

Tour of the 1990 Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception Crookston, MN

THE BEGINNING

"This Cathedral is the work, first of all, of God who calls us together so that from the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord may be praised." These words from a dedication letter written by then Bishop Victor Balke call us to remember the purpose of so much hard work and sacrifice by so many people; namely: that God may be praised in holy worship here, in this holy place.

THE ORIENTATION

The property on which the 1990 Cathedral sits was once the property of the Sisters of Mount St. Benedict, whose convent and grounds are currently adjacent to the south and west of the Cathedral buildings. The yellowish/tan brick building connected to the 1990 Cathedral was built by the Sisters to house a short-lived educational effort called 'Corbett College,' named after the first Bishop of Crookston. It now houses the Cathedral Grade School and Parish and School offices.

As like the shape of a diamond, the Cathedral Church sits with its 'points' on an east-west/north-south axis with entrances into the Cathedral proper from either the West entrance or the East Entrance. The significance of this axis will be spoken of at the Baptismal font.

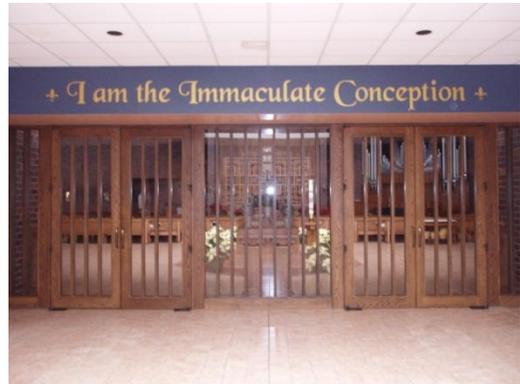
As one stands on the west side of the building at the covered entrance, to one's left (north) one can see the larger of two towers which grace the west and east axis points of the Cathedral. At the base of this tower is a simple marble corner stone indicating the date of the Cathedral's dedication: September 25th, 1990. This tower also serves as the Cathedral bell tower which houses three bells, the largest of which weighs 2,000 pounds and sounds the note of "F." This bell came from the other Catholic Parish Church in Crookston: St. Anne's, which closed in 1980. Two other bells: one bell sounding the note of "A" weighs in at 1000 pounds and the "C" note bell weighs 750 pounds, were donated in 1996 by a parishioner in memory of her children and her deceased husband. Their names are inscribed upon these two bells. The bells ring out 10 minutes prior to weekend Masses calling people to worship; and each day they call out to the city of Crookston and beyond, ringing the Angelus at 7am, Noon and 6pm.



ENTRANCE

The Cathedral Gathering Space is an open floor plan which provides a bright and spacious entrance for worshippers and guests to the Cathedral. The gold-leafed stenciling which runs along the upper walls and over the entrance of the Church proper is in a stylized 'fleur-de-lis' pattern - the French flower which is often associated with the Blessed Mother.

Over the entrance doors to the Cathedral are the simple words: "I Am the Immaculate Conception." This simple sentence was spoken by the Blessed Mother to little (St.) Bernadette Soubirous in an apparition at the grotto of Massabielle in Lourdes France in 1858. When, upon the sixteenth apparition to the little peasant girl, Bernadette asked the Lady in white who she was, she responded in a simple French dialect: "Que soy era Immaculada Conception." (I am



the Immaculate Conception) Little Bernadette ran from the grotto to her priest repeating to herself the words the lady had said but which she didn't understand. When the 14 year old blurted out what the lady had said - the skeptical priest knew this little girl could not have made this up, as few peasants knew of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception which had been defined only four years earlier in 1854. Our Lady's words to St. Bernadette at the poor grotto in France now greet you as you are about to enter the Cathedral dedicated to her honor.

BAPTISMAL FONT

The entrance doors of any Church, whether they are artistically commissioned or not, are powerful symbols in Catholic ritual. It is here, at the entrance doors of the Church we come to meet those who are to be baptized; we greet the body of our beloved dead; and especially at the Cathedral, it is at these doors which a newly named Bishop is symbolically presented keys as he claims his apostolic authority over this local Church; and is through them that we pass back into the world having been renewed by the Sacramental Mysteries of Christ bringing his light and life to all the world. Blessed John Paul II indelibly etched the image of doors as symbols of Christ when constantly calling out to the Church in preparation for the Jubilee year of 2000: "Open wide the doors to Christ!"

As you enter Our Lady's Cathedral, you come upon the Baptismal Font. In the shape of Christ's cross, this large baptistery accommodates the full immersion of both infants and adults and all ages in-between into the life, death and resurrection of Christ and

Sacramental graces. Living, blessed Holy Water overflows with abundant grace, pouring itself out as did our Crucified Lord, unsealing for the Church an everlasting, life-giving font of Grace.



