St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church

720 East Beach Boulevard

Long Beach, Mississippi

The history of St. Thomas the Apostle Church features a dedicated, determined congregation and the powerful forces of hurricanes.

The first church was established as a priests retreat, where thirteen altars allowed many priests to say Mass at once. With time, local residents and visitors joined them, and a parish developed.

That simple white building and its oversized steeple were destroyed by Hurricane Camille. In response, the parish constructed a invincible-looking pyramidal church. Though it looked indestructible, it was no match for the waters of Hurricane Katrina.

Todays church, dedicated in 2011and larger than its predecessors, was designed by Blitch Knevel of New Orleans. Thanks to the generosity of donors nationwide, the entire complex was completed without incurring debt.

The windowsall installed high above any possible future water damagedominate the church art. Four huge round chunk-glass windows face the cardinal directions. From the earlier church, these, amazingly, survived Hurricane Katrina, probably because they had been covered (they were back-lit by electric lights). Teams of about 50 parishioners carefully lowered the sixteen sections of each window and stored them in a barn.

All windows were produced by the Conrad Pickel studio of Vero Beach, Florida, and this may be the only church in the greater New OrleansGulf area with glass from this studio. Whereas the round ones are highly abstract and of heavy faceted glass, the 36 new windows are of a more traditional pictorial style, carefully shaded. Indeed, some resemble photographs in the fineness of their detail. A parish committee selected and organized the topics according to purposeful themes: Biblical scenes, saints, and the Virgin Mary. Fittingly for this location, most of the windows in the narthex include water and boats.

To replace the other religious furnishings, church leaders purchased the Stations of the Cross, crucifix, statue of the Sacred Heart, candle holders, and altar chairs from a shuttered Lithuanian church dating to about 1900 in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Four statues that had floated away from the old church were miraculously recovered, and several others were purchased in Italy.

Like the ecclesiastical furnishings of the church, this parish blends the old and the new, a long history, and the determination to provide for the spiritual needs of the future.

*Visited April 2015*

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**Windows**

Round windows

West: Nativity

North: Resurrection

East: Ascension

South: Pentecost

South to North: Scenes from the Old & New Testaments

Creation

Noahs Ark and the flood

Moses parting the Red Sea

Wedding feast at Cana

Baptism of Jesus

Ten Commandments

Jesus calling his apostles

Jesus calming the sea

Jesus with the children

Raising of Lazarus

Woman at the well

Jesus heals the blind man

Loaves and fishes

Good Samaritan

Transfiguration

Palm Sunday

Washing the Apostles feet

Last Supper

Good Shepherd

Agony in the garden

West to East: Blessed Virgin Mary and the Saints

Annunciation

Our Lady of Fatima

St. Catherine Labouré

Mother Teresa of Calcutta

Pope John Paul II

St. ThereseLittle Flower

St. Michael the Archangel

St. Patrick

Crowning of Mary as Queen of Heaven

Our Lady of Guadalupe

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton

St. Louise de Marillac

Conversion of St. Paul

Mother Cabrini

St. Mary Magdalene

St. Stephen