

Heaven in Stone and Glass: Experiencing the Spirituality of the Great Cathedrals

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In this book, Robert Barron takes readers on a spiritual pilgrimage through the greatest wonders of the Christian world.

Barron's mission is much the same as John Drury's in *Painting the Word* [BKL D 15 99]: to open a window on the symbolism of Christian art. Whereas Drury aimed to enrich appreciation of paintings, Barron unveils the symbolism of those triumphs of the art of Christendom, the Gothic cathedrals. Exemplifying primarily from Notre-Dame de Paris and Chartres, he discusses 14 features of a cathedral, including space, light, and orientation (e.g., the verticality of every major line in the building), as well as tangible features, such as the rose windows and the labyrinth on the floor at Chartres. Besides what a feature symbolizes--for instance, the cathedral's interior space represents the womb of Our Lady, a place of safety and comfort--Barron explains the doctrinal rationale and implications of the feature's significance. He does the latter so literately and congenially that the little book makes fine devotional as well as informational reading. Ray Olson

Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved. Barron, a priest and professor at Mundelein Seminary, has produced a deeply personal and deeply engaging guide to the experience of the medieval or medieval-style cathedral. His is not a scholarly treatment but rather a kind of staged walk around the cathedral with the reader, drawing spiritual sustenance from the features of the building: stillness from the Rose Window, sense of the inhabited cosmos from the tympana, and so forth. Barron's treatment is direct and even vulnerable but not naive: he acknowledges the painful ambiguities of the presence of Jewish prophets in the cathedral's sculptures and makes reference to figures as au courant as John Lennon and Alasdair MacIntyre. A charming and appealing volume; highly recommended.

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Other Books

Selected Poems, I hide myself within my flower, That wearing on your breast, You, unsuspecting, wear me too--- And angels know the rest. I hide myself within my flower, That, fading from your vase, You, unsuspecting, feel for me Almost a loneliness.

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