



# DOMUS DEI

Diocese of Fargo  
Retreat Center

Craig D. Michels

The background is a complex collage of embossed symbols in a light beige color. At the top left, there's a ship's mast and sails. To its right is a quill pen. Below the ship is a large, stylized arrow pointing upwards and to the right. In the center, there's a flame or fire symbol. To the right of the flame is a sun with rays. At the bottom left, there's a water drop. The symbols are arranged in a way that they overlap and create a sense of depth and interconnectedness.

# Research Results & Goals

# **DOMUS DEI: DIOCESE OF FARGO RETREAT CENTER**

A Design Thesis Submitted to the  
Department of Architecture and Landscape Architecture  
of North Dakota State University

By

Craig D. Michels

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
Bachelor of Architecture

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Department Chair

May 2005  
Fargo, North Dakota

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# HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THESIS

In 2003 the Catholic Diocese of Fargo moved into a new building in south Fargo next to the new Shanley High School. They did this to get all of the offices into a single building which is called the Pastoral Center. The old main office building was the Queen of Peace retreat center, which was an old convent. In this move they unfortunately no longer have a retreat center as it wasn't budgeted for in the new building.

In 2001 a new ministry group called the Young Disciples Teams was created and operated out of the Queen of Peace. This building worked well because the dormitories in the building housed the team members during their training. In 2001 there were 6 team members and in 2005 they expect to grow to 20. The Pastoral Center did not work for them because of the lack of dormitories and conference space.



Figure 1

Both of these functions are addressing the needs of the Diocese of Fargo. Today's generation more fully understands Vatican II as a clarification of the traditional teachings of the Church and not a document of radical new changes. People once again understand the richness of the full teachings of the Church and are seeking out ways to enrich their lives through them.

Currently the Diocese of Fargo is lacking a facility to house larger retreats. The spaces being used for retreats are adapted spaces and don't provide the atmosphere desirable for a successful retreat experience. Those participating at the Diocese of Fargo retreat center will know that the retreats are inline with Rome and not have to wonder if all the teachings are correct as they do at some retreat centers in other Diocese.

A need has also developed for good Catholic vacation bible camps in the region. These parishes have either a lack of staff or qualified staff to teach the bible camps. The Young Disciples teams were started to fill this need.

# RESEARCH SUMMARY



Figure 2

The following case studies were used in investigating Italian architecture and landscape architecture which is the underlying theological emphasis for the project. The research was aimed at discovering patterns in the architectural style that would be best utilized in the design of the retreat center to portray the atmosphere of an Italian villa.

In my research of Italian architecture and landscape architecture, I found it to be the case that architectural elements such as buildings are often used in the gardens. They tend to have less elaborate and controlled gardens than that of the French landscape school, and much shorter sightlines than either French or English.

Sight lines tend to terminate within the garden space with an architectural element such as a building or wall. This is an advantage when the views outside of the garden spaces is not under the designer's control and when those views are not pleasing to look at. They also tend to be smaller which allows them to fit in to an urban context more easily.

The grassy gardens with potted flowers will work well with Fargo's climate. Potted plants can easily be moved indoors for the harsh winters that are very common in this region. The wild-flower gardens which are also common for Italian style gardens can be adapted to grow native prairie flowers that can withstand the winters.

## THEORETICAL CASE STUDIES



# FARNESE/VILLA TATTI



Figure 3

The gardens and structures of Farnese complement one another very well to the point that the buildings appear to just be elements of the gardens themselves.

The picture below shows how the architectural quality of the arched doorways makes the space pleasing without lots of plantings.



Figure 4

Villa Tatti also incorporates structures within the garden spaces. The layout and statues encourage those experiencing the spaces to stroll throughout the garden to look at the different elements. The garden looks as if it has a story to tell.

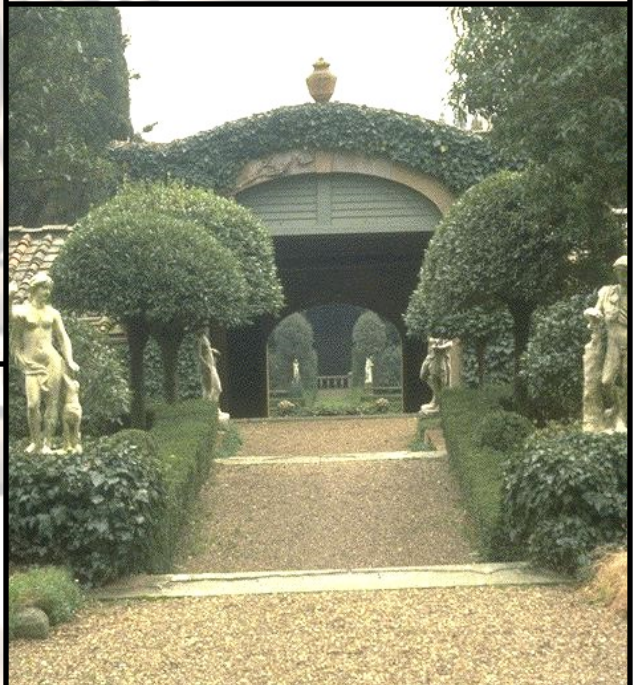


Figure 5



# GAMBER

Gamber is another example showing architectural elements being used to enhance the quality of the garden spaces. The picture to the left shows a very simple planting layout in a very charming space that creates good views from adjacent spaces.



Figure 6



Figure 7

The above picture utilizes an arch as a backdrop in this garden space. The simple and uncontrolled planting layout gives the space a natural feel. The wall with the arch and the trees terminate any sight lines out of the garden so no outside negative views can detract from the character and feel that the garden creates for itself.



# TREBBIO



Figure 8

The picture on the left shows how the vegetation at Trebbio is used in a way to frame a view which terminates at the building. The trees and shrubs planted around the building brings down the scale of what would be a very opposing experience. The building and vegetation work together to complete the view.

The colonnade in the picture below is a very visually interesting space even though the planting layout is not very complex. The trellis and columns provide a degree of enclosure without being completely enclosed. The view down the colonnade is not entirely clear encouraging those in the space to have to walk to the end in order to view what is at the end. This space again shows the use of shorter terminating sight lines.



Figure 9



# GUILIA/VICOBELLA



Figure 10

Guilia shown to the left and Vicobella below both show similar design strategies used in their gardens. The arches and walls become elements of visual interest that also act as devices to terminate sight lines in the garden.

Both utilize gravel to the garden which, besides aiding in drainage, adds to the experience of those in the garden by stimulating their sense of sound as they move through the garden. Gravel also adds texture for a tactile experience. This allows those in the garden to see, smell, hear and feel the garden.



Figure 11



# RESEARCH SUMMARY

My typological research for this project brought me to three retreat centers in the region: Christ the King in Buffalo, MN; Presentation Center in Fargo, ND; and Maryvale outside of Valley City, ND. My goal for this part of the research was to discover things that would need to be incorporated into my design. I came upon these things either by the expressed shortcomings or those things that were successful.



Figure 12

The two North Dakota retreat centers I visited taught me more about how a retreat center should not be. Maryvale is an example of inappropriate architecture for a Catholic retreat center. Much of the symbolism and meaning is lost in the Modern architecture style. Maryvale is also an example of disproportionate spaces. It can house many more people than what the other retreat spaces can handle.

Presentation Center's architecture also doesn't fit the function. It houses a handful of people at a time so its small spaces are enough for it.

Christ the King in Buffalo, MN is the best example of what is needed by the Diocese of Fargo. It has an architectural style that is conducive to a good retreat experience. The size and number of spaces is also a good model. Those running Christ the King have taken much care in making sure they provide to all the needs of its retreatants. Christ the King also has all the elements which the directors of the other two retreat centers say theirs lack.

# CHRIST THE KING ~ BUFFALO, MN

## Background

- Founded in 1952 on a bluff overlooking Buffalo Lake in Buffalo, MN
- Remodeled/expanded in 1960, 1965, 1991, 1999
- Owned & Operated by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate
- 7,000 annual visitors

## Aesthetics

- Original structures have old world character
- New addition has cold “hotel like” character



Figure 13

The outside of the chapel at the King House retreat center has the type of character that lends itself well to a retreat. The inside of the chapel was remodeled in 1991 to look more modern which doesn't give the feel one would expect when viewed from the outside.

The courtyard shown below gives retreatants a good chance to enjoy a garden space even in the winter despite the contemporary look..



Figure 14



# CHRIST THE KING ~ BUFFALO, MN



Figure 15

The King House retreat center's original structures conveys the feeling I am looking for. The 1999 construction of a new St. Joseph Hall, which replaced two cottage units that held 32 rooms with a sleeping hall that looks and feels like a Super 8 hotel, detracts from the overall experience.

King House is a good example of the size of retreat center I am looking for. It has adequate number and size of rooms to run both large and small retreats without having to use a room in make-shift fashion.

The Lethert House was part of the original retreat house. The historic character of the house works well to help the retreatants feel as if they are away from their every day lives.

The Red Lounge, shown left, was the original chapel. The chandelier in this room is an example of the many historic pieces that were saved from other buildings that were destroyed.

The Mary Hall, shown below, was done in 1965 and was the last part of the center to be built that still attempted to convey a historic feel.



Figure 16

# CHRIST THE KING - BUFFALO, MN

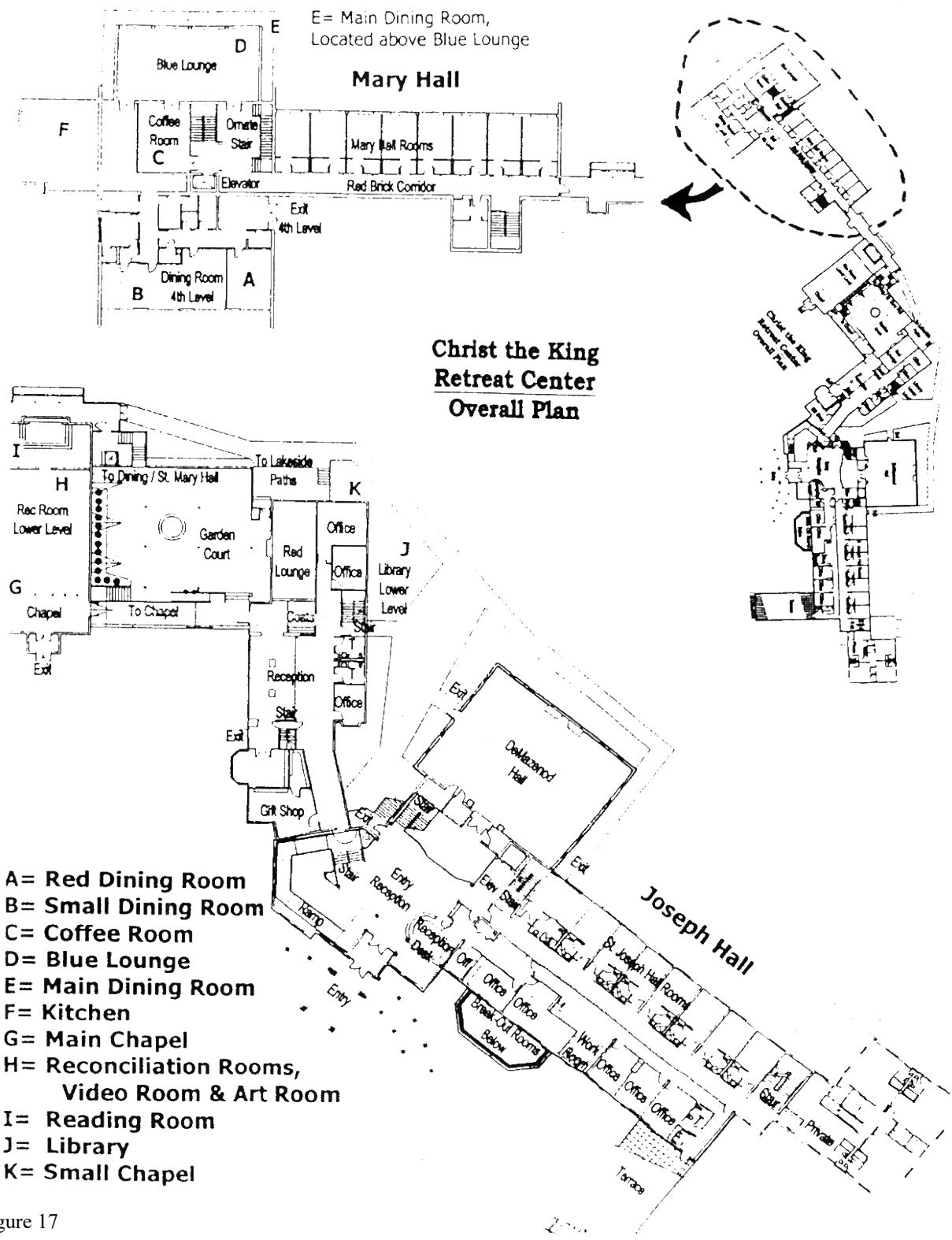


Figure 17



# PRESENTATION CENTER-FARGO, ND



Figure 18

## Background

- Owned and operated by the Sisters of the Presentation
- Main retreat facility has strong 70's style architecture
- Four bedrooms for self-directed retreats
- Main facilities focus on day retreats

The Presentation Center is a smaller scale retreat center in Fargo, ND. The architectural quality of this center is greatly lacking. The main reason for this is that the original intent of the building was not a retreat center.

