St. Philomena Catholic Church

108 Brule Road, Labadieville

Founded as a mission church under the jurisdiction of St. Joseph Church of Thibodaux, St. Philomena Church held services in a private home from 1842 until 1847, when a small church was dedicated. A larger church was built in 1853, and two years later Bishop Antoine Blanc granted the parish its independence. A brick church followed in 1860. The founding of the Institute of the Immaculate Conception, a teaching order of women, in the town in 1871 reflects the size and enthusiasm of the Catholic community in Labadieville.

The present church, with its splendid steeple, and the rectory date to 1888; the side aisles to 1908. Although the architecture is of eclectic style, the graceful pointed arches and inserts of tracery in the church are Gothic. The basilica-style church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

The side windows, of art glass and opalescent glass, form a stunning sampler showing the beauty of unpainted glass. They were probably installed as funds were donated, beginning in 1908, rather than as a set.

The only figurative windows, portraying saints, are at the clerestory level in the apse and may well date to the construction of the building. These are, from left to right, SS. Peter, James, Philomena, Maria, Elizabeth with John the Baptist, Luke, and Paul. The window of St. Philomena bears the signature of Felix Gaudin, Claremont-Ferrand. Not much is known about Gaudin, but a stained glass window by him in 1884 has been documented, and he taught stained glass techniques in the early 20th century in Paris.

Depictions of St. Philomena are found in several churches in this area. She is the only saint to be canonized solely on the basis of her miraculous intercessions, as nothing is known of her biography. When the bones of a young lady, aged about 14, were discovered in 1802 in Italy, drawings of two anchors, three arrows, and a palm accompanied them. It was assumed that the first two represent the nature of her martyrdoms at such a tender age, and palms can symbolize martyrdom. In 1961 the pope removed Philomena from liturgical calendars.

*Visited April 23, 2005*

If citing information from this page, please acknowledge the

Preservation Resource Center of New Orleans, 2021.