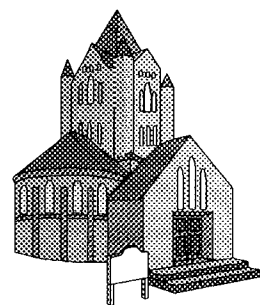


The Art & Architecture,

The Signs & Symbols

Of St. Matthew's Church



ST. MATTHEW'S -- THE EXTERIOR

Like our people, the physical church of St. Matthew's is complex, beautiful, and very Catholic. The architecture of St. Matthew's is a magnificent and well-conceived hybrid of French and English Gothic with Romanesque flourishes, compliments of our Italian architect Joseph Conradi.

Built in the shape of a cross, the overall design of St. Matthew's is French Gothic. The building itself is short and wide while its transepts, the arms of the cross, project slightly from the main body of the church.

The exterior is generally English Gothic. The spires, or steeples, are symbolic fingers pointing to heaven where Christ is King. The gable windows in the clerestory hearken back to the churches of the English countryside.

The ornate brickwork above the rose window in the center of the church and in the gables of the transepts is Romanesque in design.

The cornerstone is polished granite. Its Latin inscription reads:

This cornerstone was laid by me in the Year of Our Lord 1906 on the 12th day of August in honor of St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist.

John Glennon, D. D., Archbishop of St. Louis

The cornerstone is an image of Jesus Christ (Matthew 21:42).

The Four Evangelists are depicted in large statues on the exterior walls of St. Matthew's.

On the south side of the church, St. Matthew and St. John maintain a lapidary vigil.

St. Matthew is on the left. At the base of his statue there is the visage of a human being. The Human Being is St. Matthew's symbol because St. Matthew's gospel opens with the human genealogy of Jesus Christ.

St. John, known primarily by his youthful demeanor, is on the right. At the base of his statue there is an eagle. The Eagle represents St. John because his gospel opens with the contemplation of the Word, a contemplation which causes his soul to soar like an eagle.

On the north side of the church, St. Luke and St. Mark keep watch.

On the left is *St. Mark*. At the base of his statue there is a lion. The Lion represents the Royal Dignity of Jesus Christ.

On the right is *St. Luke*. At the base of his statue is an ox. The Ox is symbolic of the sacrificing priesthood which serves the Roman Catholic Church.

Also on the north side of our church, of some historical import, there is a green glazed shamrock in the bridge between the church and the garage. The shamrock is a popular Irish symbol for the *Holy Trinity*. The three leaves represent the Father, Son and Holy Spirit while the stem represents the Godhead from which these Divine Persons flow. This Irish tribute is owed to the founding pastor of St. Matthew's Rev. Joseph Terrance Shields, a young Irish immigrant, and the predominantly Irish congregation who first prayed in St. Matthew's.

ST. MATTHEW'S -- THE INTERIOR

Our stained glass windows, our statues, our icons, our Stations of the Cross, and all of our artwork serve first and foremost as tools of Catechism. In the early Middle Ages when so many Catholics, including the clergy, were illiterate and unable to read the Bible or the history of the church, the stained glass windows and the statues told our history and taught us our catechism. It is difficult for modern men and women who are all day long bombarded with colorful images to understand people who rarely saw bright colors. Country folk were naturally drawn to the kaleidoscopic colors of the stained glass, and as they viewed the bright colors, they learned the Bible stories contained therein.

As Catholics walked into the great cathedrals of the Middle Ages, their eyes naturally ascended the high steeples causing their minds to fill with thoughts of heaven where the saints, angels, and martyrs dwell with Christ the King and his Mother Mary, Queen of Heaven and Queen of all Saints.

Perhaps one of the most lamentable aspects of modern Catholicism is the all-pervading ignorance regarding the splendid beauty of Church art and architecture. Our church, St. Matthew's, is a living example of Catholic art and architecture at its absolute finest. Craftsmanship, material and age have all combined to create in St. Matthew's priceless works of art, priceless in monetary value, yes; but more importantly, priceless in the spiritual grace that can be gleaned for

those who understand what they are looking at.

THE SANCTUARY

The altar is a symbol of Christ. This is why the priest venerates the altar with a kiss at the beginning of the each Mass.

