Sacred Heart Chapel, Hansens Disease Center

Carville, Louisiana

This solid chapel is a tribute to the diligence of the Daughters of Charity who served 85 years at the facility. Indeed, credit for much of the medical success of the hospital at Carville also belongs to these Sisters. The former plantation was in shambles in 1896, when they arrived, two years after the state had designated the site as the state leprosarium, but they gradually expanded it into an attractive and effective facility.

In the 19th century no one knew how Hansen Disease was transmitted, so the traditional solution was to isolate those with the disease. The Louisiana Leper Home was the nations first and only in‑patient hospital on the Mainland for this disease (a colony existed on the Kalaupapa Peninsula in Hawaii from 1866 until 1969). In more than a century of caring for patients (the last staff members left only recently), no care giver was known to develop Hansen Disease as a result of contact with the residents.

Residents busied themselves at various workshops, cared for others, played golf, served time in the hospital jail, published a newspaperand occasionally sneaked under the fence to visit relatives or the store in Carville.

Their spiritual needs received attention too. The building we visit is the third Catholic chapel on the site, and Mass is still said here every Sunday. The chapel for Protestants, built in 19101920 by the American Leprosy Society, can be seen from Point Clair Road but is now shuttered.

The indomitable Sister Catherine Sullivan led the efforts to build this chapel, which was designed by New Orleans architects Bernard and Wogan and dedicated in 1934. Funds were provided by the Catholic Church Extension Society. The wooden carvings flanking the altar are the shields of the Extension Society and of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Sister Catherine donated the three round windows, and other windows were added over the years as donors came forward.

The stained glass windows display at least five different styles and date from the construction until 1980. All incorporate antique glass of varying depth of color. Despite their diversity, the windows create a coherent ensemble. Many came from the studios of the Unión de Artistas Vidrieros, in Irún, Spain, and are possibly the only Spanish windows in the New Orleans area.

Ironically, the installation of the latest windows, which portray New Testament scenes of healing, coincides with the development of effective outpatient treatment for Hansen Disease. Thereafter, patients were treated at clinics scattered around the country, rather than as inpatients.

For those consigned to the Carville hospital for life, this chapel and its windows surely provided a welcome comfort and beauty.

*Visited October 22, 2016*

**Windows**

(Numbers refer to the descriptions below.)

Choir loft

8

Door

7 9

6 10

5 11

3 4 12 13

2 (at choir level) 15 (at choir level)

14 &16

1 Altar

1. Personnel side. Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España. Installed June 11, 1957. Gift of Carville Chapel Guild. (signed window)

*Invocations from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

Turris Davidica (Tower of David)

Turris Eburnea (Tower of Ivory)

Regina Pacis (Queen of Peace): Crowned Dove

Stella Matutina (Morning Star)

Speculum Justitiae (Mirror of justice)

Justitiae (Scales of justice)

Rosa Mistica (Mystical rose)

Vas Honorabile (Vessel of honor)

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God): Lamb Standing with the Banner of Victory

2. Round window (Gift of Sr. Catherine Sullivan). Portrays four Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, who are identified by their symbols.

NIKAGreek letters meaning conqueror

3. Personnel side. Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España. In Memory of Abbot Francis Sadlier, OSB, Chaplain at Carville, 1955-1959

*Invocations from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary* + *homage to the Franciscans*

Mater Divinae Gratiae (Mother of divine grace)

Mater Admirabilis (Mother most admirable)

S. Franciscus A (St Francis of Assisi, invoked against dying alone)

Virgo Potens (Virgin most powerful),

Virgo Fidelis (Virgin most faithful)

S. Ioannis Bapt (St John the Baptist)

Regina Confessorum (Queen of Confessors)

Regina Ordinis Minorum (Queen of the Order of Franciscan Friars Minor)

Deus Meus et Omnia (God is my all) (motto of Franciscan Order) Hand of Jesus and of St Francis Assisi on crucifix indicating stigmata (?)

