

CROSS TALK

Enhancing Our Faith Through Art



In this issue of Cross Talk we learn more about the art used in our current church. We explore the reasons pieces of art were selected, the meaning of the symbols and artifacts used and what they mean to us.

In the early centuries Catholics worshiped in homes, afraid of potential persecution. Later, as practicing the faith was no longer outlawed, churches were built to show the love for God and desire to worship together. The word church took on two meanings. When used with a capital “C,” Church means the assembly of God’s people. When used with a lower case “c,” it means the building where the congregation worships.

Since the founding of Saint Helena’s in 1919, our congregation has worshiped in three buildings. First in the wooden church, then in the church that was combined with the school and now in the “new” church dedicated in 2004.

As we learn more about the art used in the current church we give recognition to those who made it a reality. First, to the people of Saint Helena’s for their financial support and tireless efforts in bringing it to fruition. Next, to the architect (Ron Knabb), mural artist (Emanuel Utti d. 2016), stain glass designer (Timothy Callahan d.2009), Reredos Refurbishing (Frederick and Emily’s), other Refurbisings (Bair and Bair) and Statue and Stations touch up (Barbara Fitzpatrick.) Their works are truly inspiring!

Space does not permit us to discuss each piece of art used in the church. We invite you to become familiar with the history and meaning of the pieces selected and share the good news with your family and friends.

On the front cover:

- Panoramic view of the inside of the church
- Saint Anthony of Padua stained glass window at the side entrance/exit
- Rose Window at the main entry/exit of the church
- Saint Theresa, the Little Flower stained glass window at the side entrance/exit
- Saint Helena statue at the top of the Reredos
- Saint Helena picture outside sacristy in Narthex
- The twelfth Station of the Cross
- “The Tithe” located in the Narthex

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... Upon This Rock I Will Build My Church



Designing a new church building starts with a vision of the way it will look and the messages it will convey. For Saint Helena's this meant weeks and months of planning for Monsignor Nicolo and the various committees called to the task. What architectural style should be chosen and how would it fit with our mission, namely,

“One Family, One Heart, One Faith?”

For months Monsignor Nicolo toured various churches and religious buildings noting what he liked and how it could be incorporated into our church. As the final design took shape the decisions were made to build a traditional church in the shape of a cross (cruciform) and to use a Gothic style of architecture. Each of these choices was in keeping with the vision of creating a beautiful edifice which invites us to lift our eyes upward soaring towards Heaven, powerfully connecting our world to the heavenly realm.

Another key design philosophy was to use, whenever possible, artwork and artifacts from previous churches, monasteries and religious community motherhouses. For example, the original design of the Reredos was to be a stained glass window with a view to the outside. However, when the Reredos from the former Saint Ladislaus church in Philadelphia became available, it was decided that would be a more fitting tribute to the style of the building. With the help of skilled craftsmen it was refurbished along with a number of other pieces, i.e., the Ambo (Pulpit), Presider's Chair and Wedding Kneeler. Our patron saint, Saint Helena, was placed at the top of the Reredos to look down upon us.

The large stained glass windows, on either side of the church, represent the Nativity and the Resurrection, the key mysteries of our faith. Those windows along with the windows representing the local American saints, Saint Theresa and Saint Anthony Padua were carefully crafted to tell our story. Some symbols in the windows are obvious while others are more subtle. For example, a careful look at the Saint John Newmann window shows the dome of the Cathedral of Sts. Peter and Paul in Philadelphia which was built during his tenure as Bishop of Philadelphia.

Attention to detail throughout the church is evident in the selection of the lighting, borders and the archways over the doors all leading to the church that we know today. We are indeed blessed!

All Are Welcome Here



As we approach the church we see the Rose Window above the main doors of the church. The window, which is typical of Gothic architecture, depicts Saint Helena with the Cross on which Our Divine Savior was crucified. Located on the lower right side is a lily symbolizing purity and eternal life. On the left hand side is a depiction of our church.

The Lily also symbolizes virginity. It reminds us that our Lord was conceived of a sinless, undefiled Virgin.

