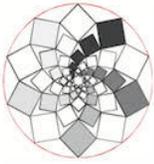


**Subject:** Re: 2019-4-24 ACSF newsletter  
**Date:** Wednesday, April 24, 2019 at 23:19:51 Eastern Daylight Time  
**From:** Julio Bermudez  
**To:** ACSF (NCSU) Listserv  
**Attachments:** image001.jpg



**ACSF** Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum

### 2019-4-24 ACSF newsletter

Dear ACSF members,

In this issue of our newsletter we focus on the events surrounding Notre-Dame. Before we do, however, and related to it, is the Cathedral of Chartres that was featured in the third episode of *The Story of God with Morgan Freeman* entitled "Visions of God." In this episode, ACSF member Julio Bermudez guided Morgan Freeman through the beautiful cathedral discussing how architecture and sacred space could be a gate to the transcendent. "Visions of God" is part of the new third season and aired on the National Geographic Channel in early April. Here is a link that to watch the whole program in "preview pass" (the actual episode starts in minute 25 and finishes in minute 32).

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/watch/1a6bf3fd4e168175a6814698f081060d/>

Another item of potential interest to our members has to do with the last issue of *Psychology of Religion* that covers topics germane to our areas of interest (place and spirituality), here is a link:

<https://journals.sagepub.com/toc/prja/41/1>

Now, let's get to the focus of attention for this newsletter.

The burning of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris has produced a huge reaction around the world. Many voices, opinions, and positions have been (and continue to be) shared in the press, TV, Internet, and radio. Many of our members have contributed to the conversation in the U.S. and abroad. Below, we share a selection of articles reflecting on the event. As one could expect, not all views coincide or agree, arguably, but there is an overall pattern that emerges. The discussion certainly deserves attention, especially from ACSF members. The views presented in these articles are not necessarily endorsed by ACSF, and are presented here as food for thought (and, hopefully, discussion at the ACSF Symposium at Taliesin West May 16-19, 2019).

#### **Notre-Dame and the Questions It Raises About Sacred Space**

<https://commonedge.org/notre-dame-and-the-questions-it-raises-about-sacred-space/>

#### **Why the Notre-Dame Fire is Getting the Attention America's Burned Black Churches Never Could**

<https://www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/why-notre-dame-fire-getting-attention-america-s-burned->

[black-ncna995671?fbclid=IwAR075-Gggt3\\_ooDZevsa3SLPQgblwJCCiPwGIYCVKuj4aD5I40Z9tTou69Q](https://www.facebook.com/black-ncna995671?fbclid=IwAR075-Gggt3_ooDZevsa3SLPQgblwJCCiPwGIYCVKuj4aD5I40Z9tTou69Q)

### **A Dialogue With Our Fragile Past**

<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-dialogue-with-our-fragile-past/article26891121.ece>

### **How Do We Responsibly Rebuild Notre-Dame?**

<https://thehill.com/opinion/international/439742-how-do-we-responsibly-rebuild-notre-dame>

### **We Grieve the Loss, But Hope For Resurrection**

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/anxiousbench/2019/04/holy-week-is-a-tragic-time-to-lose-the-cathedral-of-notre-dame-but-holy-week-is-also-the-perfect-time-to-hope-for-resurrection/>

### **Let's Not Rebuild Notre-Dame**

<https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/04/do-not-rebuild-notre-dame.html>

### **Restoring Notre-Dame: Architects, Engineers, Faithful Seek Best Way Forward**

<https://www.voanews.com/a/architects-engineers-faithful-explore-how-to-restore-notre-dame/4881864.html>

### **Notre Dame Fire May Finally Awaken France's 'Zombie Catholics'**

<https://cruxnow.com/notre-dame-cathedral-fire/2019/04/20/notre-dame-fire-may-finally-awaken-frances-zombie-catholics/>

### **The Death of Architecture?**

<https://premckar.wordpress.com/2019/04/21/the-death-of-architecture/>

### **Why Are We So Moved By the Destruction of a Medieval Cathedral?**

<https://theconversation.com/why-are-we-so-moved-by-the-plight-of-the-notre-dame-115555>

### **After the Fire, a 21st-Century Notre-Dame**

<https://news.dartmouth.edu/news/2019/04/after-fire-21st-century-notre-dame>

### **Proof that Truly Great Architecture Holds Hallucinatory Power**

<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/notre-dame-cathedral-fire-architecture-history-paris-france-a8872696.html>

### **For a Church Transformed Over Many Centuries, How Should It Be Rebuilt?**

<http://nymag.com/intelligencer/2019/04/on-the-once-and-future-notre-dame.html>

### **Great Works of Sacred Architecture Are Forever in Transition**

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/great-cathedrals-burn-collapse-and-crack-notre-dame-can-survive-this/2019/04/16/b973eab4-5fbb-11e9-9ff2-abc984dc9eec\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.7db93b6e4ae1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/great-cathedrals-burn-collapse-and-crack-notre-dame-can-survive-this/2019/04/16/b973eab4-5fbb-11e9-9ff2-abc984dc9eec_story.html?utm_term=.7db93b6e4ae1)

### **Notre Dame's Impact on the Arts, Literature, and Culture is Many Storied**

<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/apr/16/the-culture-inspired-by-notre-dame-paris>

### **France Announces a Competition to Rebuild Notre-Dame's Spire**

Response from two ACSF members on the fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral

*How Should We Rebuild Notre-Dame Cathedral?*

By Richard Vosko

The destruction of the iconic Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris by fire was difficult to witness even in the media. Many sources are describing the incredible tragedy as one that has united people around the world in their disbelief and mourning.

