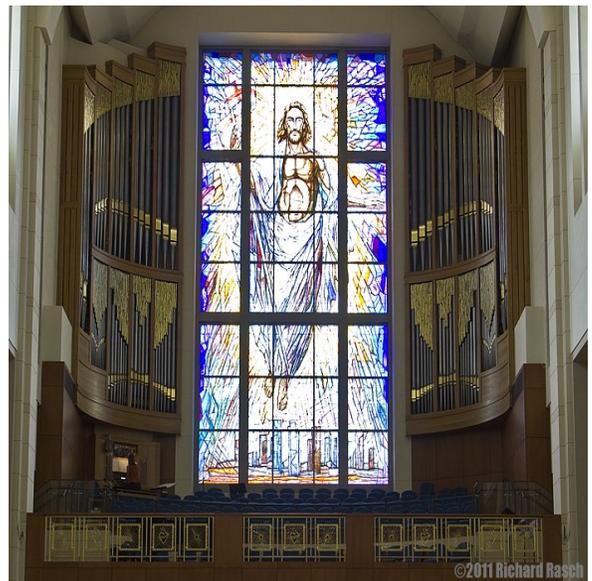
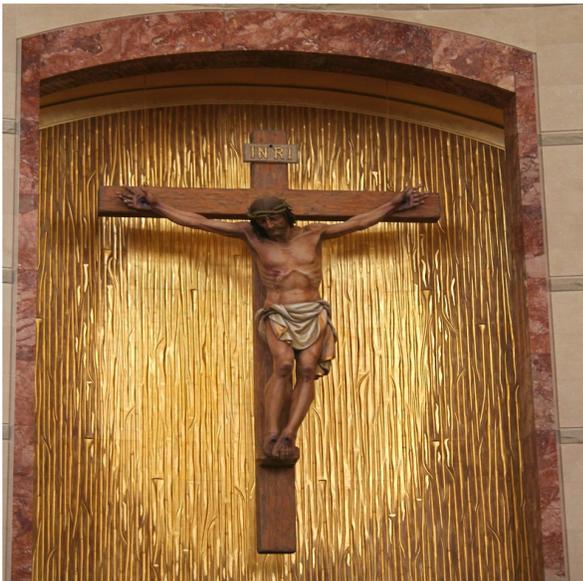


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*Discovering the Renaissance in Houston*



## The Exterior of the Cathedral

### 1 Description

The aerial photo of the cathedral is taken in the daylight and shows its cross-shaped form from above which is made out of two rectangles. In the middle, where the rectangles meet, is a dome with a blue roof and below the roof, the structure of the dome is supported by short columns. On the top of the roof is a cross which symbolizes the religious occupation of the building. Since the whole cathedral is shaped like a cross from the bottom to the top, the simple shapes of the rectangles are clearly visible. Around the front of the building, there are larger columns on each side and two smaller buildings on each side also. There is a tower on the landscape which is placed right in front of the road and which has the function of a bell tower. The cathedral and the tower are occupied by windows in different shapes and sizes which let natural light inside of the buildings. The simple geometrical shape gives the cathedral a meaning of simplicity without reducing its religious meaning.

The second picture is taken by night and the illumination of the church is visible through the lights which are placed inside of the structure. The picture shows the cathedral from the front like someone who has taken the photo was standing right in front of it. The large front of the cathedral is decorated by a large glass stained window which is illuminated by light and is supported by two columns which are right in front of the entrance. On top of the frontal building is a cross which is simple in structure and is standing alone, and is so clearly visible. The bell tower is a little bit cut off in the photograph and gives the impression of walking out of the photo. The rest of the structure, like the side of the building and the dome are in an atmospheric perspective and cannot be easily described.

I would say that my photo is a compromise between the two other photos, and shows a mixture out of the clearly visible structure of the aerial photograph and the atmospheric second photo. One can see clearly the cross-shaped structure, made up out of two rectangles which are visible from above and from one side. The dome on top of the cathedral can be seen real good in its shape, but its color can't be seen by the naked eye. Since the photo was taken by night, the artificial light puts out an illusion for the vision anyways. One thing which I didn't see before are the three crosses on top of the roof and they are distributed on the front, on the dome and on the bell tower. The landscape is made out of lawn with little trees on it and of simple shape with no fancy decoration.

