Holy Name of Mary Catholic Church

500 Eliza Street, Algiers

Holy Name of Mary Parish, the first Catholic parish in Algiers, traces its origins to 1847, and the next year a wooden church and a rectory were erected across the road from the legendary Duvergé mansion. It was named St. Bartholomew, in honor of Barthélémy Duvergé, who had donated the land. In 1865 Marist fathers replaced the diocesan priests.

By the 1870s the Catholic population of Algiers had outgrown the church, and the rectory that had been built for one priest housed three. In addition, a violent storm in 1870 damaged the wooden church, which was not safe. Plans were laid for a larger church and rectory a few blocks away.

The new church stood at the corner of Alix and Verret streets. Inspired by thirteenth-century architecture, it was dedicated in 1873 as Holy Name of Mary Church. Modifications during the nineteenth century included a 200-foot steeple. Early in the 20th century, transepts, altars, altar railings, lighting fixtures, the pulpit, paintings and frescos by Archille Peretti (who designed stained glass windows at St. Patricks Church), and stained glass windows were added. The last included two magnificent creations by the Franz Mayer Studio of Munich, which dates them to 1909.

The great fire of 1895 spared the church (by only a block), but like most churches in New Orleans, this one suffered damages from the 1915 hurricane. In the early 1920s city engineers determined that the foundations were giving way, causing the walls to lean dangerously. Since the repairs were exorbitantly expensive, the building was demolished in 1927. The parish saved as many furnishings of the old building as possible, but the paintings and frescos and the Jardine pipe organ were lost.

The cornerstone of the current church was laid in April 1929. In Tudor Gothic style and the work of architect Alexander W. Norman, it accommodates 1100 people.

Triple portals with religious symbols dominate the façade. Four statues by Enrique Alférez, aged 27 when he sculpted them, stand in niches. The smallest, St. Peter, is over the main door; above, to the left and right, are St. Joseph and St. John. The Virgin Mary is over the central arch.

Furnishings from the previous church that were incorporated into this structure include three altars of Carrara marble set off by onyx and South African colored marble; the communion rail of marble edged with Mexican onyx; the gates to the sanctuary, ornamented by panels representing the Nativity and the Last Supper and guarded by two angels; and the two Mayer windows. The gates have since been converted into the Altar of Sacrifice.

As time has passed, additional stained glass windows have been added, replacing the original plain blue panes. The five windows behind the altar honor former New Orleans mayor Martin Behrman, a member of the parish. The windows along the sides of the church and the clerestory portray various Catholic saints. Nearly two thirds of the windows depict Mary or female saints, reflecting the influence of the Marist order.

The windows illustrate two different styles: the Munich style of painted windows and the Gothic Revival style. The Munich windows, crafted by the Mayer Studios for the earlier church and located on each side of the altar, depict the Holy Ghost descending upon the Apostles and the Nativity of Jesus. These can be viewed as paintings on glass, given the elaborate detailing. Mayer expanded both, by adding an apostle and two shepherds, to fit the larger openings of the 1929 building. In addition, the Mayer window list includes three windows, ordered in 1959, but these have not been identified. The origin of the other beautiful windows also needs to be researched.

The Gothic Revivalstyle throughout the remainder of the church emphasizes the beauty of the color of the glass, and should be viewed as mosaics of glass. The painting is secondary to the profound effect of the blue glass, accented by brilliant primary colors as found in early European cathedrals.

A small grotto on the church grounds was dedicated to Our Lady of Victory in 1948 as a gift from grateful mothers of returned veterans of World War II. In 19851986 a bequest from Miss Rita Rousselot and others allowed the complete renovation of the church.

In 1999 the Marists turned the church over to archdiocesan priests, and ten years later the parish of St. Julian Eymard was folded into Holy Name of Mary Parish.

**Windows of the upper tier**

**altar**

Blessed Virgin

Nativity *(Mayer windows from old church)* Descent of the Holy Ghost

Rose window Rose window

St. Jeanne de Valois St. Bridget

St. Louis Jesus & His Mother

St. Joan d'Arc St. Catherine

St. Damian In honor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help

Mother Cabrini St. Joseph

St. Cosmas St. Anthony

St. Ambrose St. Luke

St. Jerome St. Mark

St. Gregory St. Matthew

Angel St. Isaac Jogues

Martyrdom of Blessed Chanel St. Francis Xavier

Angel St. Julia

Pope Pius X

St. Thomas flanked by angels with musical instruments

**Windows of the Lower Tier**

**altar**

St. Bridget St. Thérèse of Lisieux

St. Anthony St. Cecelia

St. Rose of Lima St. John the Evangelist

Sacred Heart St. Elizabeth

Our Lady of the Sacred Heart St. Joseph

St. Gertrude Our Lady of Victory

St. Agnes Our Lady of Grace

St. Catherine of Siena St. Ann

Immaculate Conception St. Michael

St. Patrick St. Margaret Alacoque

St. Catherine Guardian Angel

St. Helena St. Peter

Eye of God

Flying ducks Tower of God

Baptistry alcove

St. John the Baptist

with the symbols ChiRo and IHS

*Visited*

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*May 21, 2006*

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