

*A Walking Tour
and
The History
of*

St. Benedict Catholic Church



A Walking Tour of St. Benedict Catholic Church

Welcome to this Walking Tour of St. Benedict Catholic Church. We are indebted to Msgr. Terry Young and the founding members of our church who have glorified God in teaching us our faith. This Catholic faith has been celebrated for over two thousand years. This tour is an opportunity for us to share and explain our faith to succeeding generations.

The Catholic Church has a long history of using arts to glorify God and to teach our faith. Our newly renovated church building continues this faith tradition.

As you enter the church, directly in front of you is the **baptismal font**. The baptismal font is rightly considered to be one of the most important parts of the church. For it is the place for celebrating baptism, the first sacrament of the New Law, through which those who firmly accept Christ in faith and receive the Spirit of adoption become in name and in fact God's adopted children. Joined with Christ in death and resurrection like his, they become part of his Body. Filled with the anointing of the Spirit, they become God's holy temple and members of the Church, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people."

The **lectern or ambo** must be worthy to serve as the place from which the word of God is proclaimed and must be a striking reminder to the faithful that the table of God's word is always prepared for them.

The altar. The ancient Fathers of the church, meditating on the word of God, did not hesitate to assert that Christ was the victim, priest, and altar of his own sacrifice. For in the Letter to the Hebrews, Christ is presented as the high priest who is also the living altar of the heavenly temple; and in the Book of Revelation our Redeemer appears as a Lamb which has been sacrificed, whose offering is taken by the holy angel to the altar in heaven.

Since Christ, Head and Teacher, is the true altar, his members and disciples are also spiritual altars on which the sacrifice of a holy life is offered to God.

When Christ instituted a memorial of the sacrifice he was about to offer the Father on the altar of the cross in the form of a sacrificial banquet, he made holy the table where the community would come to celebrate their Passover. Therefore the altar is the table of the sacrifice and the banquet in which the priest, representing Christ the Lord, accomplishes what the Lord himself did and what he handed on to his disciples to do in his memory. The Apostle clearly imitates this: "The blessing cup that we bless is a communion with the blood of Christ, and the bread that we break is a communion with the body of Christ. The fact that there is only one loaf means that, though there are many of us, we form a single body because we all have a share in this one loaf."

The Christian altar is by its very nature a table of sacrifice and at the same time a table of the paschal banquet:

- a unique altar on which the sacrifice of the cross is perpetuated in mystery throughout the ages until Christ comes;
- a table at which the Church's children assemble to give thanks to God and receive the body and blood of Christ.

In every church then, the altar "is the center of the thanksgiving perfected in the Eucharist" and the focal point around which the Church's other rites are, in a certain manner arranged. Because it is at the altar that the memorial of the Lord is celebrated and his body and blood given to the people, the Church's writers see in the altar a sign of Christ himself – hence they affirm: "The altar is Christ."

The artwork in the sanctuary reflects some of the basic doctrines of our Catholic faith, the history of the Archdioceses of Atlanta, our unity with Rome, and the spiritual patrons of our parish.

Above the sanctuary hangs the **Crucifix**, the symbol of unconditional love, the motivation for all of God's actions. Of the five stained glass windows behind the altar, the center window represents the **Holy Trinity**. The top symbol represents the **Father** with the Hebrew word "Yahweh: (Hebrew for "I Am Who I Am"). The **Lamb of God** on the "Book with the Seven Seals" from the Book of Revelation represents the Son. The **Holy Spirit** is represented by the descending dove.

The rest of the windows on either side of the Trinity window set forth the coats-of-arms of the Bishop and Archbishops who have served here as well as the Popes who have reigned since the establishment of the Archdiocese of Atlanta in 1956. In addition, there is the coat-of-arms of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulcher of Jerusalem to which most of our bishops and some of the senior clergy belong.

Above the windows there is a frieze on which is written *Ego Sum Lux Mundi Qui Sequitur Me Non Ambulat In Tenebris* ("I Am The Light of the World; Whoever Follows Me Will Not Walk in Darkness"). We write this in Latin because it is part of our heritage. Although most of the inscriptions and memorials around the church are in English, we have some inscriptions in Greek, Latin or Hebrew as an indication of our ancient roots and universality.

