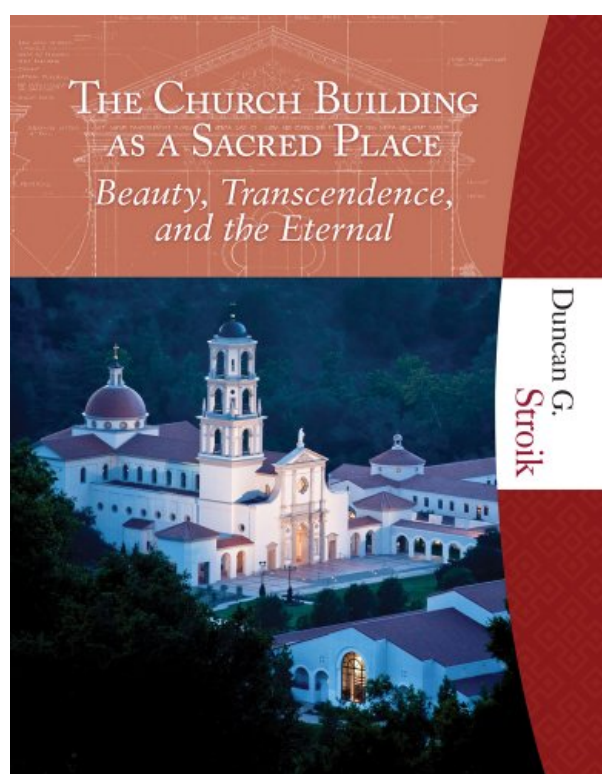
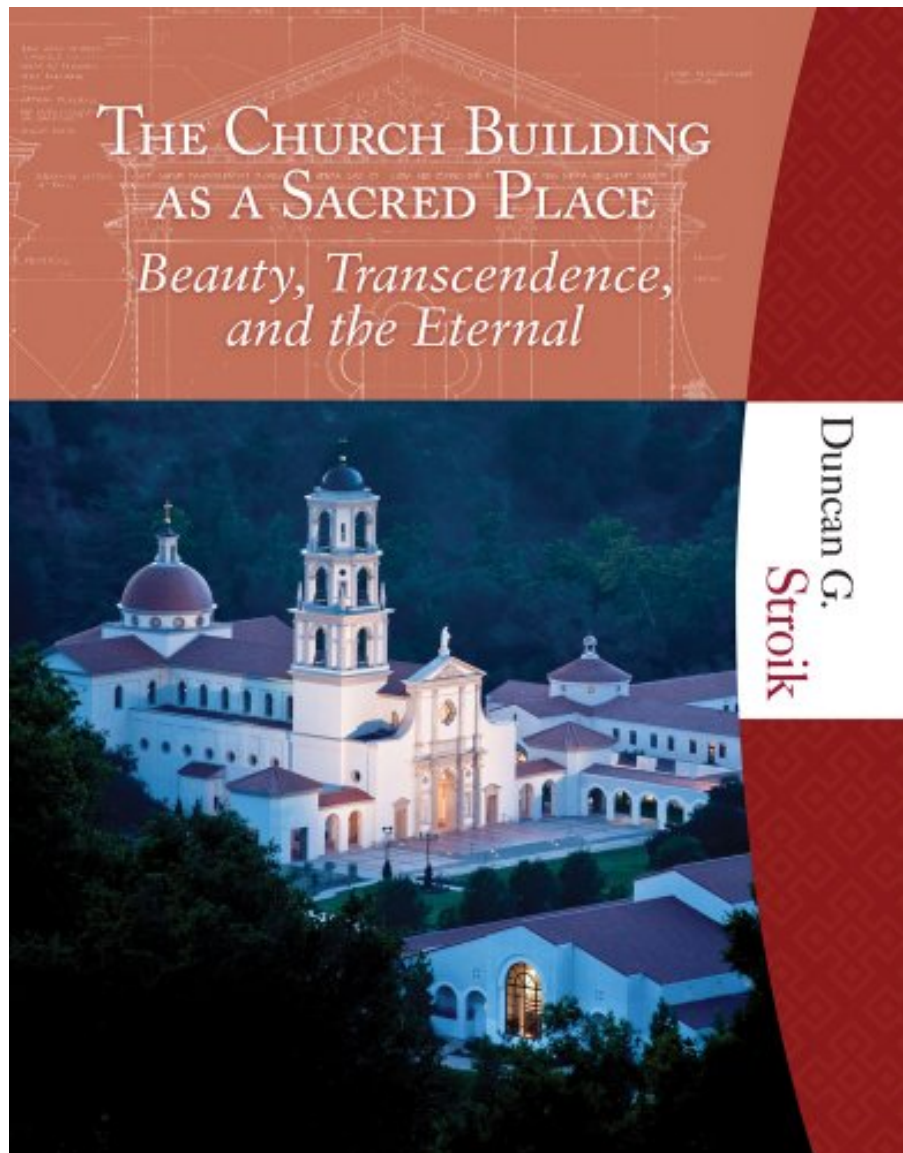


