Our Lady of Good Counsel Catholic Church

1307 Louisiana Avenue

Our Lady of Good Counsel has been a perennial favorite for weddings. The interior is elaborate, from the newly refinished hardwood floors to the colonnaded nave with a painted canvas ceiling.

In 1887 Archbishop Francis Xavier Leray established this parish, carved from territories in Redemptorist and St. Stephen’s parishes, under the patronage of Our Lady of Good Counsel. He said the first Mass in a two-room frame building, which was replaced by a larger frame church. The present church, dedicated in 1894, was designed by Thomas H. Carter and built by Thomas Cary for $30,000. The 1920s were a time of growth for the parish, with the addition of an elementary school and the renovations of the convent for the Sisters of Notre Dame and of the large house at the corner of Coliseum Street home as a rectory.

In 2008, along with St. Henry Church, Our Lady of Good Counsel was closed because of declining congregations. Both were folded into the newly created Good Shepherd Parish, centered at St. Stephen Church. Here, as at St. Henry Church, the archbishop’s decision was met with loud disapproval. Seven years later, extended discussions with a new archbishop and the priest of Good Shepherd Parish led to the decision move the Charismatic Catholic Renewal’s Center for Jesus the Lord from its home on Rampart Street, which needed expensive maintenance, to Good Counsel *Church*. (Building names rarely change.) Although the *Parish* of Our Lady of Good Counsel was not revived, the beloved church is open and appreciated again. (St. Henry Church is now open for early weekday Masses and special services as part of Good Shepherd Parish.)

The exterior of the church displays many architectural details loved by the Victorians: Eastlake fretwork over the doorways (these postdate the main construction), a variety of window shapes and sizes, asymmetry, and towers of eclectic styles. Like many churches in New Orleans, this church was damaged in 1965 by Hurricane Betsy, which destroyed the bell tower steeple.

As part of the reopening of the church, the Archdiocese financed an energetic renovation. This included new lighting, HVAC, and sound and electrical systems, as well as the edition of a “cry room” and a bathroom. Statuary and the Stations of the Cross were touched up. As a separate undertaking, the school on the river side of the church has been converted to apartments.

The stained glass windows, which portray favorite themes seen in other New Orleans churches, are outstanding for their rich details, including expressive faces and abundant flowers and architectural features. The window featuring Mary as the Good Shepherdess is unique in this area. Most date to the 1920s, but their maker is not known. The remaining windows were produced by the Emil Frei Studio of St. Louis at later dates.

If the church had an organ when first built, nothing is known of it. During the 1920s the parish purchased one from Teller-Kent, in Erie, Pennsylvania, and its unplayable remains are still in the church. The instrument in use now was built in 1947 for the former Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church on St. Bernard Avenue. Built by the Wicks Organ Company of Highland, Illinois, it has three unified ranks of pipes.

**Windows of Our Lady of Good Counsel** **Church**

Rose window

St. Margaret Mary Alacoque’s vision St. Bernadette’s vision

of the Sacred Heart of Our Lady of Lourdes

Jesus, the Good Shepherd Mary, the Good Shepherdess

*Altar*

(Parentheses refer to the circular windows above)

Immaculate Conception (gate to a garden) Death of Joseph (“ora et labora”)

Annunciation (paschal lamb) Crowning of the Virgin

Visitation (“mysterious rose”) Assumption of the Virgin (M)

Nativity & shepherds (“IHS”) Pentecost (menorah)

Presentation in the temple (candle) Ascension (heart & arms)

Jesus among the doctors (10 Commandments) Resurrection (phoenix)

Agony in the Garden (chalice & bread) Crucifixion (dove / Holy Spirit)

Scourging at the pillar (??) Way of the Cross (Veil of Veronica)

*Vestibule*

Mocking of Christ

Two angels\* with tri-nimbus halos,

representing Christ as the Alpha and Omega

*Choir loft*

St. Cecelia, patroness of music Archangel Michael and angels

Madonna and Child with archangels Symbols for Mary (“M” and lilies) with angels

\*These may be Lordships, beautiful angels in the Second Sphere of Christian angelology. They supervise the lower angels and sometimes carry an orb.

*Visited*

*March 21, 1993*

*September 28. 2008*

*April 22, 2018*

*Revised March 2020, but the Covid-19 epidemic of 2020 prevented a return to identify the missing window.*

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