The **Tabernacle** is where the **Holy Eucharist** is reserved as a focus of prayer and adoration, and for ministry to the sick. Below this is inscribed *Panis Vitae* ("Bread of Life"). Below the Books of the Gospel is inscribed *Verbum Dei* ("Word of God").

As you look around the nave (the body of the church where the congregation sits), the most marked feature of this area is undoubtedly the ten large windows (8' X 22') which flank this space and the statuary mounted on the pilasters and the niches. The first four windows on each side represent an epoch period in the history of the church. The

windows on each side divided by the balcony have child saints in the cry rooms and teen saints or angels on the balcony level. There is a symbol at the top of each window which represents something of the spirit of that era.

Starting to your right and proceeding clock-wise, the first thing you will see is the statue of the **Sacred Heart of Jesus**. This popular devotion to divine love began in the Middle Ages and was greatly promoted by Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, a seventeenth-century Visitation nun. The inscription under it reads *Fans Misericordiae* ("Fountain of Mercy").

Next in the alcove, you will find the shrine to **Saint Peregrine**, the fourteenth-century Servite priest who was miraculously cured of cancer the night before his foot was to be amputated. He is the patron of cancer sufferers.

Before examining the windows, note the **14 Stations of the Cross** that surround the room. These Stations taken from a nineteenth-century church in Utah help us to reflect on Our Lord's Passion and Death by which we have been saved.

The first nave window depicts holy men and women of our Jewish roots. The symbol at the top is of the Ten Commandments, the tablets given to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Those depicted are:

Abraham: "Our Father in Faith" with whom God made the covenant which established the Hebrews as uniquely his own.

Moses: the Leader of the Exodus experience and recipient of the Ten Commandments which is the basis of the Law.

David: the great King of Israel who established the Jewish Kingdom and contributed to the liturgical worship of Judaism.

Elijah: the great prophet of the eighth-century (B.C.) who cleansed Israel of pagan influence and with whom Jesus conversed during the Transfiguration.

Sarah: a woman of great charm and beauty, the wife of Abraham. In her old age in fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the beginning of his great posterity. Thus, she is the mother of the Jewish people and a spiritual mother to us all.

Rachel: the wife of Jacob and mother of Benjamin, was significant to the process of expanding Jacob's progeny, who would be the foundation of the twelve tribes of Israel. Her tomb near Bethlehem is still a place of pilgrimage for Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

Ruth: a Moabite by birth, after the death of her Hebrew husband chose to accompany her mother-in-law, Naomi, to Bethlehem. Later she married a kinsman of her husband. She was the great-grandmother of David.

Esther: a beautiful Jewish girl in the harem of the Persian king, ultimately became the Queen of Persia. Through her efforts, the Jewish people were saved from annihilation. Her Hebrew name was Hadassah.

The statue between the first and second windows is that of **Saint Joseph**, foster-father of Our Lord, husband of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and Patron of the Universal Church.

The next window honors some of the "Family and Friends of Jesus" drawn from Sacred Scripture and tradition. All members of the Jewish nation, the star of David represents the theme of this window, the familial social life of Jesus. The saints depicted here are:

Saints Elizabeth and Zechariah: the parents of John the Baptist and related to Jesus through Mary.

Saints Martha and Mary: of Bethany, the friends of Jesus with whom he often stayed when he went up to Jerusalem.

Saints Anne and Joachim: the parents of the Blessed Virgin and grandparents of Jesus.

Saint Mary Cleophas: a disciple of Jesus who witnessed the Crucifixion.

Saint Mary Salome: a Galilean follower of Jesus, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John. She was among the women who brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus.

Saint Lazarus: a friend of Jesus and brother of Martha and Mary. It was he whom Jesus raised from the dead.

Saints Simeon and Anna: pious people who witnessed the presentation of Jesus in the temple.

Saint Joanna: the wife of Herod's steward, was healed and became a follower of Jesus. She provided assistance for Jesus and the Apostles. Along with Mary Magdalene and other women, she discovered the empty tomb.

