**Windows on Theology: Understanding Sacred Space January 15th – February 19th, 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm**

**Roberto Chiotti, Instructor**

**Course Description:**

Throughout history, architecture has played a major role in giving tangible, meaningful expression to a particular culture’s beliefs, values, hopes, and aspirations. Arguably, this is most profoundly expressed in the sacred spaces that we build. This course will explore the nature of sacred space, how we define it, how we understand it, and how it influences our own worship experience in the contemporary context. By examining Western Religious Architecture from the pre-Christian era to the 21st century we will explore how the style of Christian Architecture evolved in response to major external influences, and changing ways in which we came to understand our relationship to God and Creation. Participants will also learn to understand their own places of worship and how they either support or detract from evoking a sense of the sacred, the liturgy, and sacramental life of the parish.

**Suggested Class Outlines:**

1. **January 15, 2020:** **Interrupting the Profane**

This initial class will explore the nature of sacred architecture as “space set aside” from the everyday realm for the purposes of religious rituals and observances. What are the defining characteristics that distinguish sacred space from the quotidian and provide access to the spiritual, ineffable, and transcendent realms? Referencing actual examples, we will explore sacred space as centre, as meeting point, as microcosm of the heavenly realm, and as immanent-transcendent presence, the four functions that define sacred space according to theologian Harold W. Turner in his book From Temple to Meeting House: The Phenomenology and Theology of Places of Worship.

1. **January 22, 2020****: Meaning in Western Religious Architecture: “The Pre-Christian Era”**

Throughout history, architecture has played a major role in giving tangible, meaningful expression to a culture’s beliefs, values, hopes, and aspirations. Arguably, this is most evident in the sacred spaces that we build. Drawing from seminal work by Christian Norberg-Schultz, we will explore the meaning of sacred space within cultures dating from the early Egyptian dynasties, Greek, Roman, early Christian, and Romanesque, eras.

1. **January 29, 2020: Meaning in Western Religious Architecture: “From the Romanesque to the Rococo”**

This week we will continue our historical exploration of western sacred architecture from the Romanesque through the Early and Late Gothic periods, the Renaissance, Reformation, Baroque, and Rococo periods and how the changes reflected external influences and evolving understandings of our relationship to God and Creation.

1. **February 5, 2020:** **Sacred Space in the 20th Century**

This week, we will explore the design of sacred space in the context of the 20th century. How did the tenets of modern architecture and the international Style affect the design of Christian sacred space? Examples will be drawn from leading architects of the 20th century. Did a defining style of western sacred architecture emerge in the 20th century?

1. **February 12, 2020: Sacred Space in the Contemporary Canadian Context**

The first half of the class will examine “Sacrosanctum Consilium”, Vatican II’s Constitution of the Sacred Liturgy, and its influence on “Our Place of Worship” and “Built of Living Stones”, documents published by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops and their American counterparts to assist parishes in the design and renovation of worship spaces. Examples will be drawn from the presenter’s 25 years of experience designing worship spaces for parishes within the Roman Catholic tradition and other Christian denominations. The remaining time will be devoted to exploring class participant’s own worship spaces with the goal of providing greater understanding and insight into how those spaces either support or detract from a sense of the sacred through engagement of the senses, the liturgical action that unfolds within those spaces, and the sacramental life of the faith community.

1. **February 19, 2020:** **Sacred Space in the 21st Century**

This final class will examine the context of sacred space design in the 21st century, exploring influences from eco-theology, indigenous cultures, other faith traditions, digital technologies, and the impacts on those who have suffered the loss of sacred places through conflict and migration.