The symbols in the outer leaf of the Rose window starting with the Lamb and con-

tinuing clockwise in the direction of the Escallop symbol are: Agnus Dei, Chi Rho (Greek for Christ), Jerusalem Cross, Rock (Christ) with the Cross, Chalice and Cross, Crown with the Book of Scriptures.

We enter through the St. Helena Church doors into the Narthex, an architectural element typical of early Christian churches. It is an area where we transition from the day-to-day into a holy realm where we embrace our journey into the Mysteries.



We then are welcomed by the symbolic paintings of the Four Marks of the Church; that is, One (Una), Holy (Sancta), Catholic (Catholica), and Apostolic (Apostolica) above the doors leading

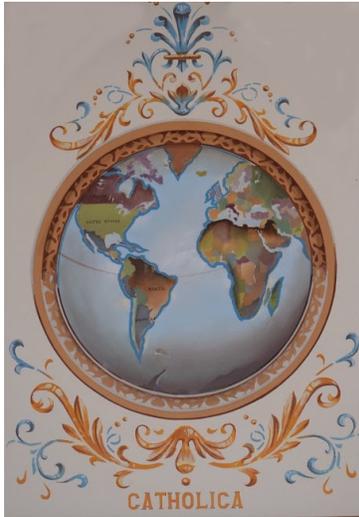
into the Nave, or main body of the church.



The Church is One because her source is three Divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Church is also One in the unity of One Faith, One Baptism, One Sacrifice and the same Sacraments.

The Church is Holy because Christ, as the Head of His Mystical Body, the Church, has made the Church Holy through the gift of the Holy Spirit.





The Church is Catholic or Universal because Christ has given the Church the fullness of the means of salvation: correct and complete confession of faith, full sacramental life and ordained ministry in apostolic succession. The Church is also Catholic and universal because her mission is to preach the Gospel to the entire world.

The Church is Apostolic because the Church contains the mission of the Apostles, continues to teach what the Apostles taught and continues to be taught, guided and sanctified by the Apostles from Heaven.



The journey continues as we move from the Narthex into the Nave where the Baptismal font serves to remind us that it is here where each of us became a child of God. It is in this sacred space where we were first welcomed into the Church, filled with grace and called to a life of holiness. Our Baptismal Font features a statue of St. John the Baptist baptizing Jesus.

An additional reminder of our Baptism are the beautiful Angel Holy Water Fonts gracing every entrance of the church.



As we step further into the body of the church we find ourselves enshrined in the midst of three magnificent images: the Nativity Stained Glass Window to the left, the Reredos with the Crucifix front and center and the Resurrection Stained Glass Window to the right, beautifully symbolizing the core Mysteries of the Birth, Death and Resurrection of Jesus.

This Sacred Space



The Reredos is the large altarpiece placed behind the altar of the church. It rises from ground level behind the altar. In the center of the Reredos, above the Tabernacle, is the large crucifix reminding us of Our Lord's sacrifice for us. The Reredos is surrounded by angels on either side, as well as the Blessed Mother and Saint Joseph statues. Imbedded within the Reredos are niches to hold statues which are further described to the right.



The Pulpit, also known as the Ambo, is located to the left of the Reredos. It is the place where we participate in the Liturgy of the Word, in preparation for the Liturgy of the Eucharist.

The Presider's Chair to the right of the Reredos symbolizes the authority of the Presider as the teacher of the faith.





At the pinnacle of the magnificent Reredos is our beloved Patroness, St. Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. Born in the mid- third century she was married to the Roman General Constantius who later divorced her to marry the Emperor's stepdaughter, insuring that he then would become Emperor. Years later Helena converted to Christianity and performed many acts of charity including building churches in Rome and in the Holy Land. She has been credited with finding the True Cross on her pilgrimage and is usually depicted as an empress holding the True Cross.



Below St. Helena to the far left and right are St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Stanislaus Kostka, early Jesuit saints who died at a young age and who are considered to be the "Patron Saints of Young Jesuits." Both were born to powerful aristocratic families whose fathers opposed their desire to enter the priesthood but who, despite these pressures, became models of personal sanctity for youth.



