

# ST. MEINRAD CATHOLIC CHURCH

ST. MEINRAD, INDIANA

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## WALKING TOUR OF ST. MEINRAD CATHOLIC CHURCH

### HISTORY

- Welcome to St. Meinrad Parish! The parish was founded on January 21, 1861 on the patronal feast day of its holy patron, St. Meinrad, monk and martyr, who lived in the ninth century.
- On January 28, 1861, the octave (or eighth) day, the town was founded. This happened on the 1,000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of St. Meinrad in what is now known today as Einsiedeln, Switzerland. The name *Einsiedeln* comes from the German word for “hermitage.”
- The original parish church was located in the log cabin of the monastic community. Soon after, another wooden church structure was constructed to serve the needs of both the monastery and the parish. Until 1960, the parish community worshiped with the monks in what is now known as the Archabbey Church, under the patronage of Our Lady of Einsiedeln.
- In 1955, it was determined that a separate parish church was needed to strengthen the identity and to meet the ever growing spiritual and pastoral needs of the parish community. A capital campaign was launched to build the current parish church. Ground was broken on January 25, 1959.
- Archbishop Paul C. Schulte of Indianapolis laid the cornerstone of the church on May 10, 1959, and the church was dedicated on March 27, 1960.

### CHURCH APPOINTMENTS

- The parish church is fashioned from sandstone from the monastery quarry. Beneath its terrazzo floor was a state of the art in-floor heating system. The interior walls are also finished with St. Meinrad sandstone.

- The stained glass windows depict the Beatitudes. Taken from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from Matthew chapter 5, the windows illustrate the groups Jesus called "blessed" or "happy" – such as those poor in spirit and those who mourn.
- The Stations of the Cross hanging on the wall were designed by Father Donald Walpole, OSB, a monk of Saint Meinrad Archabbey. The stations portray images on Jesus' way to his death, coupled with Scripture passages that Jesus fulfilled.
- Near the entrance of the church we have the baptismal font. As Christians, we became members of the Church when we were baptized. In the same way, the baptismal font and holy water containers at the entrance remind us of our own Baptism, how God has washed away our original sin and claimed us as His beloved children. Next to the font is the Paschal Candle, which symbolizes Christ our light. A new Paschal Candle is blessed and lit each year during the Easter Vigil, when we baptize and welcome new adult members.
- The main body of the church where the faithful worship is called the "nave." The word "nave" is related to the words "navy" or "naval." As Christians, we all belong to the same boat or ship of the Church as we journey along towards Christ.
- The front of the church, where priests, deacons, acolytes, servers, lectors, and other ministers serve in their duties, is called the "sanctuary." On the left and right sides of the sanctuary are side altars dedicated to Our Lady and St. Joseph. On Our Lady's altar lays a book listing the faithful departed of the parish. On the St. Joseph altar rests a book of intentions and prayer petitions for the needs of the faithful, parishioners, and guests who pray in this church.
- The two main focal points of the sanctuary are the Altar of Sacrifice and the Ambo, both of which were recently crafted. The Altar of Sacrifice in the center, flanked by candlesticks, is where the priest offers the Eucharistic sacrifice and leads the holy banquet. Above it is a baldachin, or baldaquin (from Italian: *baldacchino*), original to the church's structure, moved from above the high altar. It is a traditional canopy of state typically placed over an altar or throne, seen in architecture throughout Christendom. The Ambo on the left side (when facing the sanctuary) is the lectern or pulpit where lectors proclaim the Word of God. The stone construction of the Altar of Sacrifice and the Ambo is in harmony with the church's overall design and provides a sense of stability.
- Behind the altar and ambo is the old High Altar and the Tabernacle (the container where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved). The Tabernacle and the ornaments on the sanctuary walls were crafted by Elmer "Billy" Fischer. The Tabernacle is crafted from copper and its moving parts were repurposed from an old clock owned by the parish. The ornaments on the wall depict three Persons of the Holy Trinity, and the fourth on each side depict the complete union of the Persons of the Trinity.

- In the back of the church we see the choir loft. It was fitted for a pipe organ but this dream has yet to be realized. The large stained glass window, catching the eastern sun, was a gift of the Alvin C. Ruxer family, son of the parish and local philanthropist.
- A recent addition to the parish is a statue of St. Theodora Guerin, co-patron of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, located in the southeast corner of the nave. “Mother Theodore,” as she is often known, became the first saint from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis when she was canonized by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006. Responding to a request from the first bishop of Vincennes, Mother Theodore sailed from France to settle in Indiana. She founded a community of religious sisters in Terre Haute whose mission was education and care for the sick. This community is now known as the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods.

## **OTHER INFORMATION**

- Today the parish is the spiritual home of over 230 families as well as many pilgrims and guests associated with Saint Meinrad Archabbey.
- Mass is celebrated here on Sundays at 8:30 AM and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Fridays. Other days of the week, Mass is celebrated with our linked parish of St. Boniface, and at the local Shrine of Monte Cassino. The shrine is named after Monte Cassino, a famous abbey in Italy where St. Benedict is entombed.
- Our parish has always had a Benedictine monk as its pastor, reflecting the monastery’s original mission of serving the People of God in southern Indiana.
- Today, we continue to be a vibrant parish community with a mission to nurture an intentional faith-filled Catholic Community which inspires and empowers all people to follow Jesus Christ. We will continue to "Keep our eyes fixed on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) by living the Word of God, celebrating the sacraments with meaningful worship, and calling one another to prayer, Christian service, and fellowship rooted in the living tradition of a rich German-Catholic heritage.

*Revised December 6, 2016*