Between the second and third windows is the statue of **Saint Thérèse**, a late nineteenth-century French Carmelite nun, whose "Little Way" of spiritual progress has helped countless souls to experience a deeper relationship with Christ. In 1997 she was the third woman to be declared a Doctor of the Church.

The Third window represents the "Apostle Church," the early church guided by the Apostles. The symbol used is the fish with the Greek word *ichthys* which means fish. The letters of this word are an acronym in Greek for "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." It was one of the earliest symbols of our faith. The saints depicted here are:

Saint Peter: "The Prince of the Apostles," Vicar of Jesus, and first head of the church in Rome.

Saint Paul: "The Apostle to the Gentiles," our greatest missionary, and author of many New Testament epistles.

Saint Mary Magdalene: the first witness to the Resurrection, was a disciple of Jesus and had been converted from a sinful life.

Saints James and John: the sons of Zebedee and Salome, along with Peter, formed an "inner cabinet" among the Apostles. They witnessed the Transfiguration. James was the first of the twelve to be martyred, and John the "Beloved disciple" was an Evangelist and last to die.

Saint Stephen: the "protomartyr" and deacon, died for the faith by being stoned to death at Jerusalem.

Saint Luke: a Greek physician of Antioch and co-worker of Saint Paul, worked closely with him until Saint Paul's martyrdom. Luke then wrote the Third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles.

Saint Mark: a disciple of Jesus, accompanied Saints Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey. Then he became a close associate of Saint Peter whose preaching became the basis of the gospel Saint Mark wrote. According to tradition, Saint Mark brought the faith to Egypt and was martyred there.

Saint Timothy: "the beloved son in faith" of Saint Paul, and Saint Titus, another favorite disciple of his, accompanied the great apostle on his journey. Timothy is associated with the establishment of the church in Ephesus and Titus with the church in Crete. Both died for the faith.

The Statue between the next two windows is that of **Saint Martin de Porres**. Born to a Spanish father and Negro-Native American mother, he served the sick and the poor as a Dominican Brother. He a was a collaborator in ministry with Saint Rose of Lima.

The fourth window shows some of the greatest women and men of faith during the first seven centuries. The symbol representing this "Patristic Period" is the Greek word *Theotokos* which means "God-bearer" or Mother of God. The earliest title of honor for the Blessed Virgin Mary declared at the Council of Ephesus (431), it was proclaimed in defense of the nature of Jesus as both God and man. The saints depicted in this window are:

Saint Augustine of Hippo: the greatest theologian of the Western church, started out as a precocious North African youth and brilliant teacher, hostile to the Catholic faith of his mother, Monica. Through her prayers and the example of the Sainly Bishop Ambrose, he embraced the faith and became an outstanding teacher, preacher, bishop, writer, and

religious community superior. All of western theology, both Catholic and Protestant, has been influenced by him.

Saint Helena: the mother of the emperor Constantine the Great, lent her position, enthusiasm, and faith in the work of building churches in Rome and over the holy places of the Holy Land. She was involved in efforts to find the True Cross, and is often called "Our First Archaeologist."

Saint John Chrysostom: an eloquent preacher and zealous defender of orthodoxy, experienced many hardships as Patriarch of Constantinople. Besides being the most prolific of the Greek Doctors of the church, Saint John is famous for his version of the Greek liturgy which is used in Greek Orthodox churches to this day.

Saint Jerome: first as a student of the classics and then as an assistant to the Pope, was known for his deep faith and great intellect. He spent the final years of his life translating the scriptures into Latin and writing biblical commentaries. He was our first biblical scholar.

Saint Athanasius: often called the "Father of Orthodoxy" and "Defender of Christ's Divinity," fought the Arian heresy from the council of Nicea to his home diocese of Alexandria, Egypt. One of the Greek Doctors of the church, he was a theologian of profound influence on the church.

Saint Perpetua: a young woman of position, and **Saint Felicity,** a slave girl. They, along with other Christians of North Africa, died heroically for the faith in the early years of the third century. They are listed in the First Eucharistic Prayer.

Saint Patrick: a Roman-Briton of the fifth century, was captured as a boy and taken as a slave to Ireland. In time he escaped and returned years later as a missionary bishop to Ireland. He is rightly called "The Apostle of Ireland."