Saints Peter and Paul are also often depicted together as "Columns of the Faith." Peter was the rock upon whom the Church was built and who was handed the Keys to the Kingdom. Paul was the Apostle of the Gentiles, especially chosen by Christ to carry the Good News to those who were not Jews. St. Peter is seen holding the keys and St. Paul is holding two symbols of the Word of God, the Scriptures and a two-edged sword.



To the left of the Altar the Blessed Virgin Mary is enshrined as the Mother of Our Divine Savior. Her "Fiat" or "So be it" to the Angel Gabriel calls us to follow her example in our own lives and to celebrate her pivotal role in our salvation history. Saint Joseph, on the right, the husband of Mary and foster father of Jesus, is honored as a just and upright man. Known as the Patron of the Universal Church as well as the Patron of a Happy Death, his life calls us to a life of justice and holiness.



DO THIS IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME



“Sanctuary” is from the Latin word “Sanctus” meaning “holy.” It is the consecrated area around the Altar. This holy space is a representation of the Sacred Presence in our midst, creating our “heaven on earth.”

The center panel of the altar shows Christ and the apostles at the Last Supper. The left panel depicts Abraham willing to sacrifice his son, Isaac while the right panel depicts Melchizedek offering bread and wine to God.

The Tabernacle is the Sacred place where Christ dwells in the Eucharist. It is the place where



the Sacred Hosts consecrated during the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass are securely reserved for carrying to the sick. It serves also as the main focus of Jesus’s abiding Presence for those visiting the church.

The Sanctuary Lamp is the lighted candle in the red globe which signifies the Presence of the Eucharist, “The Light of the World.”



Stained Glass Windows - American Saints

Lining the walls of the church are beautiful and impressive stained glass windows paying homage to our Local and American Saints whose life stories are even more beautiful and an inspiration to all who view them. They are there to remind us that *“if they can do it, we can do it.”* Starting from the back left of the Church, the windows are:

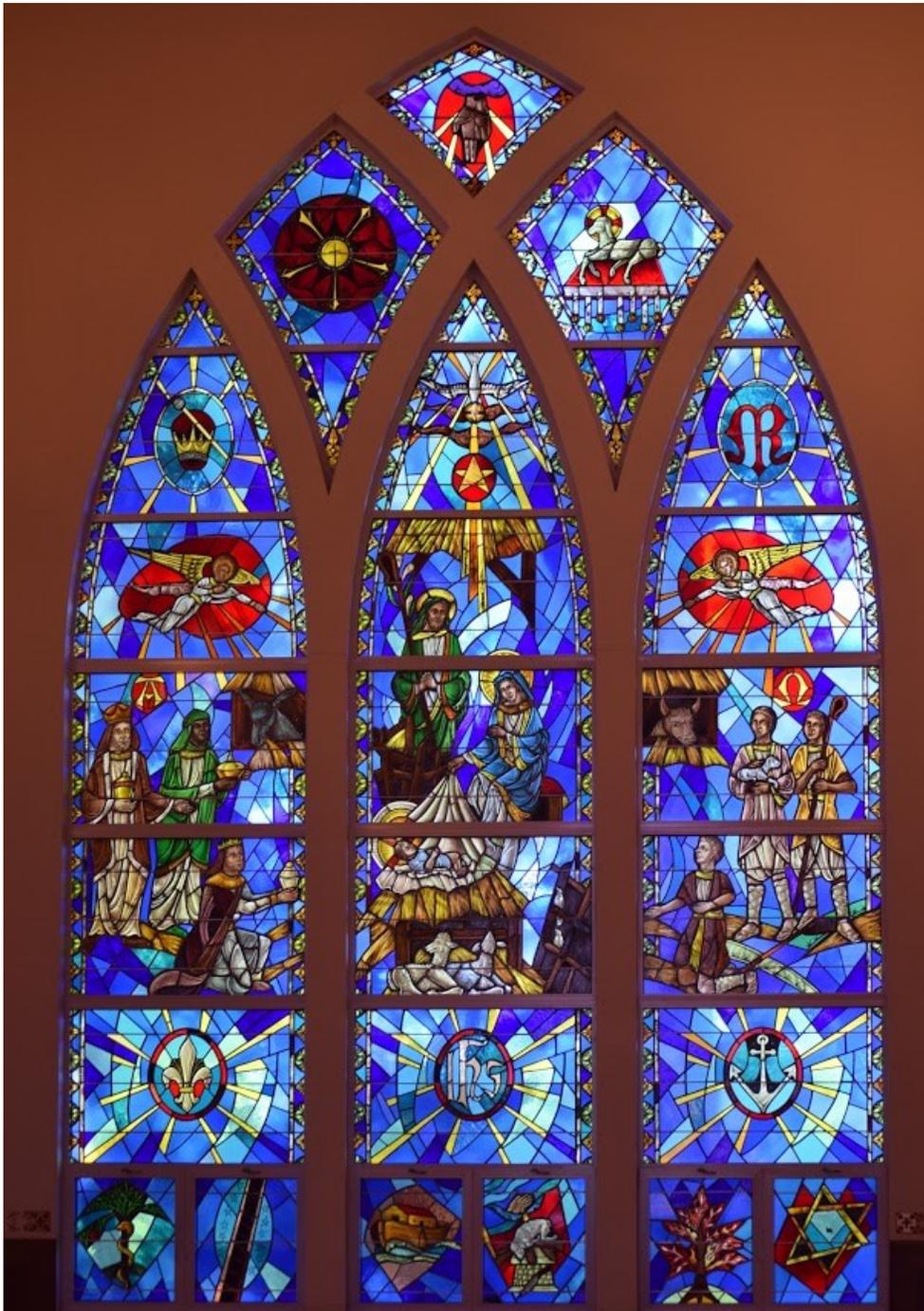


- Venerable Pierre Toussaint was a Haitian born slave who became a noted benefactor to the poor.
- St. Katherine Tekawitha, the Lily of the Mohawks, is the first Native American to be recognized as a saint.
- St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (1946) started the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart to care for poor children.
- St. Katherine Drexel (2000), a Philadelphian, devoted her life to Black and Native Americans.



- John Neumann(1977), the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia founded the Catholic Parochial School System .
- St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (1975), the first American born Saint, founded the Sisters of Charity.
- St. Isaac Jogues, a Jesuit missionary and North American martyr, was captured, tortured and died for his faith.
- St. Juan Diego, an Indian, is the first indigenous saint from the Americas.

And Unto to Us is Born a Savior



The Nativity stained glass window and surrounding murals are beautiful representations of the Birth of Christ. Their powerful and memorable artistry invites us in to the panoramic story of Jesus's Birth. The Nativity window showcases the Birth of Christ surrounded by the Magi and Shepherds, rapt in adoration and the Angels, heralding the wondrous news!

The many, meaningful faith symbols, artistically portrayed in the window, continue the unfolding narrative. From the bottom these symbols include:

- Snake, Tree, Fruit (Fall of Adam and Eve); Ladder and Twelve Stars (Jacob's Ladder and Twelve Tribes of Israel); Noah's Ark; Altar, Lamb, Knife (Abraham's sacrifice of his son); Burning Bush (Moses); Six Pointed Star (House of David)
- Fleur de Lis (Purity of Mary); IHS (Greek for Jesus); Anchor (Christ, our Anchor and our Hope)
- Alpha and Omega (first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, Jesus is the Beginning and the End)
- Crown and Scepter (Christ the King); Dove (The Holy Spirit); Five Point Star (Christmas Rose Star followed by the Magi); MR (Maria Regina; Mary, Queen of Heaven)
- Messianic Rose (Isaiah's prophecy that "A rose will bloom in the desert;") Lamb (Jesus is the Sacrificial Lamb of God); Book of God (In the Apocalypse)
- Hand (Hand of God the Father)

Surrounding the window are three large murals and four smaller ones which continue to tell the story.

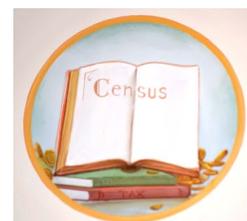


The Annunciation illustrates the Angel Gabriel being sent by God and appearing to the Virgin Mary to ask her to be the Mother of His Son. Mary gives her "Fiat" or "So be it" and the Word becomes Flesh within her.