THE CHURCH BUILDING AS A SACRED PLACE: BEAUTY, TRANSCENDENCE, AND THE ETERNAL BY DUNCAN G. STROIK



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This retrospective and forward-looking collection of 23 essays by Duncan Stroik shows the development and consistency of his architectural vision over the last eighteen years. The essays cover church modernism and modernity, renaissance and renewal, principles of church design, and a critique of modern iconoclasm. The appendices feature: a list of canonical documents pertaining to church architecture, a useful chart showing the comparative size of well known churches and comparative sizes of baldacchinos in Rome. Packed with informative essays and over 170 photographs, this collection will help priests, bishops, liturgical consultants, lay commissions and parishioners understand the Church's architectural tradition. Duncan Stroik's architectural practice and career have helped lead the evolution of the international classical movement, and over the past decade his work has been instrumental in the new renaissance of sacred architecture. He is an internationally noted classical designer and heavily involved in promoting the new renaissance in Catholic architecture. He combines a passion for an architecture of durability, beauty, and function, with an intimate knowledge of Catholic liturgy.

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A masterful work in a neglected field

By Sacred Art Lover

Duncan Stroik's new book on Sacred Architecture (Amazon is mistaken, it is a 2012 book) is the product of 20 years of work as one of the leading Catholic church architects and as a professor and Notre Dame. This fact really shows up in this book; it does not read like a quick commentary upon sacred architecture, but rather as a to the point discussion of the main issues in the field.

I thought that the best thing about this book was its combination of real world knowledge about the state of the field of catholic architecture (a background that distinguishes him more purely theological writers on the subject) and profound grasp of the many church documents, regulations, historical factors and the like that all factor in this nuanced and often incompressibly complex field--as I was reading I kept thinking: "how does he know all this stuff? This ability to bring the many sides of sacred architecture to the table is what gives this book's its broad applicability and readability. Indeed, this is that valuable type of work "the specialist writing for the common man" that is so often compelling. In this sense the issues raised in this book would be valuable to every catholic priest, search committee member, and anyone interested in the field.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Champion of Beautiful Churches

By W. Foley

By all means buy this wonderful book, and while you're waiting for it to arrive check out the author's bona fides. Dial up Thomas Aquinas College on your computer. At the top of the page click on A CATHOLIC LIFE, and then on CHAPEL. Read about Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity Chapel. This exquisite little church was designed by the author of this book, and may well be the most beautiful building of the 21st Century. It is certainly the most beautiful Catholic Church built in the last 50 years.

In addition to designing beautiful contemporary classical-based buildings in his South Bend architecture practice, Mr. Stroik is Professor of Architecture at University of Notre Dame, and is founder and editor of Sacred Architecture Journal.

My take on Duncan Stroik's talk and walk is that there is no one more qualified to lead the charge if we Catholics really want to stop building the "ugly as sin" churches we have been building for the last fifty years, and his book, *The Church Building as a Sacred Place: Beauty, Transcendence, and the Eternal*, is a perfect way for Catholics to come up to speed on the subject.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Speaking Truth to Power

By Felix

What a thought-provoking collection of essays Dr. Duncan Stroik has culled over the course of the years as he theorizes and actually constructs sacred buildings dedicated to the Catholic faith. Defying the architectural establishment and the Left Wing of the Catholic Church, Stroik is not afraid to explain how the building of Catholic sacred spaces since the mid-20th century and embracing the minimalist style of mid-century Modernism has in fact betrayed many of the core beliefs of Catholic Tradition and tradition and given us instead an architecture that serves as the misguided (and often ugly) vessel in which to deposit our Catholic faith. Stroik evidences in architecture not a hermeneutics of continuity (as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI would have us believe has happened since the Second Vatican Council) but rather a methodical and thorough rejection and condemnation of Catholic architectural tradition, i.e., an undeniable hermeneutics of rupture. Stroik is, nevertheless, encouraging in reassuring his readers that already an esthetic and conceptual reaction against this too-long-in-the-tooth mid-century Modernism has begun. He cites as the ideal course of action for present and future Catholic sacred architecture a growing fusion of tradition and innovation to create new and beautiful sacred buildings that will contain and express the truths of Catholic Tradition to a contemporary world. Ironically enough, it is in Post-modernism and in Urbanism that we can best find this combination of the old and the new juxtaposed to produce something totally new and of our times yet firmly linked to the architectural tradition of the last 2,000 years. If there is a quibble with this collection of cogently argued and elegantly expressed essays is that the actual works that Stroik presents as representative of the esthetic he is advocating (many are his own commissions) fail to impress readily on the reader where the innovative component may be found in them. It is easily observed how these new works hark back to Catholic traditional architecture, but how are they also concurrently new and innovative? Not all the works that the author proposes as models fail to show this combination of tradition and innovation but to this reader, sadly, most of them do and this tends to undermine the praxis side of Stroik's overall argument, as he is not showing us enough of what he is explaining to us, though what he is showing us is very beautiful. Despite this, it is a work worth recommending highly and at all levels, from contemporary architects challenged by the construction of a new Catholic sacred space, to disgruntled lay parishioners who can't understand why modern Catholic churches too often have to look like truly ugly and uninspired meeting houses or gymnasiums and how they appear Catholic in name only (some photographs are really unbelievable in their depictions of "Catholic" churches). Ugly as sin they may be, so Deo gratias for Dr. Stroik as he points us towards a different and very viable alternative.

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