Saint Gregory the Great: our first monk to become Pope, was an outstanding administrator, liturgist, preacher, and writer, yet "he always remained a monk at heart." He did much to establish the papacy as a stabilizing force in society starting in his time and throughout the Middle Ages.

The next window is divided by the balcony. The upper section features the **Archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael,** as well as the **Guardian Angels.** The symbol at the top is a traditional insignia for Saint Gabriel. The lower section depicts the **child Mary** at about age five when tradition says she was presented in the Temple at Jerusalem; **Saint Agnes,** a girl martyr of the fourth century; **Blessed Francis Chakichi,** a Japanese boy of four years, who was martyred along with the rest of his family in the mid-seventeenth century suppression of the faith in Japan.

As you pass in front of the balcony, you will see the symbols of the twelve apostles. Most of these symbols are drawn from biblical references or the manner in which tradition says the apostle died.

The lower level in the cry room shows images of the **Infant Jesus**; **Saint Maria Goretti**, a 12-year-old Italian girl who was killed in 1902 by a man who wanted to rape her because she tried to persuade him not to commit such an act against the will of God; and the **Holy Innocents**, infant and toddler boys killed by Herod at the birth of Christ.

The sixth window is also split by the balcony. The upper section depicts the teenage saints: **Dominic Savio**, who was of such high virtue when he died at age 15 that he was canonized; **Joan of Arc**, who was a great witness of faith and hope to her countrymen, and although falsely accused and executed at 19 for heresy by churchmen, triumphed in time over her detractors; **Agatha Yi**, a 17-year-old Korean girl whose example of faith at her martyrdom inspired adult Christians to profess their faith too, even though it meant certain death; **Dionysius Sebuggwao**, a teenage page at the Ugandan royal court, who was executed for teaching his faith to another boy; and **Teresa of the Andes**, who was noted for her service to the poor and died at 19 years of age after professing religious vows in a Carmelite monastery in Chile. The symbol atop this window is the Book and the Lily representing youth as a time of learning and struggles over innocence.

At the seventh window we return to the chronological history of the faith with representative saints of the Middle Ages. Those depicted are:

Saint Bernard of Clairveaux: entering the newly founded Cistercian Order at 22 years of age along with thirty relatives and friends whom he had persuaded to join with him, quickly became the leader of the Order. He was one of the great teachers, theologians, and moral leaders of the age. He was a key adviser to popes, kings, and councils. The Trappist monks at Conyers, Georgia are the spiritual heirs of Saint Bernard.

Saint Gertrude the Great: as Abbess of the Benedictine monastery at Helfta, was an outstanding administrator, spiritual guide, mystical writer, and scholar. She was an early promoter of devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Saints Cyril and Methodius: known as the "Apostles of the Slavs," were brothers who preached the faith to Slavic peoples, developed the Cyrillic alphabet, and translated the Bible and liturgy into Slavonic.

Saint Francis: born into a merchant family, underwent a conversion of life and embraced a life of poverty, prayer, and preaching the Gospel. He was ordained a deacon and founded a religious community.

Saint Dominic: as an Augustinian canon, gathered a group of men to preach in France against the Albigensian heresy. This laid the foundation for both the male and female branches of the Order of the Preachers or "Dominican Order." His community did much to popularize the rosary.

Saint Thomas Aquinas: called the "Angelic Doctor," was a humble and prayerful Dominican friar who became the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages. His writings had a profound effect on Catholic thought and education into the twentieth century.

Saint Catherine of Siena: as a lay Dominican tertiary living at home, led a prayerful life and worked among the poor. She was a spiritual director to the clergy and laity and did much to bring the papacy back from Avignon to Rome. She was a tireless worker for Church unity. Her writings in mystical theology are the basis of her being declared "Doctor of the Church" in 1970.

Saint Hildegard: a Benedictine nun of great personal sanctity and intellect, was a mystic, poet, physician, and political moralist. She rebuked popes and princes, bishops and laity with complete fearlessness and unerring justice. She wrote works on medicine, natural history, and mystical theology.

The symbol representing this age is the sword, symbolizing courage, and the Latin word *Credo* ("I believe") which symbolizes faith. Both of these virtues shaped the life and culture of Medieval Europe.

