St. Rose de Lima Catholic Church

301 South Necaise Avenue

Waveland, Mississippi

St. Rose de Lima Parish has a long and proud history, starting as a response to the need to educate. In 1868 it was founded as the first school in Bay Saint Louis for African-American children. They were instructed by the Sisters of St. Joseph Academy, who also ran the nearby girls school at Our Lady of the Gulf Church. (St. Stanislaus was the boys school, founded by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart.)

In 1921 priests of the Society of the Divine Word took over the school, creating an independent parish shortly thereafter. Next to the church is a cemetery that reflects the diversity of the community.

The church, which was dedicated in 1926, was also built to minister to the African-American community. In 1991, the 65th anniversary of its construction, the parish undertook an energetic renovation.

While the exterior of the church is not fancy, its interior incorporates unique, non-traditional religious art. The altar, the stand for reading the Bible, and other furnishings are made from driftwood or woodof local origin.

The principal stained glass, featuring St. Mary Margaret Alacoque and the Annunciation, is of German style, but its maker is unknown. Their overall compositions are almost identical, with St. Mary Margaret receiving her charge as guardian of the Sacred Heart in the left window and the Virgin Mary receiving the news of her role as the mother of Jesus in the right window. Behind the baptism font is the River of Life window, donated by a Baptist church in Baldwin, Mississippi.

The visitors eye is immediately drawn to the mural, painted by New Orleans artist Auseklis Ozol and covering the walls of the chancel. This depiction of Christ blends the Crucifixion and the Resurrection. Christs flesh reflects the mixed race of todays parish, and he is draped in fabric trimmed with African Kente cloth. The background is a realistic rendering of a live oak tree and other local flora. Names of parishioners families painted on the wall reinforce the historical importance of the church to its parishioners

On the outer side of the columns and at the back of the church are pictures of important religious figures from the 13th to the 20th centuries and from all parts of the world. San Martín de Porres, who worked among the poor of Lima with St. Rose, is among them, as is the Virgin of Guadalupe, who, like St. Rose, is considered the Patroness of the Americas..

Fortunately, the chancel and its mural and the stained glass windows survived Hurricane Katrina relatively unscathed, but the rest of the church needed extensive restoration. Nonetheless, the church served as a home for volunteers and residents who had lost so much. The repairs were completed in 2011.

This is a active parish, proud of its heritage and dedicated to its Christian mission.

*Visited*

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