St. Maurice Catholic Church

605 St. Maurice Avenue

In 1857, five years after the founding of the parish of St. Maurice by Archbishop Antoine Blanc, this church was built for the Catholic populations of the Faubourg LaCourse, in lower New Orleans, and of St. Bernard Parish upstream from Paris Road. The new parish included the Jackson Military Barracks and the land where the Battle of New Orleans took place.

Designed by Fr. P. Cambiaso, SJ (who also designed Immaculate Conception Jesuit Church in New Orleans and St. Joseph Cathedral in Baton Rouge), it was blessed under the patronage of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, Help of Christians, with the title of Our Lady of Prompt Succor, and under the invocation and name of St. Maurice, chief of the Theban Legion, and his companion martyrs.

The facade of the church is in Spanish Romanesque style with a single steeple topped by a copper cross. Father Cambiaso had lived in Spain and was obviously impressed by the semi-circular arches of churches in the northern part of the country. The semi-circular tops of the portico doors and the windows complement the barrel vault of the nave and the rounded openings of clerestory windows inside.

In a cruciform plan, the interior was beautifully decorated with twenty-two stained glass windows of individual saints. Although these saints seem randomly chosen, themes emerge when their lives are examined. Six are either Doctors or Founders of the Church who formulated or expanded the philosophical tenets of the faith, and six are founders of religious orders that have carried out the work of the Church. Two are educators and two are soldiers who supported and defended the faith.

Two different studios probably made the windows. The figurative windows were added around 1958, apparently to celebrate the centennial of the parish, and were by the Baut Studio of Swoyersville, Pennsylvania, a company not represented elsewhere in the New Orleans area. In both the nave and the clerestory they are rich in symbolism and opulent in texture. The saints portraits are set against fleur de lis backgrounds. This is appropriate in a church dedicated under the patronage of Mary, who is often portrayed with lilies. Some of the windows date to around 1958, in honor of the centennial of the church, and were made by the Baut Studio of Swoyersville, Pennsylvania, which still produces traditional stained glass. This may be the only church in the New Orleans area with Baut windows.

Each saint carries a symbol of the mission of his life. Thomas Aquinas, for example, holds a quill and book bearing the title of his principal work. St. Joan of Arc stands with her sword in front of a French banner. St. Rosalie, who renounced the world and lived in a cave, is the patroness of Palermo, honored for delivering her country from a plague and for bringing about innumerable cures. St. Lucy is invoked to heal eye diseases.

In contrast to the figurative windows, those in the clerestory feature medallions with religious symbols surrounded by geometric patterns.

Following Hurricane Katrina, St. Maurice Church began a new chapter in its life. Already facing a declining population (its school was shuttered in 1987), it closed and the parishioners were assigned to St. David Church. The main windows were moved to Most Holy Trinity Church in Mandeville, though those in the clerestory remained. The property was sold and now hosts weddings, movie filming, art shows, and other events.

**Windows**

(Symbolic windows in italics are above the paired portrait windows.)

St. Joachim St. Peter

St. Ann & Child Mary St. Paul

*Crown Holy Spirit (Ave Gratia Plena)*

(Rose window) (Rose window)

Crucifixion Annunciation

(Triple window) (Triple window)

Our Lady of Fatima Our Lady of Lourdes

St. Lucy St. Thomas Aquinas

St. Ignatius of Loyola St. Cecilia

*The tomb Hands above flaming heart*

St. Rosalie St. Charles Borromeo

St. Augustine St. Teresa of Avila

*Descent of the Holy Spirit Infant in manger*

St. Dominic St. Vincent de Paul

St. Francis of Assisi St. Joan of Arc

*Hand of God above earth Doves in a basket*

St. Louis IX St. Alphonse Liguori

St. Benedict St. Margaret of Scotland

*Lamb with flag Star of David*

Above doors

Angel with red wings: Angel with green wings:

May God be with you May God be with you

Clerestory

Baptism: Hand, shell, water Victorious sacrifice: Lamb with flag

Confession: Keys, fringed stole Atonement: Pelican feeding its babies

Peace: Dove in flight toward the sun Eucharist: Host and chalice

Marriage: Joined hands Confirmation: Holy Spirit (dove) and choir

Extreme Unction: Hourglass Holy orders: Host, chalice, stole

*Toured April 2004*

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