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# Leggere le chiese

Denis R. McNamara



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LEGGERE LE CHIESE

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## LEGGERE LE CHIESE

### **A crash course in Christian architecture**

How to Read Churches is a pocket primer for decoding the structure and purpose of ecclesiastical buildings. It traces the development of church architecture from biblical precedents like the Temple of Solomon via the ornate passion of medieval Gothic cathedrals to the Postmodern works of the twenty-first century. Adopting a strictly visual approach, this accessible guide uses exquisite engravings and authoritative text to:

- explore all types of Western Christian ecclesiastical building – churches, cathedrals, chapels, abbeys and monasteries.
- provide the context for building styles, materials and motifs and to identify the separate architectural elements, interior organisation and ornament of some of the most exalted buildings in the Western world.
- show the reader how to search for the visual clues that tell the story of ecclesiastical buildings: the messages they convey and their spiritual connection between heaven and Earth.

This handy volume is a guide to appreciating Western Christian ecclesiastical buildings. Almost all of a church's architectural features can be understood in relation to how it stands up and what its builders wanted it to say. The logic of structure is taken to extremes by church architects, sending stone skyward as a lacy steeple or curved dome. Since churches have a spiritual message to convey, they are often adorned with non-structural elements and exquisitely decorated. This expertly written guide enables anyone who loves visiting churches to understand these aspects and to marvel at some of the greatest expressions of human achievement.

How to Read Churches begins with an overview of building types, styles and materials. Succeeding chapters look at individual architectural elements and consider their variety through the ages and in different locations. The final sections are devoted to glass, ornament and symbols. Addressing a multitude of ecclesiastical and architectural facts and details, this richly informative volume reveals the elevated, glorified condition of creation that church builders intended.

### **The author:**

**Denis R. McNamara** holds a BA in the History of Art from Yale University, and a PhD in architectural history from the University of Virginia. He is the author of two books on Christian architecture and is currently Assistant Director of The Liturgical Institute, University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, Illinois, USA.  
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## LEGGERE LE CHIESE

**Grave di acanto**  
Il foglio di questa  
trabocchante in stile  
composito presenta  
un girale di acanto,  
la stessa pianta le  
cui foglie ornano  
il capitello. Per  
stimolare i ritorni-fogli  
in questo forme  
naturali, lo spazio  
tra i ricami era  
regolato basato  
sul cervello.



**Simbolismo delle vite**  
Tutte le immagini vegetali  
simbolizzano a un modo o  
altro il Spirito Santo, ma la  
vite ha un significato particolare.  
Cristo si era chiamato la vite e l'aveva  
presente nel la materia prima del  
vino offerto nel rito eucaristico.



**Bull flower**  
Molto tipico degli edifici post-ogotici del  
XV secolo, il Bull flower è formato da una  
pietola alta entro un fiore a tre petali. Non si  
conosce la sua origine precisa ma alcuni  
ritengono rappresenti un analogo a questo,  
immagine del cuore malato di Gesù.

**Uomo verde**  
L'uomo verde, o verde  
cristo, è spesso  
medievale, appare nelle  
chiese medievali come  
volto composto da  
forme vegetali. Ricorda  
da alcuni un immagine  
pre-cristiana associata  
del cristianesimo,  
caratterizzata spesso  
foglie di rilievo delle  
chiese, come dimostra  
questo esempio tedesco.

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