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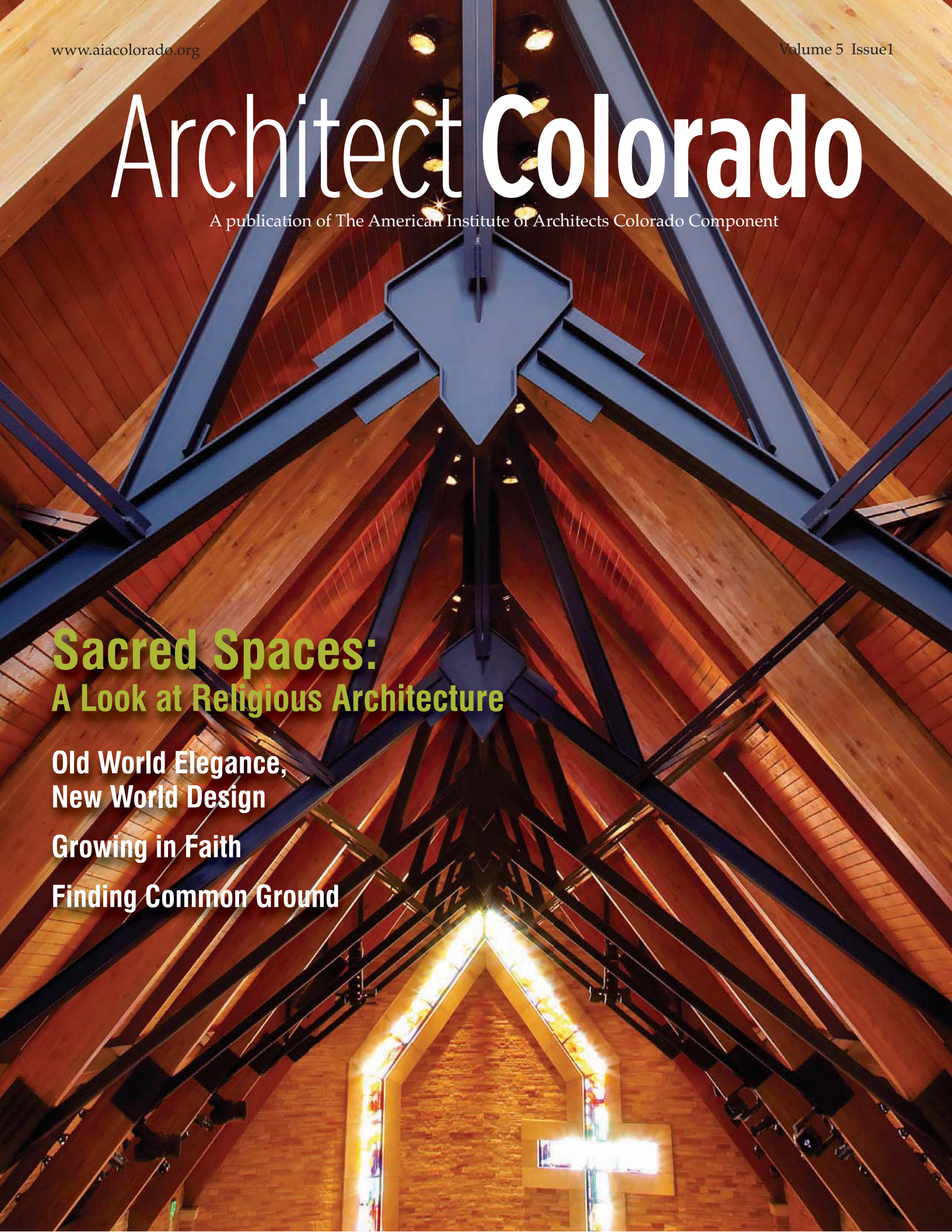
A publication of The American Institute of Architects Colorado Component

## **Sacred Spaces: A Look at Religious Architecture**

**Old World Elegance,  
New World Design**

**Growing in Faith**

**Finding Common Ground**



# Growing in Faith

A new campus-style church provides the Immaculate Conception parish the space they needed to welcome more members and better serve Lafayette's Catholic community.

