St Christopher the Martyr Catholic Church

309 Manson Avenue, Metairie

After World War II, the population of Metairie grew rapidly. In response, St. Catherine of Siena and St. Agnes parishes were subdivided into at least seven parishes, including St. Christopher the Martyr.

This parish was established July 1, 1947, and three army barracks were purchased from Camp Plauché, near the Huey P. Long Bridge, as its first home. Within three months, the barracks had become a temporary church and rectory.

The present church was started in the mid-1950s and dedicated in 1957. Like many other Metairie churches of this vintage, it was built to the specifications of a gymnasium, on the assumption that when a real church was built later, the original one could become a gym for the school.

According to the parish history, the renovation of 1981 was undertaken when the parish accepted the fact that the gymnasium-style church was to be its permanent place of worship. The changes created the warm, inviting atmosphere that we enjoy today.

Most of the stained glass windows date to this renovation. The sole exception is the traditional-style window portraying St. Christopher and the Christ Child, which was relocated from above the altar in the old incarnation of the church to the choir loft above the entrance in the remodeled church. Records from the famed Franz Mayer studio of Munich specify that it fabricated one window in 1960 for St. Christopher Church.

The remainder of the windows are *dalle de verre,* or faceted slab glass created by the Cavallini Stained Glass Studio of San Antonio, Texas. The artists have incorporated an amazing amount of detail and symbolism for this type of glass. Roch E. Babin, a graduate of LSU, probably designed the windows, as he joined the Cavallini studio just before the 1982 contract was signed. The colors are vivid and vibrant, and the artist used the entire area of each window to tell his stories. Most Cavallini stained glass is found in Texas and New Mexico, and three other Louisiana churches with Cavallini windows are located in Alexandria, Bourg, and Schriever.

At first glance, the theme of the windows appears simple: Old Testament on the left and New Testament on the right. According to Father Andrew Taormina, priest during the renovation, however, the real theme is the History of Salvation, from the Creation beyond the Resurrection. With the installation of these unique windows in 1983, the renovation was complete.

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**Windows**

Old Testament New Testament

Garden of Eden Christ the King, Alpha and Omega

Rainbow and flood Sunburst

Sacrifice of Isaac Pentecost

Moses and the Ten Commandments Christ and the Cross

King David as a shepherd boy Nativity

Choir Loft

Left: Word of God, symbolized by the Book and the Flame

Center: St. Christopher and the Christ Child, by Mayer, 1960

Right: Body and Blood, symbolized by grapes (wine) and wheat (bread)

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