You will notice three sets of steps descending/ascending in the font. With adult baptisms, the Catechumen (non-baptized person seeking Baptism) stands on the west side of the font as the Bishop/priest readies them to receive the Sacrament of Baptism. The west is the direction of sunset and source of darkness. The Catechumen is being called out of that darkness and to join Christ in his tomb. The Catechumen then enters the font and is submerged into the Living Water. Once baptized, and as the congregation sings "Alleluia," the newly Baptized emerges from the water and exits the 'tomb' on the east side

- the direction of the sun's rising and the origin of the world's light. The third set of steps leading north remind the Catechumen, that Baptism leads one to the fullness of union with Christ at the Altar and the profound gift of His Holy Body and Blood in Communion at Mass.

The font and source of all Sacramental graces, the Baptismal font is the true wellspring for all the joy of the Christian life. Thus, you will notice surrounding the cruciform baptistery is a set of floor tiles of a darker color than the rest of the floor. These darker tiles form the shape of an octagon emanating outward from the font. The early Church

Fathers (around 110AD to 520AD) often wrote of the “eighth day” of creation being the gift of new life given us in Baptism and which is to culminate in its fullness in the eternal joys of heaven. Thus, the octagon, reminds all who enter our Lady’s Cathedral that we have been blessed with a destiny of Eternal Life. Therefore, whenever we enter a Holy place dedicated to the Lord, we Catholics dip our hands into the Holy Water and make the sign of the Cross, asking God to keep us blest upon this way of discipleship and to bring us to eternal life. Some people even quietly pray this prayer while blessing themselves: *“By this Holy Water and Thy Precious Blood, O Lord, may I be freed from sin and brought to the joys of eternal life. Amen.”*

HOLY OILS & THE HOLY SPIRIT

If you now stand at the north end of the font and turn around to face the entrance of the Church, you will see placed along the wall of glass a stand with three bluish ceramic urns. These three urns contain the three Holy Oils blessed by the Bishop at the Chrism Mass during each Holy Week. To the left and to the right are the urns containing (1) the Oil of Catechumens (used within the ritual of the Sacrament of Baptism) and (2) the Oil of the Sick (used in the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.) The third urn, slightly elevated above the other two is an oil of special distinction because of the nature of its consecration and its use in the Sacraments, especially Baptism, Confirmation and Holy Orders, as well as the ritual of dedicating Churches to the honor of God for Holy Worship. This third oil is the Christ Oil or Sacred Chrism. When this oil is consecrated at the Chrism Mass, it is the only oil to receive an aromatic nard to ‘perfume’ the oil with the scent of Christ, as it were. Placed so near the baptismal font, the oils affirm both that the Font is the beginning of the Sacramental life as well as the fact that two of the three oils are used within the ritual of Baptism itself.

Further reason for the placement of the oils here is given by looking above the oils stand high upon the blue wall. Here is seen an image of the Holy Spirit. The Oils are a special gift of the Holy Spirit’s action in the Diocesan Church at Chrism Masses. In fact, it is at the point of consecrating the Sacred Chrism that the ritual calls for the Bishop to blow upon the oil to be made Sacred Chrism, invoking the Holy Spirit’s power upon the oil. Thus the appropriateness of the slight ascension of the Sacred Chrism leading the eye to the image of Holy Spirit from Whom it received its blessing. Too, the Holy Spirit image towering above the waters of the font recalls the Baptism of Christ himself at the river Jordan, when “...the heavens were opened and he saw the Holy Spirit descending like a dove and coming upon him...” [Matthew 3:16] An anonymous donation from parishioners, this image was designed and executed by Mark McCallister of Hurley’s in Fargo, ND. The image is based upon the Holy Spirit window of Bernini in the Chapel of the Chair of Peter in St. Peter’s Basilica of Rome, thus alluding to the Apostolic connection between the chair (Latin: ‘cathedra’) of the Bishop of Crookston and the chair (cathedra) of the Bishop of Rome – the Holy Father.

The Holy Spirit is, in Catholic Tradition, called: "The Spouse of Mary," since it was by the action of the Holy Spirit that Our Blessed Lady conceived the child in her womb at the miracle of the Annunciation. [Luke 1:35] Therefore it is right and fitting that in Mary's Cathedral, an image of her Divine Spouse be given a place of prominence and honor. When you exit through the doors of the Cathedral, pause for a moment to look upon the image of the Holy Spirit and quietly say a prayer, asking the Holy Spirit, Spouse of Mary, to come with you into the world and enflame in you the seven fold gifts given to you in your Sacramental Confirmation. *"Come Holy Spirit....be my love, my life, my all."*

SAINTS PETER & PAUL

Still standing at the north end of the font, looking south (at the doors) you will find to the left and to the right of the entrance niches which hold the statues of St. Peter (left) and St. Paul (right). It is an ancient tradition to prominently place images of these two apostles in Cathedrals, as they represent the beginning of the Apostolic Church's mission to proclaim Christ crucified and risen as he had commanded at the time of His ascension: *"Go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."* [Matthew 28:19] These images remind Cathedral worshipers that the Diocese of Crookston is commanded to share in that One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic mission to bring all people to salvation in Christ Jesus. These statues, donated by parishioners in memory of loved ones, were hand painted and carved from basswood in the Demetz Studios of Italy.

