

About St. Mary

Saint Mary of the Assumption Catholic Church, located in the heart of historic German Village, beautifully brings together history and tradition with a vibrant faith life. Considered by many to be the landmark building of the area, St. Mary's stands as a symbol of the religious foundation of the German immigrants who settled here during the 1800's.

In 1863, the German-speaking Catholics in south Columbus began working toward a church of their own. Two years later, in 1865, the parish of St. Mary's was founded. A temporary combination of a one-room church, one-room school and second floor rectory was erected at a cost of \$5,000. This building, located behind the present church, is now called the Specht Center after the church's first pastor, Msgr. Francis X. Specht.

In 1866, construction began on St. Mary's, the third Catholic Church in Columbus. Under the direction of architects Blackburn and Koehler, the church was constructed at a cost of \$40,000.00. The building is of German Gothic design and is 62.5 feet wide, 140 feet long, 75 feet high and 60 feet clear. The ceiling vault is unsupported. On November 29, 1868, St. Mary's was dedicated by Bishop Sylvester Rosecrans.

In 1987, church leaders initiated a major renovation to preserve the architecture and historical beauty of the church. This renovation included: completely restoring the ceiling and wall artwork, enlarging the sanctuary area, relocating the ambo, new carpet and wood floor, refinishing the pews, installing new kneelers, establishing a north-side entrance handicapped ramp, new public address system and new Stations of the Cross.

On December 6, 1987, the community celebrated the restoration of St. Mary's in a dedication ceremony, with the Most Reverend James A. Griffin, Bishop of Columbus, presiding.

In 1994, the slate roof of the steeple was replaced. In 1998, air conditioning was added to the church, a gift of St. Mary alumnus Dr. & Mrs. W. W. O'Donnell. In 2002, renovation of the Burkley Center provided office space, restroom facilities, meeting spaces, and an elevator to aid accessibility.

Alcoves

The alcoves in the north and south walls originally housed confessionals. The relics of saints are displayed in the south front alcove of the church. A picture of the Divine Mercy is in the north front alcove. The "pieta" is now located in the south rear alcove. A statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus is in the north rear left alcove.

Altar Area

The altar is at the center of our church, and at the center of our faith. *The altar*, around which the Church is gathered in the celebration of the Eucharist, represents the two aspects of the same mystery: the altar of the sacrifice and the table of the Lord. This is all the more so since the Christian altar is the symbol of Christ himself, present in the midst of the assembly of his faithful, both as the victim offered for our reconciliation and as food from heaven who is giving himself to us. "For what is the altar of Christ if not the image of the Body of Christ?" asks St.

Ambrose. He says elsewhere, "The altar represents the body [of Christ] and the Body of Christ is on the altar." The liturgy expresses this unity of sacrifice and communion in many prayers. The altar table in Christianity has been the focal point of unity, reverence, prayer, and worship

The tabernacle, "tent" holds the Blessed Sacrament. This gilded receptacle is placed in the center of the reredos and reminds us that Jesus Christ is the center of our life. The tabernacle candle is next to the tabernacle. It is lit when the Blessed Sacrament is present.

The reredos is visible behind the main altar, standing 45' high and 20' wide. This "prayer wall" was carved from white walnut by Allard Klooter at a cost of \$2,500. The reredos constructed prior to 1866 is older than St. Mary. It was moved here from another church in Cincinnati. In a time when many in the congregation were illiterate, a reredos or prayer wall provided statues and pictures for the prayerful reflection of the congregation. The reredos in St. Mary's contains three statues all made of carved wood. The center statue is Mary, Mother of God, holding the infant Jesus. She is patroness of the parish under the title *Mary, of the Assumption*. The statue left of center is St. Catherine of Alexandria, patroness of carpenters; on the right is St. Boniface, patron of the German people. Arching over the reredos is the Latin phrase "Ave Maria Gratia Plena," or "Hail Mary, Full of Grace."

St. Mary's ambo, where the Word of the Lord is proclaimed, is today located to the left of the altar. Originally, it was on the right side of the altar and elevated (readers had to climb steps to reach it). The ambo canopy with a statue of the Good Shepherd is still in place.

The Baptismal font with its copper bowl and carved base has been in continuous use since 1868. The Baptistery stands where the original ambo stood.