By Brianne Sanchez



Marcus Parr, Parr Studio

What does it feel like to walk into the sanctuary at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church — as an architect, a parishioner or a pastor? A year after the church's dedication, members of the Lafayette, Colo., parish describe the space as they would a close friend: welcoming — evoking a feeling of openness, intimacy and warmth.

“Walk in and there's an immediate sense of peace,” Pastor Father Bob Amundsen says.

Light streams through a skylight above the full-submersion baptismal font that is big enough for adults to enter to receive the sacrament but is also accessible to the smallest children. A ceiling of Douglas fir-laminated beams warms and calms against walls in an earth-toned color palette. Eldorado Stone grounds an alcove behind the altar and Crucifix, a backdrop that blends the earthly and ethereal.

From sanctuary to support space, each decision made by project architect Richard Nearman, AIA, a principal of Eidos Architects, considered discussions with the church's building committee and interviews with the choir, volunteers, staff and churchgoers. Collaboration and open communication are key in the successful execution of religious projects, and Nearman's team exemplified both.

“One of the things (the architects) said they did well that they did do well was listen,” says Edie Ortega, who served on the Immaculate Conception Building Committee with her husband Jim. “They met individually with the musicians, volunteers in the kitchen and staff, as they were really trying to design a building that met our parish needs. These guys did that really well, and they kept doing that.”

Above: Eidos Architects designed the Immaculate Conception Church as a campus, breaking up different aspects of the building to fit the residential site.

Of the congregation’s desires for the building, that element of intimacy — which might feel like the natural outcome of hundreds joining together to worship — is facilitated by conscious design choices that transform the project from church to Church.

A difficult undertaking, considering the scope of the project: construction of a new 31,000-square-foot structure on an 11-acre site to be bordered by residences in the Cabrini Garden Subdivision. The original church, built in 1954 and situated a little more than a mile away, was only 8,000 square feet. “When you go from a very tiny church, you have to figure out how to create that very special feeling,” Ortega says.

Nearman’s solution for a community that craved space but also familiarity was wraparound pew placement. “We have people looking at each other’s faces,” Nearman says. Instead of creating a long line of seating extending to the back doors, the pews form a semi-circle around the altar. The sanctuary currently seats 500, but it is large enough to double in capacity as the parish grows into its new home.

“Now there’s no more than 60 feet between me and the last row,” Amundsen says.

The choices for the sanctuary are not the only notable elements of the Immaculate Conception project. Eidos Architects also was tasked with striking a balance of scale between the surrounding residential area and the towering backdrop of the Front Range, and between traditional tastes and modern needs.

“We wanted people to know that it was a church, to get that immediate feeling of ‘This is a holy place,’” Amundsen says of the desire for a traditional building that would be recognizable even to the casual driver-



Marcus Fair, Farr Studio

Above: Large windows expose the worship space and highlight gatherings.

Below: The Immaculate Conception Church project involved creating a new 31,000-square-foot structure.



Marcus Fair, Farr Studio



Marcus Fair, Fair Studio

Above: Pews arranged on three sides of the altar create an intimate space during services.

Below: The crucifix above the Immaculate Conception altar was brought from the original church and mounted on a larger cross to keep it in scale with the sanctuary.



Marcus Fair, Fair Studio

by. The siting of the church was planned to make it visible from the nearby highway and from the arterial streets in the area without dominating the surrounding neighborhood.

“This could have been one big clunky, ‘warehouse-y looking’ building,” Amundsen says. Instead, all three buildings have a consistent appearance and feel. Divided and with separate entrances, they can all serve their purposes simultaneously. It’s a vast improvement for a parish whose former communal space and bathrooms were in the basement, accessible by a narrow staircase. To keep the project respectful of the scale of the residences, Nearman suggested the church be divided into separate massings. Instead of a colossal cathedral space, the church is divided into three connected spaces: the worship area, social hall and parish offices and classrooms. A narthex serves as a gathering space that serves as an extension of the sanctuary in case of an overflow of visitors.

“It’s more of a kind of campus or a village look,” Nearman said. Parking is away from the sides of the building that face the subdivision and is thoughtfully landscaped to shield the vehicles from view. Eidos Architects also added outdoor meditation areas for the prayerful who want to find communion with nature as well as man.