4. Personnel side. Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España). Gift of Franciscan Fathers.

Invocations from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary + homage to the Benedictines

Mater Purissima (Mother most pure)

Mater Boni Consilii (Mother of Good Counsel)

Regula (Rules): book and quill pen, symbols of St Benedicts writings

Virgo Veneranda (Virgin Most Venerable)

Virgo Praedicanda (Virgin Most Renowned)

St Benedict of Nursia as portrayed on his medal

Regina Patriarcharum (Queen of Patriarchs)

Regina Prophetarum (Queen of Prophets)

Deo Servire Regnare (to serve God is to reign): bishops regalia

Windows 5 through 7 and 9 through 11 (patients side of the chapel): Lamb Studio, Spring Valley, New York Margareta Overbeck, designer (cartoons in Library of Congress) designed in 1979 and installed in1980

5. Center aisle right side: I am the Light of the World, Lord, I believe (Christ & blind man). In memory of Joe and Anna Roppolo by their children

6. Center aisle right side: Thy faith hath made thee whole If I may but touch His garment In memory of Santiago Castillo.

7. Center aisle right side:As thou hast believed so be it done with Thee, So great a faith (Christ & soldier). In memory of deceased patients and staff and friends

8. Round window above choir loft: Bust of Christ the Sacred Heart on a cloud. Signed by Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España. Gift of Sr. Catherine Sullivan.

9. Center aisle left side:Wilt thou be made whole Arise, take up thy bed and walk Dedicated to living patients, staff and friends of Sacred Heart Chapel.

10. Center aisle left side: Son, thy sins be forgiven thee (Christ and child on bed). In memory of George Maxos.

11. Center aisle left side: This girl is not dead, but sleepeth (Daughter of Jairus). Lower right corner LAMB signature. In memory of Father Senan Kelly, OFM. Gift of staff, patients and friends.

12. Side entrance from walk: Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España. Installed May 21, 1960. Gift of Landry family by Albert and Marie Landry.

Invocations from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Regina Martyrum (Queen of Martyrs)

Sedes Sapientiae (Seat of Wisdom)

Santa Anna (St Ann)

Mater Christi (Mother of Christ)

Auxilium Christianorum (Helper of Christians)

Gratis Agens (Doing Right) bandaged man

Consolatrix Afflictorum (Comforter of the Afflicted)

Vas Spirituale (Spiritual Vessel)

S. Casimir (St. Casimir)

13. Side entrance from walk: Unión de Artistas Vidrieros Irún, España. Installed April 28, 1961. Gift of Charles Stiney.

Invocations from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Refugium Peccatorum (Refuge of Sinners)

Salus Infirmorum (Health of the Sick)

Sancta Maria (Holy Mary): Stylized initials A M (Ave Maria: Hail Mary)

Domus Aurea (House of Gold)

Janua Caeli (Gate of Heaven)

Mater Imaculata (Mother Most Immaculate): Vase of White Lilies

Regina Angelorum (Queen of Angels)

Foederis Arca (Ark of the Covenant)

Virgo Prudentissima (Virgin Most Prudent): Lighted Lamp + Chi Rho

14. Promises by Jesus to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque as Sacred Heart

I. I will give them all the graces necessary for their state of life.

II. I will establish peace in their families.

III. I will console them in all their afflictions.

IV. I will be their secure refuge in life and especially at the hour of their death.

V. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.

VI. Sinners shall find in My Heart the source and infinite ocean of mercy.

15. Round window Christ King of the Church (designer and maker unknown). Gift of Sr. Catherine Sullivan

16. Promises by Jesus to St Margaret Mary Alacoque as Sacred Heart

VII. Tepid souls shall become fervent.

VIII. Fervent souls shall rise speedily to great perfection.

IX. I will bless every house in which the picture of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honored.

X. To priests I will give the gift of touching the most hardened hearts.

XI. Those who shall promote this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart never to be blotted out.

XII. I will grant the grace of final penitence to those who communicate on the first Friday of nine consecutive months.

*Visited October 22, 2016*

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