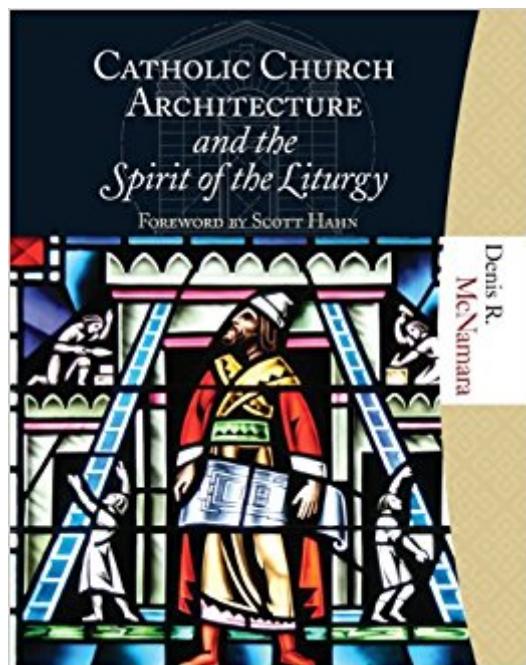


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# Catholic Church Architecture And The Spirit Of The Liturgy



## **Synopsis**

This unique book delves into the deep meanings of liturgical art and architecture, and by association, the Sacred Liturgy itself. It is meant to help pastors, architects, artists, members of building committees, seminarians, and everyone interested in liturgical art and architecture come to grips with the many competing themes which are at work in church buildings today. The object of Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy is help the reader to drink deeply from the wells of the tradition, to look with fresh eyes at things thought to be outdated or meaningless, and glean the principles which underlie the richness of the Catholic faith. Part one presents an emerging area of study: Architectural Theology Part two introduces the readers for the first time to the scriptural foundations of church architecture Part three focuses on the classical tradition of architecture Part four examines iconography as eschatological and Part five concludes with a discussion of the Twentieth Century and where we are now in the Age of the Church. Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy is a foundational sourcebook for studying, designing, building, and renovating Catholic churches, this book is intended to find the middle of the road between differing and sometimes conflicting theories of liturgical architecture. It will give architects and building committees the theological language and tools to understand the elements of church design by examining past architecture and will help decision makers link these principles to their current building projects. Winner of two Catholic Press Association awards: Design and Production, Second Place History, Second Place

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"I believe that this book by Denis McNamara is the kind of mystagogy Pope Benedict called for. I believe it is the kind of mystagogy the ancient Fathers would wish for their own churches. Dr. McNamara knows that to contemplate sacred space is not merely to trace influences in an evolutionary diagram back to Vitruvius. To understand a church requires more than a genealogy of tourist postcards. It requires an interior life. It requires a hope of heaven. It requires a revelation. It calls for mystagogy. All of which are evident in the pages of this book. Dr. McNamara has given us something we desperately need, something rare and great: at once an achievement of scholarship, a work of mystagogy, and an act of piety." --Scott Hahn, Founder and Director, St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology

"With his Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy, Dr. Denis McNamara has made a most significant contribution to the theology of the Sacred Liturgy, in the line of the luminous writings on the subject by Pope Benedict XVI, both before and after his election to the See of Peter. Dr. McNamara argues convincingly and well that the *lex aedificandi*, that is, the norm of building in what pertains to churches and chapels, like the *lex orandi* or norm of praying, by its very nature, gives expression to the *lex credendi* or norm of faith itself. Among the many rich elements of Dr. McNamara's profound and comprehensive study of Sacred Architecture is his most timely application of the "hermeneutic of continuity," that is, the interpretation of Sacred Architecture in the light both of the roots of Christian worship in Jewish worship and of the organic development of Sacred Worship, down the Christian centuries. Dr. McNamara helps us to understand how a church or chapel is at one and the same time the House of God and the House of the Church. I wholeheartedly commend the work of Dr. McNamara to all who want to deepen their understanding of sacred architecture, who desire to be schooled in the Church's *lex aedificandi*. In a particular way, it is my hope that his study will become a standard reference for seminarians and priests, and for all who have responsibility for the building and maintenance of churches and chapels. For every attentive reader, Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy will not fail to offer a most significant contribution to the life of faith and worship." --The Most Reverend Raymond L. Burke, Archbishop Emeritus of Saint Louis

"This comprehensive volume answers the two questions that should initiate any discussion about the future of liturgical architecture: Why and How. Why should a church look like a church? How do we "read" a church to know if it does? The answer to these fundamental questions does not come out of ideology or archaism, but from a theological analysis of Beauty and a review of architectural principles. McNamara has the uncommon capacity to speak about both, as he describes the church as a sacramental building. McNamara's progression from eschatological icon and Beauty to the architectural principles of decoration and ornament to a

careful reading of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is ingenious. If congregations facing a renovation, priests facing a building committee, and church architects facing a project were to really struggle with the content of this book, it would change the kind of churches that we build. The book has the potential to change the future. What would happen to church architecture for the next fifty years if this book were to be read seriously?" --David Fagerberg, Associate Professor of Theology, University of Notre Dame

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Denis R. McNamara, an architectural historian who specializes in American church architecture of

the 19th and 20th centuries, holds a Ph.D. from the University of Virginia. He has written and lectured widely on the history and theology of ecclesiastical architecture, and has served on the Art and Architecture Commission of the Archdiocese of Chicago. He is currently Assistant Director and faculty member at the Liturgical Institute of the University of St. Mary of the Lake / Mundelein Seminary, and serves as a liturgical design consultant.