The style of the main altar is a hallmark of the Gothic style of the Middle Ages. Upon the flat table portion of the altar (called the "mensa") there is a small cross in all four corners of the table and one in the center. These five crosses correspond to the five wounds of Christ. In the front and center of the mensa there is a small, square cut-out in the marble. This cut is where the relic of a saint is contained. Originally, relics were placed in altars for three reasons: 1) to honor the saint to whom the church was dedicated; 2) to gain the saint's intercessions on behalf of the church; 3) to draw a parallel in the altar between the life of sacrifice lived by the saint and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

The great upright portion of the altar which contains the statues and the tabernacle is called a "retable." The style of the retable reached its height in the 15th century. Once the priest began turning around to face the congregation as he celebrated Mass, retables fell out of fashion. After all, the priest had to be able to see the congregation.

The permanent altars of St. Matthew's are of Italian marble. The inlays and small columns are onyx.

The three steps leading up to the main altar are in honor of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The little shelves

in the retable are called "gradines," and their purpose is to serve as a spot to place flowers honoring the altar.

In the high center of the retable is Jesus as the *Sacred Heart*. Looking left to right, the statues are of St. Ann and St. Mary, St. Agnes, (crucifix) St. Aloysius Gonzaga, S. J. and St. Vincent de Paul.

St. Ann is teaching her daughter Mary about the history and tradition of their people. St. Ann is the Patron Saint of Grandmothers.

St. Agnes, Patron Saint of Girls, was a virgin and martyr of the Early Church. She is always depicted with a lamb and a palm.

St. Aloysius Gonzaga, S. J. was a Jesuit. He is the Patron Saint of Youth. He is shown here meditating upon a crucifix which was one of his favorite methods of prayer.

St. Vincent de Paul, depicted with the children, is the Patron Saint of Charitable Societies.

In the very center of this altar is the tabernacle. The tabernacle found its way into the altar's retable in the 16th Century. On the exterior of the brass tabernacle are the Greek letters I. H. S. These are the first three letters of the name Jesus when spelled in Greek. Just inside the tabernacle is a second set of doors decorated with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, the Alpha and the Omega. This refers to Jesus and God who are the Beginning and the End (Revelations 1:8). In the marble work on either side of the tabernacle, there runs a grapevine. This is, of course, in reference to Jesus Christ as the True Vine (John, Chapter 15). It should be noted here that the healthy grapevine has

long been a symbol of peace and prosperity in the land. Immediately left and right of the tabernacle in the marble work are grapes and wheat. All of these symbols signify the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.

The candle that burns continually on the altar is called a "tabernacle light." The history of the tabernacle light goes back to the days of the Roman Empire. When important civil authorities were out in public, they were accompanied by a light-bearer. As Christianity found favor within the Roman Empire, important ecclesial figures such as bishops and popes would also be accompanied by light-bearers. In every Catholic Church, the most important Person present is Jesus Christ who dwells in the tabernacle in the Body of Christ. So, the tradition of placing a candle next to the tabernacle began in the 13th Century and became church law in the 17th Century.

Below the altar itself is the traditional depiction of Jesus and the Twelve at The Last Supper.

The four stained glass windows in the clerestory behind this altar are four sacrifices in the Hebrew Scriptures. Moving left to right: *Cain and Abel* are the subject of the first window. In the background the smoke of Cain's sacrifice is not ascending, but stays parallel to the earth. This signifies God's rejection of Cain's gift. This story is recorded in Genesis, Chapter 4.

The next window is the story of *Noah and the Ark*. Notice the rainbow in the background and recall that the rainbow is a sign of God's promise never again to flood the world. The story of

Noah can be found in the Book of Genesis, Chapters 6-10.

Just to the left of this south side door, there is a brass vault upon which are the Latin words "OLEA SACRA." This is where the Sacred Oils are kept. These are the Oil of Chrism, Oil of the Catechumens, and Oil of the Sick. These oils come to St. Matthew's every Holy Thursday after the Mass of Chrism celebrated by the Archbishop. These oils are used throughout the year for any number of sacramental functions from Baptism to Anointing of the Sick.

