



# The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church

By Margaret Visser

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## The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church By Margaret Visser

Margaret Visser has visited many more churches than most people, but like the rest of us, she began to tire of the slew of facts and lack of meaningful information available from guidebooks. The desire to find answers to her own questions -- as a traveler, a believer, and an insatiable anthropologist of the everyday -- led her to undertake this unique and revelatory book.

More than any other kind of edifice, a church is intentionally meaningful in all its aspects, and Visser decided to find out what it was trying to express, in its nuances as well as in its grand gestures. She deliberately chose a relatively simple church just outside the walls of Rome, Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura, but she casts a wide net -- taking in history, theology, anthropology, and folklore, among other disciplines -- to illuminate its physical and spiritual architecture. As she guides us through the building, from apse to nave, catacombs to campanile, Visser explores the symbolism of lambs, the Christian fascination with virgins, the meanings of martyrdom, and the history of relics. At the same time, she moves back through the centuries to reveal Christianity in its earliest forms and purposes. The book ends at the church's beginning, with the grave of Agnes, a twelve-year-old girl who was murdered seventeen hundred years ago and whose remains lie buried beneath the altar. By then we have learned how to read any church building, how to interpret what it "does" and "says," whether we are of any faith or none.

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Visser, described as "an anthropologist of everyday life," has written an enthralling, absorbing and exquisitely researched study of what she calls an "ordinary church." For her subject matter she chose a small but ancient Christian church dedicated to St. Agnes that sits half-buried outside the walls of Rome. Tired of endless tours through world churches in which guides provide lists of facts about dates and architects, Visser aims to bring one small church alive by exploring the stories, meanings and rituals built into each piece of the building. Using the physical layout of the church as the structure for her book, the author takes each staircase, window, fresco, catacomb and chapel as an entryway to fascinating details of mythology, history, early Christian theology, Roman culture and contemporary practice. Visser brings an obvious love and respect for her subject matter and demonstrates remarkable depth in her knowledge of the church's milieu from details on the origins of the halo in religious art, to the techniques of mosaic building, to the historical development of virgin-hero myths. In some ways the author is an archeologist as much as an anthropologist: she digs through layers of history to reveal the depth and breadth of one small building, and peels back layers of meaning in the words and images that adorn it. For the reader, this is rich and thoughtful armchair traveling of the best kind.

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From Library Journal

Spiritual traveler and author Visser (*Rituals of Dinner*) takes readers on an extended interior conversation as she explores Sant'Agnese fuori le Mura, a smallish Roman church dedicated to the fourth-century martyr Saint Agnes. Sort of an anthropology of the commonplace, the work spans art and architecture, medieval theology, myth and symbolism, history, and Catholic doctrine, as the author travels from the threshold of Sant'Agnese through its sanctuary and below to the crypt and tomb of the saint. Not so much about the church itself, Visser's insights are intended to evoke internal discovery within each reader, "like finding one's way to the center of a labyrinth." The result is a sort of well-researched guidebook for "reading" symbolic places. Visser's thoughtful perspective gives license to those who find transcendence and majesty in secular or religious spiritual architecture. Recommended for general religion and art history collections. DSandra Collins, Duquesne Univ. Lib., PA

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From [The New Yorker](#)

The church on which Visser trains her curious, shrewd, and affectionate attention is Sant'Agnese Fuori le Mura, which stands outside the walls of Rome. Dedicated to St. Agnes, who was martyred in 305 A.D., at the age of twelve, and built over a shrine containing her bones, the building has been in constant use for more than thirteen hundred years. Theology, etymology, mythology, art history, and necrology are just a few of the subjects the author addresses. Reading the church building itself as a text, she renders its language of marble and mosaic into a splendid narrative whose subject is how an architectural space "can both express and recall epiphany."

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The event that you get from The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church is a more deep you rooting the information that hide into the words the more you get enthusiastic about reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to comprehend but The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church giving you enjoyment feeling of reading. The author conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by means of anyone who read the item because the author of this guide is well-known enough. That book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. Making it easy to understand then can go together with you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We suggest you for having this kind of The Geometry of Love: Space, Time, Mystery, and Meaning in an Ordinary Church instantly.

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