St. Joseph Co-Cathedral

721 Canal Boulevard, Thibodaux

This imposing church shares the status of diocesan seat with the co-cathedral in Houma. The Thibodaux parish was founded in 1813, and its first church building was dedicated in 1819 near the contemporary church cemetery.

Of an eclectic, elaborate architectural style, the present church was begun in 1920 to replace one that burned (see the window over the side entrance). French and Italian marble forms the main altars. Above the center aisle a painting depicts the Apotheosis of St. Joseph, and statues portraying the Infant Jesus of Prague, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Pietà, and numerous saints add to the aura of elegance. Of particular pride to the church is a reliquary containing the arm of St. Valerie, patroness saint of the co-cathedral.

The principal stained glass windows narrate the life of Christ while the clerestory windows portray the Seven Sacraments. These finely crafted windows are of the Munich school of stained glass, with its realistic artistic treatment. The maker is, thus far, a mystery.\*

**Windows**

Altar

Resurrection of Jesus Nativity of Jesus

Jesus Blessing the Apostles Virgin Mary with Parents, St Joachim and St Ann

Death of St. Joseph The Annunciation

The Marriage at Cana The Visitation: Mary Visits Her Cousin Elizabeth

Jesus Blessing the Children Flight into Egypt

Jesus Healing the Sick Jesus in the Temple

Above side doors

Father Charles Menard, Pastor, 18421896 St. Joseph Church (on Hwy 1; burned in 1916)

Organ Loft

St. Cecilia Rose Window Pope Gregory I

Baptistery

Baptism of Clovis, First Christian King of France

Msgr. Alexander Barbier, Pastor 19111935

\* The Mayer studio of Munich reviewed its order list and could find no mention of this church.

**The Organ of St. Joseph Co-Cathedral**

St. Josephs houses the larger of the two pipe organs in Thibodaux. Both instruments are from the shop of the Wicks Organ Company of Highland, Illinois. This privately owned company was founded in 1908 and remains one of the largest pipe organ builders in America.

This particular instrument was built in 1938 as Wicks opus 1777, with 17 ranks of pipes in three divisions (two manual, one pedal) and with direct electric action. It has been reported that Henry Willis, the grandson of the noted English organ builder Henry Willis, was responsible for the tonal design. He came to the United States just before 1938 and worked initially for the Wicks Company.

In 1992, J. Adrian Cook refurbished the organ. Cook, also an Englishman, resides in Thibodaux. He replaced the keyboards, electric relays, and other aging parts of the action and added a solid state memory and three rank mixtures in the manual divisions, bringing the organ to its current size of 25 pipe ranks.

Organ connoisseurs say that the best stop on an organ is its acoustic setting. This instrument is certainly blessed by the wonderful resonance of St. Josephs Church!

*Dan Baudier*

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Pam Burst contributed an article on St. Joseph Co-Cathedral to *Louisiana Homes and Gardens* in November 1999.

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