### 2 Religious Context

If we look at the cathedral of Florence, we can see a structure of impressive size which symbolizes the glory of God in a way which can be compared to the Pantheon in Rome. The Pantheon was built to honor the gods of Ancient Rome and the Renaissance is looking to those images to inspire their own architecture and art. Specially after the plague, people wanted to infuse religious architecture and images with a new naturalistic look, and let Humanism look over the old abstract images of the Middle ages. But the people of the Renaissance never forgot the meaning of religion and infused it with just enough harmony between God and his believers. Even philosophers in the Renaissance still mixed their philosophical beliefs with religious context, and so did of course artists.

The Houston cathedral is smaller and serves a total different congregation which relies on budgeting when it comes to religion and their art and architecture. It doesn't mean, if one's religious structure is smaller and more simple that belief in God is not so strong. God can be worshiped everywhere, it doesn't matter the size of the cathedral or church which can vary from simple to impressive. To hear God's word is not depend on expensive physical buildings which can be destroyed in a flash, but it depends on the belief inside of every person. Every person is important, it doesn't matter if poor or rich.

### **3 Personal Views**

The cathedral and the buildings are so strong in contrast to each other that the feeling comes up being surrounded by a wall of commerce and money, which lets the church look like a island of tranquility. The architecture of the business buildings is simple and functional without any spiritual meaning, just the height of the buildings looks like they grow into heaven. The cathedral seems to be small against those building structures and out of place in the matter of architecture but not in a deeper sense. The church could be a place where busy business men and women find peace, which gives them new energy to continue their work and be more productive in the future. They just need to open their eyes.

## The Interior of the Cathedral

### 1 Description

The interior of the cathedral is very beautiful and when you walk inside it gives you the effect of being in a sunny and happy place. The clarity of the colors and the geometrical shapes inside the church let it look simple but sophisticated, which can hold a stand against every church and religious structure. The impression of walking inside can go further that one think to walk in a ancient Greek structure or a building, which could be compared to ancient school of knowledge and learning like the philosophical academies in ancient Athens. The beautiful organ pipes which surround a magnificent glass-stained window with the image of Jesus in gold and blue colors and fitting perfectly the modern and humanistic environment. On the opposite side, we got a sculpture of Jesus Christ hanging on the cross which is naturalistic and of course the colors are very natural also. In the middle, one can see the wooden benches, the columns, and the baptismal font. In the next paragraph, I talk some more about it.

If we look up, the ceiling is white with gold and is arched, which is supported by columns which are flat between two columns to give a geometrical shape. The columns look like they made out of natural marble, which gives the cathedral the look of modern simplicity and clarity. The floor under the wooden benches is made out of marble with geometric patterns on it, and seems to enhance the wooden structure of the benches with the contrast of light color meets dark color. The baptismal font is the center of the cathedral and is in dark and golden tones which fits perfectly to its round shape with little columns. The hallway to the font leads also to the cross over the altar which connects both together and shows the visitor the connection with Christ. The windows in the church let natural light in and come in round rectangular shapes, specially the beautiful window over the altar with its colorful design. The dome with its uplifting structure should be placed under the glass-stained window, but it is not real visible on the pictures. All together, a church with simple and magnificent surprises.

### 2 Religious Context

“The circle symbolizes the eternal realm of the divine; the square reflects the limited nature of man.” (Bramante's Drawing)

In the cathedral, the baptismal font reflects that image of the divine through the round shape of the font which symbolizes our connection with God, when we get baptized. The square on the floor under the font tells us that we are in an earthly structure, which limits our nature. Bramante's drawing reflects that centralized meaning of becoming a member of the church without judging our limitations, but reflecting on the greatness of God with his eternal power without any limits. The text says, his design was never built, but it was; maybe not St. Peter but in Houston cathedral.

“The truths of the Christian religion are as self-evident as the laws of mathematics.” (Creator of the Renaissance Church)

The geometric shapes are in harmony with the Christian belief and underline that it was built in the name of Humanism and Modernity which fit perfectly together, science and religion.

