

Key Concepts

Sanctuary

Holy place

Altar

A table made of stone on which the priest consecrates the bread and wine in Mass

Tabernacle

A box in which the consecrated (blessed) hosts are kept

Mass

The central act of worship of the Catholic Church which involves the celebration of the Eucharist

Crucifix

A cross with the image of the crucified Christ on it

Sanctuary Lamp

Reminds Catholics that the Blessed Sacrament is in the Tabernacle

Buildings

How the sacred objects within a Church represent Catholic beliefs about salvation

The architectural features of a Catholic church and how they reflect Catholic belief and facilitate worship

Key Sources of Authority

“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” Mt 18:20

The church is “a house of prayer in which the Eucharist is celebrated ...where the faithful assemble, and where is worshipped the presence of the Son of God our Saviour, offered for us on the sacrificial altar”
(Catechism of the Catholic Church 1181)

Key Beliefs

Feature

Meaning

Altar

Reminds Catholics of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross and that Jesus offers **salvation** to all through his death.

Candles

Symbol of the resurrection; Jesus as the light of the world.

Lectern

The Bible (word of God) is read from here. At Mass the word of God spiritually nourishes the people.

Crucifix

A reminder that Jesus’ died for the sins of all and that his death brings **salvation**. Some Christians prefer to use a cross not a crucifix in order to focus on the resurrection rather than the suffering and death of Jesus.

Stained glass windows

Tell stories of the saints and Jesus. By following their example and living a Christian life, believers can be **saved**.

Feature

Meaning

Cruciform shape

The church built in the shape of a cross as a reminder of the cross on which Jesus died in order to **save** believers.

Confessional

This is where Catholics confess their sins to a priest. Reconciliation cleanses them from sin to enable them to be reconciled with God and be **saved**.

Towers/ Steeples

A symbol of prayers rising up to heaven. These enable the building to be seen from far away which emphasises how special they are.

Facing East

Traditionally churches face East, towards the Holy Land where Jesus lived, died and rose again and where the sun rises. A reminder of the resurrection bringing new life.

Baptismal Font

Through baptism, Catholics are cleansed of original sin and become members of the Catholic Church in order to be **saved** (achieve salvation).

Exam Practice

Describe how the altar and font represent Catholic beliefs about salvation. (5)

Explain how Catholic beliefs about salvation influence the design of churches. (8)

Key Connections

How did Vatican II change church buildings?

Are there any similarities between churches and synagogues? What are the main differences?