On the left, the statue of St. Peter presents the Apostle holding a set of keys, harkening the words of Jesus to St. Peter: *"...to you I entrust the keys of the kingdom..."* [Matthew 16:19] With a shepherd's staff in his other hand, signifying his authority of shepherd of the flock of the Lord, he stands upon a rock (in latin: Petrus) as recall the words of Jesus: *"You are 'rock' and upon this rock I will build my Church..."* [Matthew 16:18]

On the right, the statue of St. Paul represents the Apostle, robed in the color of martyrs. He holds in his hands a book and a sword. The book represents the letters written by St. Paul which constitute the single largest collection in the New Testament of any one author. The sword recalls St. Paul's own reference to the Word of God as sharper *'...than a two edged sword,'* [Hebrews 4:12] and one of the weapons of armor for spiritual warfare: *"...the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God."* [Ephesians 6:17]

THE SANCTUARY

Turning now to the north (with one's back to the font), one faces the main aisle leading to the Sanctuary of Our Lady's Cathedral. One notices at first the position of the Sanctuary to the assembly – situated as it is as on an axis point for the visibility of all in the assembly. For it is 'around' the altar of the God's Word and the altar of God's sacrifice that the faithful gather to offer Divine Worship and praise.

Within the Sanctuary you will find the primary symbols: The Altar; the Ambo and the Cathedra. These pieces were designed by Fr. John Buscemi based upon the Prairie School of design originated by Frank Lloyd Wright in the early 20th century in a nod to the location of the Crookston Cathedral within prairie lands of the Red River Valley.



The placement of the Altar and Ambo to the left and right of the sanctuary is an interpretation of the Church's document on the Liturgy at Vatican II (Sacrosanctum Concilium) which seeks to emphasize within the Mass the two



liturgical moments: 1. The Liturgy of the Word; 2. The Liturgy of the Eucharist. Affixed to the underside of the Altar is the original altar stone from the old Cathedral high altar. This stone contains 1st class relics of saints, thus symbolically linking the action of this local church in Worship with that of the action of the heavenly liturgy of the Saints and angels. [cf. Book of Revelation: 4]



The cathedra (chair) of the Bishop sits upon a raised platform indicating the centrality of the symbol from which the mother church of the diocese draws its name: Cathedral. One will notice that the back of the cathedra has a hand stitched appliqué of the coat of arms of the current bishop of the Diocese of Crookston. Too, there is to the left of the chair (as one sits) a stand for the bishop's crosier (staff) which signifies his shepherd's responsibility entrusted to him. A matching chair, of lesser stature, is for the priest who would preside at Mass when the bishop is not present to do so.

Two other features in the sanctuary are to be mentioned. The first is the large Crucifix placed for all to see during the Sacrifice of the Mass, as instructed by the General Instruction of the Roman Missal. The corpus of this crucifix is hand painted and carved of bass wood in the Demetz Studios of Italy. The cross itself was made by a Cathedral parishioner and imitates the design concept of the Buscemi sanctuary furnishings. On the back side base of this crucifix is a memorial plaque requesting prayers for the mother and father of donor of this beautiful work.

MUSIC

To the east of the sanctuary (your left as you face the baptismal font/entrance) is the area set aside for the music ministry – so very crucial to the proper celebration of Sacred Worship. Prominent within this area is the magnificent Reuter’s Organ built by the Reuter Organ Company of Lawrence, KS. It is distinctive in that it is a two-manual keyboard; and consists of 1789 individual pipes.



DEVOTIONS

In addition to being home for Sacred Worship, the Mother Church of the Diocese welcomes people throughout the day to come to prayer and devotions, deepening their last Eucharistic communion at Mass.

To the west of the sanctuary – opposite the music area - is a statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, for whom the Cathedral is named. This image is carved from carrara marble which is quarried only in the Tuscan region of Italy. Carrara marble is noted for its grey/blue hues within its otherwise milky white coloration and has long been the marble of choice for sculptors for centuries.



