Our Lady of Guadalupe Church

and International Shrine of St. Jude

(Mortuary Chapel)

411 North Rampart Street

This chapel was founded not as a parish church but as the mortuary chapel for St. Louis Cathedral, to avoid laying out dead bodies in the cathedral proper. Thus, it was thought, yellow fever epidemics would be averted.

Constructed in 1826 just beyond the city walls and adjacent to the cemeteries, it is the citys oldest standing church building. The legendary Père Antoine (Antonio de Sedello) was among those laying the first stone and participating in its blessing as the Mortuary Chapel of St. Anthony of Padua. Almost 15 years later, it gradually assumed the functions of a parish church as well, serving as a chapel of ease for St. Louis Cathedral.

For about ten years in the middle of the nineteenth century, the church lay in disuse. In 1865 it was assigned to Father Isidore-François Turgis, the beloved chaplain of the New Orleans Guard Battalion, to respond to the needs of returning Confederate veterans.

Following Father Turgis death the chapel stood vacant once more until its revival in the 1870s as St. Anthonys Chapel (St. Anthony of Padua Parish), for Italian newcomers to the city. Early in the twentieth century, Archbishop Chappelle confided the church to the Spanish Dominicans, and in1915 St. Anthonys was moved to back-of-town Canal Street. Italians in the French Quarter area were assigned to St. Marys Italian Church on Chartres Street, and the chapel on Rampart Street again stood empty.

In 1921 the San Antoniobased Oblates of Mary Immaculate took over the chapel and, expecting a large Mexican congregation, renamed the chapel for Mexicos patron saint, Our Lady of Guadalupe. This was a time of major redecoration of the interior of the church, when the major windows were probably installed.

The stained glass windows were apparently the work of at least two studios. Those in the transept are signed by the Albertella Studio of Genova, Italy, and are thought to date to the 1950s. The maker of the elaborate windows in the chancel is still a mystery. Both the style and the quality of workmanship argue for different origins, as the detailed Bavarian-style nave windows retain vivid colors, whereas the paint in the transept windows is fading and flaking.

Major redecoration was undertaken for the churchs 1976 sesquicentennial celebration. The well-known Charles Reinike painted the ceiling frescoes and decorated the impressive mosaic shrines on either side of the main altar. One features the International Shrine of St. Jude, and the other honors deceased policemen and firemen.

St. Jude, the patron saint of apparently impossible cases, has been honored by public novenas here since 1935, when the first shrine to St. Jude was erected. The grotto to the right of church displays bricks conveying thanks for prayers answered.

In addition as to serving as the Police and Firemens official chapel, the church maintains an active program of feeding the homeless. Now almost 200 years old, Our Lady of Guadalupe Chapel is still a vital part of the religious and civic life of New Orleans.

**Windows** **of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church**

Altar

Transept

Police Department Emblem (Crescent Fire Department Emblem (Maltese Cross)

and Star)

Our Lady of Fatima The Good Shepherd

Nave

Our Lady of Guadalupe Our Lady of Lourdes

Our Lady of Prompt Succor

(Fire of 1812 and Battle of New Orleans) The Annunciation

Our Lady of Charity Our Lady of Mt. Carmel,

Patroness of Souls in Purgatory

Christ Blessing the Crucifixion, with the Virgin Mary,

Little Children Mary Magdalene, and John the Apostle

*Visited*

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