The following window is the story of *Abraham and his son Isaac*. In the foreground, see the ram caught in the bush. The ram replaced Isaac as Abraham's sacrifice in this remarkable story of holy obedience. The story of Abraham and Isaac is found in Genesis, Chapter 22.

The last window is the story of *Abram the Patriarch and Melchizedek who is king of Jerusalem*. Melchizedek offered Abram bread and wine after Abram's military victories. The story of Abram and Melchizedek can be found in the Book of Genesis, Chapter 14:17-20.

Above the sacristy door on the south side is the *Agnus Dei* or *Lamb of God*, a traditional depiction of Jesus Christ. On the banner above the Lamb are the Latin words "Ecce Agnus Dei" which means "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

Above the sacristy door on the north side is a depiction of a *Mother Pelican Feeding Her Young*. It was believed that a Mother Pelican picked her breast until it bled then fed her young with her own blood. The Mother Pelican

became a symbol of Jesus Christ who feeds us with his Precious Blood.

Just to the right of this north side sacristy door is a table. Upon the table, enclosed in plastic, is a reliquary. Inside the reliquary are the relics of several Jesuit Saints, among whom are St. Ignatius, St. Peter Claver, and St. Francis Xavier. The reliquary in which these relics are contained has a brass bottom while the ornate upper portion of the reliquary is gold-plated. The Certificate of Authenticity for these relics is in a frame on the wall just above the table and its reliquary.

SIDE ALTARS

The Marian Altar: *The Blessed Mother* is almost always depicted with her eyes looking downward in holy reverence. The statue in this altar is no exception. St. Mary is often portrayed standing upon a snake coiled around the world. This signifies Mary's defeat of evil on earth. Notice the apple in the mouth of the snake. This represents the forbidden fruit of which Adam and Eve ate thereby bringing sin into the world. The S. M. at the base of the altar are for St. Mary. Around the S. M. are roses. Roses are a symbol of joy and have been a symbolic flower for Mary since the development of the Rosary in the Middle Ages. The word "Rosary" comes from the Latin word "rosarium" which means "rose garden."

Opposite the Marian Altar on the north side of the Church is the *St. Joseph* Altar. In the hands of St. Joseph are a carpenter's square which represents his profession as a carpenter, and lilies

which signify his purity. The S. J. stand for St. Joseph.

THE SOUTH WALL

Just to the left of the Marian Altar is our first stained glass window. It is a depiction of *Adam and Eve* being banished from the Garden of Eden by God. This story is found in Chapter 3 of Genesis. Notice the serpent above Eve's head. Notice also the peacock in the lower left. The peacock is a symbol of eternal life, a gift Adam and Eve have forsaken through their sin. Finally, see the Blessed Virgin inserted into the scene. She is there because she becomes the New Eve. As sin came into the world through woman, so woman is responsible for bringing salvation into the world through giving birth to Jesus Christ.

The next five windows in the Gospel Transept are the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary. Viewing them right to left they are:

The Annunciation - Luke 1:26-38

The Visitation - Luke 1:39-56

The Birth of Jesus - Luke 2:1-7

The Presentation - Luke 2:22-38

Notice in the apex window the nine-branched candelabrum called a "menorah," and the stone tablets which contain the Ten Commandments. These are symbols of the Jewish faith into which Jesus was born, lived, and died.

Finding Jesus in the Temple - Luke 2:4-52

The six remaining stained glass windows on the south wall, two above and four below, depict the Public Life of Jesus.

Up above:

Wedding Feast of Cana
John 2:1-12.

Jesus teaching the disciples about the need for them to pick up their crosses and follow him.
Matthew 16:21-28.

The windows below, moving right to left, are as follows:

Sermon on the Mount
Matthew Chapters 5-7

Woman carrying a child
Matthew 15:21-28

Jesus restores a dead girl to life
Mark Chapter 5

Notice the butterfly in the apex window. The Butterfly is a symbol of the Resurrection.

Jesus and the Children
Luke 18:15-17

THE CHOIR LOFT

In the old choir loft, or gallery, are four figures associated with Sacred Music. Right to left:

Pope Gregory the Great, a former monk, and originator of Gregorian Chant. He is Patron Saint of Musicians.

Saint Cecilia, with St. Gregory, is the Patron Saint of Musicians, often depicted with an organ.

