Cathedral of the Holy Trinity

1200 Robert E. Lee Boulevard

The Cathedral of the Holy Trinity, founded in 1864, is the oldest Greek Orthodox congregation in the New World. But it did not start out in such an imposing building.

Like many religious groups, the Eastern Orthodox first worshiped in private homes, beginning in 1864. This congregation, comprising Orthodox followers of several nationalities, began raising funds for a church almost immediately. In 1866 a small wooden church in the style of a Greek temple opened at 1222 North Dorgenois Street, in the Esplanade Ridge area. Its formal name was the Eastern Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity, under the jurisdiction of the Holy Synod of Greece. The first priest arrived in 1867, and many parishioners moved into the surrounding neighborhood because of the church.

Although several buildings were added, the congregation outgrew its first home. Thus, a solid brick church with Romanesque features replaced it on the same site in 1950. (It now houses St. Lukes Episcopal Church.)

Ten years later the parish was elevated to the status of Cathedral and See of the diocese. In 1976 the congregation sold the North Dorgenois Street church to St. Lukes Episcopalian Church. Energetic fund raising led to the construction of the Hellenic Cultural Center, on Bayou St. John, in 1980 and of the Cathedral in 1985. In 2001 this was consecrated with relics from the first church and from the Old World.

This cathedral is a modern treatment of ancient Byzantine architectural forms and houses religious iconography drawing heavily on Eastern European art forms. The exterior, of deep red terra-cotta blocks, is imposing but spartan except for the large mosaics over the entrance, facing the bayou. The interior is elaborate and magnificent.

The visitors eyes are first drawn to the dome, which contributes to the translucence of the sanctuary. At the center of the dome is the Pantocrator, Christ. Twelve stained-glass windows portraying the disciples form a circle surrounding Christ. Behind the altar, which is separated from the nave by an ornate *iconostasion,* is a vividly colored semi-abstract arched window. All stained glass was executed by the Conrad Schmitt Studios of Wisconsin.

*Visited:*

 *September 21, 1997*

 *October 25, 2015*

**Windows**

 Arched window

 Altar

 Dome

 Christ (Pantocrator) surrounded by the Twelve Disciples

Pentecost Epiphany

Many-Eyed Cherubim Six-Winged Seraphim

St. George St. Sophia

St. Basil Prophet Elias

St. Paul Ss. Cosmas and Damian

 Front Door

 Trinity

**Glossary for Greek Orthodox Liturgical Art**

*Byzantine:* Architectural style incorporating frescoes, mosaics, icons, round arches, and rich (often sumptuous) colors.

*Hellenic Orthodox Church:* Greek Orthodox Church; part of the traditional orthodox Christian church that dates from the time of Christ; one of four traditions remaining under the patriarch of Constantinople.

*Iconostasion:* Screen adorned with icons that separates the *solea* from the Holy Altar.

*Orthros:* Morning office or rite preceding Holy Eucharist; comparable to Lauds.

*Pantocrator:* Representation of Christ as ruler of the universe.

*Proskenetaria:* Icon shrine in the narthex.

*Solea:* Raised part of church between the nave and the holy altar. Corresponds to the chancel in the Western church. It translates literally as a place lit up by the sun.

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Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.