St. John the Baptist Catholic Church

11345 St. John Church Road, Folsom

Like much of the North Shore area, St. John the Baptist Parish bears witness to the importance of the Benedictine Order. Beginning in 1920 Father Odilo Alt, a German missionary assigned to St. Joseph Abbey near Covington, rode a tired horse to this isolated farming community to say Mass in the homes of parishioners. Because this was the only church within reasonable distance, Father Odilo soon converted members from other religious backgrounds as well.

Shortly thereafter, he founded a school, which served also as a church until Father Odilo was able to raise money for a separate church. He even helped paint this new, simple structure, which was dedicated by Archbishop Shaw in 1922.

Always hoping to improve his parish, Father Odilo longed for stained glass windows. The answer to his prayers came from an unexpected source. In 1934 a fire at the nearby Chinchuba Institute (a school for the deaf) destroyed all its buildings except the chapel, which had been constructed in 18991900.

Father Odilo asked for the chapel windows, but they were too large for his church. Hardly a man of humble designs, he convinced the archbishop to give the entire Chinchuba chapel to St. John the Baptist Parish. It was disassembled and moved to Folsom, where the architecture was altered to accommodate a growing congregation. In 1940 Archbishop Rummel dedicated the charming wooden structure.

The eleven Chinchuba windows are from the Emil Frei Studios of St. Louis, Missouri. Two of these, added between 1905 and 1910, were donated by the Frei Studios in gratitude for the many purchases of their stained glass in the New Orleans area. The Mignot window depicts St. Hycanthe in honor of Fr. (Canon) Hycanthe Mignot, the Dominican founder of the Chinchuba Institute. The Rand window honors Mrs. Elizabeth Rand, who financed the construction of the chapel there in 1900, and portrays St. Elisabeth of Hungary feeding the poor.

The many styles of the windows reflect their varied origins. Windows 5-8 were originally smaller than the window openings in this building, so pastel panes were inserted at the top. Windows12 and 13 were originally taller than the openings, so some of the upper framing was removed. Up to six different decorative styles can be distinguished.

In 1965 Father Odilo obtained two additional windows from another neighboring school, St. Scholasticas Academy in Covington, which was closing its old chapel. (Sacred Heart Church in Lacombe and St. Benedict Church in Covington house other windows from the St. Scholastica chapel.) The tripartite window depicts Benedictine history and is named for Father Odilo, who served the parish almost fifty years. The other window of this set is over the vesting room door. The maker of the St. Scholastica windows is not known for sure, but Ken Attenhofer, a former member of the Stained Glass Art in Sacred Places committee and a stained glass artist, suggested that the St. Scholastica windows at Sacred Heart Church in Lacombe were made by Mayer studio in Munich, Germany.

The Benedictine history window comprises three parts: (top) Twelve Benedictine monks carrying the reliquary of St. Walburga while a Benedictine sister holds two vials containing dew found on St. Walgurgas brow when she was exhumed. (center) St. Helena, mother of St. Constantine. (3) (bottom) St. Bernard of Clairvaux before St. Marys altar.

The remaining window, dedicated to Margaret De Frange, mother of the priest at the time of the tour, was created by Gordon Binder of Covington in 1999. The pearl is a translation of the name Margaret.

**Windows**

*Picture numbers are from the history prepared by the church.*

3. St. Peter \* 4. St. Rita of Cascia \*

1. St. Hyacinth, O.P. \* 2. Elisabeth of Hungary feeding the poor \*

5. Christ healing a mute child \* 7. Angel carrying a prayer to

Our Lady of Perpetual Help \*

6. St. Jean Baptiste De La Salle \* 8. St. Catherine of Alexandria \*

Vesting room door 12. Benedictine history \*\*

13. St. Augustine being baptized by (tryptich)

St. Ambrose (?) \*\*

In the vesting room

14. Window with oyster (by Gordon Bender)

10.Sister Armella \* 11. St. Athanasia \* 9. Christ and children \*

\* From the Chinchuba Institute chapel (Frei)

\*\* From the St. Scholastica chapel, Covington

*Visited May 17, 2003*

See also: John Laven, *St. John the Baptist Church,* 2003. Available on the church website.

When citing information from this document,

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