### 3 Personal Views

The Catholic churches, I'm used to, are mostly located in Germany and their structures are Gothic or Baroque style. Gothic style is very pointed in structure and gives you the feeling of distance and separation between the church and its believers. The Baroque style is very lavish and rich which gives you the impression of overloading the vision of the believer with too much decoration. The Renaissance style or modern Renaissance style is just the right approach to the matter of building a religious building because of the geometric harmony between the structure elements and the Humanism behind it. Mostly I got surprised by the lightness of the interior structure and the superb simple combination of colors in the Houston Cathedral. Simplicity is the key to religion anyways, if we go by the teachings of Jesus Christ.

## Religious Art – Sculpture in the Cathedral

### 1 Description

The sculpture I have chosen is Jesus Christ on the cross and it's located over the altar of the cathedral. When you enter the church, go through a hallway where are benches left and right, pass the baptismal font, go straight to the altar, look up and there it is. On the opposite side is the cathedral's organ which can be admired during a visit also. Let's get to this later on. The natural look of the sculpture and it's simplicity in colors are very distinct and give the impression of humanity and realism. But then you have the golden colored background with red marble around it, which gives the sculpture and the wooden cross, Jesus is nailed on, a kind of glow and divinity. Religious sculptures like this always give the feeling of pain and suffering when one is standing in front of it. Specially a sculpture of Christ being nailed to the cross and the pain of the crucifixion is visible in his face.

### 2 Religious Context

“Durer's image of the crucifixion emphasized redemption and life rather than guilt and sin.”  
(Albrecht Durer and the Protestant Reformation)

Durer created an unfinished painting during the years of turmoil and religious wars and that reminds one on the sculpture in the cathedral. Both works are of Renaissance style and express Humanism which is visible in the natural look of both. Durer's attempt to create for Protestants a art form which wouldn't destroy Renaissance ideals was an effort, which can be seen in the sculpture in a similar way. The artist in the cathedral had more in mind to create a sculpture in a modern way of religious thinking by implementing, that Christ didn't die for one faith but for all. Works of art in that kind combine religion and realism.

### 3 Personal Views

I think, when you would walk into the cathedral, it would be the first thing, you would be drawn to. The reason for this is the location right above the altar and is considered the most sacred in a church. But the on the other hand, I would say it's the sculptures simplicity which is so remarkable even with the divine background of the work. I'm glad the artist has chosen Renaissance style features in stead of modern abstract, which would diminish the message the sculpture should give and represent. Religious buildings in general suppose to present themselves in a way that everyone can relate to them, and I think the cathedral with its artworks is an ideal place.

## **Religious Element – Personal Favorite**

### **1 Description**

The personal favorite I have chosen is the organ with the glass-stained window in it. When you enter the cathedral, turn around, look up and it's right there across from the Jesus sculpture on the cross. The organ is from impressive size and the window is right in the middle of it, taking up the complete space between the organ pipes. I took both to describe because they intertwined with each other like a couple in love. Let's start with the window and I will describe the organ, so we are not getting confused. The window is made out of glass-stained material and is very colorful like blue, yellow, red and brown. The image in the glass shows Christ like floating in the air which could explain why the window almost reaches the ceiling and so showing his connection with heaven. Around the window are the organ pipes which are made out of metal that is painted in blue and gold. Altogether a very uplifting image.

### **2 Religious Context**

Putting music and religious art together is a very uplifting experience. Means you are not just looking at religious images, you also listen to the music which was composed in the name of Christ. Instrumental church music suppose to inspire the congregation to praise the Lord in a way which can be seen as happy an very inspirational. Leonardo da Vinci would have been very amazed about the technology of an organ and maybe would have been encouraged to play one. Since he was an artist of visual art, the glass-stained window with his modern look would have found his approval also. Music, technology and art can be combined in a religious context, so-long tolerance and faith work hand in hand together. After all in modernity, science and religion have to work together to reach everybody.

### **3 Personal Views**

My personal views of the organ and the glass-stained window are of such an amazement when I saw the picture, because when I discovered the richness of the colors, specially the blue on the pipes, I was fascinated. The deep color gives you a feeling of tranquility and the music, which comes of course out of the pipes, did its part. Th window with the image of Christ at a lightness to the weight of the organ which makes the whole picture flowing. I think that was the purpose of the architect and artist to do a combination out of both. Lightness, simplicity and beautiful colors for a perfect picture.