

Faith in Five – Adults
Sacred Architecture, Sacred Spaces
September 16, 2022

The main function of **sacred architecture** is to elevate our minds and hearts to God.

1. The word "Church" (Latin ecclesia, from the Greek ek-ka-lein, to "call out of") means a convocation or an assembly. It designates the assemblies of the people, the building in which the Christian community gathers to hear the word of God, to pray together, to receive the sacraments, and celebrate the eucharist for the purpose of public worship.
2. Peter calls Christians "living stones" built into a "spiritual edifice" (1 Pet 2:4). The church building, then, is an icon of the Heavenly Jerusalem, which itself is made up of the Trinity and celestial beings surrounded by living stones of the saints. Making this invisible spiritual reality appear to us in material form is the very essence of the sacramentality of a church building. ([Source](#))
3. There are Scriptures depicting precise measurements and fine materials to be used for the Tabernacle for the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25). Similarly in 1 Chronicles 28, the Lord gave David specific instructions for the temple. Even in Heaven everything is detailed specifically; the walls, foundation and gates are made with precious metals, stones and jewels (Revelation 21:15-27). It is no wonder earthly churches of old are grand and beautiful! We are led to an overwhelming sense of awe and wonder; grateful for the beauty of God that surrounds us and our presence before Him. Sacred buildings and requisites for divine worship should be truly worthy and beautiful and be signs and symbols of heavenly realities (GIRM, 288).
4. These visible churches are not simply gathering places but signify and make visible the Church living in this place, the dwelling of God with men reconciled and united in Christ..." [where] "the truth and the harmony of the signs [in the church] should show Christ to be present and active in this place" (CCC, 1180). (Image Source: <https://masscomminfo.tumblr.com/>)
5. The Roman architectural idea of a basilica, appealed to the Christians and they began constructing churches with wide open spaces to accommodate their activities and community. Eventually, the cruciform plan was adopted. The crucifix-shaped layout of the Catholic church enables worship and services to be conducted easily. The cruciform plan symbolizes Jesus' suffering and sacrifice.
6. For the celebration of the Eucharist, the people are normally gathered together in a church. If there is no church or if it is too small, then in another respectable place suitable for carrying out the sacred action and for ensuring the active participation of the faithful. Mass can be celebrated in large halls, general purpose rooms, or outside. Preparation is necessary to make sure it is a prayerful space.



Below is a comprehensive overview of Catholic architecture, including its symbolic meanings.

