

**Parish Church and Diocesan Shrine of St. Therese, Collinsville, Oklahoma
Liturgical Environs/Steven J. Schloeder, Berkeley, California (Architect)**

While this design is rooted in the traditional forms of Catholic church architecture, it also addresses local climactic and vernacular issues, and materials, technologies, and a program suitable for a parish community growing strongly into the third millennium.

The client wanted a design that both “works as” and “looks like” a Catholic church. Above all was the desire to build a church that was respectful of the great models of the Ecclesia. This led the architect to consider the building as analogous of the body, the temple, and the city. “Each of these models involves integrated relationships between parts and the whole,” Schloeder explains,

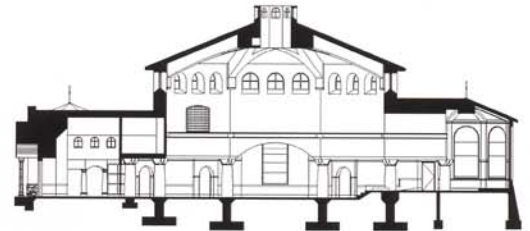
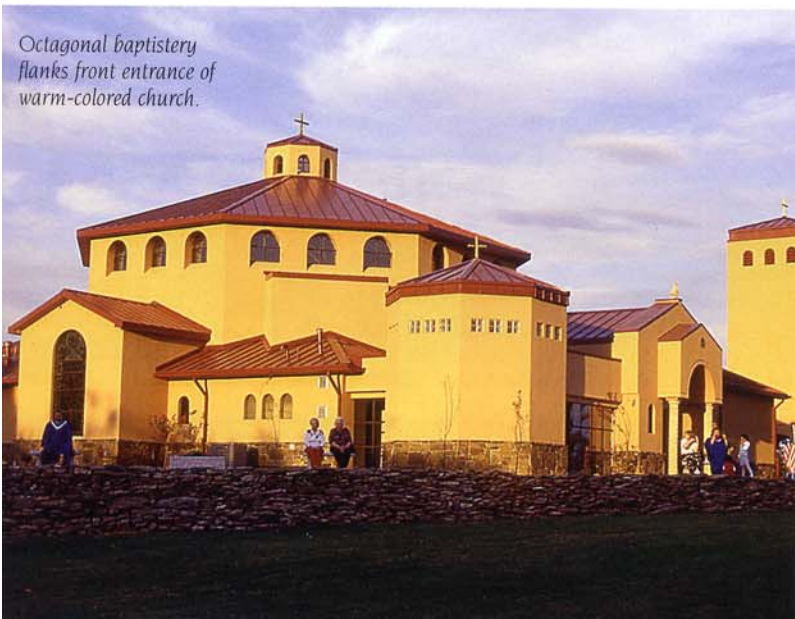
All photos: © 2000-2003 Steven J. Schloeder

“the body, the house, and the city (in their primitive senses) have certain formal traits that by analogy can be applied to the question of church design.” Each element of the building is therefore articulated in a harmonious integration of form, creating a true sense of “church” both as “community” and as “sacrament.”

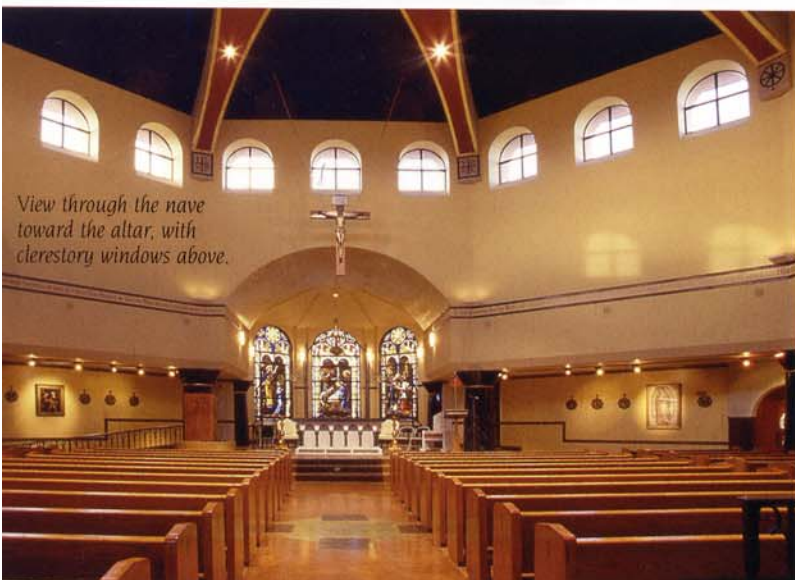
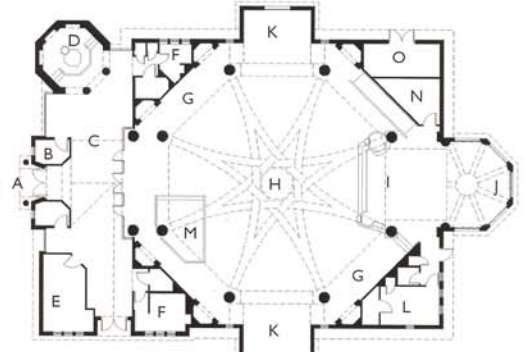
The plan is generated from the octagon, a symbol of the resurrection, over which is laid the cross to recall the redemption gained through Christ’s suffering. These forms simultaneously evoke the immanent centrality of early Christian buildings, and the hierarchical transcendence that speaks to the “Body of Christ.” The 12 columns that define the nave and sanctuary signify the Apostles, while the 24 clerestory windows allude to the Elders around the throne.

One of the distinguishing features is the ambulatory around the nave, which accommodates both circulation and private devotional spaces, and leads to the Eucharistic Chapel in the apse. Since the church is dedicated to St. Therese, the “Little Flower” whose emblem is the rose, the nave ceiling has a subtle allusion to her patronage.

The massing of the forms at St. Therese gives clear definition to each separate part — entry, baptistry, bell tower, nave, cupola, apse — thus allowing for the church to be read as an organic and integrated whole. “By respecting this ‘language’ of form, function, location, and symbolic meaning,” explains Schloeder, “we are able to design a ‘church that looks like a church,’ which participates in the tradition of Catholic architecture while being very much of our age.”



- Plan Key
 A. Entrance
 B. Reconciliation
 C. Narthex
 D. Baptistry
 E. Bride/ Meeting
 F. Toilet
 G. Ambulatory
 H. Nave (360 seats)
 I. Sanctuary
 J. Tabernacle
 K. Side Chapel
 L. Sacristy
 M. Choir
 N. Storage
 O. Mech / Elec



Front entry of the church faces to the right, with bell tower beyond.



Tabernacle is a model of the church.