

The meaning of  
catholic church  
architecture theology  
religion essay



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Theology in Stone: The Meaning of Catholic Church Architecture. If a tour of the Catholic churches were to be formed, you would be in need of a guide. The reason for this is simple. Catholic churches have assigned symbolic meaning to the various parts of the church building. This symbolism is shown not only on the exterior of the building, but also through-out the interior and the Holy items within.

There are several misconceptions surrounding Catholic churches and its architecture. One myth about the church states that the Vatican Council requires the rejection of traditional church architecture and the promotion of more modern architecture. This myth is supported by what Roman Catholics have built during the last three decades rather than what the Church has taught. Even by vocational reports, the church architecture of the past decade has been a complete calamity. Nevertheless, actions frequently speak louder than words, and the faithful have been led to accept that the Church necessitates its structures to be functional abstractions. There has also been controversy surrounding the Catholic church praising saints or items and symbols, it is easy to see why someone may say that it is not possible or welcomed to build a beautiful church. This happens to be completely wrong. We live in an age where men have been flown to the moon and insanely ample sums of money are exhausted on sporting arenas. Of course we should also be able to construct these structures of the same quality as the previous Christian basilicas or Gothic cathedrals. In recent layman architecture we are observing a great resurgence of traditional architecture and craftsmanship.

Following the book ' Ugly as Sin', there are three natural laws of Catholic church architecture. The church must have verticality [1]. It is said that a good, successful, and vertical church will stick out above the other smaller buildings in the area. This is so the heavenly Jerusalem (which I interpret as Heaven) is passed through the church. Verticality, itself creates this condition of existence. It's this beingness that makes divine architecture at all possible. Windows, columns, supports, and sacred art should fortify this heavenward ambition. The ceiling's pronunciation should create a sense of transcendence toward the Heaven through the mosaics and murals as well as the use of natural light used on the body of the church. (Ugly as Sin, 24)

The second of the three natural laws of church architecture is permanence [2]. The building itself symbolizes Christ's presence in the world. (" Christ's presence in the world is the same yesterday and today and forever.") The same thing goes for the church. It must be lasting and surpass space and time. Typically, stone or brick will be used as the material to form the exterior of the church in order to satisfy permanence. This permanence is yet another way of creating transcendence. An authentic

Catholic church construction is a work of art that communicates the preceding importance of the Church's architectural heritage. " It refers to the past, serves the present, and informs the future." (Ugly as Sin, 26)

The last natural law, Iconography [3]. The Catholic church must have Iconography, this will distinguish the building as a church. A creditable church will also use iconography to capture something bigger. "... meditation; painting, sculpture, and architecture are meant to work together

to produce a unified effect". (St. Ignatius Loyola) This is said to emphasize the importance of beautiful creations in the world. A church's architectural appearance should reverberate God's creation. In specifically, man, who was made in the image of God. " Art has been, is, and will be forever, the greatest agency for spiritual impression that the Church may claim." writes architect Ralph Adams Cram. He writes in addition; because of art, Christians have defined the creative symbolism that lift us to God. The iconography may also display the life of Jesus through-out the Church in a story of pictures, symbols, items, or furniture. (Ugly as Sin, 27)

Our journey will lead us to the front, or facade of the church which may be the most artistic and memorable piece of the church. There could be elaborate stained glass, sculptures or memorials in the facade. The stained glass is most commonly above the large wooden doors that create a ' gateway' that guards the interior of the church. Often the facade shows a story formed around the detailed artwork. When discussing the shape of the church, other than height, you will find the building to be in the shape of a cross. Also, the church transepts will be pointing to the North and South. A transept is the transverse arm of a cruciform church. The left transept is the North transept and the right transept is the South transept. A dome is usually formed at the center of the transepts. The liturgy is supposed to be conducted facing East under this dome where God's people have gathered.

Upon entering the church, you come to the Narthax, which means " entry". The transition from the outside world to the inside. This can also be a covered porch-like structure outside of the building. A certain attitude should be attributed to the scents and sounds when entering the Narthax. As you <https://assignbuster.com/the-meaning-of-catholic-church-architecture-theology-religion-essay/>

progress through the church, you will find the Nave, which means “ ship” in Latin. This is where followers sit or stand when receiving the liturgy.

Churches in the Gothic era typically had screens covering the sanctuary. This area was treated as the Holy of Holies. The sanctuary is where the Tabernacle is kept and where there should be a burning tabernacle light. When the Tabernacle is presented, followers genuflect. When the Sacrament is exposed, Catholics kneel on both knees. The altar is the next significant item found in the Church.

The Altar should be set and made of stone and contain a relic of a Saint (usually a hair or other small body part). This is also where the Tabernacle is usually kept. (Jeremiah)

The Church performs many functions. Of the most important, there is, worship, hymns or songs, and discipline. Worship facilitates our relationship with God and makes it possible for us to communicate with him in both private and public. Worship more commonly is a public function, done in the mass and amongst other believers. Hymns are another pertinent aspect or function of the church. These allow us to express feelings and emotions we have for God and and the relationship we’ve formed with him. We also see discipline in the church, this is spiritual discipline. This faithfulness regards our hearts, psyche, and spirit. Prayer should be something we Christians enjoy doing and desire being a part of. It may sound like “ discipline” is referring to punishment, when the real meaning of discipline is something that disciplines, or enables (learning). Discipleship refers to the continuous teaching and mentorship. “ Passing the word through the generations. It has been said, no man is good left alone. Nor is it good for a Christian to be left

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alone. We must encourage ministry by giving permission, training, tools, and removing any impedance." (" Six Functions of the Church")

" Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!... Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12).

Fellowship can serve as a mutual relationship among Christians. Fellowship means sharing life experiences, emotions and burdens. This encourages Christians to help not only one another but also those who do not believe in Christ. All of these functions are served by the Catholic Church and serve a distinct, pious, purpose for members of the church. (" Six Functions of the Church")

The architecture that forms the church is invariably important to the teachings of the bible and Jesus' life. The shapes, scents, and designs assist the learning and provide certain sensations that parallel the traditional mass and liturgy. Architecture plays an important part as symbolism for the church. Much of the artistic features about the church represent something greater or tell a story. The church must also seek to perform a few major functions; worship, hymns, and spiritual disciplines. All of these functions are to bring us closer to God and his heavenly Jerusalem and every aspect of the church is to transcend the spirit through-out us, God's people.

Cites:

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