Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church

2400 Napoleon Avenue

Our Lady of Lourdes Church combines architectural styles rarely seen together. Its exterior is of Spanish Mission Revival style, a popular design in the 1920s. The interior, however, is Romanesque, distinctive for the absence of columns. Since it focused on a lady, the interior was painted a pale pink. The dome above was inspired by that in Holy Rosary Church at Lourdes.

This parish was established in 1905 to serve the residents of the lakeside end of the Bouligny Plantation area (St. Stephens and St. Henrys ministered to the river section of the tract). The dynamic Reverend Leslie J. Kavanagh was the first pastor, and as a devotee of Our Lady of Lourdes he selected its name. Soon a building combining the church, school, and rectory was constructed in the block where several structures later served these functions.

The Dominican Sisters operated the school for most of its existence.

In 1908, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the apparition at Lourdes, Father Kavanagh organized a three-day ceremony, which included the dedication of a replica of the Lourdes grotto.

The parish continued to thrive, and a larger sanctuary was needed. In 1923, having paid off the original debt, the parish consulted the architectural firm of Diboll and Owen. The original building was moved to the middle of the block, construction proceeded quickly, and the new churchincluding the original statuary and a new replica of the grottowas dedicated in May 1925. Generous parishioners paid for interior decorations, such as the windows, over several years.

The stained glass windows are lovely and very much in the German tradition. Their theme is the worship of Mary, who is featured in almost all, from the Presentation to her Coronation. Elaborate borders and complex upper and lower portions combine to make the Our Lady of Lourdes windows memorable. Because the church glorifies Mary the mother, all the Joyful Mysteries were included.

The unenclosed organ pipes in the rear loft belonged to the second organ at the church. Designed and built by the Wicks Organ Company of Highland, Illinois, it was dedicated in 1963 as the companys Opus 4302. The predecessor instrument was a much smaller freestanding, two-manual organ that occupied only the center of the choir loft. The organ had 17 ranks of pipes, available on two manuals and one pedal division. The pipe chest worked by direct action, as is typical of Wicks organs.

Hurricane Katrina filled this part of the Napoleon Avenue area with many feet of flood water. Already facing a declining congregation, Our Lady of Lourdes closed and merged with St. Mathias Parish to become Blessed Trinity Parish. Its altar was installed in St. Clement of Rome Church in Metairie; the windows were removed and stored. The old building and rectory eventually sold to Landis Construction in 2019 and are being repurposed, while the school is to be converted into affordable housing for low-income seniors.

**Windows**

Sacrifice of Isaac Melchezidek

Manna from Heaven Moses Striking the Rock

Altar

Presentation of St. Mary Coronation of Mary

Betrothal of Mary and Joseph Assumption of Mary

Annunciation Death of the Virgin

Visitation Crucifixion

Nativity Young Jesus in the Temple

Presentation of the Infant Jesus in the Temple Christ with the Little Children

Wafer, Chalice, and Grapes Baptism of Christ

Above Confessionals

Mater Dolorosa Virgin Mary

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*Notes written by Susan Levy; updated in December 2020*

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