On either side of the sanctuary are side altars. The one on the right is dedicated to St. Joseph and the one on the left to Mary, Mother of God.

Crucifix

Parishioner Thomas Zinner constructed the near-life-size wooden crucifix hanging from the dome above the apse. Measuring 10 feet by 12 feet, it was first hung in the 1930-1935 period. Four symbols at its extremities represent the four evangelists Matthew (a human head), Mark (a lion), Luke (an ox) and John (an eagle). The crucifix was removed in 1987, refurbished and replaced in its original position in 1998.

Paintings

The ceiling design was originally painted in the 1890's. The ten ceiling panels depict some of the German symbols and invocations of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin.

Conrad Schmitt Studios of New Berlin, Wisconsin repainted the ceiling during the renovation of 1987. Photographs and stencils of the original ceiling were used to reproduce the design, which had been damaged by years of wear and deterioration.

- **NORTH SIDE** - Starting with painting closest to altar and moving back

Thurm Davids/Bitte für uns (Tower of David/Pray for us)

The Tower of David was the strongest tower in the wall of Jerusalem and survived the destruction of the city.

Geistliche Rose/Bitte für uns (Mystical Rose/Pray for us)

Goodness and holiness flower in the saints. Mary, the queen of saints, can be called then the “Mystical Rose” and in her are found the mystical mysteries.

Ehrwürdiges Gefass/Bitte für uns (Vessel of Honor/Pray for us)

Mary a pure virgin held in her womb the Savior of the world.

Sitz der Weisheit/Bitte für uns (Seat of Wisdom/Pray for us)

Mary can be called the “Seat of Wisdom” because wisdom became incarnate in her son Jesus whom she carried in her womb.

Spiegel der Gerechtigkeit/Bitte für uns (Mirror of Justice/Pray for us)

Mary, responsive to the will of God, reflects God’s own holiness. She mirrors the holiness of God. She is the “mirror of justice.”

- SOUTH SIDE - Starting with painting closest to altar and moving back

Elfenbeiner Thurm/Bitte für uns (Tower of Ivory/Pray for us)

The Ivory Tower exists as a sanctuary to help those who are lost find their way home.

Goldenes Haüs/Bitte für uns (House of Gold/Pray for us)

Mary was the temple of God; her womb “housed” the Lord. She is the “House of Gold.”

Arche des Bundes/Bitte für uns (Ark of the Covenant/Pray for us)

The Ark of the Covenant contained a piece of manna, the rod of Aaron, and the tablets of the covenant, tokens of God’s agreement with the people of Israel.

Himmelspforte/Bitte für uns (Gate of Heaven/Pray for us)

Mary, we greet you as the Gate of Heaven because you are the Mother of the Gate of Heaven, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

Morgenstern/Bitte für uns (Morningstar/Pray for us)

Mary is the “Morning Star” that heralds the coming of Jesus, the sun of justice and the dawning of the day of redemption.

Between 1930 and 1935 Gerhart Lemars, a native of Munich, Germany, completed the sanctuary paintings. The ceiling painting of the apse represents the dome of heaven with the eye of God encased in an equilateral triangle, representing the Trinity. The oval symbols near the face of the apse are symbols of salvation. The angels hold instruments of Jesus’ passion and stand over the Latin which translates, ‘Behold the wood of the cross on which hung the salvation of the world...Faithful cross, most noble tree of all.’

The fresco_oil_paintings, which flank either side of the sanctuary above the side altars, were signed and dated 1867 by Wenceslaus Thein and William Lamprecht, Cincinnati, Ohio. The painting on the left depicts the Epiphany of the Lord (the visit of the three kings); the one on the right depicts Jesus, Mary, Joseph and St. Anne in Joseph’s carpenter shop. Their frames are actually part of the paintings.

Organ

The original organ was made by a local builder and was installed in 1875. In 1901, the present organ was built by the William Schuelke Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and installed at a cost of \$5,000. In the 35 stops in the great, swell, and pedal organs, there are 2,250 pipes. It was later electrified, and in 2001, fully restored.

