St. Catherine of Siena Catholic Church

105 Bonnabel Blvd., Metairie

St. Catherine of Siena Parish, the oldest Catholic parish in Metairie, can trace its roots to Mater Dolorosa Parish in Carrollton. In the late 1800s, the pastors of the Kenner and Carrollton parishes tried unsuccessfully to found a chapel in the intervening area.

Finally in 1909 the pastor of Mater Dolorosa, Fr. John Francis Prim, erected a quaint wooden country chapel, designed by architect H. Jordan Mackenzie, on a piece of donated land at the intersection of Labarre Road and the tracks of the Louisiana Railroad and Navigation Company. This rustic little chapel (see page three) in a moss-hung oak grove served the area until 1921, when Archbishop Shaw formally established the parish. The parish boundaries extended from Shrewsbury Road to the New Basin Canal (now West End Boulevard) and from the train tracks to the lake. Since the chapel was located in a corner of the new parish, far from any homes, it was relocated to about the 300 block of Bonnabel Boulevard.

In 1924 this chapel in the weeds was literally rolled to its new location, 105 Bonnabel Boulevard, donated by the Codifer family. The building served the parish, first as the church and then as a parish hall until it was torn down in the mid -950s to make room for the current church.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish was one of the first parishes based on geographic contiguity, rather than on French, German, Irish, and Italian origins as seen in older New Orleans neighborhoods. This change reflected the movement of immigrants descendants to the suburbs, where they self-identified as Americans, not tied to ethnic roots.

Beginning with a small school in 1925, St. Catherines elementary school has grown through the addition of several new buildings over the years.

If the name of St Catherine of Siena Church rings a bell with you, that may be because the bell tower, with its shape similar to a mid-20th century rocket ship, is familiar to anyone who drives along Metairie Road.

Completed in 1957, todays church was designed by James Lamantia Jr. for Burk, Le Breton and Lamantia, and built by the Lionel F. Favret Co. with a seating capacity of one thousand. Its design combines the style of a 14th-century Italian cathedral with mid-20th century construction materials: steel, concrete and glass. Keeping the structural elements on the exterior allowed Lamantia to offer a huge worship area with no supporting columns.

Diligent research by Pame Tanner led to the discovery that the stained glass comes from the renowned firm of Franz Mayer of Munich. A representative of the firm describes it as to a certain extent forward looking and progressive. Franz X. Wilfried Braunmiller (1905-1993), a free-lance artist, designed the windows.

The two main stained glass windows, located above and behind the altar on the east end and in the choir on the west end, are filled with the morning light and then the afternoon light until sunset. These are the largest windows in the New Orleans area (the Ascension window at St. Pauls Episcopal Church in Lakeview is the largest in Orleans Parish). These windows were removed and sent to the Conrad Schmitt Stained Glass Studio in New Berlin, Wisconsin, for repairs in 2017.The stained glass was installed as a set before the church was dedicated in July 1957. In addition to the large windows at the east and west ends, the church houses 28 windows along the side, depicting the Corporal Works of Mercy, the Spiritual Works of Mercy, the Seven Sacraments, and the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit; as well as two relating to the Resurrection and spreading the word of Christianity.

This large church could have been a huge, cold space, but the windows, rich with primary colors, create a feeling of light and serenity.

**Windows**

Worship of God. The Priesthood

**Altar**

Left side Right side

Paul preaching ?? Christ crucified

Resurrection of Jesus

***The Corporal Works of Mercy The Seven Sacraments***

To feed the hungry Baptism

(St. Elisabeth of Hungary)(Jesus baptized by St. John the Baptist)

To give drink to the thirsty Confirmation

(St. Francis Xavier) (Descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary

and the Apostles)

To clothe the naked (St. Vincent de Paul) Holy Eucharist (The Last Supper)

To visit the imprisoned Reconciliation [formerly Confession]

(St. Peter unchained by the angel (Jesus to Apostles: Receive the Holy Spirit

while in prison) . . . if you forgive mens sins . . . John 20:23)

To shelter the needy Anointing of the Sick

(Holy Family refused at the inn) (Jesus and Mary at the bedside of Joseph)

To visit the sick Holy Orders

(Job and his friend) (Christ ordaining Apostles

at the Last Supper)

To bury the dead Matrimony

(Jesus burial) (Adam and Eve with God the Father)

***The Spiritual Works of Mercy Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit***

To admonish the sinner Wisdom

(Jesus at the well (St. Charles Borromeo Council of Trent)

with the Samaritan woman) Understanding

To instruct the ignorant St. Augustine vision of the child Jesus

(Christ with Nicodemus) trying to empty the ocean into a small

To counsel the doubtful hole in the sand)

(St. Thomas) Counsel (St. Benedict)

To comfort the afflicted sorrowful Fortitude (Three holy men

(Curé of Ars St. John Vianney) not burned by fire Daniel 3)

To bear wrongs patiently Knowledge

(Jesus judged by Pontius Pilate) (St. Thomas Aquinas, Patron of Scholars)

To forgive offenses Piety

(Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss) (St. Maria Goretti)

To pray for the living and the dead Fear of the Lord

(Jesus restores Jairus daughter to life) (John the Baptist rebukes Herod)

**Choir Loft**

Life of St. Catherine of Siena

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St. Catherine of Siena Church, 1909