As a liturgical design consultant for 50 years I have helped Jewish and Christian congregations build and renovate their houses of worship. These are holy places that serve as cradles of faith filled memories and yearnings for happiness. They are metaphors for the religious traditions and life giving narratives they were built to house. They are settings for the worship rites of living congregations. They are testimonies to the sacrifices of founding generations. They are designed to transform people in ways that make us better human beings who care for one another and the earth.

What is surprising to this writer is precisely the emergence of the collective global interest in this venerable Gothic giant. It strikes me as so ironic that, when most research centers are documenting the astonishing exodus from mainline religions in the European Union, The Netherlands, Scandinavia, and North America, people are moved to tears about a Christian building struck by tragedy. Could it mean that people are hungry for something, anything that provides a glimpse of beauty, truth and goodness in an age fueled by hate rhetoric, a time that lacks moral moorings? Is the collective reaction connected to a search for a simple uncluttered, almost mystical, spirituality that mainstream churches seem afraid of embracing and teaching?

What is actually incomprehensible is the strong desire to rebuild the Notre-Dame Cathedral to replicate the way it looked before the fire. Aside from the lack of trades familiar with Medieval construction techniques, the advancement of building technologies and current codes will have to be employed in any restoration project.

Furthermore, cathedrals are not museums that thrive on tourism. They are living stones that support the memories, needs, and visions of a loyal congregation determined to take their social action into the streets. This could be an opportunity to create a cathedral that is not merely a reliquary to a bygone period of secular and ecclesial history but a vision of what tomorrow could look like.

This could be a time to introduce artistic and architectural elements that celebrate all faith traditions and address the social concerns of humanity. This could even be a time for the cathedral to serve as a model for other churches in honoring the liturgical renewal set in place a half century ago by the Vatican Two Ecumenical Council.

It is also astounding to read that money is pouring in from everywhere on earth for the rebuilding of this French national treasure. Where was the global public outcry and the financial support for the Coptic churches in Cairo destroyed by terrorist groups? Where is the moral outrage over the three churches burned to the ground by extremists in the United States? Who continues to grieve over the destruction of the churches, synagogues, and mosques in Iraq? Who is willing to make monetary contributions to organizations helping people who live on the fringes of society especially along our borders? Those persons long for the biblical justice preached from pulpits in places like the Notre Dame Cathedral.

The fiery destruction of the cathedral in Paris has raised a most interesting cultural awareness about the important place of religious buildings in our communities. Rebuilding the cathedral is an opportunity to

honor and balance memories with imagination.

*Richard S. Vosko, is a Catholic priest in the Diocese of Albany, New York who specializes in the design of houses of worship. This commentary was written before news of the bombings of three churches in the cities of Colombo, Negombo, and Batticaloa in Sri Lanka. One hopes that there will be a global response to these tragedies similar to the reactions over the Notre-Dame Cathedral fire.*

*Notre-Dame and More*

By Bradford C. Grant

There have been many profound reflections from people around the world about the tragic destruction of Notre-Dame. We are all saddened by it, but it also presents an opportunity for a broader consideration of the place of sacred space in the mission of the Architecture, Culture, and Spirituality Forum.

At the same time that Notre-Dame was burning, so was the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. In late March and early April, three African American churches in rural Louisiana were destroyed by arson (Mary Baptist Church, Greater Union Baptist Church, and Mount Pleasant Baptist Church of St Landry Parish <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/nbcblk/suspicious-fires-black-churches-louisiana-follow-risehate-crimes-n992571>)

While the architectural history and merit of these African American places of worship might not compare with the magnificence of Notre-Dame in a strict Western aesthetic sense, they certainly possess the spiritual and cultural substance connected to physical sacred place that ACSF celebrates. They also have special architectural qualities that are attributed to the sacred vernacular and African American cultural aesthetics. In Jerusalem, The Al Aqsa Mosque has an 1,800-year history and is a grand example of historic Islamic architecture and sacred aesthetics. It also embodies and symbolizes our humanity—a key value shared by ACSF members.

Notre-Dame Cathedral is a masterpiece of Gothic architecture and a symbol of the Roman Catholic faith and its reign in the West (although—as many commentators have pointed out—it also symbolizes subjugation, colonialism, imperialism, and the victimization of people at the hands of clerical authorities). As is true of all sacred places, Notre-Dame aspires to universally reflect humanity regardless of our nationality, faith, and race. But this aspiration is difficult to achieve in a world where nationality, faith, and race clouds our view of others, especially within religion.

As we mourn the harm to Notre-Dame, let us recognize the multiple understandings, values, and faiths that move us closer to “the very concrete yet ineffable links between architecture, culture, and spirituality” that ACSF affirms.

*Bradford C. Grant is a professor of architecture in the Department of Architecture of the College and Engineering and Architecture at Howard University in Washington, D.C.*

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*"leap and the net will appear"*