

The House of God

A synopsis of what our parish study (Feb – April 2009) learned:

1. From the very beginning, since banishment from Paradise, man has sought to turn to God. In so doing, he constructs an altar and offers prayer and sacrifice.
2. Holy events make those places where they happened holy. (see the book of Genesis, “Beth-el”)
3. The architecture for the House of God was given by divine revelation; it was not the product of mere human imagination. (Moses “saw the heavenly pattern”; see the book of Exodus).
4. The first Tabernacle was portable, showing that earthly houses are transient; only the heart of man is fit to be the true and everlasting dwelling place of God. (book of Exodus; Acts of the Apostles ch 7—St Stephen’s testimony).
5. Jesus Christ offered worship in the House of God along with the other Jews. “My House shall be a house of prayer.” The holy Apostles attended worship in the Temple as well.
6. The ancient Mosaic and Levitical temple has a direct analogy to Christian architecture:

Ancient Temple	Holy of Holies	Holy Place	Inner Court	Outer Court
Christian Church	Altar	Nave	Narthex	Court/Plaza

7. The primitive Christian eucharist took place in modified houses made suitable for the purpose: altar, holy place, gathering place (for agape meals, etc.), baptisterion a separate area.
8. The end of the Roman persecution under Constantine brought about the widespread employment of Roman municipal halls and government buildings as models for Christian churches: the basilica became the dominant architectural model for ancient Christians, especially in the great urban centers and towns.
9. Under Justinian and later, especially in the East where the iconic sense of Christian architecture was more keenly sensed, the domed naves came to the forefront (St Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople, etc.)
10. Orthodox Christian Church temple architecture is iconic, domed, cruciform, indicative more of holy community rather than of clerical authority, and beautiful.