



St. Anna Greek Orthodox Church

The Church building as an icon of the Church.

Orthodox Church buildings are full of icons, but the very architecture and layout of the buildings are themselves icons of the Church. In the ornamentation of the church, the various iconographical scenes and figures are not arranged by chance, but according to a definite theological scheme, so that the whole edifice forms one great image of the Kingdom of God.

The Orthodox faithful can feel the building open up to a time without end. They are surrounded by the images of Christ, the angels, and the saints, and are reminded of the invisible presence of the whole community of heaven at the Divine Liturgy. Each local congregation, in their church building, can see that their Liturgy on earth is one and the same with the great Liturgy of heaven.

The building should help the faithful lay aside their earthly cares, as the Liturgy is celebrated, so that they, like the cherubim may welcome the King of all.

Temple of the living God

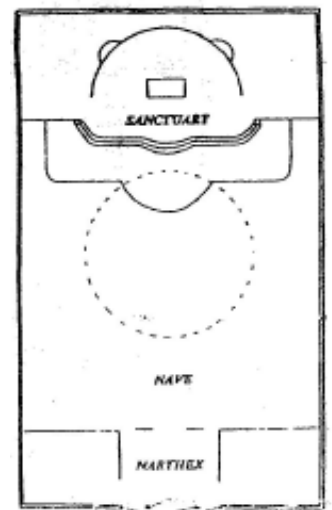
The building reveals a basic understanding of Orthodox Christianity that God is with us. The design shows that God is with men, dwelling in us and living in us through Christ and the Spirit. By having a dome or the vaulted ceiling, many Orthodox churches have the impression that in the Kingdom of God, Christ "unites all things in himself, things in heaven and things on earth," (Ephesians 1:10) and that in him we are all "filled with all the fullness of God." (Ephesians

“God Is With Us” Depicted through Church Architecture.

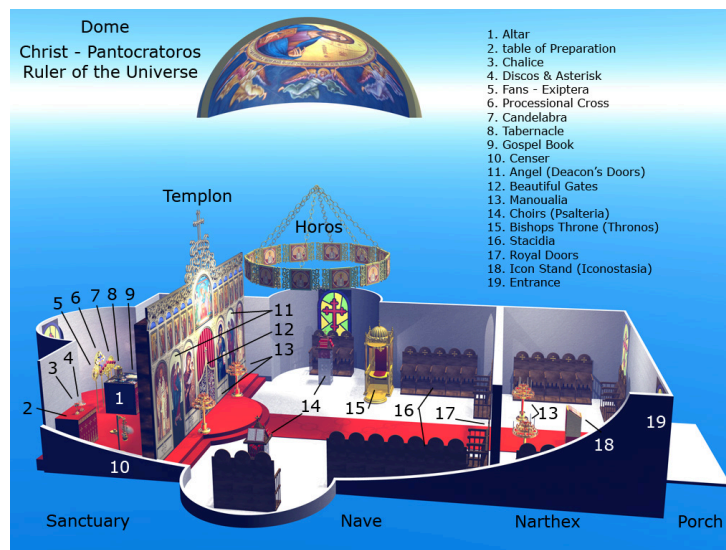
In the long history of the Orthodox Church a definite style of Church architecture has developed by the attempt to reveal- the fundamental experience of Orthodox Christianity: that GOD IS WITH US. This determines the form of the church building. God is with man in Christ through the Holy Spirit. The dwelling place of God is with man. “ We are the temple of the living God.” (2 Corinthians 6:16) It is this conviction that church architecture wishes to convey. It is also of interest that churches are oriented so that the altar face the East and sunrise, symbolizing Christ, the Light.

Orthodox Church Architecture and the Book of Revelation

The church is not constructed to be a meeting hall for those whose life exists solely within the bounds of this earth. The church building is patterned after the image of God's Kingdom in the Book of Revelation. The faithful Christians on earth enter the church through the Narthex or vestibule, which symbolizes the world. The next area of the church is the nave, which is the assembly of people of God. Finally, the area behind the Icon screen (iconostas), is the Sanctuary with the altar table. The sanctuary stands for the Kingdom of God. Before us is the altar table on which Christ is enthroned, both as the Word of God in the Gospels and as the Lamb of God in the eucharistic sacrifice. Around the table are the angels and saints, the servants of the Word and Lamb who glorify Him, God the Father - in perpetual adoration inspired by the Holy Spirit. The altar table is the symbolic and mystical presence of the heavenly throne and the table of the Kingdom of God. The Holy Gospel is perpetually enthroned on the altar table.



Orthodox Church Floorplan



Detailed diagram of a Fully Furbished Orthodox Church

The Iconostas or Icon Screen

The iconostas exists to show our unity with God. That He is with us and we with Him. Typically at the center of an iconostas in a fully finished church, are the Royal Gates, leading to the altar. (As St. Anna is a young parish and still being finished, the Royal Doors are not yet present.) there is a deliberate placement of the icons. The icons placed on the left of the entrance to the altar are always of the Virgin Mary, or Theotokos, and Saviour. On the right there is always an icon of the Glorified Christ. This symbolizes that everything that happens to us happens between Christ's coming as a Saviour born of the Virgin Mary, and His coming at the end of the age as the King and the Judge. Within the icon screens also are icons of St. John the Baptist, next to the icon of Christ. Next to the Theotokos is always an icon of the Saint of the church. The middle icon on the left in our parish is of St. Anna, grandmother of Christ and mother of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos.



The Iconostas during the Kneeling Service of Pentecost.

The Solea

The Solea is the area just in front of the iconostas. It is here where the priest comes out to serve the parishioners. It is the connection between the nave and the sanctuary. To the right is the Bishop's throne, used for Hierarchical services, and chanter's stand. To the left is the choir.



The Solea during Holy Thursday Service of Holy Week.

The Altar Table

The altar table is where the Holy Eucharist is prepared. It is from the altar table that we offer the 'bloodless sacrifice' and from the altar table we receive the 'Bread of Life', the Body and Blood of the Lord's Passover supper. This table is "the table of God's Kingdom." (Luke 28:30) Typically, when a church is fully completed in structure, it is consecrated and relics of saints are placed within the altar. This is because the church is built on the blood and lives of the many Christians and saints who died for the faith. It was a custom in the early church to gather and celebrate the Holy Eucharist on the graves of those who died for the faith.

