

## “Churches that Look Like Churches”: Traditionalism in Recent Catholic Church Architecture

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This paper examines the traditionalist movement in Catholic church architecture in the U.S. over the past two decades. Taking into account the reasons for discontent with churches built in the Modernist style, this paper considers both the theological claims of traditionalist architects and their architectural expression. It focuses on four representative churches: St. Thomas Aquinas College’s neo-Baroque Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity (2009), the neo-Gothic St. Mark’s in Peoria, Illinois, remodeled from 2002-2004 following its 1970s Modernist re-ordering, the neo-English Gothic Our Lady of Walsingham in Houston (2004) and the contemporary traditionalist St. Therese in Collinsville, Oklahoma (2000). Despite their stylistic diversity, these churches all exhibit shared formal characteristics, including an exterior which is visually distinct from the surrounding area, a hierarchical separation between nave and chancel, a prominent location of the altar and the tabernacle, and an integrated iconographic program. This paper argues that these commonalities derive from a shared understanding among proponents of traditionalism of the church building itself as a holy image: an icon.