Like the sanctuary, the social hall has the potential to double its capacity, from 250 to 500. “Our other church needed so much,” Ortega says. “We didn’t have a place for our parish family to gather. I really love the fact

that we have a building now that is welcoming and open to everybody.”

Currently, the space below the office and classrooms remains unfinished. After further fundraising, a subsequent phase involves lower-level classrooms. But for a donation-funded project, it was crucial that Eidos present the parish with cost-saving measures. Nearman introduced budget-saving material options to the building committee, like less expensive tiling and architectural stone veneer in the alcove where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. This gives the impression of a traditional grotto without the expense of solid stone. Building materials like stucco and brick are maintenance free and energy efficient. Even the lighting, which is hung at a more human level to balance the 40- to 50-foot ceilings, have the added appeal of being low enough that they will not require special equipment when it comes time to change a bulb. Another sustainable and sentimental decision was to repurpose elements from the old church, such as artwork, wrought iron work around the windows and the original crucifix. This eliminated the need to purchase new embellishments and tied the history of the community to the new place.

The best testament to the new church’s design is that it truly invites worship. “We were at the other church for 54 years, and in the time I was there, I hardly ever saw anybody in there praying during the day,” Amundsen said. “Now, there’s almost no time during the day when there’s not someone in praying.” ■

## IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHOLIC CHURCH

**Architect** Eidos Architects - Richard G. Nearman, AIA, principal, project manager, project architect  
**Location** 715 Cabrini Drive, Lafayette, Colo.  
**Construction Cost** \$5.6 million  
**Scope** The Immaculate Conception Catholic Church project included the construction of a new 31,000-square-foot church on a 14-acre site, in the northwest portion of Lafayette, Colo. The church is situated in a residential neighborhood, near Highway 285.  
**Purpose** Design a new facility to be utilized as worship area with office and classroom space for the Immaculate Conception Parish.  
**Completion** March 2008

**Owner** Immaculate Conception Parish  
(The Archdiocese of Denver)  
**Contractor** Franssen Pittman  
**Civil Engineers** MVE  
**Mechanical Engineer** RAD Engineering, LLC  
**Electrical Engineer** B.F. Hammond Electrical Design  
**Structural Engineer** The McGlamery Structural Group  
**Photographer** Marcus Farr, Farr Studio

### Other Notable Projects by Eidos Architects

- IBP Corporate Headquarters, Dakota Dunes, South Dakota
- New Dunkirk K-8 School, Denver
- St. Patrick Catholic Church, Colorado Springs, Colo.

Below: A skylight over the baptismal font brings in natural light, creating welcoming warmth for those attending Mass.



**Holy Name Catholic Church**  
Eidos Architects, PC  
**Architect** Robert L. Saas, AIA

**Location** Steamboat Springs, Colo.  
**Client** Holy Name Catholic Church/  
Archdiocese of Denver  
**Cost** \$5 million  
**Scope** Master plan entire campus,  
design new sanctuary, nave and  
chapel and remodel existing nave  
into new narthex.  
**Completion** 2012

Eidos Architects is completing the master plan and Phase I schematic design for the expansion of Holy Name Catholic Church in Steamboat Springs. Originally built in the early 1960s, when Steamboat Springs was a much smaller ranching community, the parish at Holy Name has exploded with growth just as its community has blossomed into a major ski resort.

Holy Name requested that Eidos Architects first prepare an overall master plan not only reflecting current growth but also anticipating Holy Name's continual growth over the next 30 to 40 years. Under that plan, the existing church will double in size, increasing its seating capacity from 280 to more than 600.

The intent of the master plan is to create a completely interconnected campus with the church and sanctuary as its major focus. Eidos Architects developed the interconnecting elements of the narthex, office area and religious educational components with transparent relationships through the use of glass and strategic alignments in the design, allowing views of the nave and sanctuary from multiple locations throughout the campus. The design connects the building not only on the interior but also through meditative cloister walks that surround the building and an entrance to the church that announces to the parishioners that they are entering a holy place.

Fox Construction of Steamboat Springs will build the church.



Eidos Architects, PC