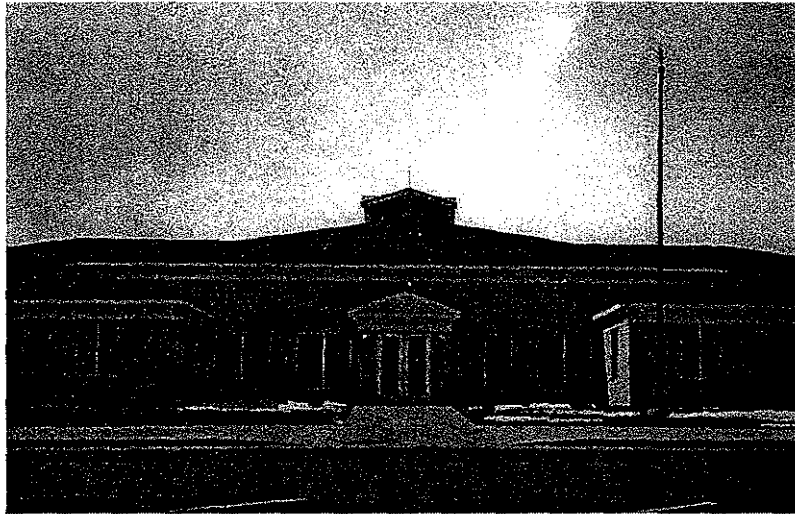


*Figure 9:* Inside the current Church of St. Peter, facing the rear of the church from the altar. The open doors and windows allow for both an increased amount of light allowed in, as well as provide openness to instill a message of missions.

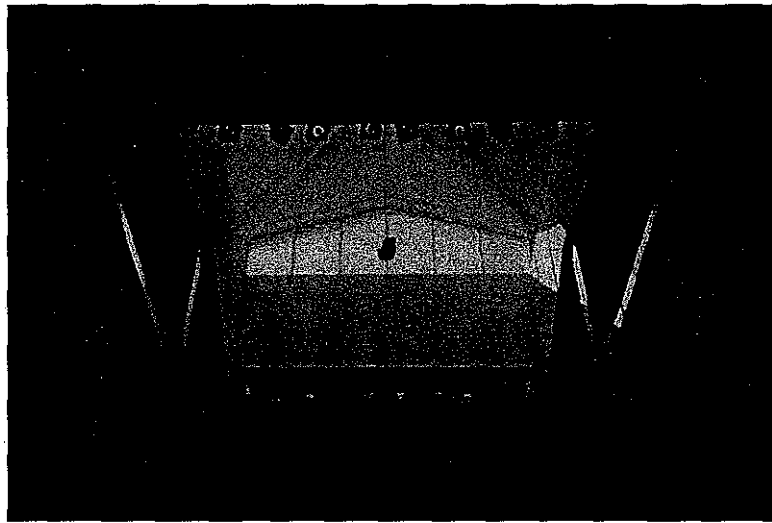


*Figure 10:* The choir and organ were located at the rear balcony in the old church.





*Figure 11:* Entrance to the Church of St. Peter.



*Figure 12:* Lantern at the Church of St. Peter. This allows much natural lighting of the space.

