Our Lady Star of the Sea Roman Catholic Church

1835 St. Roch Avenue

The chimes of Our Lady Star of the Sea filled the neighborhood with the sound of Christmas in 2005, less than four months after Katrina’s visit. The church had survived, and the music brought hope to nearby residents, who were repairing and cleaning their homes. The church, high above street level with stout brick walls, had escaped major damage, and even the stained glass windows were relatively unscathed.

The first parish church, a frame structure built in 1911, had not been as fortunate. It was completely leveled by the terrible hurricane of 1915. First rebuilt of wood, it was replaced in the 1930s by the present impressive Byzantine structure designed by the firm of Bernard and Wogan. The spacious Greek cross plan, unbroken by columns, gives the large interior space a sense of unity. Lavish fittings of Belgian black marble complement the simple style of the sanctuary.

The parishioners, many second-generation immigrants of limited means, were hard working and determined. Before embarking on the ambitious church building program, they established a fine school for their children.

The wider community soon became aware that the church offered a 3 a.m. mass, the earliest in the city. This “Fisherman’s Mass” became popular with New Orleanians on their way to the fishing grounds to the east or returning from late-night parties and balls.

In 2001 a mural behind the altar by Vernon Dobard replaced one that had been damaged. It features Mary as Our Lady Star of the Sea, or Stella Maris. Eight angels, each representing an ethnic group that the parish has served, attend her. Painted emblems of the apostles flank the altar.

The stained glass windows were made by the studios of Emile Frei of St. Louis and Franz Mayer of Munich, the latter dating to 1931/1934. Many honor Mary, and angels abound. Of particular interest are Mayer windows depicting three different popes: Leo XIII blessing Mother Cabrini; Pius XI making the first Vatican radio broadcast; and Pius X serving First Communion to children. (In addition, Papal Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli, the future Pope Pius XII, is at the far left in the radio broadcast window.)

This impressive building reflects the importance of faith to this area. The windows are a powerful mixture of real people and biblical figures.

**Windows**

Christ Enthroned\*

Altar

Holy Spirit\* (round window above) Lamb of God\* (round window above)

St. Teresa Full of Grace

The Holy Family, Mary as Our Lady of Fatima Birth of Christ, the Magi

Immaculate Conception Work and Pray

Pope Pius X serving Papal Nuncio Eugenio Pacelli, Father Giuseppe Gianfranceschi

Communion to children\* (first director general of Vatican Radio),

Pope Pius XI, and Guglielmo Marconi

transmitting the first radio broadcast from the Vatican\*

Events in the life Mary as a Queen, with angels

of Mother Frances Cabrini Crucifixion (signed by Frei)

(Pope Leo XIII advises her to go the U.S.)

Choir loft

Four Evangelists\*

\* Windows by Franz Mayer; others are by the Emile Frei Studio

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