Thank you! Great book

Great!!!

Very detailed and descriptive. The liturgical perspective is very inspirational.

Our parish is in the midst of evaluating the worship space we have now. The unspoken pain of many of our parishioners in the current architecture has been given a voice through this process and this book has been a powerful starting point for study. It eloquently expresses what so many Catholics know from their interior but have a hard time expressing - that "my church doesn't look like a church". I believe this book will serve as a starting place for the emerging discussion on what went wrong with architecture following the Second Vatican Council. While the book is scholarly, it is approachable to the interested lay person. Difficult terms are bolded and defined on the page that they appear. Vivid and clear examples are given in pictures and photos in each chapter, and the reader comes away with a strong sense of "what went wrong" and where to go from here. The reader will first be taught that beauty is not 'in the eye of the beholder' and therefore Catholics are not lost to the whims of modern liturgists and architects. "An object is beautiful when it most clearly and fully reveals its ontological reality, the very reality of its being as understood in the mind of God." A church that looks like a meeting house or factory is not beautiful for this reason - it doesn't look like a church. The text then moves to the scriptural foundations of architecture laying a path for "theological architecture" beginning in ancient Israel (shadow) to the New Testament (living stones) to today, the Church as a vision of heaven (does your Church look like a vision of heaven or chaos or emptiness?). Part III covers the classical tradition in decoration, ornament, and columns - their meaning, and their use to express an elevation to a heavenly reality. Part IV covers iconography and the eschatological reality and nature of the church building. The author masterfully discusses the ability of the artist to bring into physical form a 'flash' of the reality of heaven and what went wrong in modern architecture. Part V is a study of the 20th century, the history of architecture and the

liturgical movement, Mediator Dei, the Second Vatican Council (and what it actually said as opposed to the "Spirit" of the council), the hermeneutics of discontinuity employed for modern ugly church architecture, and finally, where we can go from here. I highly recommend this book for anyone confused to why so many churches are "ugly as sin" (the title of another great book), and want to speak intelligently to their pastors, bishops, building committees, and worship commissions. It should be required reading for all students of theology, religious education, and required reading in seminaries. This is the only book on Catholic Church architecture I would give a full 5 stars. It is well worth the price.

Denis McNamara has delivered a framework for church architects and building projects that has been needed for many years. Denis takes from theory and spiritual concepts to deliver brick and stone examples. This book is full of photos and methodologies of how churches are built, explaining the traditions, theology, and techniques used to in representing heaven on earth, via a built structure. The book is accessible to laymen, builders, and clergy. It is also informative from a historical perspective as to what theories have led us to the way churches look over time. The audience need not be a specialist to enjoy this, but a specialist can certainly use this as a tool in building projects.

I'm not writing this for artists, architects, pastors, seminary students, designers, liturgists, contractors, or professors. "Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy," should simply be their required reading for its expertise, theology and inspiration. The author, architectural historian Denis McNamara, is assistant director and faculty member at the Liturgical Institute of the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary near Chicago. This review is for today's voiceless parishioners who, without the kind of information in this book, have no constructive opinion as to what their church building's interior renovation or new construction will ultimately look like. North, South, East and West from Holy Name Cathedral in the Archdiocese of Chicago, there are some of the most awesome churches in Christendom. Most were built in a different era, when, as author McNamara says, the church building was "a sacrament of the city of heaven." If one of these is your house of worship, thank God, and read this book to better appreciate what you have. (In fact, McNamara's first book, "Heavenly City," showcased Chicago's outstanding houses of God.) If your Sunday Eucharist is offered in a "Disneyland gothic," or glorified gymnasium, read this book to be better informed on what you're missing. Granted, no matter how mundane the parish place of worship may be, it is filled with happy and sentimental memories. It is filled with loving neighbors, as

well as the ghosts of those who went before -- those who cooked the chicken dinners that built those walls in our founding pastor's price range."Catholic Church Architecture and the Spirit of the Liturgy," is a book to curl up IN. You'll savor its 225 pages and 425 stunning photographs if you're into the topic. It expresses a school of thought and a consolation, that the "something" missing in so much of our world is Beauty, Truth and Goodness, which is God himself. The author hopes through this book (I call it a "course") to help readers "rediscover the meaning of Beauty."He addresses the competing themes at work in church buildings today and strives, in charity, to find middle ground between conflicting theories of liturgical architecture. There are 16 frequently asked questions included from his parish presentations and from the classroom, that helped inspire him to write the book. His answers are straightforward.Summing up the role of liturgical art and architecture joined to the liturgy, McNamara writes: "...it reveals to us our heavenly destination by showing us where we are, where we have been, and where we are going. ... It welcomes us to the Heavenly Banqueting Feast ... It shows to our eyes the glory of heaven and absorbs all good that has come before; from pagan, Jew, and Christian. ... In it we swim in the warm, effortless delight of the Sabbath, in the vision of freedom where all is from God, to God, and about God."

Very interesting and informative. Will help my better appreciation of Catholic churches and will share information with my circle of Catholic friends, especially those who have roles in helping to build our new churches.

Building churches is a touchy topic. McNamara brings in historical and theological background without overwhelming the casual reader with technical terms or unhelpful details. His approach is very balanced, neither conservative nor progressive, firmly rooted in Vatican II and the traditions of the Church (and of architecture).I have long searched for a book that would teach me "How to Read a Church." This book does that, and much more.

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