The statue between windows seven and eight is that of **Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton**, a nineteenth century mother and widow who converted to Catholicism and founded the first American community of women religious. She is the first American-born person to be canonized.

The eighth window deals with the Counter-Reformation. This was a time of great faith and great suffering, a time of great spiritual progress and great violence. The symbol at the top, the keys and swords, are an insignia of Saints Peter and Paul. Yet, in this we can also see the swords as a symbol of strength and the keys as a symbol of authority. This was a time of struggle over authority. Who was to interpret the Gospel? Who would carry on the ministry of the Apostles?

The saints in this window are men and women of faith tested by the struggles of external revolution and internal reform. Those we have selected as representative of the age are:

Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a soldier who, while recovering from war wounds, underwent a spiritual conversion. He developed a program of spiritual formation and a rule of life that became the foundation of the Society of Jesus. From thence the Jesuits became a force in reforming the Church from within and refuting the Protestant Reformers.

Saint Teresa of Avila: With her establishment of a reformed or "discalced" Carmelite convent at Avila, she established contemplative prayer as an important part of the Church's reform and renewal in the sixteenth century. Along with Saint John of the Cross, the leader of reform in the male branch of the order, she wrote on mystical theology and prayer. Both are "Doctors of the Church."

Saint Thomas More: a prominent lawyer, politician, and government leader, who was executed for refusing to recognize Henry VIII as a supreme head of the church in England. He refused to compromise his conscience for either political preferment or personal safety.

Saint Charles Borromeo: appointed Archbishop of Milan and a Cardinal at age 22 by his uncle Pius IV, yet proved to be a truly outstanding bishop. He did much to bring about the reforming work of the Council of Trent and founded the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine for the instruction of children.

Saints Vincent de Paul and Louise de Marillac: collaborators who responded to the plight of the poor and destitute. Vincent founded the Congregation of the Mission to preach the Gospel to the poor, and with Louise he founded the Daughters of Charity to meet the physical as well as spiritual needs of the poor.

Saint Francis de Sales: one of the greatest pastoral figures in the history of the Church who brought Calvinists back to the Church, reformed the clergy, wrote spiritual books (Introduction to the Devout Life is a classic), and preached with great effect. During his lifetime his people called him "The Gentle Christ of Geneva." With his guidance Saint Jane Frances, a widow from the nobility, founded the Order of the Visitation, a contemplative community, with a foundation in Snellville, Georgia.

Saint Margaret Clitherow: a convert to the faith during the suppression of the Church in England, who spent two years in prison for this offense. Upon release she hid priests in her home and had Mass celebrated there. She was arrested, tried, and pressed to death. She was a lively, witty young woman of thirty. She is one of the "Forty Martyrs of England and Wales."

Saint Stanislaus Kostka: the son of a senator, who joined the Jesuits over the protests of his family. He died as a Jesuit novice at 18 years of age and was canonized because of his extraordinary and exemplary virtue.

The next statue is of **Saint Anthony of Padua**, an eloquent Franciscan friar of the thirteenth century, who was famous for his presentation and defense of the Faith. The Christ Child in his arms refers to a vision that he had.

The next window depicts some of the representative saints in the Church's great missionary / expansion period during the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. They are:

Saint Rose of Lima: like Saint Catherine of Siena, was a Dominican tertiary who lived at home and was blessed with mystical gifts. A friend of Martin de Porres, together they cared for the poor. She was the first canonized saint of the Americas.

Saint John Neumann: born in Bohemia and came to the United States after his seminary studies. After ordination he joined the Redemptorists. Following several years of

missionary work in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland, he was appointed the fourth Bishop of Philadelphia where He was noted for his humility and pastoral zeal. He was a pioneer in Catholic education, and did much to promote a love for the Holy Eucharist.

Saint Isaac Jogues: born in France, joined the Jesuits and came to Canada to work among Native Americans. He was captured and tortured by Mohawks, but escaped. He returned to work among the indigenous peoples and was killed by the Iroquois. He, along with seven other Jesuits, are the "North American Martyrs."

