Thomas J. Semmes Memorial Chapel

(Holy Name Chapel / Priests Chapel, Jesuit High School)

These biographies and the history of the Semmes Chapel were writtenby Fr. Donald Hawkins, S.J., and Fr. Donald Saunders, S.J., in 2006. The pictorial Mayer windows, from Munich, are described starting at the front of the chapel, to the left of the altar, and continuing in a counterclockwise direction. A diagram correlating the numbered windows to their arrangement is at the end. The Stations of the Cross, in elaborate Moorish tracery, also are of stained glass by the Mayer studio. Windows for the Baronne Street school were ordered around 1905, and two for the chapel in the Mid-City school date to 1926.

1. **Pope Paul III and St. Ignatius**: The Holy Father officially approved the Society of Jesus as a religious order on 27 September 1540 through the promulgation of the papal bull *Regimini Militantis Ecclesiae*.

2. **St. Aloysius Gonzaga** (1568 1591) receiving his First Holy Communion from St. Charles Boromeo, the Cardinal Archbishop of Milan, on 22 July 1580. The marquis and marquise of Castiglione, the noble parents of Aloysius, look on. When studying theology in Rome as a young Jesuit, St. Aloysius contracted the plague while working for the sick and died on 21 June 1591. St. Robert Bellarmine was the young Jesuits spiritual director and asked to be buried as close to Aloysius as possible. Today they are entombed at adjoining side altars in the church of St. Ignatius, Rome.

3. **St. Peter Canisius** (1521 1597) discussing theology with Cardinal Otto Truchsess von Waldburg of Augsburg. The dog indicates that this is Canisius, a play on his name, from the Latin for *dog* (*canis*). Peter Canisius was one of the great figures of the Counter Reformation, an outstanding theologian and defender of the Faith, who wrote the *Catechism* and served as a theological expert at the Council of Trent. His founding of schools (18 colleges), writings (37 books), and preaching helped greatly to restore Catholicism to Germany.

4. **Bl. Rudolph Aquaviva** (1550 1583) and his companions, the Martyrs of Salsette, India. Rudolph Aquaviva, son of the Duke of Atri, was born in the family castle at Abruzzi, Italy. He was the nephew of Claudio Aquaviva, fifth Superior General of the Jesuits, and a cousin of St. Aloysius Gonzaga on his mothers side of the family. After entering the Jesuits and studying philosophy and theology in Rome, he was accepted for the missions in India. Ordained in Lisbon, he set sail for Goa in 1578. Blessed Rudolph became the superior of the missions in Salsette, a peninsula south of Goa, inhabited by Hindus and fanatical haters of Christianity. While visiting missions and establishing more churches, Bl. Rudolph and four other Jesuits were attacked by villagers and killed. The details in this window follow closely many of the facts concerning the martyrdom. Blessed Rudolph, brought to the ground with a slash from a scimitar, showed his willingness to die by opening the collar of his cassock and exposing the left side of his neck. He was struck on the neck, but finally killed by an arrow. His companions (only three of whom are pictured in the window) were killed with spears and scimitars. The Hindu statue may indicate that the site of martyrdom, where the Jesuits planned to build a church, had been the location of a Hindu temple. An angel brings the palm of martyrdom as the Jesuits die. Blessed Rudolph Aquaviva and his four companions were beatified by Pope Leo XIII in 1893.

5. **Bl. Anthony Baldinucci** (1665 1717). A Florentine, Blessed Anthony preached at rural parish missions throughout Italy. As depicted in this window, he was noted for walking barefoot to his parish missions. The great effectiveness of his missions was frequently indicated by the many worldly possessions burned by the faithful in bonfires at the end of his preaching. Along with the usual playing cards, dice, and worldly books, Blessed Anthony once counted 240 daggers and small arms and 21 pistols laid at his feet. The falling leaves are a reference to a vision: he saw souls falling into hell like leaves from a tree. The hooded figure is a member of a penitential confraternity, one who led the penitential procession as part of the preparation for confession during a mission and then led the entire group of parishioners in procession to the next village where Blessed Anthony would preach.

