Holy Angels Academy

Our Lady of Seven Sorrows Chapel

3500 St. Claude Avenue

With green spaces, five buildings, and six grottoes, the complex housing the Holy Angels Congregational Center and the Holy Angels Academy was a haven of quiet and contemplation, far from the noise and fast pace of the Ninth Ward, for almost 150 years.

But change has come even here. The school closed in 1992, and the Malta Court Retirement Center has sheltered the elderly in some of the old buildings, while Holy Angels Apartments have offered affordable housing. In 2016 the Marianite Sisters sold the property to real estate developers, and the land has been rezoned for commercial and residential use.

The Marianites of Holy Cross had served at this location since around 1850. A teaching order that began in France in 1841 as part of the Family of Holy Cross, the Marianites have played a role in the education of girls and young women throughout New Orleans. Holy Angels Academy, which they founded and operated here from 1865 until 1992, was an example of their contributions to the city.

In the middle of the complex, under a tower with a bell named Mary of the Seven Dolors Francis Xavier Basil Stanislaus, is the small Our Lady of the Seven Dolors (Sorrows) Chapel, built in 1885. Designed by James Freret, it was named for the first Superior General of the Marianite Sisters. The chapel was never a parish church; rather, it was intended for the students of Holy Angels Academy and the nuns who lived and taught there. Once the high school library, the space was renovated and simplified in 1995 for special services and meetings.

At least two of the windows are from the Emil Frei Studios. The Marianite archives at Holy Cross College hold a September 1921 receipt for two nave windows (Death of St. Joseph and Agony in the Garden), costing $300 each. (A scan of this invoice included in these documents.) Three months later, the Frei Studios wrote the sisters, offering to take measurements for two vestibule windows. Since the number of day and boarding students was increasing and the school was prospering, most of the windows probably date to this period.

Featuring traditional themes, these windows contribute to the calm oasis for contemplation and study.

*Visited April 18, 2004*

*Notes revised March 2020, but the Covid-19 epidemic of 2020 prevented a return to the chapel to confirm the accuracy of the window descriptions.*

**Windows**

Apse

Clerestory

Symbols of the Passion (Cup, Scourging Pillar, Crown of Thorns surrounding Nails, Ladder with Pole and Sponge, Fancy Robe, Empty Cross)

Left and right of Crucifix

Sacred Heart of Jesus Sorrowful Heart of Mary

Large windows

Anne and Joachim, parents of the Virgin Mary

Nave

King David Pope \*\*

Death of St. Joseph Agony in the Garden

Mary, Mother of God Annunciation

Assumption of Mary Nativity

Angel Frances Xavier Cabrini \*

Angel Thanksgiving Jubilarians 1952

Back wall

St. Francis Xavier baptizing an African boy

Transom: Angel with inscription: Holy Angels Academy

\* Omnia possum in eo qui me confortat: I can do everything through Him who gives me strength. *Philippians* 4:13

\*\* Pope Gregory if he is holding a book of music or Pope Leo if the book contains writing.

When citing information from this document, please acknowledge the Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.