King David, the most powerful and important King in Israel's history. He also played the lyre. He composed music, invented musical instruments, and danced. Read about King David in the two Books of Samuel.

The last window is **Joshua**. He is seen here with a ram's horn, called a "shophar" in Hebrew. Joshua followed Moses in the leadership of Israel. With rams' horns blowing, Joshua brought down the walls of Jericho. Read this story in the Book of Joshua, Chapter 6.

ABOVE THE DOOR BETWEEN THE VESTIBULE & THE NAVE

At the entrance of the church is **St. Matthew**. Above the doors on either side are angels.

At the far right is **Jesus being Baptized** by John the Baptist in the River Jordan (John 1:19-36). Once upon a time this was the door to the Baptistry. Inside the Baptistry, which is now a bookstore, the stained glass contains themes that are repeated in the main body of the church. Right to left: The Body and Blood of the Holy Eucharist, The Mother Pelican, the Agnus Dei, and the Phoenix.

THE NORTH WALL

Up above:

The two windows on the east end of the north wall are, from right to left:

The Agony in the Garden

Matthew 26:36-46

In the apex window see the cup from which Jesus drank, though praying to his Father, "Let this cup pass from me."

The Crucifixion

Notice the apex window wherein we find again the Mother Pelican representing Jesus Christ.

Down below:

The windows below, moving right to left:

This first window combines two events in the life of St. Peter and Jesus:

1. ***Jesus gives Peter the keys to the Kingdom***
Matthew 16:19

2. ***After the Resurrection Jesus appears to Peter on the Sea of Tiberias with the commission, "Feed my Sheep."***

John Chapter 21.

Notice in the apex window the crown and keys. These are the symbols of the Papacy, Office of the Pope, of which Peter is considered the first in accord with these two scriptural stories.

Jesus before Pilate

Matthew 15: 1-15

Jesus scourged and mocked

Matthew 15:16-20

Jesus meets his Mother and St. John on the way to Calvary.

While scripture does not record Jesus meeting his Mother and St. John on the way to His death, both are there at the Crucifixion itself (John 19:25-27). There is no reason to suppose she and John would not have seen Jesus on the road to Calvary.

In the apex window is the heart of Mary being pierced with a sword in accord with the prophecy of Simeon

which can be found in the Gospel of Luke 2:35.

Gospel Transept

Right to Left:

These five windows are the Glorious Mysteries of the Rosary. They are:

The Resurrection

The Ascension

Notice in the apex window the Chi and Rho which is an ancient symbol for Christ since the Chi and Rho are the first two letters in the Greek spelling for Christ.

Pentecost

Assumption

Coronation

The last window on the north wall is the story of the two disciples meeting the resurrected Jesus on the **Road to Emmaus** (Luke 24:13-35). In the apex window is the Phoenix. According to Greek mythology the Phoenix is a bird which consumes itself in flames every 500 years only to be reborn from the ashes. It has become for Catholics a symbol of the Resurrection.

THE STATIONS OF THE CROSS

We have in St. Matthew's particularly lovely, large Stations of the Cross which were custom made for St. Matthew's. The history of the Stations of the Cross is quite interesting.

Early in the history of the Church, Christians pilgrims liked to visit the Holy

Land. They would retrace the final steps of Jesus from the Garden of Gethsemane where he prayed that "this cup pass from me," to the place of crucifixion, and finally to the tomb where Jesus was buried. During the Crusades of the 11th, 12th, and 13th Centuries, it became too dangerous to make the pilgrimage to the Holy Land because of the fighting between Christians and Muslims. Rather than go to the Holy Land, little outdoor stations commemorating the final hours of Jesus sprang up all over Europe. Pilgrims would visit these shrines rather than go to the Holy Land. Each shrine had between 5 and 20 stations. Then in the 18th Century, Pope Clement XII fixed the number of stations at 14. Also in the 18th Century, the stations were allowed to come inside the churches. And this is where we get the 14 Stations of the Cross.

In the 1960's, some churches added a 15th station -- The Resurrection.

THE STATUES

We have several statues in St. Matthew's. In no particular order they are:

The Pieta. This is the statue of Mary mourning over the body of her Son Jesus.