Saint Sharbel Makhlof: born in northern Lebanon and became a Maronite Antonine monk as a young man. He was ordained and then became a hermit. Renowned for his holiness of life and wise counsel, he died in 1898.

Saint Francis Xavier: a fellow Spaniard and coworker with Saint Ignatius Loyola, who is considered the second greatest missionary in the Church's history, after Saint Paul. Saint Francis led Jesuit missions to India, Ceylon, Malaya, Japan, and other areas of the Far East. He died at 46 years of age as he was about to enter China.

Saint Rose-Philippine Duchesne: a French missionary of the Society of the Sacred Heart, who founded missions in the Mississippi Valley and Rocky Mountain regions.

Blessed Damien of Molokai: a Belgian missionary in the latter half of the 19th century, who came to the Hawaiian Islands and spent many years caring for the lepers who had been transported to Molokai by the government. He contracted the disease himself and died at 49 years of age after a long, painful illness.

Saint Lorenzo Ruiz: the first Filipino saint who was a lay missionary in Japan and was martyred in Nagasaki in the 1630s along with other missionaries and Japanese Catholics.

The symbol we have chosen to represent this age is the symbol of the Immaculate Conception, a doctrine that was declared an article of faith in 1854. This reminds us that the place of Mary in God's plan of salvation was a part of the faith that missionaries carried to every part of the earth.

The statue between the last two windows is that of **Saint Monica**. The wife of a non-believing husband and a brilliant, but rebellious son, she suffered much and prayed much to bring about their conversion. Her son, Saint Augustine of Hippo, became a great bishop and theologian.

The tenth and final window in the nave depicts some holy men and women of this century. They once again remind us that holiness is possible in every age and under all sorts of circumstances. These saints and beatified are:

Saint Maximilian Kolbe: a Polish Conventual Franciscan missionary and pioneer in Catholic publishing. Starting as a student, Saint Maximilian began his evangelization

among the laity with a program noted for a strong Marian emphasis. He gave his life at Auschwitz to save the life of another prisoner.

Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini: founded a religious order in Italy in 1889, was the first United States citizen to be canonized. She brought her Sisters to the United States to work among Italian immigrants. She died in Chicago in 1917 and is buried there.

Saint Edith Stein: a German-born philosopher and teacher, who converted to Catholicism from Judaism in 1922. Eleven years later she entered the Carmel of Cologne. After the rise of Nazism, she went to the Carmelite house in Echt, the Netherlands, in order to protect her Sisters from persecution. After the German occupation of that country, she was arrested and died at Auschwitz in 1942.

Blessed Titus Brandsma: a Dutch Carmelite and philosopher who was arrested for his vigorous attacks on Nazi crimes and philosophy. He died at Dachau in 1942.

Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity: a French Carmelite and contemporary of Saint Therese, who entered the Carmel of Dijon already advanced in the spiritual life at 21 years old. She was blessed with a profound sense of the indwelling of God and died at 26 years of age after a painful illness which she bore with great faith and courage.

Blessed Pier Giorgio Frassati: born into an affluent family in Turin, Italy, and was an engineering student active in various Catholic activities while at university, including the Saint Vincent de Paul Society. While the university community had a strong anti-clerical ethos, Pier lived openly as a Catholic committed to chastity and spirituality. He was noted for his attention to biblical studies and social issues. He died of polio at age 24.

Blessed Alphonsa Mattahupadathus: the first Indian to be beatified, and was of the Syro-Malabar rite. After a long illness which she bore heroically, she died in 1946 at 36 years of age.

Saint Miguel Febres Cordero: the first Ecuadoran de la Salle Brother. A gifted teacher, loved by his students, Saint Miguel was also a gifted poet and writer. He was noted for his great sense of humor and intense prayer life. He died in 1910 and was canonized in 1934.

The symbol for this period is the Chalice and the Book which reminds us of the Word and Sacraments which were at the center of the Church's reforms at the Second Vatican Council.

Next in the alcove to the left of the sanctuary you will find a little shrine in honor of **Saint Jude**, the popular "Patron Saint of Lost Causes."

Finally, you arrive at the shrine to the **Blessed Virgin Mary**. In this statue, Mary is represented in her quintessential role as one who presents Christ Our Savior to the world.