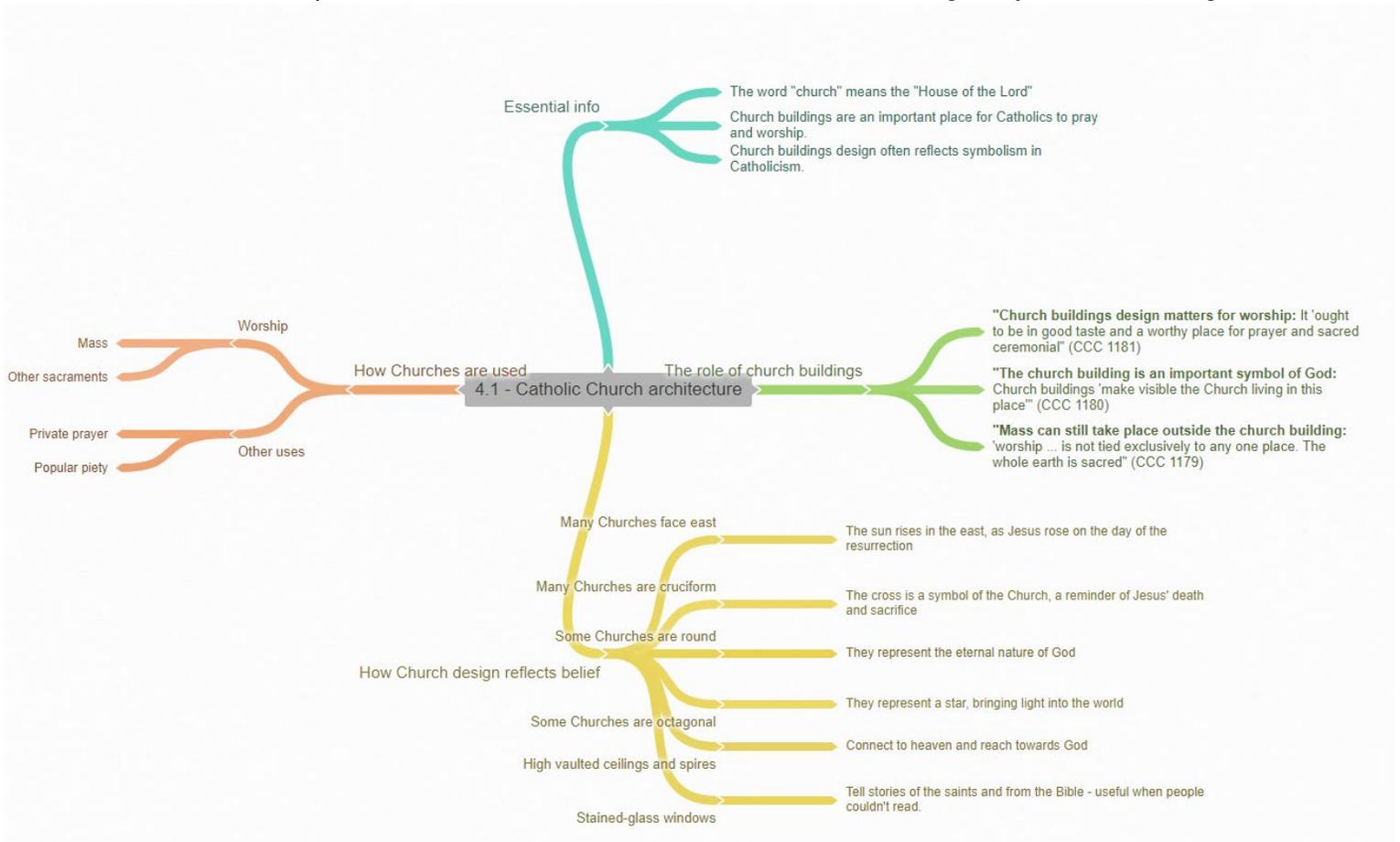


Image Source: https://coggle.it/diagram/XL4h_8UWNGcyFwCp/t/4-1-catholic-church-architecture

The ornamentation of a church should contribute toward its noble simplicity rather than to ostentation. Moreover, in the choice of elements, attention should be paid to authenticity; there should be the intention of fostering the instruction of the faithful and the dignity of the entire sacred place (GIRM, 292)

The sanctuary is the place where the altar stands, the Word of God is proclaimed, and the Priest, the Deacon, and the other ministers exercise their functions. It should be appropriately marked off from the body of the church either by its being somewhat elevated or by a particular structure and ornamentation. It should, moreover, be large enough to allow the Eucharist to be easily celebrated and seen. (GIRM, 295).

7. Parts of the church

Sanctuary – area containing the altar. It is considered to be the most sacred space.

Altar – focal point of the church, elevated.

Nave – seating area

Vestibule – the anteroom, spacious for books, pamphlet racks, holy water font, notices, etc.

Narthex – enclosed area or porch at the entrance of the church that connects the outside to the main worship area.

* The terms narthex and vestibule are used almost interchangeably, but there is a slight technical difference. A vestibule is a passage, hall, or room between the outer door and the interior of a building, whereas the narthex is a porch or lobby that connects the outside to the main worship area.

8. Catholic places of worship

shrine	A church or sacred place to which numerous members of the faithful make a pilgrimage for a special reason of piety (CCC, Code of Canon Law, 1230). For a shrine to be called a national shrine, the conference of bishops must give its approval; for it to be called an international shrine, the approval of the Holy See is required.
chapel	can be associated with a specific place such as a college, convent or hospital. Looks like a small church and may have their own altar. Chapels that are built as part of a larger church are holy areas set aside for some specific use or purpose
church	A building specifically for prayer, worship and gathering, also known as parish. It is the center of religious life, where Mass and the sacraments are celebrated. May have side chapels
cathedral	Contains the seat of the bishop, serving as the main church of the diocese. It is usually the biggest church in the diocese.
basilica	A very large church building, distinguished for ceremonial purposes from other churches. St. Peter's is the papal basilica, not a cathedral since it is not the seat of the bishop. The Archbasilica of St. John Lateran is actually the cathedral church of Rome.

9. Sacred spaces in the home

Creating a special place at home for worshipping the Lord ourselves or together as a family honor our faith and desire to serve the Lord. These spaces can be as simple or elaborate as one wishes. Traditionally, a crucifix, images of Jesus and Mary, candles, rosaries, and holy books can be found in these areas. In this dedicated space at home, we are reminded of our call to holiness, where we can submit ourselves to the worship and reverence of God.

You Tube Videos: [For ideas on creating a home altar from A Catholic Mom's Life](#)

Also view: [A Catholic Mom's Life Home Altar](#)

[A Catholic Mom's Life Home Altar on a Budget](#)

“Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place”.
2 Chronicles 7:15

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