The building in which the sisters live has some very nice spaces that the retreatants walk over to use because the main part of the retreat center does not have them. However the feeling of "visitor" is strong in these spaces.



Figure 19

# MARYVALE - VALLEY CITY, ND



Figure 20

## Background

- The Maryvale convent is owned and operated by the Sister of Mary of the Presentation. The convent is located outside of Valley City, ND.
- The sisters still reside in the convent but have experienced their numbers dropping and becoming older.
- Retreats such as SEARCH are held at Maryvale convent.

Maryvale convent is designed with some Modern style architectural elements. Concrete is used throughout the building which gives the building a cold feel. The dormitories are also very institutional in layout and materials.

The architectural style detracts from the effectiveness of the facilities in providing a good retreat experience. (M. Hanbury, personal communication, October 11, 2004)



Figure 21



# GOALS FOR THE THESIS PROJECT

The goals for this project is to provide a facility worthy to fulfill the requirements for a Diocese of Fargo retreat center and house the training for the Young Disciples teams. Only a building rich in symbolism and meaning will fit the bill for these two functions deeply rooted in Catholic tradition.

Old World design elements like those of an Italian villa will give a feel which will work with the function of a retreat. This will also allow the spaces to be easily broken into separate yet connected buildings to give a more residential feel than what one large building could.

Symbolism and meaning will be incorporated into all the spaces inside and outside. The function of the space will correspond with the appropriate symbols to achieve the feel each space.

It is also my goal to elevate the quality of the outdoor spaces to the same level as the indoor spaces by investing equal time to all spaces outlined in the Programmatic Requirements. It is also my goal to provide those using the facility to feel as if they are half a world away from their jobs and lives in and around Fargo, ND.

The spaces will not only be used to set the atmosphere for the retreats, but to be able to be used as a tool. Many of the symbols, pictures, stain glass windows, and statues in the past told the stories of the faith to those who could not read. Many of these things were also used to aid in various forms of prayer and meditation. It is my goal for these things to once again be true.

The background is a complex collage of embossed symbols in a light brown color. At the top left, there's a ship's mast and sails. To its right is a hand holding a quill pen. Below the ship is a large arrow pointing upwards and to the right. In the center, there's a stylized flame or fire. To the right of the flame is a sun with rays. At the bottom left, there's a water drop. The symbols are arranged in a way that they overlap and create a sense of depth and interconnectedness.

# Site Analysis

# SITE ANALYSIS

Fargo, ND is where the bishop of the Diocese of Fargo has his seat. The Diocese of Fargo comprises of the eastern half of North Dakota. Fargo is the largest city in a mostly agricultural state. Fargo is currently experiencing rapid growth to the south and is expected to continue growing south for

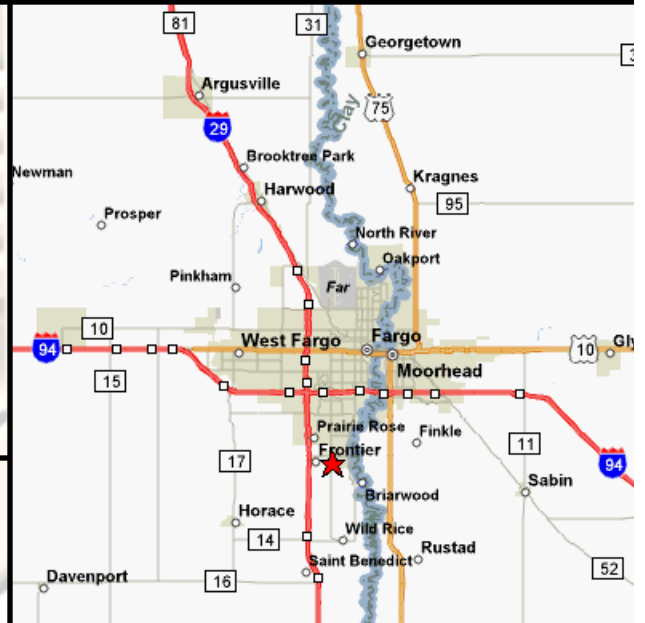


Figure 24



Figure 22



Figure 23

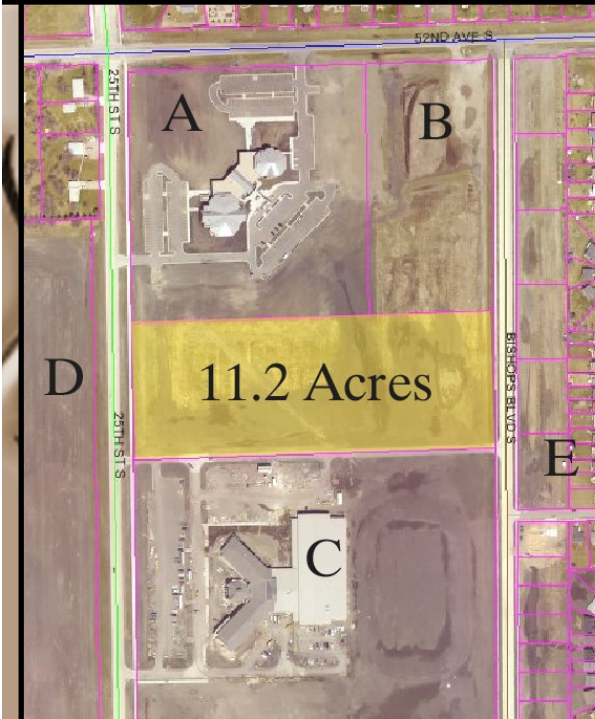
years to come. The site is located on property owned by the Diocese of Fargo between Sts. Anne & Joachim church, the Pastoral Center and Shanley high school.

The site is bound by Bishops Blvd on the east side of the site and by 25th Street to the west. To the north is Sts. Anne & Joachim and the Pastoral Center; and the south side is Shanley high school. 52nd Ave S. provides major access to interstate 29.

The land is virtually flat and is a clay soil. The open site will provide lots of sun.



# SITE ELEMENTS



## Site Elements

- A) Sts. Anne & Joachim Church
- B) Current site of Pastoral Center
- C) Shanley high school
- D) Open field
- E) Residential housing

Figure 25



A

Figure 26



B

Figure 27



C

Figure 28



E

Figure 29



D

Figure 30

# SITE ANALYSIS



The background of the slide is a collage of embossed symbols in a light brown color. At the top left, there is a ship with a large sail. To its right is a quill pen. In the center, there is a stylized flame or fire. At the bottom left, there is a water drop. At the bottom right, there is a sun with rays. The symbols are arranged in a way that they appear to be part of a larger, textured surface.

# Programmatic Requirements

# SPATIAL SUMMARY

- |                                 |                |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| • St. Polycarp Hall             | 4,685 sq. ft.  |
| • St. Ambrose Hall              | 6,670 sq. ft.  |
| • St. Augustine Hall            | 5,510 sq. ft.  |
| • St. Anselm Hall               | 6,525 sq. ft.  |
| • St. Thomas Aquinas Hall       | 18,125 sq. ft. |
| • St. Francis of Assisi Gardens | 4,900 sq. ft.  |

## Relationship of Spaces

- Separating the functions into their own differentiated spaces allow for each to have unique characteristics. The Halls, although separate, will be connected to one another for climatic reasons since Fargo has very intense winter conditions.
- The Halls will be related to each other in layout to give a feel of an Italian villa. The site will be organized orthogonally on a grid, much like the layout of the Plan of St. Gaul. The spaces between the buildings will be different gardens.

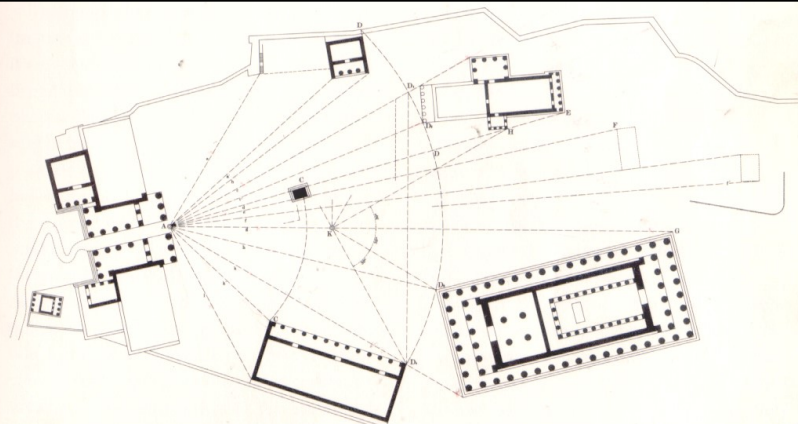


Figure 31

# PROGRAMATIC REQUIREMENTS



# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

- **Qualitative Attributes**

## St. Polycarp Hall

- **Reception**

The reception space will not be a great big empty room which is a common sight at most large religious complexes. The reception area for the Diocese of Fargo retreat center will be more intimate; as one would expect to feel when entering someone's home.



Figure 32

- **Retreat Office and Young Disciples Office**

The atmosphere of the office will be once again very inviting for those visiting and working. Materials of wood and stone and warm colors will be used to provide a home-office feel, for those working often have long hours and the office becomes a second home.

Attention will be given to the layout of this office space to prevent it from becoming a long hallway like many office spaces. The layout will be close to the way a home would be laid out to once again aid in making the space more comfortable.

# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

## St. Ambrose Hall

- **Chapel**

The chapel will be a light filled space with large stain glass windows. It will have a more refined style of architecture making use of the classic orders. This will be the least humble of the spaces with ornate details for it is the one space completely devoted for worship of God.



Figure 33

- **Reconciliation room**

This space will be again more intimate. To help those preparing for this sacrament feel comfortable, the ceiling will be lower, light will be less intense, and warm colors will again be predominately used.

- **Gathering Space**

The gathering space will be directly outside the chapel and will be a very open space with lots of light and energy. People will feel free to mingle and talk amongst one another. This space will also have a garden like feel, so those on a retreat during the winter months can still have the benefits of being in a nature setting even as the outside gardens are covered in snow.

# PROGRAMATIC REQUIREMENTS



# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

## St. Augustine Hall

### Teaching Spaces

The St. Augustine Hall will have a more formal academic feel to it compared to the rest of the complex. Although it will have an old world feel, it will have all the functions of a modern classroom.



Figure 34

### Conference Room

The conference room will be a large open room for holding large conferences of 100 or more people. It will have a vaulted ceiling giving the room a larger feel. This room will double as a gym-like space during Young Disciples training when teaching games that will be played at the summer bible camps.

### Gift Shop

The gift shop will have a cozy cottage feel where those on retreats can buy religious items and books used during the retreat. There will be no cashier so a honor system will be used.

# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

## St. Anselm Hall

### ▪ Kitchen

The kitchen will have the look of old world, with stone columns and arches. However, it will be a full functioning modern kitchen with stainless steel commercial quality appliances.

The chef will have an office directly off the kitchen. This office will resemble the other offices in quality and feel.



Figure 35

### ▪ Cafeteria

The main dining space will look as a great banquet hall inside a castle. Gothic arched windows will be flanked by tapestries. Chandeliers will be hung off rough cut heavy timber wood trusses.



# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

## St. Thomas Aquinas Hall

- **Bedrooms**

The bedrooms will have exposed heavy timber frame with plaster walls. Hardwood floor will be used in the main part of the room and ceramic tile floors in the bathroom. These materials will be carried into the hallway between the rooms.