6. **St. Edmund Campion** (1540 1581) and his companions, the English Martyrs. Campion was the first of the English Jesuits sent back into England to minister secretly to Roman Catholic recusants during the Reformation. After working very effectively for more than a year, he was captured, condemned to the Tower of London, dragged through the streets of the city, and finally hanged, drawn, and quartered at Tyburn, near Hyde Park. The ropes around the necks of the martyrs indicate the type of death they suffered; the palm fronds are symbols of martyrdom. Campion was martyred with one other Jesuit, Alexander Briant, and a secular priest, Ralph Sherwin. The feast on 1 December celebrates St. Edmund Campions martyrdom and that of twenty-five other Jesuit martyrs of England and Wales, who died, according to the words on the cross in this window, for the true faith and the primacy of the Apostolic See.

7. **St. Stanislaus Kostka** (1550 1568). In this window St. Stanislaus is depicted in Vienna, where he was a student. Falling seriously ill, Stanislaus wanted to receive Communion because he was afraid that he was about to die; however, because he was living in the house of a strict Lutheran who refused to call a priest, he could not receive the Sacrament. Stanislaus prayed to St. Barbara, the patroness of his Sodality (CLC). She and two angels brought him Holy Communion. (Although depicted in this window wearing a Jesuit cassock, Stanislaus was not yet a Jesuit at this time.) St. Stanislaus, a Polish nobleman, recovered and traveled to Rome to enter the Jesuits. He was sent from Vienna with the recommendation of St. Peter Canisius and received in Rome by the Jesuit General, St. Francis Borgia. The recommendation written by St. Peter Canisius is preserved in the Jesuit Curia in Rome today: a unique letter written *by* a saint *to* a saint *about* a saint. St. Stanislaus died from fever at only eighteen, still a Jesuit novice.

8. **St. Peter Claver** (1580 1654) [left] and **St. Alphonsus Rodriguez** (1533 1617) [right]. These saints are depicted at the Jesuit College of Montesion in Palma on the Isle of Majorca, where St. Alphonsus, a Jesuit brother, was the porter (receptionist) for many years. St. Alphonsus is pointing to South America, urging the young Peter Claver to go to the missions. St. Peter Claver ministered to slaves in Cartagena (Colombia), a major center of the slave trade, for about forty years.

9. **Sts. Stephan Pongrácz, S.J.** (1583 1619) and **Melchior Grodziecki (Grodecz), S.J.** (1584 1619), Martyrs of Košice, Hungary. Between these two Jesuit saints is **St. Mark Krizevcanin (Krizin),** not a Jesuit, but a canon of the cathedral of Košice, Hungry. These saints demonstrated great courage and zeal for souls while preaching the Faith in Eastern Europe during the Protestant Reformation. They were brutally tortured and martyred together in Košice, a stronghold of Hungarian Calvinists in the early seventeenth century. Each of the three holds a palm frond, a symbol of martyrdom. At the bottom of the window, one of the three cherubs holds an axe, the instrument of their torture and death. The three were canonized by Pope John Paul II at Košice in 1995. When this window was made (1905), they were not yet canonized, but only beatified.

10**. The First Jesuit Vows** of St. Ignatius and his companions. The first seven Jesuits, students at the University of Paris, took their vows (poverty, chastity, and a promise to go to the Holy Lands, or if that became impossible, to place themselves at the disposal of the pope) at Montmartre, Paris, on 15 August 1534. Blessed Peter Faber, the first priest of the Society of Jesus (and the only priest of the seven at that time), is celebrating the Mass. Jesuits even today take their vows in the same way depicted here: before Communion at Mass, kneeling in front of the celebrant, who holds the consecrated host.