Reconciliation Rooms

The current reconciliation rooms are in the rear of the church. The north reconciliation room was originally the baptismal area, and still has a ceiling painting full of water symbols. Around the painting's edges is inscribed: "*As the heart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after thee, O God*" (Ps.41:2). In the south room was the "pieta," a statue of Mary holding Jesus. This room also contained small vigil candles; whose soot ruined the room's ceiling.

Stained-Glass Windows

St. Mary's Church has a total of 13 stained glass windows. No records are known to exist regarding the stained-glass windows in St. Mary's Church. The original windows were not pictorial. They featured geometric patterns and religious symbols. They were designed to fit gothic styled stone casements which had full-length dividers down the middle. Original windows are still to be found on either of the stairways leading to the choir loft, on either side of the organ, in the sacristy, in the vestibules and over the doors entering the church.

Eight of the original stained glass windows were replaced with painted pictorial stained glass windows. These replacement windows on the north and south walls of the sanctuary each contain five stained glass windows. Four of each of the five on the sanctuary walls are hand painted "stained glass" windows and depict stories from the Bible, the life of Jesus Christ, Mary, the Holy Family and legends of saints (St. Dominic and St. Theresa). The remaining stained-glass windows are made of actual stained glass and are mosaics.

-NORTH WALL-

St. Dominic and Mary *First window near the altar*

This painted "stain glass" window depicts St. Dominic with the rosary and Mary. This window is dedicated to the remembrance of Monsignor Francis Xavier Specht, the first pastor of St. Mary's. (Zur Erinnerung Anden Hochwurd F X Specht, V.G.)

The Annunciation (Announcement!) *Second window*

This painted stained glass window depicts the announcement by the angel Gabriel to Mary that she had been chosen to bear the Son of God who was to be named Jesus. (Luke 2:26-35)
Dedicated to Fr. Benjamin P. Horny first regular assistant at St. Mary's (1886-1903).

The Holy Family *Third window*

This window depicts The Holy Family in a garden being serenaded by a young cherub playing a violin. Music is important to Germans of all ages and the early parishioners of St. Mary's were very German. Donated by Regina & Adam Dunkle

St. Theresa of Lisieux (The Little Flower) Fourth window

This is probably the last replacement of the eight stained glass windows in St. Mary's nave. The date for the replacement is reported to be 1932, which is just seven years after Pope Pius IX canonized St. Theresa in 1925. Donated by the Arthur H. Maeder family – the five angels represent his five daughters – Mary K., Rowena, Alice, Margaret, and Louise.

-SOUTH WALL-

Jesus/ The Sacred Heart Appearing to St. Margaret Mary Alacoque First window near the altar

This window depicts St. Mary Margaret Alacoque kneeling before Jesus who exposes his heart to her. This window also is dedicated to Monsignor Francis Xavier Specht.

The Marriage of Mary and Joseph Second window

This event is not frequently depicted in religious art.

Christ and St. John the Baptist as Children Third window

The scene is idyllic, a pleasant, verdant spot beside a small stream or pool. The blessed boys are attended by three cherubs and by a large, dignified, reclining lamb (Agnus Dei).

Mary of the Immaculate Conception Fourth window

The Immaculate Conception is presented as an icon rather than an event. Mary is in an almond shaped nimbus edged with thirty stars standing on a crescent moon. Under the moon a serpent, with an apple in its mouth, is crushed by Mary, the Immaculate Conception, the new Eve.

Stations of the Cross

St. Mary's 14 approximately 100-year-old "Stations of the Cross" are antique paint-on-copper pictures. They depict incidents in Jesus' last journey. These Stations of the Cross were discovered during the disassembly of another church, and donated to St. Mary's. The pictures were framed by Lou Calderone, using pieces of the oak pews that were removed during St. Mary's renovation. The stations were hung the same day as the 1987 dedication.

Steeple

The steeple, 197 feet above ground level, was built above the tower in 1893 at a cost of \$5,000. The clock was installed in 1894. In 1870, the chime of three bells was hung in the tower at a cost of \$2,200.

On April 24, 1963 a new 500-pound stainless steel cross was placed at the top of the church steeple. It replaced the old weather worn wooden one, which had stood there for 70 years. In 1994, at a cost of \$147,000, the church steeple was restored. New copper flashing was installed, and all the slate was replaced. Pieces of the old steeple slate were distributed as lasting remembrances of St. Mary's.