Figure 36



Figure 37

## St. Francis of Assisi Gardens

- **Gardens**

The gardens will be Italian style gardens with terminating site lines so that those in the gardens will not have views out to the rest of Fargo. This will allow those on the retreats to feel that they are half a world away. Many different types of vegetation, fountains and statues will give this feel to the gardens.

- **Ground Keep's Shop**

This building will be a stone structure where the ground keep will base work out of. Details will not be left out on this building since it will be visible from the gardens and will act almost as an element of the gardens themselves.

# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

Quantitative Attributes	
<b>St. Polycarp Hall</b>	<b>3,230 sq. ft</b>
<b>Reception</b>	<b>300 sq. ft.</b>
• Receptionist	300 sq. ft.
<b>Retreat Office</b>	<b>590 sq. ft.</b>
• Director	200 sq. ft.
• Reservationist	150 sq. ft.
• Office	2 @ 120 sq. ft.
<b>Young Disciples Office</b>	<b>740 sq. ft.</b>
• Young Disciple's Director	200 sq. ft.
• YD Assistant	2 @ 120 sq. ft.
• YD Volunteer Room	300 sq. ft.
Work Room	500 sq. ft.
Storage Rooms	3 @ 100 sq. ft.
Library	600 sq. ft.
Coffee room	200 sq. ft.
<b>Mechanical 15%</b>	<b>485 sq. ft.</b>
<b>Circulation 30%</b>	<b>969 sq. ft.</b>
<b>St. Ambrose Hall</b>	<b>4,600 sq. ft.</b>
Chapel	2,000 sq. ft.
Side Chapels	2 @ 100 sq. ft.
Reconciliation rooms	4 @ 100 sq. ft.
Gathering Space	2,000 sq. ft.
<b>Mechanical 15%</b>	<b>690 sq. ft.</b>
<b>Circulation 30%</b>	<b>1,380 sq. ft.</b>
<b>St. Augustine Hall</b>	<b>3,800 sq. ft.</b>
Large Classroom	500 sq. ft.
Small Classroom	300 sq. ft.
Conference room	1000 sq. ft.
Gift Shop	500 sq. ft.
Breakout rooms	4 @ 200 sq. ft.

# PROGRAMATIC REQUIREMENTS



# DETAILED SPACIAL ANALYSIS

Video Room	2 @ 100 sq. ft.
Mechanical 15%	570 sq. ft.
Circulation 30%	1140 sq. ft.
<b>St. Anselm Hall</b>	<b>4,500 sq. ft.</b>
Kitchen	800 sq. ft.
Chef's Office	100 sq. ft.
Storage	200 sq. ft.
Formal Dinning Hall	2,000 sq. ft.
Smaller Dinning Area	1,000 sq. ft.
Private Dinning Area	400 sq. ft.
Mechanical 15%	675 sq. ft.
Circulation 30%	1,350 sq. ft.
<b>St. Thomas Aquinas Hall</b>	<b>12,500 sq. ft.</b>
Bed Rooms	60 @ 200 sq. ft.
Retreat Master Suite	500 sq. ft.
Mechanical 15%	1,875 sq. ft.
Circulation 30%	3,750 sq. ft.
<b>St. Francis of Assisi Gardens</b>	<b>2,300 sq. ft.</b>
Ground Keep's Office	300 sq. ft.
Shop	1,000 sq. ft.
Storage	1,000 sq. ft.
Mechanical 15%	345 sq. ft.
Circulation 30%	690 sq. ft.
<b>Total Area</b>	<b>44,849 sq. ft.</b>

# PROGRAMATIC REQUIREMENTS

The background is a complex collage of embossed symbols in a light brown color. At the top left, there's a ship's mast and sails. To its right is a quill pen. Below the ship is a large arrow pointing up and to the right. In the center, there's a stylized flame or fire. Below the flame is a row of four circular icons, each containing a different symbol. To the right of the flame is a sun with rays. At the bottom, there are two teardrop shapes. The text 'Process Documentation' is overlaid on a white rectangular area in the upper right quadrant.

# Process Documentation



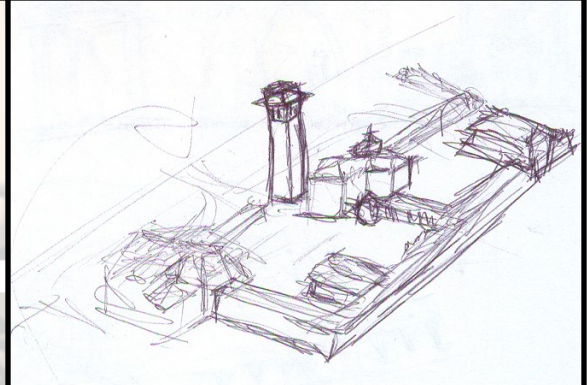
# THE BEGINNINGS



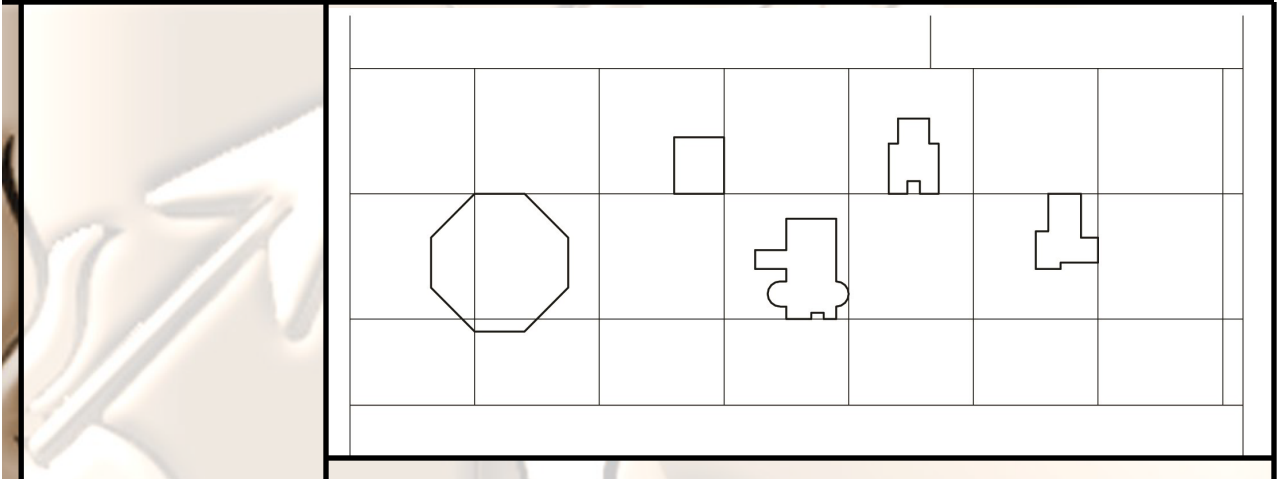
The beginning of the design process involved determining how the different buildings will be relating to one another. I knew that they needed to define the spaces in which would become the gardens for the retreat center. This was when I determined I needed an ordering system that would aid with this problem and many others throughout the design. This ordering system is based on the number "8." In the Bible, the number 7 stands for the fullness of time, and the number 8 coming after 7 stands for that which comes after the fullness of time, or Heaven.

It was then determined to use the number 8 in a grid to give the site order. Two precedents led to the decision of the grid which are The Plan of St. Gaul, and the contextual setting of North Dakota.

For the sake of giving this thesis book some sort of organization, I will continue talking about the development of the site, even though through out the design process all the buildings and the site evolved at the same time from beginning to end.

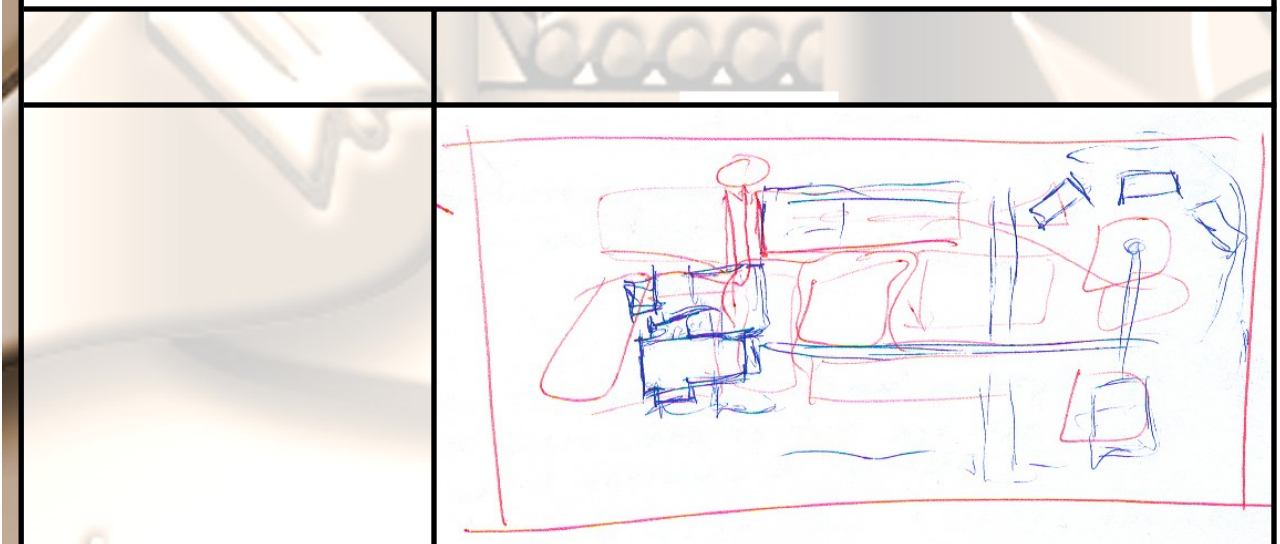


# THE SITE



Using the grid as a guide, I began exploring ways in which the site could be laid out to allow for good garden spaces and also provide circulation for those moving between the buildings during a retreat as well as the maintenance crews. The layout of the buildings continued to change as I experimented with the forms of the buildings and the way they related to one another.

The solution to this problem didn't start to really take shape until I looked at it from a different angle. I began to think more about the garden spaces and how they would relate to one another and allow them to determine the location of the buildings. With this approach, the site plan quickly began to take shape.

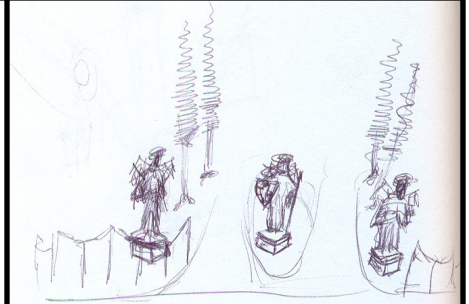


# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION



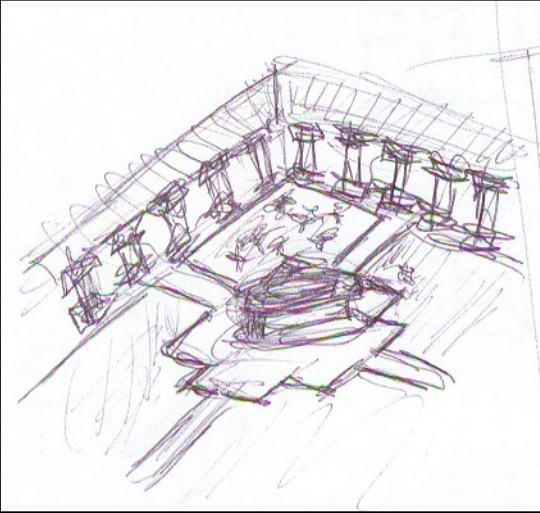
# THE SITE

The sketches on this page were studies in how the entrance to the site might look. The statues of the Archangels were to represent the angels who are guarding the retreat center from evil spirits. In the end I decided that just the statue of St. Michael, the Archangel was all that was needed to depict this. St. Michael is the leader of the celestial armies and guardian of the souls of humans. I also opened up the site more by taking out the colonnade behind St. Michael. One can almost picture a whole celestial army standing in the courtyard behind the statue of St. Michael.



# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

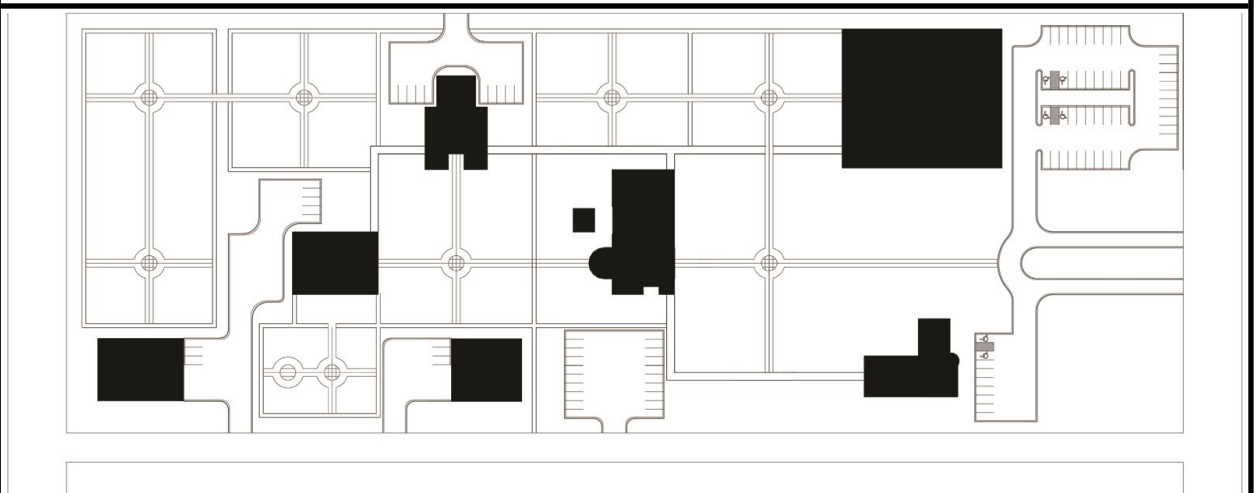
# THE SITE



Now that the layout of the gardens and buildings was complete, the smaller details that really make the gardens effective had to be addressed. I used statues of great saints as the natural focal points in the gardens. This will greatly help those on retreats with their meditation and contemplation exercises.

"It is important to visualize the subjects of meditation; painting, sculpture, and architecture are meant to work together" - Ignatius Loyola

"Man's mind is raised to contemplation through objects" - St. Thomas Aquinas

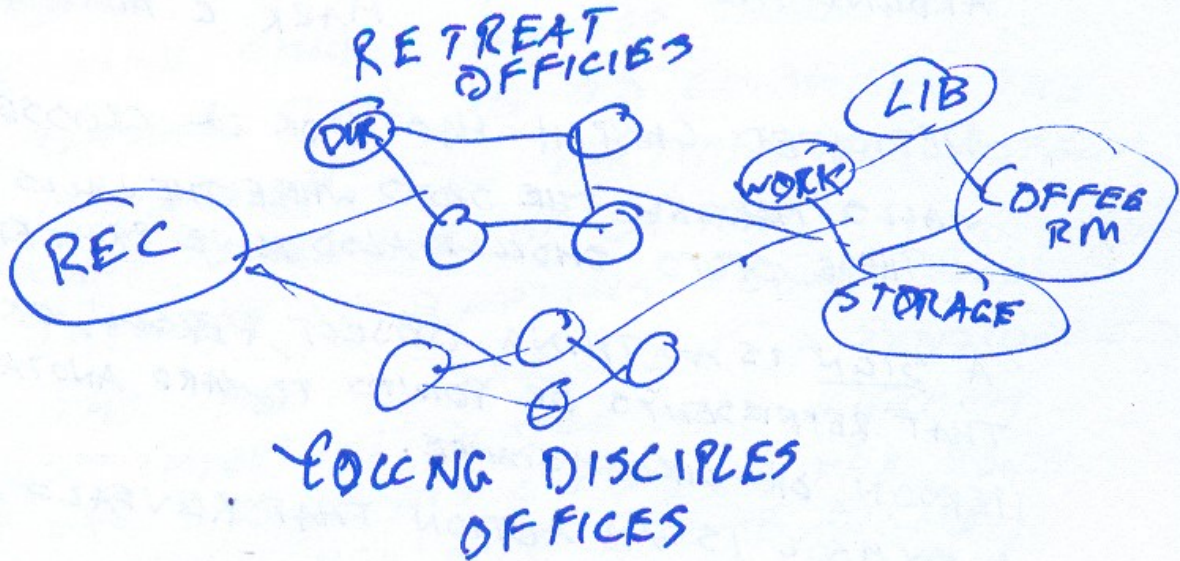


# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION



# ST. POLYCARP HALL

The St. Polycarp Hall is the main office building for Domus Dei. This building is shared by the retreat director's office and the Young Disciples Team's office since they are the two major users of the facilities. These two occupants had many spaces that could be shared even though their actual office spaces need to be separate from each other. The St. Polycarp Hall is designed to look more residential to convey a more welcoming atmosphere as visitors check in than a typical office building can.

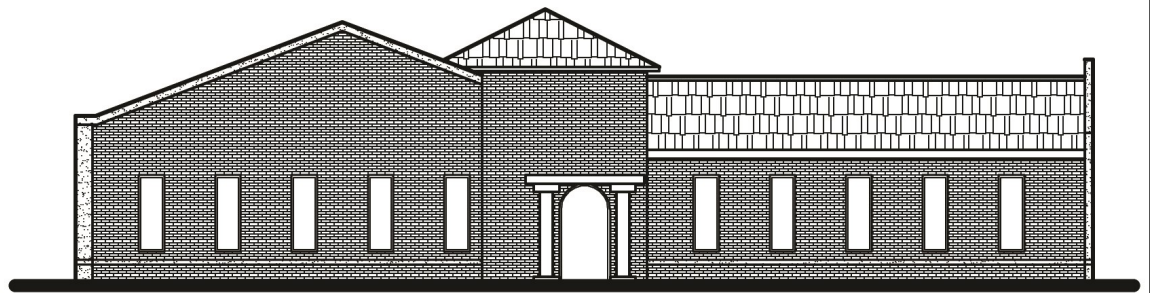
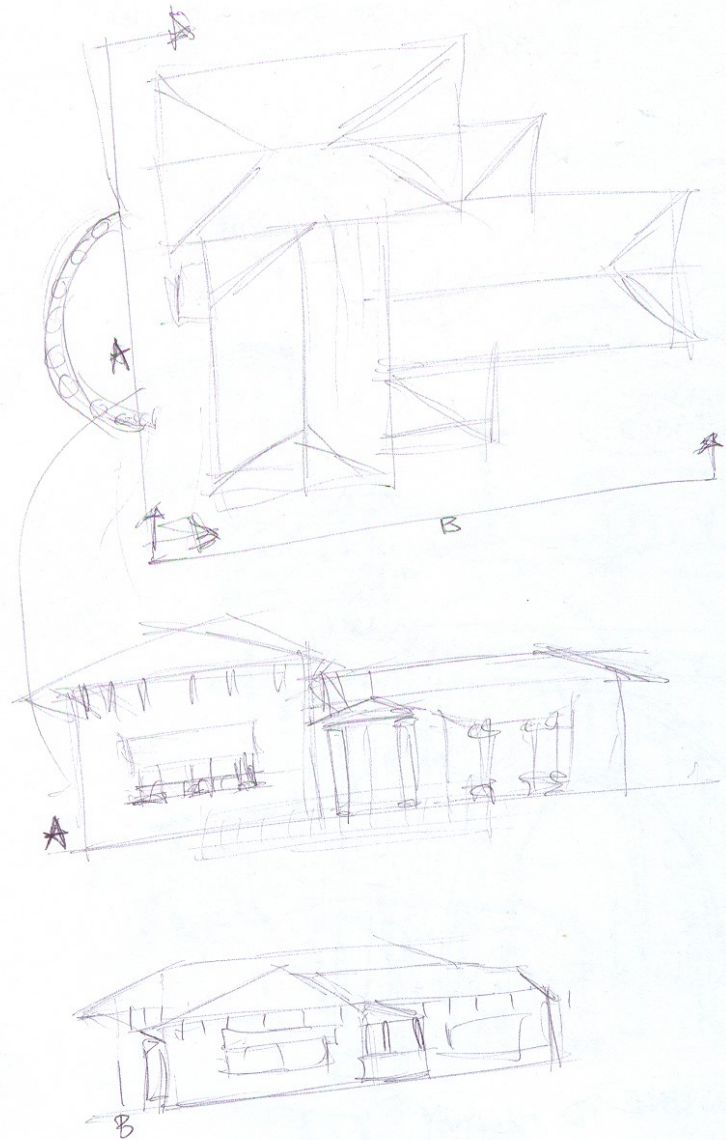


St. Polycarp, who was appointed by the apostle St. John to be bishop of Smyrna, was chosen for this building because of the welcoming purpose of the building. St. Polycarp welcomed even the soldiers that came to arrest him into his home and offered them food and drink and then prayed for the soldiers.

# ST. POLYCARP HALL

My original sketches of the St. Polycarp Hall looked very much like a very simple house. I did this because I wanted the building to have a home-like feel. However, as I began to work with this design in AutoCAD, I began to realize just how out of place it was going to look in relation to the other buildings.

Below is the final look of the building looking more institutional, but yet the overall form being residential in character.



## PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

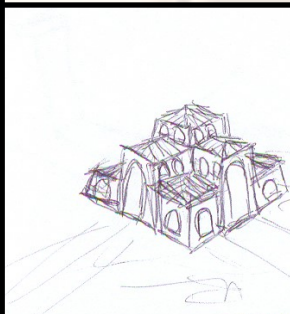


# ST. AMBROSE HALL

The chapel is to be the most prominent building on the site as suggested by the name of the retreat center, Domus Dei, which literally means "House of God." There are three natural laws of church architecture that must be met: 1) Verticality 2) Permanence 3) Iconography. Renaissance architectural theorists recognized that there are five building types to which all buildings conform and among which a hierarchy or status exists. Places of veneration, such as a Domus Dei, hold the most exalted place within that hierarchy and as such require prominent siting, the expenditure of superior craftsmanship and materials, and should be free standing.

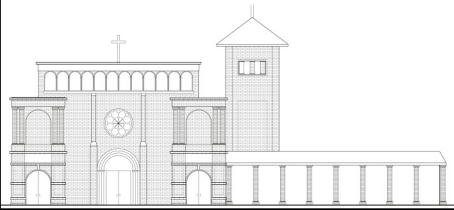
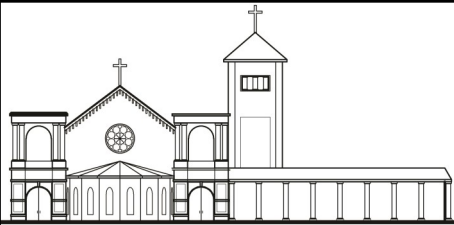


With this in mind I set out to find a design that would meet this criteria. Some of the early designs used the idea of having a plan with a central altar with seating all around and a separate baptismal. However, there are several problems with these ideas. The seating in a round does not work as well to signify the oneness of the participants as having all the pews facing the same direction. Also seating in a round is very distracting for people tend to look at the people across from them rather than on what is going on. I found out later in the design that the baptismal had to go because this is a chapel and not a parish church, and has no "parish family" so it cannot have baptisms.



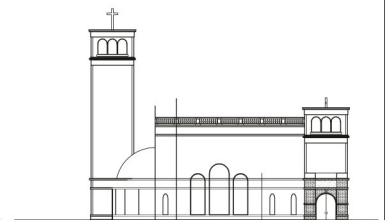
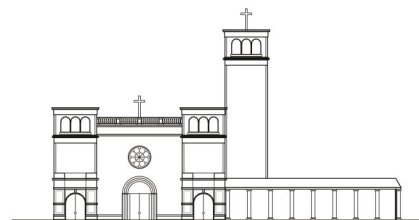
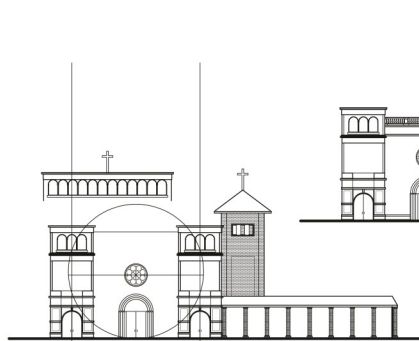
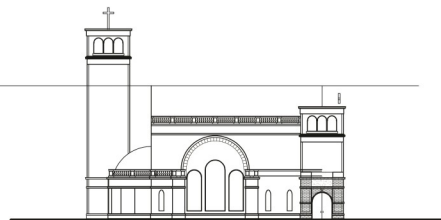
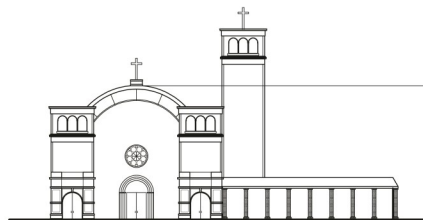
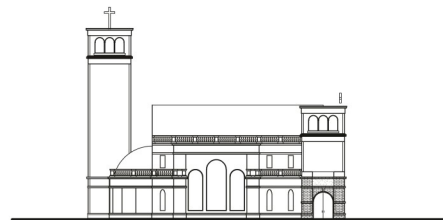
# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

# ST. AMBROSE HALL



When the baptismal had to be removed from the design, the front of the chapel had to change. At that point I went through many different design ideas. The first of these is to the left third from the top. This was just too flat, and was pointed out that it was nothing more than a saloon front with a peaked roof behind.