11. **Our Lady, Queen of the Society of Jesus (Regina Societati Jesu)** with St. Ignatius [left] and St. Francis Xavier [right]. Also depicted are [left to right] St. Alphonsus Rodriguez and the three Jesuit Saints of Youth, St. Aloysius Gonzaga (wearing a surplice, which indicates that he had received minor orders), St. John Berchmans (with the Rule Book of the Society), and St. Stanislaus Kostka. St. Aloysius and St. Stanislaus were canonized together in 1726, the fourth and fifth Jesuits canonized (after St. Ignatius, St. Francis Xavier, and St. Francis Borgia). Above this window is the seal of the Society of Jesus: the Greek monogram of the Holy Name of Jesus with Cross, nails, and crown of thorns.

12. **Seal of the Jesuit Society**. Seal of the Society of Jesus: the Greek monogram of the Holy Name of Jesus with Cross, nails, and crown of thorns.

*The* ***Our Lady of the Way*** *window can be found in St. Ignatius Hall and features St. Ignatius (left) and St. Francis Borgia (right), with the Blessed Virgin in the center..*

**St. Francis Borgia** (1510-1572 The Societys third Father General. During his term of office the first Jesuit missionaries came to Florida, the earliest mission on American soil. Before he entered the Jesuits, he was the fourth Duke of Gandia, was married and the father of 8 children. He lived in great familiarity with Charles and Isabella, and when the Empress died unexpectedly, her death made a lasting impression upon Francis. Francis suddenly realized the tragic transitoriness of human life and material possessions. He regarded that event as his day of conversion. When his wife died he became a Jesuit. Father Borgias generalate lasted for seven years and was spent in reading and writing countless letters, revising the Societys Constitutions, overseeing its expansion, and promoting missions in India, North America, and South America.

**History of the Thomas J. Semmes Memorial Chapel**

The windows, dome, paintings, altars, and pews of this chapel were originally part of the Thomas J. Semmes Chapel located on the second floor, Common Street side, of the Jesuit Residence at the old Jesuit High School (College of the Immaculate Conception), downtown. Some of these furnishings, such as the decorations on the altars, the designs on the ends of the pews, and the shape of the stained glass Stations of the Cross, follow the general Mazarabic architectural style of the neighboring Church of the Immaculate Conception, the Jesuits Baronne Street church. When Jesuit High School moved in 1926 to Carrollton Avenue and Banks Street, the chapel was re-constructed on a smaller scale in the new Jesuit Residence. The original dedication stone can still be seen under the center windows on the external wall, facing the school yard: In Memoriam / Thomae J. Semmes / Anno MCMI.

When the chapel was reconstructed in 1926, only eleven of the original stained glass windows were used. The twelfth window, which pictures Our Lady of the Way (patroness of the first church given to the Jesuits in Rome) with St. Ignatius and St. Francis Borgia (third Superior General of the Jesuits), now hangs in St. Ignatius Hall (formerly the Jesuit Residence library).

Also in St. Ignatius Hall are six circular stained glass windows that came from the old chapel on Common Street. Two rectangular windows, once behind the main altar in the old chapel, also hang in St. Ignatius Hall. Another stained glass dome from the old chapel has not been used since the move to the new school and remains in storage.

*Notes from the Stained Glass Art in Sacred Places group, Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans:*

The Mayer record books say that three dome windows with rich ornaments and two pictorial windows-- Communion of St. Louis and St. Francis Xavier Preaching to the Indians--were ordered for the chapel in 1905. Only one dome is found in the chapel. The two portrait windows, as well as a window portraying Our Lady of the Way, are absent. The orders may have been revised. Or, these three windows may be in St. Ignatius Hall.

Two windows are in the chapel but not on the 1905 order list to the Mayer studio: St. Aloysius Gonzaga and Francis Borgia. These must have been brought from the Immaculate Conception High School on Baronne Streetor their names were omitted from the Mayer list that we received.

Many (all?) of the windows were restored in 2015-2016 by the Pearl River Studio, of Jackson, Mississippi.

**Window Arrangement**

12

1 11 10

Altar

2 6

3 7

4 8

5 9

*Numbers refer to the descriptions above. Some placement errors are likely.*

*Not toured.*

If citing information from this document, please acknowledge

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