Draped over her hands is a Swarovski crystal rosary with golden links which was brought from and blessed at the Shrine of Lourdes during a parish pilgrimage there in 2005. It was at Lourdes that Our Lady appeared to young St. Bernadette and declared: “I Am the Immaculate Conception.” Perhaps you could take a moment now before this beautiful image and ask for Our Lady’s blessings upon you and your loved ones and upon her Cathedral parish family... *Hail Mary, full of grace....*

Following along the outer walls of the Cathedral are the Stations of the Cross. Each of these fourteen 'stations' are traditional commemorations of the way of Christ's cross on Good Friday. An ancient tradition of the Church is to 'travel' with Christ along this way, and meditate and share in his suffering and passion. These particular stations are mosaics, made of hundreds and hundreds of colored glass tiles and assembled by hand. There mosaics are in the Venetian style (and the Cathedral Stations are in fact imported from Venice, Italy) as opposed to Roman style of mosaics. The Venetian mosaics are distinctive from Roman by the more irregular shaped tiles loosely fitted together and are often composed of bright and primary colors.



Also following the outer walls of the Cathedral church are the dedication candles – which, on the day of the consecration of the Cathedral, were anointed with Sacred Chrism by the Bishop and brought a lighted candle signifying Christ as the light of the world. There are 12 such candles, symbolizing the Church's original apostolic witness in the Apostles.

Within the two towers of the Cathedral Church are housed devotional stations for people to pray and offer their prayers of intercession. Within the West tower are a crucifix, and statues of the Mother of God and St. Joseph. This tower was rededicated to the honor of the Holy Family in 2011, and the faithful are encouraged to bring their prayers and troubles in family life to this blessed place for consolation, comfort and hope. These three pieces were originally in the downtown Cathedral – the crucifix towered above the main, high altar; and the statues of Mary and Joseph were placed to the left and right of the sanctuary at the side altars. These three hand carved pieces were made in Oberammergau, Germany – famous for its ancient Passion Play, performed only every 10 years, but having done so since the 10th century. Originally, this western tower housed the tabernacle – which has now been moved to its own chapel. The eastern tower now houses a statue of St. Anne, the mother of Mary and grandmother of Jesus. In it, you see St. Anne pointing to heaven, as it was St. Anne who instructed the Blessed Mother on the ways of faith in the ancient heritage of family of Abraham. This statue originally graced the interior of the parish Church of St. Anne's in Crookston and was brought to the Cathedral upon its closure in 1980.



Premier among the devotional spaces within the Cathedral complex is the Blessed Sacrament Chapel, where is placed the tabernacle of the Lord – the home of the Blessed Sacrament. The Blessed Sacrament Chapel is located in the southeast corner of the Church and shares a glass door and wall with the Cathedral Church proper. It also has a direct access into the gathering space. This was originally built for a Day Chapel for daily Mass and as a ‘cry room’ for weekend Masses. However, with the deepening of a parish commitment to Adoration and Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament, it served as a fitting place to adore our Lord in the Eucharist. The golden doors of the tabernacle itself is the original tabernacle taken from the High Altar of the downtown Cathedral Church. It is now encased in the same style as the sanctuary furnishings.



Also within this chapel are a number of images for devotion.

(1) The image of Divine Mercy, on the southern wall, was blessed by Blessed John Paul the Great and toured the United States at the kindness of the Knights of Columbus. The Cathedral came into its possession as a gift from the 4th Degree Knights of Columbus in the Diocese of Crookston. (2) The image of Our Lady of Guadalupe found on the western wall is a gift to the Cathedral from our Spanish speaking members, who brought it to us from Mexico. Our Lady of Guadalupe is a source of great comfort and hope to many – but especially to those with a heritage from the Latin

American countries. And now, too, Our Lady of Guadalupe is a great and powerful intercessor for the entire Church, as Blessed John Paul and Pope Benedict the XVI had acclaimed her the “Star and Patroness of the New Evangelization,” and “Mother of the New Civilization of Love.” (3) The statue of Our Lady of Fatima graces the eastern wall of the chapel – attending, as it were, to the presence of her son in the tabernacle and during times of Exposition. To the right of the door leading into the Confessional, is a curio cabinet housing many 1st class relics of the saints. You may find a brochure next to the cabinet explaining the history of relics within the Church and within the cabinet you can find the names of the Saints whose relics we have. The majority of these relics came to the possession of the Cathedral through the kindness of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Medaille, of Crookston.

Going out of the Chapel door into the gathering space, we’ll take a left and exit to the outside through the east doors of the Church. If you make a left on the sidewalk, you will soon see the statue of St. Michael the Archangel – guardian of the Church. He is placed just outside the wall where is housed the Tabernacle of the Lord. St. Michael, within tradition, is closely associated with the Blessed Mother and so he has a place of great honor at her Cathedral. If you were to continue along the sidewalk to the farthest north point and take a left – you would come upon the large, looming wall situated at the center-north of the



building. This space awaits the day on which a grand and beautiful image of devotion will grace the edifice. Continuing along to the north-east corner, you will find the final two images of our tour - the statues of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, greeting and blessing all the guests who come and go from the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception.

We pray your time here has been blessed, and through the Intercession of Mary the Immaculate Conception may you know grace, peace and all good things!