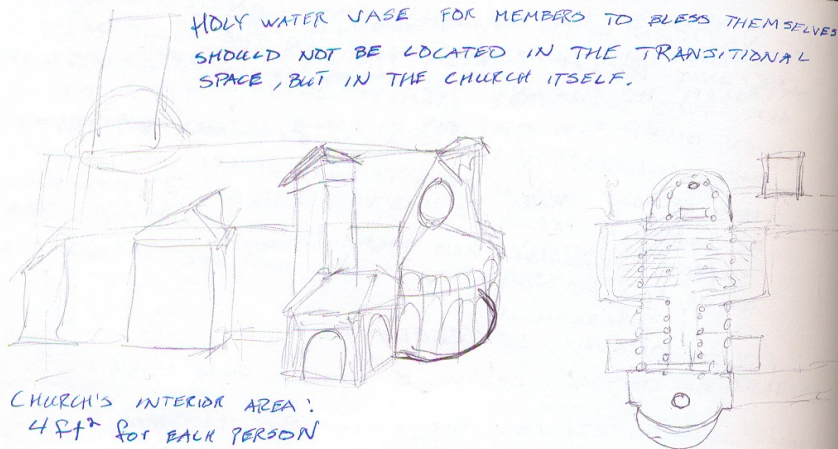
From here my changes are shown from the bottom up on the graphic below. I then put a flat roof on which looked nice, but I kept looking. I then put a barrel vault on with the rose window in the center point, but the ceiling height then became much too high. A combination of these ideas was the final idea.



## PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

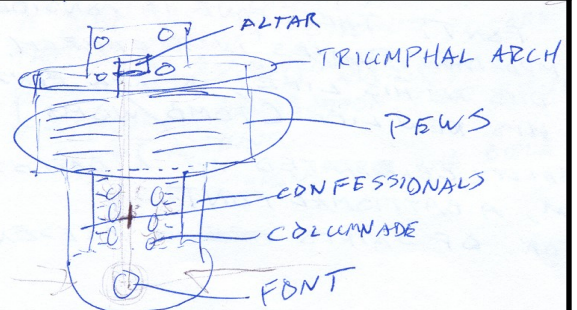
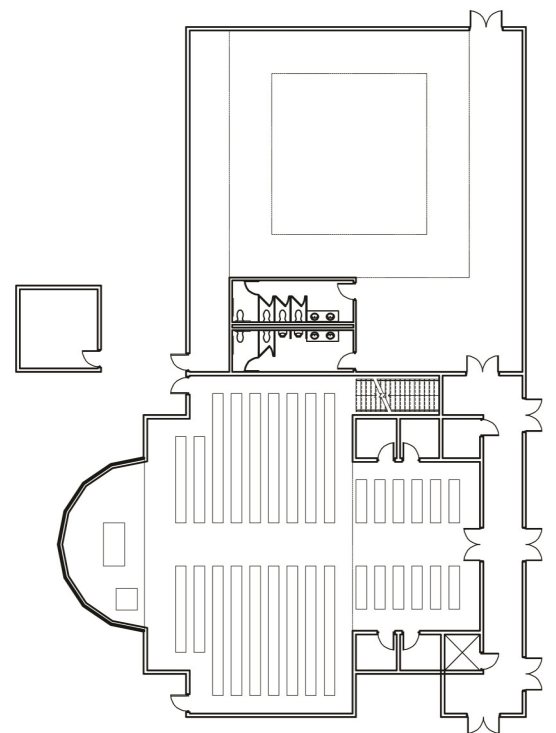


# ST. AMBROSE HALL



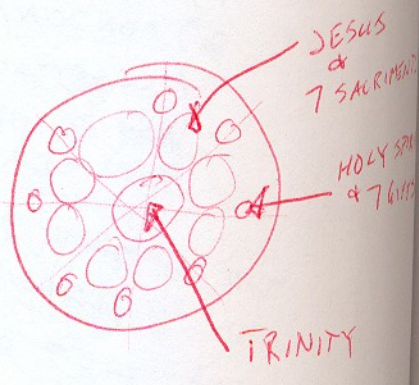
The chapel is laid out in the shape of a Latin cross. The altar and tabernacle are on axis with the entrance doors to clearly define a symbolic path one takes to Christ. All the pews are facing the same direction to signify the unity of the congregation. Since this is a chapel and not a parish church there is no baptismal font, instead a plaque listing the "baptismal promises" is above the entrance as a reminder of the beginning of their journey toward Christ. The reconciliation rooms are just inside the doors so those needing to repent can do so before continuing along the path.

The courtyard to the north of the chapel is to provide interior garden space for people during times when the weather will not permit them to use the outside gardens.



# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

# ST. AMBROSE HALL



The three characteristics of beauty are: integritas (wholeness), consonantia (harmony), and claritas (radiance). An object may be striking or interesting when one or two are present but beautiful only when all three are. A rose window has all three.

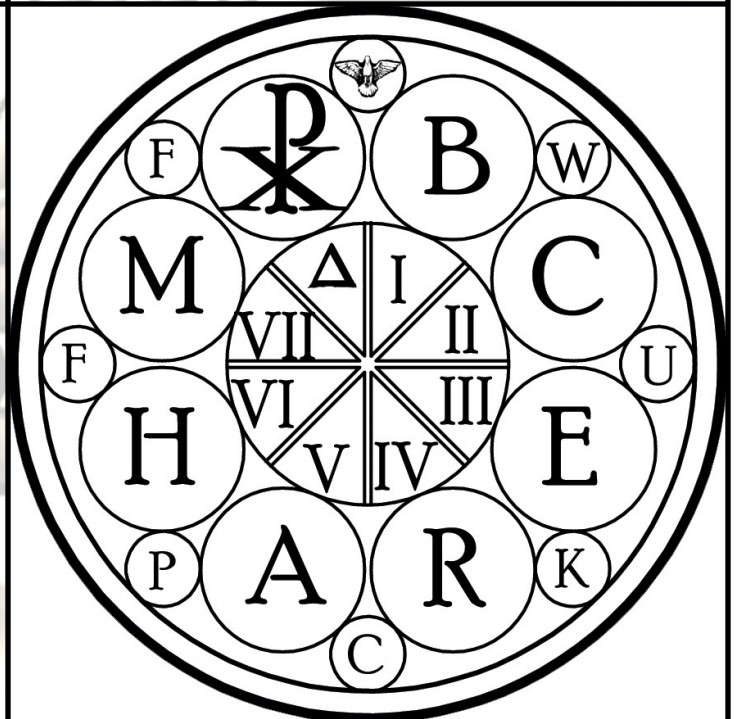
The rose window in the St. Ambrose Hall is also based on the number 8. There are two sets of 8 circles and a central circle divided into 8 sections. The center circle has a triangle representing the Trinity, and seven numbers for the seven days of the creation. The eight large circles are for Jesus and the seven sacraments. The eight smaller circles show the Holy Spirit and the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The seven sacraments instituted by Christ are:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation
3. Eucharist
4. Reconciliation
5. Anointing of the Sick
6. Holy Orders
7. Matrimony

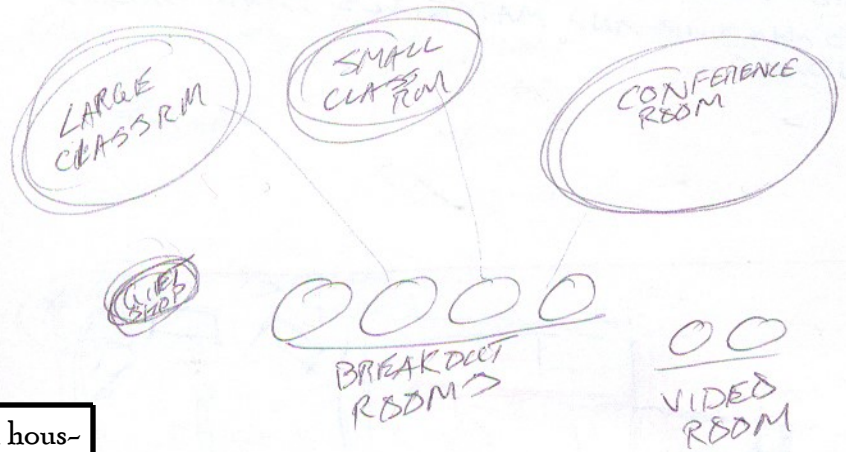
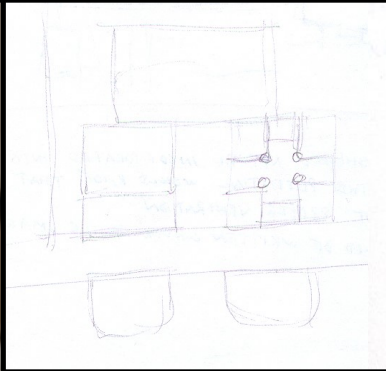
The seven gifts of the Holy Spirit are:

1. Wisdom
2. Understanding
3. Knowledge
4. Counsel
5. Piety
6. Fortitude
7. Fear of the Lord





# ST. AUGUSTINE HALL



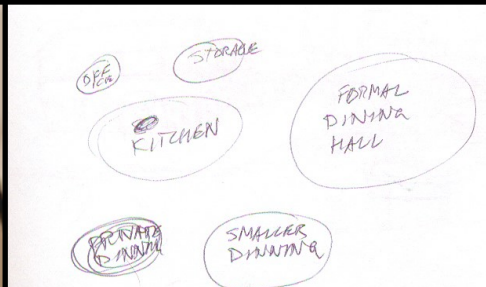
The St. Augustine Hall houses the educational functions of the retreat center and the design was aimed at portraying that. Classically inspired columns are used on the front of the building and an elliptical barrel vault rests over top the atrium space to provide light into the central core where all the classrooms empty out into. The dormers are also elliptical in shape.

This building is second to the chapel in terms of attention to details to portray the importance of being educated in the Faith, but yet not to overshadow the importance of a strong prayer life.