Under the statue is inscribed *Mater Dei* ("Mother of God"), her most ancient title of honor.

In our vestibule there are nine icons within three panels. The panel in the center has icons of **Our Lord Jesus Christ** with the **Blessed Virgin Mary** and **Saint John the Baptist**. This is the most ancient and traditional grouping in Christian art and is known as the "Desis." The next grouping has icons of **Saint Benedict**, his twin sister **Saint Scholastica**, and **Saint Pius X**, secondary patron of our Archdiocese. The last of these panels has icons of the **Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha** the "Lily of the Mohawks," **Saint Katherine Drexel**, SBS, and **Saint Kizito**, a teenage martyr of Uganda.

Mother Drexel was a missionary in Georgia and founded Our Lady of Lourdes School in Atlanta in 1912. Her order, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, was founded to teach African-American and Native-American children. Thus, in this panel we represent not only her ministry, but also the three races that built up this state starting in the colonial period.

As you have surveyed our church and vestibule, we hope that you have come to appreciate the building in traditional Catholic terms: a place of personal and community prayer, a place of celebration and devotion, a place of learning about and reflecting on the great mysteries of our faith and the marvelous ways that God has acted in the lives of women and men of faith. Thus inspired, we hope that you will visit the church often and see it as a place which is at once uniquely your own and a place where God can be encountered.

The History of St. Benedict Catholic Church

1987: The parish was established by the Archdiocese of Atlanta in June 1987 under the leadership of its founding pastor, Reverend Joseph L. Peacock. The Archdiocese purchased 13.5 acres of hilltop property on Parsons Road in North Fulton County, and thereafter sent Father Peacock to establish a parish community from the burgeoning neighborhoods in the area. A group of 10 founding families began Sunday Mass at Epiphany Byzantine Catholic Church in Roswell. It was not long before a school of religious education was established and began to meet at Northminster Presbyterian Church, Roswell. Expansive growth soon occasioned the need for a Saturday Vigil Mass which began to be held at Pleasant Hill Presbyterian Church, Duluth. The parish was never static and continued to experience exponential growth.

1990: The first building of the parish facilities, located at the Parsons Road site, now the Parish Life Center and Administrative Wing, was dedicated to the Glory of God by the Most Reverend James P. Lyke, OFM, PhD., the fourth Archbishop of Atlanta on August 14, 1990. The spacious new building offered a seating capacity for more than 500 individuals, parish offices, a nursery, a 2,000 square foot gathering space and ten classrooms for the School of Religion.

1992: Father Peacock retired from the pastorate in September 1992. He was succeeded as pastor by Reverend Terry Young, who was assisted by Rev. Ronald J. Fuchs, Rev. Gregory D. Goolsby and Rev. Stewart Wilbur. Full-time ministers of Music, Elementary Religious Education, Youth Ministry and Adult Education & Formation had been added to the parish staff between 1992 and 1994 to assist the almost 9,000 members of the parish family.

1994-1995: Father Terry Young became a Monsignor in December of 1994. Father Stewart Wilbur was assigned to the parish in order to open a mission in northwest Gwinnett County. This was meant to serve the growing needs of this area, and provide a more convenient alternative to an already over crowded St. Benedict. At Monsignor Young's request it was named in honor of Saint Monica. In March 1995, the parish began an extensive capital funds campaign to finance construction of a permanent church that would seat at least 1,200 people. This was followed by the acquisition of 6.9 acres to the north of the church property later that year. Almost immediately part of this land was used to construct 150 more parking spaces. A house on the land was renovated for more office space and the Adult Formation Program. The financial drive for the new church began in 1995 and construction began in 1996.

1996-1997: In 1996 adjoining land was purchased in order to provide a buffer to meet changed county requirements. A house on this land was renovated into a rectory. In June of 1996, Reverend Daniel J. Fleming was assigned to the parish as a parochial vicar, Father Wilbur was transferred, and Father Goolsby moved over to the Mission. Under the leadership of Monsignor Young, St. Benedict grew to 3,700 families by the fall of 1997. The School of Religion included more than 2,000 children in pre-school through senior

high school. The new church was completed as well as space in the undercroft for twelve new classrooms.

