St. Ann Catholic Church and International Shrine

3601 Transcontinental Drive, Metairie

The original St. Ann Church, founded in 1852 during an energetic era of church building under the legendary Archbishop Antoine Blanc, was located at St. Philip and Roman streets, in Sixth Ward New Orleans**.** To celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the parish, a shrine to St. Ann was added in 1903. In 1920, the parish moved to Ursulines Avenue across from St. Joseph Academy, and the old building was reorganized for African Americans as St. Peter Claver Church.

The international shrine and the parish moved from its historic Ursulines Avenue location to Metairie in 1973 and merged with the two-year-old St. Ambrose Church, which was then renamed. The spacious building, designed by the firm of Blitch, Knevel with liturgical design help from ARS Liturgica of Morris Plains, New Jersey, was completed in 1976 and dedicated in 1977. It underwent extensive renovations in 2011.

Its teak ceiling rises sharply toward the center of the cruciform-shaped sanctuary, and three of the arms of the cruciform terminate in clear glass, imparting a light and airy feel. Rather than being confined to a single long nave as in a gothic church, worshipers sit in all three of these wings, following the recommendation of Vatican II that all members of the congregation should be close to the ceremony.

The 2011 renovations came partially in response to damage from Hurricane Katrina and included the installation of new pews, sound system, lighting, carpeting, and climate control. Simulated marble now decorates the sanctuary, and space for the choir, as well as a new organ, was added. The clear glass wall separating the shrine from the sanctuary was removed.

Behind the altar stands the shrine, which is open daily for prayers and for petitions (a popular petition is St. Ann, St. Ann, Bring me a man). The large number of burning candles attests to petitioners faith in St. Ann to answer their prayers. Central to the shrine are the holy stairs that the faithful ascend on their knees while meditating on the Stations of the Cross in the window.

The windows in the shrine were donated by the Louisiana Oyster Industry.

The stained glass windows along the four wings of the sanctuary, extending from floor to ceiling, portray the Mysteries of the Rosary. Blue glass at the top and bottom unifies the modernistic windows. The Guido Polloni studio of Florence, Italy, created the windows, which are dated 1977. Polloni also created the windows at the contemporaneous St. Charles Borromeo Church in Destrehan, St. Edward the Confessor Church in Metairie, and the chapel at the Chateau de Notre Dame.

**Windows of St. Ann Church**

***East Wing***

1

 2 15

 ***North Wing South Wing***

 4 3 14 13

Altar

 5 6 11 12

***West Wing***

 7 10

 8 9

*East Wing: St. Ann Shrine*

1. The Trinity

2. St. Ann and St. Joachim

15. Stations of the Cross

*North Wing (Crucifixion Chapel): Sorrowful Mysteries*

3. Crucifixion

4. Carrying the Cross

5. Agony in the Garden

6. Scourging (top)

 Crowning with Thorns

*West Wing (Our Ladys Chapel): Joyful Mysteries*

7. Finding Jesus in the Temple

8. Presentation

9. Nativity

10. Annunciation (top); Visitation

*South Wing (Resurrection Chapel): Glorious Mysteries*

11. Crowning of Mary

12. Assumption of Mary

13. Descent of the Holy Spirit

14. Ascension of Jesus into Heaven (top)

 Resurrection of Christ (represented by the scene of Doubting Thomas)

*Toured April 14, 2002*

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