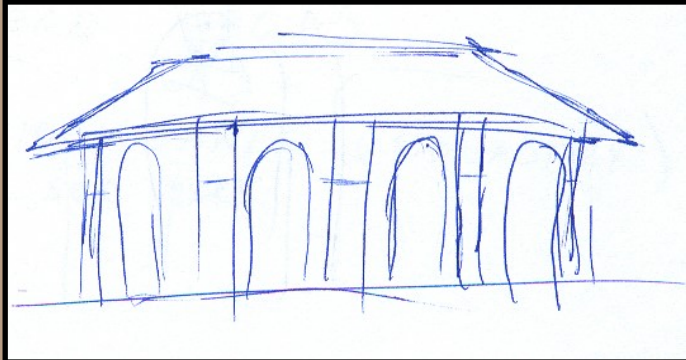
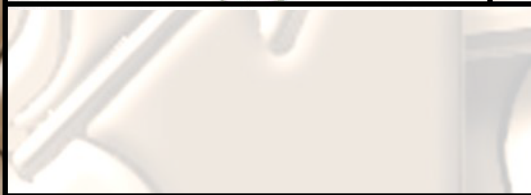


## PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

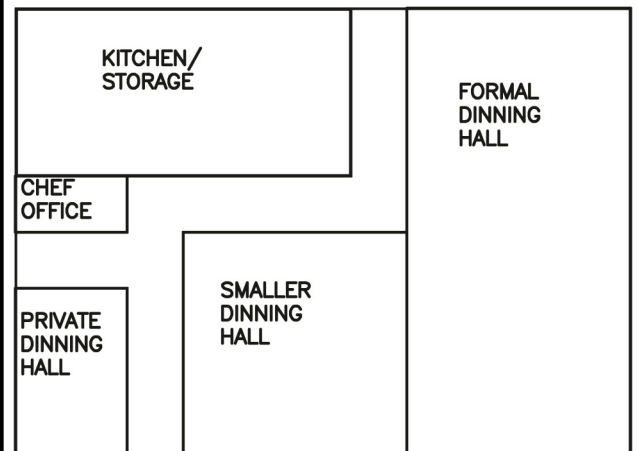
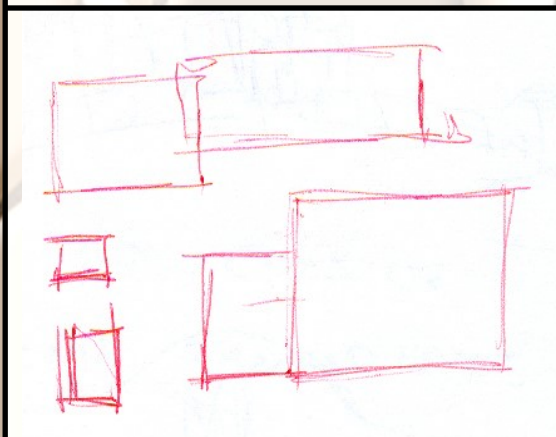
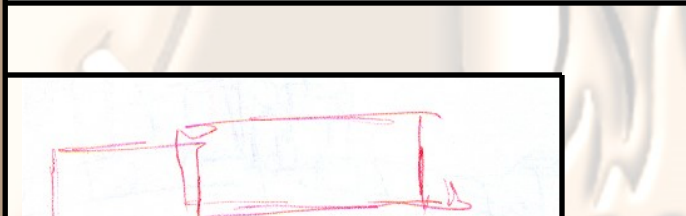
# ST. ANSELM HALL



The St. Anselm Hall is the dining facilities at Domus Dei. The original space planning for the building called for three separate dining halls for three different size groups of people who would be using the retreat. The largest dining hall to hold the largest number of people who would be on the retreat and then smaller rooms for those times when retreats are smaller. It was decided to combine these different dining halls

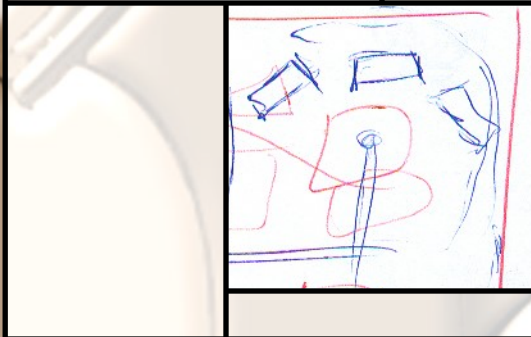
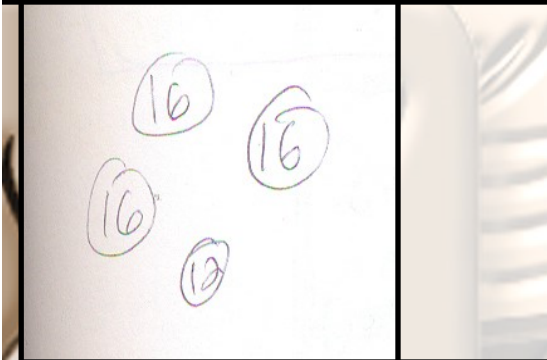


into one with a movable separator so the large room could be divided when more than one group needed to eat at the same time. The space where the other dining halls were became a lounge.



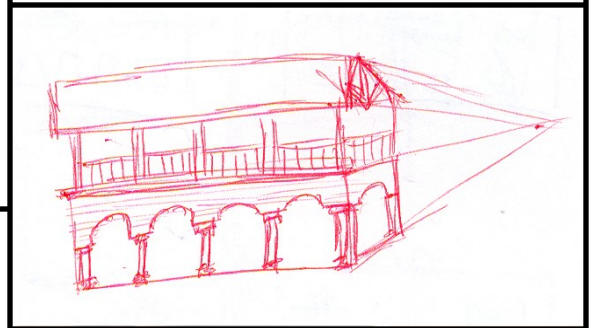
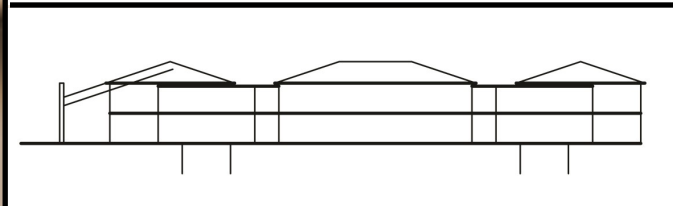
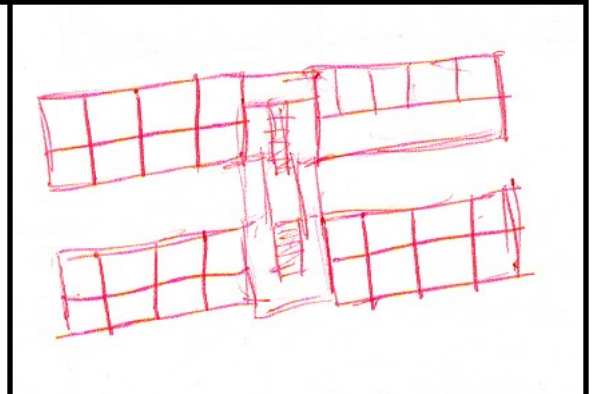
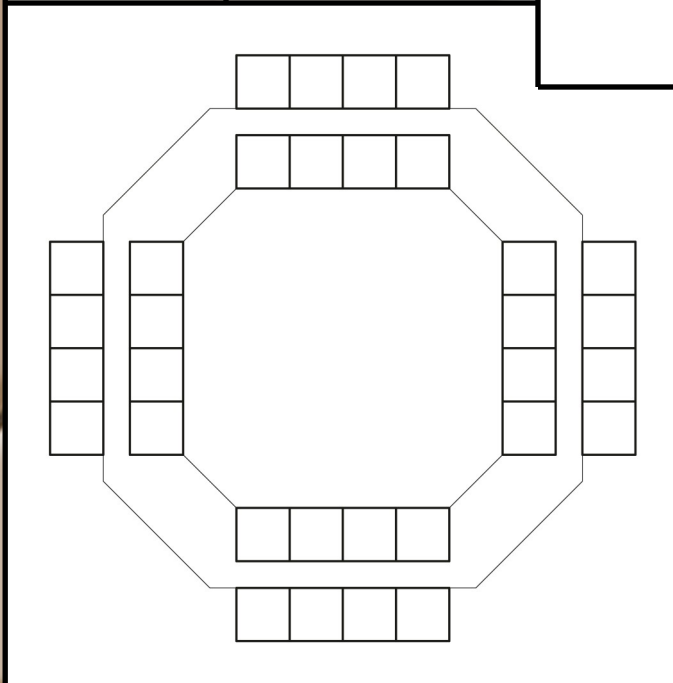


# ST. THOMAS AQUINAS HALL



St. Thomas Aquinas Hall went through three distinct phases of form. The first was separate buildings much like a group of cottages. They were then connected to give them a little more continuity and became an octagonal shape. I felt this layout made it almost seem as if they were turning their back on the rest of the site, so again they were reorganized, this time rectilinear.

At this point they still had open air balconies that connected the rooms to each other. That was changed to being completely enclosed, including the space between the two structures, for climatic purposes. A nice interior atrium garden resulted from this.



# PROCESS DOCUMENTATION

The background of the page is a complex collage of embossed symbols in a light brown color. At the top left, there is a ship's mast and sails. To its right is a quill pen. In the center, a flame rises from a base of four circular elements. Below the flame is a horizontal row of four circular symbols. At the bottom left, there is a water drop. On the right side, a sun with rays is partially visible. A white rectangular box is overlaid on the upper right portion of the collage, containing the title text.

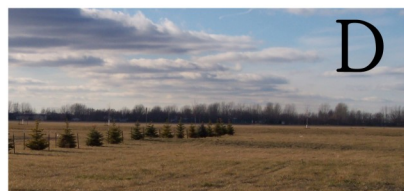
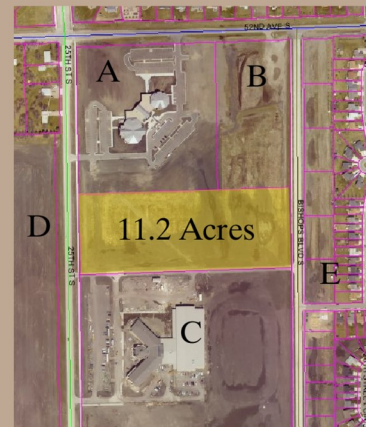
# Project Solution Documentation



# PRESENTATION BOARDS

Fargo, ND is where the bishop of the Diocese of Fargo has his seat. The Diocese of Fargo comprises of the eastern half of North Dakota. Fargo is the largest city in a mostly agricultural state. Fargo is Currently experiencing rapid growth to the south and is expected to continue growing south for years to come.

The site is located on property owned by the Diocese of Fargo between Sts. Anne & Joachim Church, the Pastoral Center and Shanley High School. The site is bound by Bishops Blvd on the east side and 25th St. to the west. 52nd Ave S. just to the north provides major access to interstate 29.



- A) Sts. Anne & Joachim Church
- B) Pastoral Center
- C) Shanley High School
- D) Open Field
- E) Residential Housing

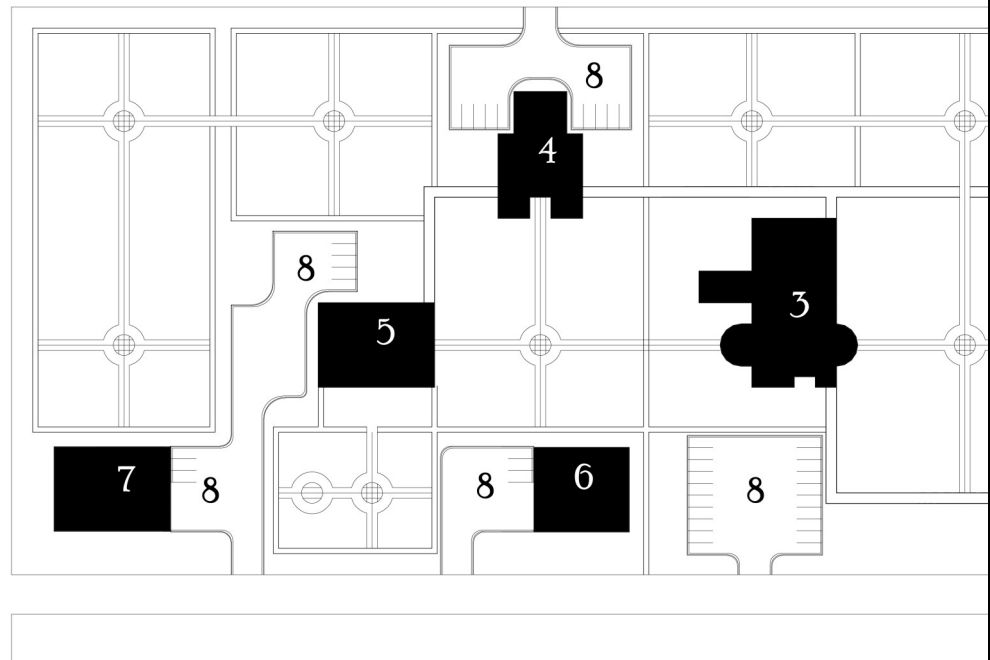
# PRESENTATION BOARDS

## DOMUS DEI Diocese of Fargo Retreat Center



Designed By:

Craig D. Michels

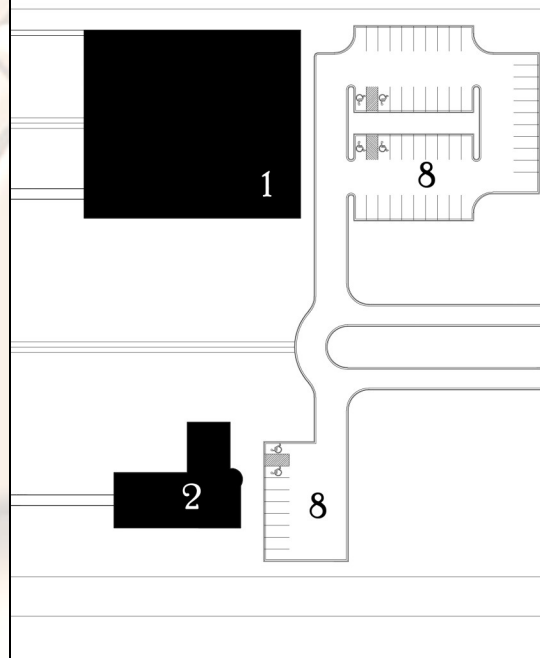




# PRESENTATION BOARDS

The number "8" is used throughout this project in the site as well as in the Design of the individual buildings. It is often reconized by many that in the Bible when the number "7" is used to mean that what is being referred to is complete or full. An example is that all creation was made in 7 days. The number 7 is used to represent the fullness of time here on earth. With this in mind the number 8, comeing right after the number 7, stands for that which comes after the fullness of time, or Heaven.

