Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church

228 South Beach Boulevard

Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

Situated on a promontory facing the Gulf of Mexico, Our Lady of the Gulf Catholic Church has survived numerous hurricanes and has sheltered its parishioners from lifes storms for over a century.

The parish was formally established in 1845, and the cornerstone for this massive church was laid in 1908. Not until 1926 was it completedwithout the domes originally planned for the towers. The exterior of the church combines elements of Romanesque and Greek architecture while the interior, because of its excellent proportions, seems larger than it actually is.

The sanctuary decorations are elaborate, dominated by the Carrara marble altar and the paintings above it. On the front of the altar, as well as in other places in the sanctuary, is the pelican, beloved resident of the Gulf shore and symbol of the Eucharist. The ceiling portrait of Our Lady of the Gulf features Mary with the Gulf and boats at her feet. Doves and angels accompany her. Statues of Mary and Joseph at the side altars are also of Carrara marble.

Overhead are portraits of the Apostles and symbols of the Gospels. Each Apostle can be identified by his own symbol. The stained glass windows are rich in artistic splendor, church history, and allegorical representations. These were created by the workshops of Franz Mayer and F. X. Zettler, both of Munich, Germany. While generic decorative flowers abound in many German windows, the flowers in these windows are identifiable as specific garden favorites, many of which also have religious significance. The *fleur de lis,* seen in many places here, symbolizes purity and, therefore, the Virgin Mary.

Because this church is dedicated to the worship of Mary, the nine large windows lining the nave portray events in her life. The windows in the clerestory present a wide range of religious icons while those in the choir focus on musical instruments.

**Windows of Our Lady of the Gulf Church**

Symbols of Priesthood

Sorrowful Mother Jesus with Crown of Thorns

Altar

The Eucharist Guardian Angel

Coronation of Mary as Queen of Heaven and Earth Presentation of Mary (Mayer 1911)

Jesus appearing to Mary after the Resurrection Annunciation

Mary at the Cross with St. John and Mary Magdalene Nativity of Jesus

Mary as Our Lady of the Gulf Mary, Joseph and Jesus in the carpenter shop

Baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist (Zettler 1964)

Clerestory

Front of Church

Monstrance, *vessel of devotion* The Lamb

Morning Star, *epiphany, regeneration* Christ the Rock

Lilies, *Mary, purity* New Jerusalem

Turtledoves, *praising Mary* House of Gold

IHS, *monogram of Jesus* Ark of the Covenant

MM, *monogram of Mary* Noahs Ark

Ivory Tower Mystical rose

Tower of David Morning glory

Laurel wreath with crown, *victory, eternity*  Bishops chair with heart

Dove, *peace* Hand, *benediction, blessing, peace*

*Toured*

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