Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church

28088 Main Street, Lacombe

The history of Sacred Heart parish harkens back to Father Adrien Emmanuel Rouquette, the first Louisianian ordained as a priest and a beloved minister to the Choctaw Indians in the St. Tammany Parish area. Father Rouquette died in 1887, and that year the congregation purchased land for a church for a dollar from one of his relatives. The first church was completed in 1890, and a Benedictine served as priest. Called St. Cecilia Church, it was demolished by a hurricane in 1915. Because the only thing left unscathed was a statue of the Sacred Heart, permission was granted to rename the parish.

A wooden building was dedicated in 1918. Deterioration led to its demolition in 1961, and a brick church was dedicated in1963. Its venerable stained glass windows of the Munich style were purchased from Covingtons St. Scholastica Academy.There they had been part of the chapel in the priory, which was being replaced. The St. Scholastica Order is the sister order of the Benedictines, and other St. Scholastica windows are found at St. John the Baptist Church in Folsom,

Fast forward to September 1993. The pastor, Father Paul Desrochiere, had resorted to locking the church during the day to keep out vandals and vagrants. He unlocked the church a few hours before evening mass, and someone entered and set the church on fire. Had the firemen directed their hoses at the stained glass, it would have been destroyed. The windows, however, were the only things saved. Ken Attenhofer, a member of this tour committee for many years, was called upon to salvage the windows. He recalls being in complete darkness when he entered the church, since thick soot covered the windows and shut out all light.

The beautiful new church, completed in 1996, blends the old and the new. Rising 40 feet behind the altar, clear glass invites the lovely surroundings inside. Because the figurative windows are at eye level, we can easily see and appreciate their fine craftsmanship. All depict saints who belonged, as priests or nuns, to the Order of St. Benedict or the Order of St. Scholastica. These include:

St. Ildephons[us], a patron saint of Toledo, Spain; noted for his dedication to Mary.

St. Gertrude (Gertrude the Great), a German abbess, theologian, and mystic She was not formally canonized

St. Gregorius, or Pope Gregory VII, for whom the Gregorian chant is named.

St. Hildegarde (Hildegard of Bingen)a German Benedictine abbess, writer, composer, philosopher, mystic, visionary, and polymathis considered the founder of scientific natural history in Germany.

St. Bernard (of Clairvaux). Though his religious life began at a Benedictine monastery, he took the vows of the Cistercian Order (a branch of Benedictines who follow more austere dictates of St. Benedict). St. Bernard was influential in developing and expanding this group. In addition, he was active in church and civilian politics and was a force behind the Second Crusade. His attributes of a white Cistercian robe and a dog are included in the window.

St. Beda, also known as the Venerable Bede, who wrote a history of England

St. Placidus, a disciple of St. Benedict.

St. Boniface, an Englishman who organized the Christian church in many parts of Germany. The symbols in the window probably refer to his writings on grammar and poetry and his martyrdom (hes often portrayed with a book pierced by a sword).

St. Walburgis [Walpurga], an Anglo-Saxon who assisted her uncle, St. Boniface, in Germany and wrote about the travels by her brother, St. Winibald, in Palestine.

St. Kunigund [various spellings], wife of Holy Roman Emperor St. Henry II. Though from Luxembourg, she founded a Benedictine monastery in Germany. She is often portrayed in imperial robes, holding a church.

St. Maurus, the first disciple of St. Benedict; founded monasteries in Gaul.

*Visited in May 17, 2003*

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