The site plan for Domus Dei is a grid based on the number 8. This method of site planning has historic ties back to a monastic community plan called "The Plan of St. Gall." The different functions of the retreat have been seperated into different buildings to aid the community feel of the site and to give the person on the retreat the feel they are very far from Fargo.



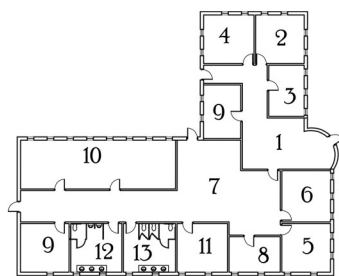
- 1) St. Thomas Aquinas Hall
- 2) St. Polycarp Hall
- 3) St. Ambrose Hall
- 4) St. Augustine Hall
- 5) St. Anselm Hall
- 6) Grounds Keep Shop
- 7) Green House
- 8) Parking

# PRESENTATION BOARDS

## St. Polycarp Hall

The St. Polycarp Hall is the main office building for Domus Dei. This building is shared by the retreat director's office and the Young Disciples Team's office since they are the two major users of the facilities. The St. Polycarp Hall is designed to look more residential to convey a more welcoming atmosphere as visitors check in than a typical office building can. All of the buildings are named after great saints that were founding fathers and doctors of the Church.

St. Polycarp, who was appointed by the apostle St. John to be bishop of Smyrna, was chosen for this building because of the welcoming purpose of the building. St. Polycarp welcomed even the soldiers that came to arrest him into his home and offered them food and drink and then prayed for the soldiers.



**Floor Plan**  
1/16" = 1'

- 1) Receptionist
- 2) Retreat Director
- 3) Reservationist
- 4) Retreat Office
- 5) Young Disciples Director
- 6) Young Disciples Assistant
- 7) Young Disciples Volunteers
- 8) Work Room
- 9) Storage Room
- 10) Library
- 11) Coffee Room
- 12) Men's Restroom
- 13) Women's Restroom



**North Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'



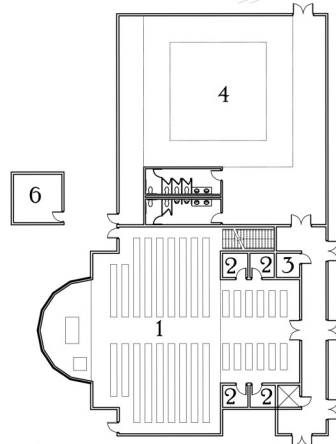
**West Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'



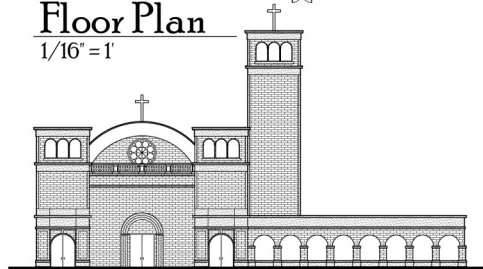
# PRESENTATION BOARDS

## St. Ambrose Hall

The St. Ambrose Hall is the Chapel at Domus Dei. The Chapel has a greater level of detail than the other buildings on the site to show the importance. The chapel is laid out in the shape of a Latin cross. The alter and tabernacle are on axis with the entrance doors to clearly define a symbolic path one takes to Christ. All the pews are facing the same direction to signify the unity of the congregation. Since this is a chapel and not a parish church there is no baptismal font, instead a plaque listing the "baptismal promises" is above the entrance as a reminder of the beginning of their journey toward Christ. The reconciliation rooms are just inside the doors so those needing to repent can do so before continuing along the path.

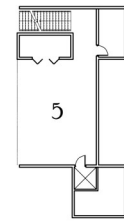


**Floor Plan**  
1/16" = 1'

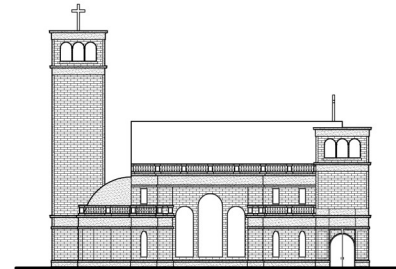


**West Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'

- 1) Chapel
- 2) Reconciliation Rooms
- 3) Side Chapel
- 4) Gathering Space
- 5) Choir Loft
- 6) Bell Tower



**Choir Loft Plan**  
1/16" = 1'



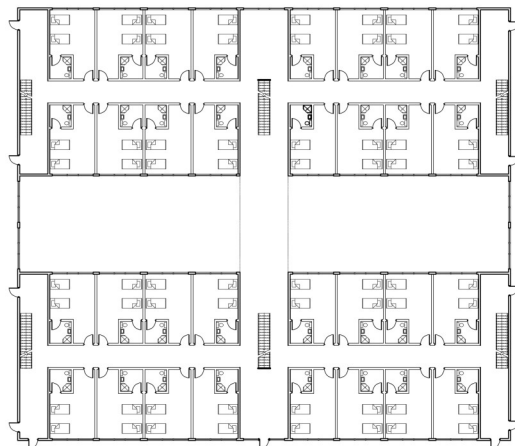
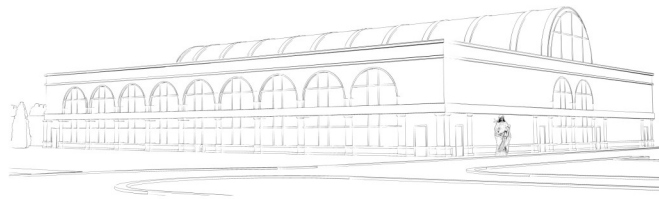
**South Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'

# PRESENTATION BOARDS

## St. Thomas Aquinas Hall

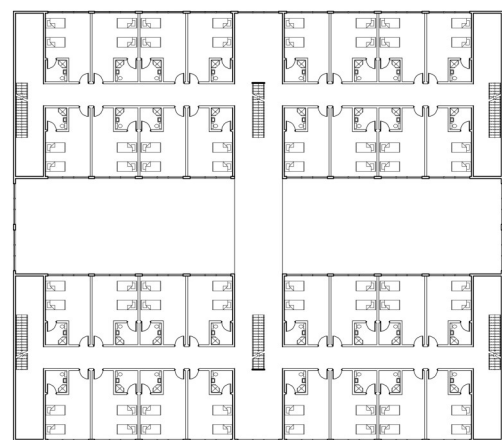
The St. Thomas Aquinas Hall is the residence hall for Domus Dei. There are 64 rooms which can house 128 people at maximum capacity. The large atrium in the middle of this building provides a garden like space to provide an open garden-like space to be used when weather does not permit the use of outdoor gardens.

An enclosed walkway also allows retreat participants to move from the residence halls to all the other buildings necessary for their retreats without having to brave the weather.



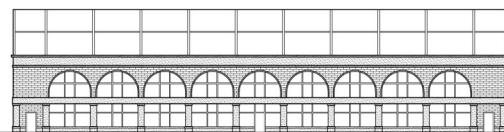
**First Floor Plan**

1/16" = 1'



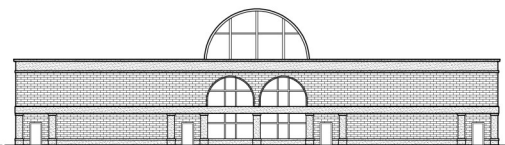
**Second Floor Plan**

1/16" = 1'



**South Elevation**

1/16" = 1'



**West Elevation**

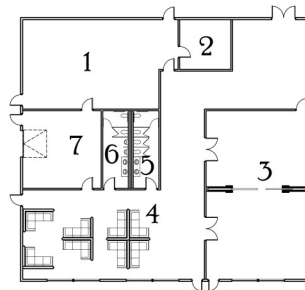
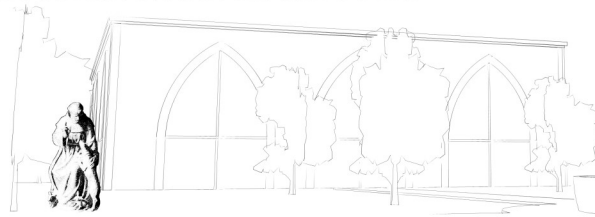
1/16" = 1'



# PRESENTATION BOARDS

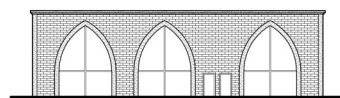
## St. Anselm Hall

St. Anselm Hall is the dining facility for the retreat center. The main dining room is dividable into two smaller rooms by stain glass sliding panels. The lounge space outside the dining room provides an area in which those waiting can recline and relax or hold conversations before and after meals. The large Gothic arched windows provide spectacular views out into the gardens from both the lounge and dining room. Even though the St. Anselm Hall is the only building to incorporate Gothic architecture into the design, it is not out of place since it was very common for different architecture styles to appear in monastic communities since not all buildings were constructed at the same time.

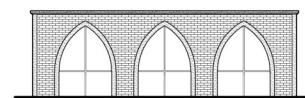


**Floor Plan**  
1/16" = 1'

- 1) Kitchen
- 2) Chef's Office
- 3) Dining Room
- 4) Lounge
- 5) Women's Restroom
- 6) Men's Restroom
- 7) Storage



**South Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'



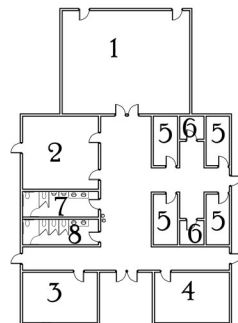
**West Elevation**  
1/16" = 1'

# PRESENTATION BOARDS

## St. Augustine Hall

The St. Augustine Hall is the building which houses the teaching spaces. St. Augustine, who's conversion was greatly influenced by St. Ambrose, defended the Faith in his writings using logical arguments and philosophy.

The design of the building is intended to look more institutional than the others to signify the function of education which is taking place inside.

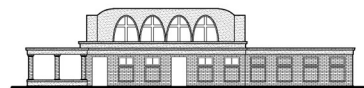


Floor Plan  
1/16" = 1'

- 1) Conference Room
- 2) Large Classroom
- 3) Small Classroom
- 4) Gift Shop
- 5) Breakout Rooms
- 6) Video Rooms
- 7) Men's Restroom
- 8) Women's Restroom



South Elevation  
1/16" = 1'





# PRESENTATION BOARDS

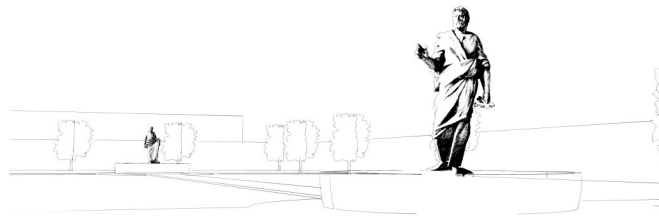
## Catholic Symbolism

"It is important to visualize the subjects of meditation; painting, sculpture, and architecture are meant to work together" - Ignatius Loyola

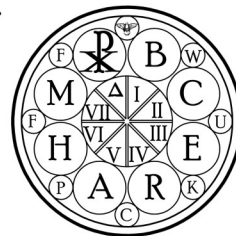
"Man's mind is raised to contemplation through objects" - St. Thomas Aquinas

There are three natural laws of church architecture that must be met:  
1) Verticality 2) Permanence 3) Iconography

Stain glass is the only art form that does not rely on reflected light. The artist is painted with the light of God



The three characteristics of beauty are: integritas (wholeness), consonantia (harmony), and claritas (radiance). An object may be striking or interesting when one or two are present but beautiful only when all three are. A rose window has all three.