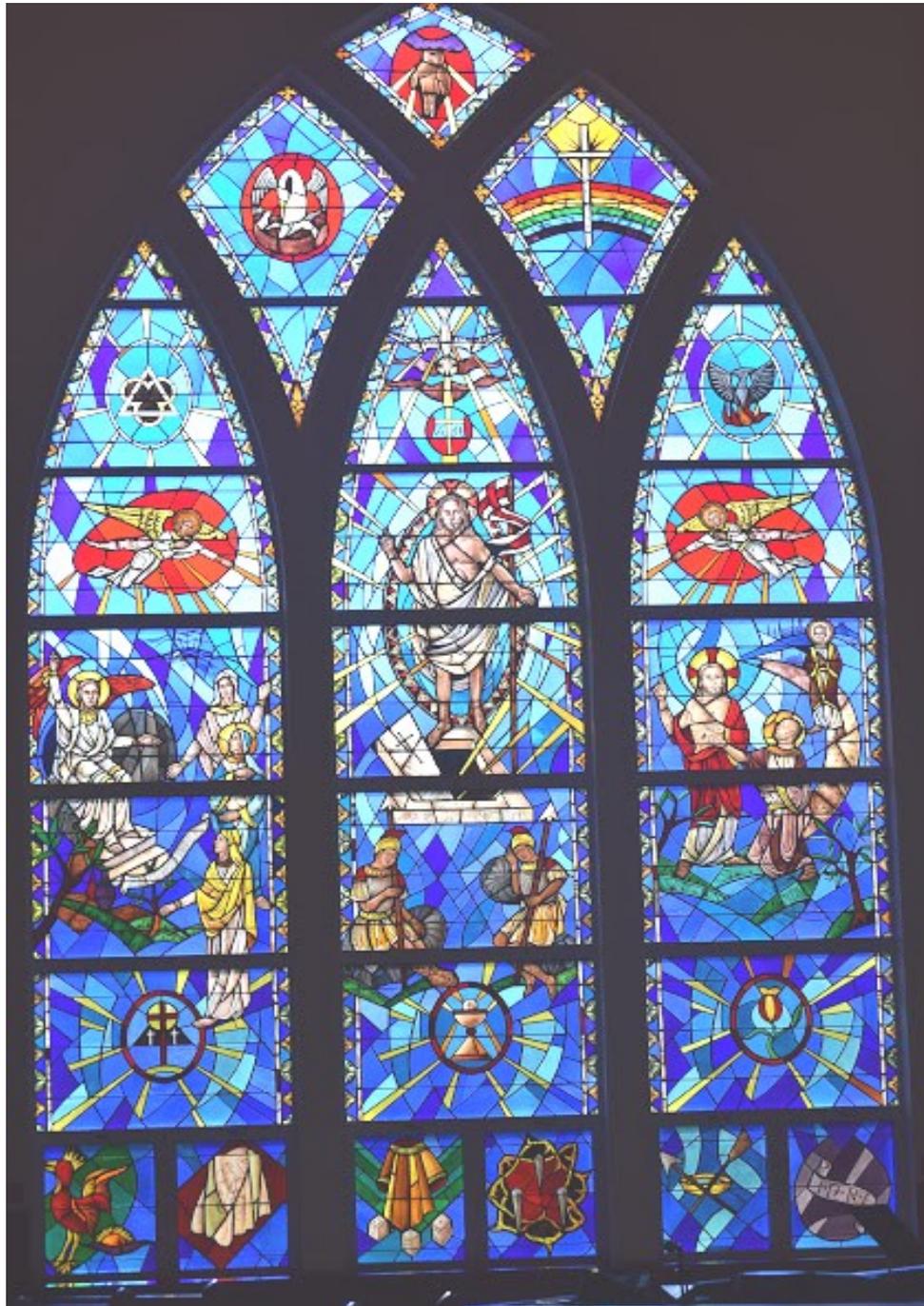
No Room in the Inn shows Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem and, finding no room in the Inn, take shelter in a lowly stable to await the birth of Baby Jesus.