St. Anthony of Padua. St. Anthony (1195 - 1231) was a Franciscan priest. He was a brilliant preacher. He is often portrayed holding the child Jesus because of a story which told of a host peering through a window at his guest St. Anthony who was in rapture as he held the Infant Jesus in his arms. He is the

Patron Saint of Lost Articles and The Poor.

St. Peter Claver. St. Peter Claver (1580 - 1654) was a Jesuit priest. He spent his entire adult life as a "slave to the slaves" in Cartagena (in present day Colombia). He is the Patron Saint of Black Americans and is invoked against all forms of slavery.

St. Martin de Porres. Born of a Spanish Knight and a ex-slave woman, St. Martin (1579 - 1639) was a Dominican Brother in Peru. He dedicated his life to serving the poor and was blessed with many supernatural gifts. He is the Patron Saint of Interracial Justice.

St. Malachy. Wearing a miter and carrying a crozier, St. Malachy (1095 - 1148) was an important Archbishop in Ireland's history, but his great love was for the solitude of a hermitage.

CANDLES

Around many of the statues are candles. The small candles are called "votive lights." The word "votive" comes from the Latin "votum" which means "vow." The votive candle is lit by a person who has made a promise to God through the saint in hopes of having a prayer answered. The candle, consumed in flame, is a symbol of the petitioner's sacrifice.

The taller candles are called "vigil lights." As the name "vigil" implies, this candle is lit as a sign of prayerful waiting and watching, as for the return of a loved one gone off to war, or for the arrival of peace in a city.

CALL TO WORSHIP

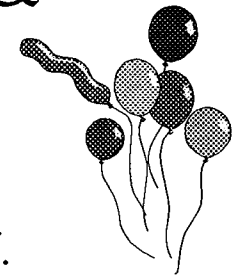
St. Matthew's has a great booming bell in its belltower. The tradition of ringing a bell one half hour before Mass began in the 6th Century because of a lack of clocks at home and in the fields. Bells were also used in the praying of the Angelus, announcing the death of a parishioner, and informing the neighborhood that the Consecration was taking place.

In the back of church at the center of the gathering space is the original marble St. Matthew's Baptismal Font. It is customary for parishioners to dip their fingers into the font and bless themselves on the way into church as a way of remembering their own baptism and as a way of purifying themselves upon entering God's House. For those with keen eyes, see that the old Baptismal Font, which served us when the original sat in storage, has now been reworked and serves us as the ambo. The ambo is the lectern from which the Scripture Readings are proclaimed during Mass.

CONCLUSION

The art and architecture of St. Matthew's offers her parishioners lessons in Catechism, History, and Theology. But more important than anything else, this church and her beauty are intended to draw the faithful into the greatest Mystery of all, The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And of this Holy Mystery, St. Matthew's is a gifted teacher.

Thank You St. Matthew's For Your Hard Work & Dedication



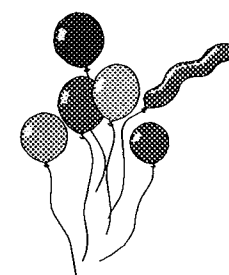
Parish Staff

Pastor: Fr. Matthew Ruhl, S. J.
Associate Pastor: Fr. Dirk Dunfee, S. J.
Pastoral Associate: Sr. Regina Bartman, C. S. J.
Pastoral Planner: Jacqueline M. McWell
Bookkeeper: Patrick Murphy
Receptionists: Kimberly Sullivan & Ruby Woods
Maintenance: Paul A. Jones

Parish Council

President: Isom Williams, Jr.
Vice President: Juanita Blackshear Doyle
Secretary: Cheryl Jones

St. Matthew's Day Committee - 1997
St. Matthew's Traditional Choir
St. Matthew's Contemporary Choir
St. Matthew's Acolytes
St. Matthew's Usher Board
St. Matthew's Liturgy Committee
St. Matthew's Evangelization Committee
St. Matthew's Lectors
St. Matthew's Eucharistic Ministers
St. Matthew's Decorating Committee



Mass Schedule:

Sunday: 9:30 a.m.
Monday thru Friday: 8:00 a.m.
Saturday: 5:00 p.m.
Feast Days: 7:00 p.m.