Statues are used throughout the gardens at Domus Dei. They are significant in reminding those who look upon them of those that were successful in following Christ. Their life stories are often helpful in helping others find Christ who face similar challenges.

Shown are Paul (left) and Simon Peter (right). Paul was converted by Jesus Christ after the resurrection and was sent to convert the non-Jews. Simon Peter was the first pope as Jesus gave him the title "Peter" after Simon proclaimed that Jesus was the "Christ." (Matt. 16:16-19)



Personal  
Identification



# PERSONAL IDENTIFICATION



**NAME:** Craig D. Michels

**HOMETOWN:** [REDACTED]

**QUOTE ABOUT NDSU:**

**"I have discovered that the real learning does not occur in the classroom. It comes about through the people you meet and the activities you pursue on your own. Don't sit in studio all day, or you will not find the things to become great."**

The background of the page is a collage of embossed symbols in a light brown color. At the top left, there is a ship with a large sail. To its right is a quill pen. In the center, there is a flame or fire symbol. At the bottom left, there is a teardrop. At the bottom right, there is a sun with rays. The symbols are arranged in a way that they appear to be part of a larger, textured surface.

# References & Appendix



# REFERENCES

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# STATEMENT OF INTENT

**Craig D. Michels**

Statement of Intent

**Diocese of Fargo Religious Center**

Implementing the richness of past religious architecture in a new training and retreat center  
Fargo, North Dakota

In 2003 the Catholic Diocese of Fargo moved into a new building in south Fargo next to the new Shanley High School. They did this to get all of the offices into a single building which is call the Pastoral Center. The old main office building was the Queen of Peace retreat center, which was an old convent. In this move they unfortunately no longer have a retreat center as it wasn't budgeted for in the new building.

In 2001 a new ministry group call the Young Disciples Teams was created and run out of the Queen of Peace. This building worked well because the dormitories in the building housed the team members during their training. In 2001 there were 6 team members and as of 2004 the group has grown to 16. They expect to have 20 members in 2005 and will continue to grow each year as the demand increases. The Young Disciples Teams realized that their new home in the Pastoral Center did not work because of the lack of dormitories and conference space.

A new retreat center that will be located next to the Pastoral Center will solve both of these problems. The new retreat center main purpose will to provide the necessary space for both small and large retreats and conferences to help those in the Diocese of Fargo grow in their faith without having to travel great distances. It will also provide facilities for the Young Disciples Teams during their summer training.

The theoretical premise of my design is the richness of past religious architecture. Historically, the architecture had large amounts of symbolism and meaning which my design will rediscover. The form, layout and details will draw from these historical buildings.

# PROPOSAL

## Diocese of Fargo Retreat Center

### Design Thesis Proposal

Craig D. Michels

October 7, 2004

#### A. Title:

Diocese of Fargo Retreat Center

#### B. Building Typology:

My thesis project is the design of a retreat center for the Catholic Diocese of Fargo. This building will serve the functions of: (1) housing both large and small retreats for the people of the Diocese of Fargo, and (2) offices and training facilities for the Young Disciples Teams.

#### C. Theoretical Basis or Unifying Idea:

In the early Church, architecture held an important role in the expression of the faith. In those times most people could not read or write so the buildings in which they worshiped told the stories of their faith. Everything about the buildings had some underlying meaning to them. The building's windows, paintings, sculptures, form and layout all had a story to tell.

Throughout the years, in the name of "advancement," much of this richness of architecture has been lost. New building technologies and the desire to have modern looking buildings have watered down the architectural significance that religious buildings once had. My theoretical premise for this project is to rediscover the stories that have all but been forgotten that religious buildings once told.

#### D. Project Justification:

In 2003 the Catholic Diocese of Fargo moved into a new building in south Fargo next to the new Shanley High School. They did this to get all of the offices into a single building which is called the Pastoral Center. The old main office building was the Queen of Peace retreat center, which was an old convent. In this move they unfortunately no longer have a retreat center as it wasn't budgeted for in the new building.

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out of the Queen of Peace. This building worked well because the dormitories in the building housed the team members during their training. In 2001 there were 6 team members and in 2005 they expect to grow to 20. The Young Disciples Teams realized that their new home in the Pastoral Center did not work because of the lack of dormitories and conference space.

A new retreat center that will be located next to the Pastoral Center will solve both of these problems. The new retreat center will provide the necessary retreats to help those in the Diocese of Fargo grow in their faith without having to travel great distances. It will also provide facilities for the Young Disciples Teams during their summer training.

## **E. Emphasis:**

The main emphasis on this project will be placed on the visual experience the users will have while interacting with the building and the surrounding site. The form and materials will be chosen to maximize the influence the spaces can have.

The site plan will draw in and connect the currently disconnected existing buildings. The site's landscaping will be influenced by the precedence of medieval monastic cloisters and the Papal gardens at the Vatican.

The emphasis on the form of the Retreat Center will be to keep it at a residential scale. Italian villas and monasteries will be styles of architecture that will be drawn from in this attempt. The interior of the building will draw from these and also other European architectural styles, for this is not an attempt to recreate any one style, but to take those elements from various different styles that have been done well.

## **F. Site Information:**

The site for the Retreat Center will be in Fargo, ND. Fargo is a city of 90,600 people which is the largest in North Dakota. It is located in the south eastern part of the state in the Red River valley. Fargo has been experiencing south moving growth along the Red River. Fargo is expected to continue growing south since it is unable to grow west because the town of West Fargo is blocking it.

The site is in southern Fargo near 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue South on Bishops Blvd. This part of Fargo was just a field a few years ago, but since Fargo is rapidly growing, there are many new buildings in this area. The three buildings surrounding the site are all owned by the Catholic Diocese of Fargo which are: Shanley High School, Sts. Ann and Joachim church, and the Pastoral Center. This site is ideal since it is already owned by the Catholic Diocese of Fargo. It will provide convenience for those who use the existing three buildings and want to use the Retreat Center. The block on which all these buildings are located is surrounded on all sides by residential housing. However vehicular traffic is moderate to heavy since 25<sup>th</sup> Street and 52<sup>nd</sup> Avenue border the block.



# PROPOSAL

The soils in this area are clays which do not drain well and the site is virtually flat. Proper landscaping will have to be utilized to provide time for absorption of water. There are currently no trees or vegetation of any kind on the site. The distance between the existing buildings is great enough that summer and winter prevailing winds from the south and north respectively will have to be taken into account.

## G. Major Project Elements:

- Gardens
- Vineyard
- Lobby / Reception Area
- Book store
- Offices
- Conference Spaces
- Breakout Rooms
- Chapel
- Library
- Kitchen
- Dining Room
- Dormitories
- Storage

## H. User / Client Description:

The Diocese of Fargo Retreat Center will be owned and operated by the Catholic Diocese of Fargo. The staff that will operate the Retreat Center and run the Young Disciples Teams will occupy the building on a daily basis. This staff will number around 8. They will be the main users of the building, despite being a smaller number than those participating in other activities at the Retreat Center.

For two weeks at the end of May and one week in July the entire building will be devoted to training the Young Disciples Team members. Currently there will be 20 team members, but this number has the possibility of doubling within the next few years. They will eat, sleep, and attend classes on site. There will be strong emphasis in having a deep understanding of their faith so professors in Catechesis and Philosophy are brought in to immerse them in it. Much time will be also spent in team and individual prayer. They will also be taught how to teach kids and make it fun for them through games and other activities.

# PROPOSAL

The next group of users will be those on retreats. There will be two general types of retreats: large group retreats, and individual retreats. The building will have the capacity to house nearly 100 people at one time for large groups. It will also cater to the individual personal retreats. Those on the retreats will occupy and use many of the same spaces that the Young Disciples Teams will not be using during the 49 weeks that they are not in the building.

The building will have its own parking for those who are working in the building on a daily basis. There is space in existing parking lots for those training for the Young Disciples Teams and the retreat participants. The Pastoral Center and Sts. Ann and Joachim church's parking lots are almost always half empty. A parking calculation will be done to figure out how much additional parking will be needed.

## I. Definition of a Research Direction and Design Methodology:

In order to solve this design problem I will need to research case studies of both historical religious buildings and current retreat centers. A library search of religious symbolism will aid me in understanding the meanings of ancient symbols and employing them properly. I plan on visiting retreat centers in the area and visiting with their directors to supplement the information I find in any case studies found either on-line or in architectural journals.

## J. Documentation of the Design Process:

I plan on documenting the case studies I research along with any interviews that I take part in. I will also keep record of early design sketches and thoughts that I have about the project. This documentation will continue through the design process to the final drafts in the spring of 2005.

## K. Schedule of Work Plan:

### Fall Semester 2003

T	24 Aug	Classes begin
T	24 Aug	1st Thesis meeting during AR/LA 561 Course
F	27 Aug	1st Draft of Thesis Statement of Intent due, 1:00 pm Arch 106 3 copies distributed to faculty for review
W	01 Sept	Thesis Statements returned to Arch 106 office by faculty
R	02 Sept	Thesis Statements returned to students in class

# PROPOSAL

M	06 Sept	Labor Day Holiday
R	09 Sept	Revised Thesis Statement of Intent due to AR/LA 561 Instructor
R	16 Sept	Marked-up Thesis Statement of Intent available in AR/LA 561
R	07 Oct	Thesis Proposal due: to AR/LA 561 Instructor (2 copies)
R	07 Oct	Student critic preference slips & faculty preference slips available
R	14 Oct	Students and Faculty return preference slips to main office
R	21 Oct	Primary and Secondary Critics announced
R	28 Oct	Last day of AR/LA 561 Class
R	11 Nov	Veterans' Day Holiday
M-F	15-19 Nov	Final week of AR/LA 571 Design Studio / presentations
W	24 Nov	Draft Thesis Program due to Primary Critic (1 copy)
R-F	25-26 Nov	Thanksgiving Holiday
R	09 Dec	Final Thesis Program due to Primary Critic (1 copy)
F	10 Dec	Last day of classes
R	16 Dec	Program grade due to AR/LA 561 course instructor
M-F	13-17 Dec	Final Examinations

## Spring Semester 2004

T	11 Jan	Classes begin
M	17 Jan	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
M	21 Feb	President's Day Holiday
M-F	07-11 Mar	Mid-semester Thesis Reviews
M-F	14-18 Mar	Spring Break
W	23 Mar	4th year Statements of Intent due in AR/LA 472
F-M	25-28 Mar	Easter Holiday
M	25 Apr	Thesis Projects due at 4:30pm in the Memorial Union Ballroom
T-W	26-27 Apr	Annual Thesis Exhibit in the Memorial Union Ballroom
R-R	28 Apr-05 May	Final Thesis Reviews
F	29 Apr	Draft of Thesis document Due to Primary Critics



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F	06 May	Last day of classes
M-F	09-13 May	Final examinations
R	12 May	Final Thesis Document due at 4:30pm in the Department office
F	13 May	Commencement at 4:00pm Fargodome

## L. Previous Studio Experience:

### 2<sup>nd</sup> Year Studio:

#### Fall 2001 - d'Anjou

Museum Display - Full Scale Display  
Bozeman, MT Rural Residence - House  
Copenhagen School of Architecture

#### Spring 2002- Hatlen

Passive Heating - House  
Urban Infill - Park  
NDSU College of Business Building  
Bridge - Sketch Problem

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Studio:

#### Fall 2002- Praefcke

Ronald McDonald House - Bed and Breakfast  
Timber Frame - Snowmobile Dealership

#### Spring 2003 - Elnahas

Steel Competition - Performing Arts  
Center  
Masonry Competition - West Acres  
Bank

### 4<sup>th</sup> Year Studio:

#### Fall 2003 - Barnhouse, Urness, Walter

Urban Design - Downtown Fargo Revitalization

#### Spring 2004- Faulkner

Marvin Windows Competition -  
Medium Density Residential  
Highrise - San Francisco Tower

### 5<sup>th</sup> Year Studio:

#### Fall 2004 - Martins

Valley City Document - Historic Preservation  
Document

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