Flight Into Egypt shows that soon after the Magi's visit, when they learned that King Herod intended to slaughter the male infants in the area, an Angel appeared to Joseph and told him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus. The Sphinx with Mary and Joseph on its lap is looking to heaven in thanksgiving for the true God.



Smaller paintings: Holy Innocents; Slaughter of the Innocents as represented by the Sword and Spear; House of Bread (Bethlehem means "House of Bread "; (Jesus, the Bread of Life, came for the common person); Book of the Census with coins

AND ON THE THIRD DAY HE AROSE



As with the Nativity window, there are three large murals and four smaller ones surrounding the window and bringing new life to the significant Mysteries of our faith. The Resurrection Stained Glass Window and surrounding murals, with their magnificent and powerful images, complete the story of Jesus's Birth, Death and Resurrection. The Resurrection is showcased as the focal point of the window and is surrounded by important symbols of our faith.

The faith symbols portrayed in the Resurrection Window include (from the bottom):

- Cock Crowing and Sun (Peter’s Denial of Christ); Veil (St. Veronica wipes the face of Jesus); Garment/Dice (Soldiers casting lots for Jesus’s garment); Crown of Thorn/Nails (Instruments of torture used on Jesus); Spear (Instrument which pierced the side of Christ); Hyssop (Sour wine offered to Jesus); INRI (Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews)
- Crosses (Crosses on Mount Calvary); Chalice and Host (Christ’s sacrifice of His Body and Blood); Pomegranate (Its seeds bursting forth are like Christ bursting forth from the Tomb)
- Tri-Foil/Triangle (One God in three Divine Persons; Dove (Holy Spirit); Bird Out of Fire (Phoenix rising from the ashes; Jesus rising from the dead on the third day)
- Pelican Feeding Her Young (The Pelican nourishes her young with her own blood; Jesus nourishes us with His Precious Blood in the Eucharist; this total giving of Self is a Symbol of the Eucharist) Cross/Rainbow (new life in Christ through the Cross and Resurrection)
- Hand (God the Father/Divine Providence)



The Pentecost window commemorates the day the Holy Spirit descends upon Our Lady, the Apostles and other followers of Jesus and enlivens their efforts in forming the Church. The feast of Pentecost is known as the Birthday of the Church.

The Coronation of the Virgin Mary window is a lovely illustration of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit crowning Mary as the Queen of Heaven and Earth.



The Ascension of Our Lord window is a beautiful representation of Jesus's literal, bodily return to God His Father in Heaven and the return to His Heavenly Glory.



Smaller paintings: Crown and Keys (Papacy); Tower of Babel; the Word of God; Shell representing our Baptism

Go Forth and Spread the Gospel

As we come to the end of the Liturgy we are sent forth with the final blessing, "Go, glorify the Lord by your life." The worship is over; now our service begins. As we take our leave from the body of the church, we realize that our journey here has taken us full circle as we continue to find ourselves immersed in lovely artistic representations designed to remind us to follow our Baptismal call and to spread the Good News.

Two beautiful stained glass windows of our beloved St. Theresa the Little Flower and St. Anthony of Padua frame out our side exits reminding us again to emulate their personal stories as we strive to follow our own call to holiness and new life.



Gracing the archways above the windows are the murals of the Four Evangelists-Saints Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, writers of the Gospels which are the heart of the Scriptures. These serve to remind us to take the Gospel with us as we go back into our daily lives.



Back in the Narthex we are sent on our way with the magnificent images of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, powerful reminders of our call to lives of service and the beautifully rendered Rose Window of St. Helena holding the True Cross, a fitting inspiration for us all!



A Look To The Future



In preparation for the 100th anniversary of the parish, we will be adding two new paintings, one on either side of the Reredos with some faux work to further beautify the Sanctuary. The paintings will be located above the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph statues.

On the back cover:

- Saint Matthew in the Paschal Candlestick on the Altar
- Sacred Heart statue in the Narthex
- Saint Francis of Assisi Embracing Christ Crucified in the Narthex

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