1998: The second building of the parish facilities was the main Church, dedicated to the Glory of God by the Most Reverend John F. Donoghue, D.D., the fifth Archbishop of Atlanta on February 1, 1998. In the summer of 1998 work began on the "old school of religion/pre-school" area to provide more office space for the staff as well as the more than 500 volunteers who work with various ministries and religious education facilities. The temporary worship space became a Parish Life Center, named in honor of our founding pastor, Father Joseph L. Peacock.

1998-2003: Rev. Hugh Marren became the third pastor of St. Benedict. During his pastorship a \$7.2 million project was proposed to encompass a gymnasium, preschool, classrooms and offices. Rev. Marren adopted a policy of not borrowing any finances from the Archdiocese to cover such a huge project. \$1.6 million was pledged and \$1.2 million of this amount was collected. Sadly, it became apparent that this project could not be realized for financial reasons. In the meantime, Rev. Marren did what he knows best... he managed to pay off the existing mortgage on the main church. The burning of the debt was a tremendous celebration for the people of St. Benedict who demonstrated their loyalty and fidelity to their faith. The first Hispanic Mass at St. Benedict took place in June of 1998 and the first group of Hispanic First Holy Communion were celebrated on May 4, 2002. Our Hispanic ministry flourished under the guidance of Fr. Guillermo, Fr. Abel, Fr. Fernando and Fr. Carlos-Mario. Fr. Marren was assisted by Rev. Simon Assamoah, Rev. Michael Kingery, Rev. Randy Maddox, Rev. Dan Rogaczewski, Rev. Jamie Barona, Rev. Guillermo Cordoba and Rev. Maduakor Casimir. Fr. Hugh M. Marren became a Monsignor on May 10, 2001.

2004: Fr. Paul Flood became the fourth pastor of St. Benedict. Knowing that the above project could not be financially realized, Fr. Paul and a team of parishioners studied the needs of the parish and decided to use the \$1.2 million (already in the bank) as seed monies for future developments.

2007: The third building of the parish facilities, which comprised of twelve additional classrooms and an Adoration Chapel, was dedicated to the Glory of God by the Most Reverend John F. Donoghue, D.D., Archbishop Emeritus on October 7, 2007. Archbishop Donoghue believed that the many and varied Adoration Chapels erected throughout the Archdiocese of Atlanta was the reason for our very successful Vocation program... he was right! Fr. Flood has been assisted throughout his tenure by Rev. Jaime Barona, Rev. Guillermo Cordoba, Rev. Maduakor Casimir, Rev. Stephen Lyness, Rev. Abel Guerero, Rev. Joseph Mullakkara, Rev. Fernando Ruge, Rev. Carlos-Mario Bustamante, Rev. Carlos Quintero, Rev. Randy Maddox and most recently Rev. Charles Okeke.

2010: Very soon after the above project, Fr. Paul Flood and parishioners embarked upon the fourth building of the parish facilities during a severe economic downturn. Putting their trust in the Lord Jesus, the people of St. Benedict jumped up to the plate and

demonstrated their faith once more. The best part of three acres was discovered behind the 'Blue' House. There was a real need to have an outdoor area where parishioners, youth and preschoolers could gather for picnics and other events. The site was explored and developed to become what is now known as "Taylor Lodge" in honor of Jimmy and Alice Taylor... long time parishioners of St. Benedict.

This part of our plan consists of a large function room, kitchen, surrounded by a porch and outdoor stage area. The basement of this building consists of two meeting rooms for our dedicated and very active Knights of Columbus and Women's Guild. The pavilion with picnic tables provides tremendous shade from the hot summers of Georgia! Taylor Lodge has given us the opportunity to gather as family for many and varied parish functions which could never have been possible... Parish Picnics, Taste of St. Benedict's, Banks and Shane Concerts, Movie Nights, to name a few. These facilities are also available for rent. Our new Outdoor Stations of the Cross overlook our beautiful complex and remind us that we have a lot to be thankful for. The fourth building of the parish facilities, named Taylor Lodge, was dedicated to the Glory of God by the Most Reverend Archbishop Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta on a very rainy September 26, 2010.

Thanks to the generosity of our parishioners the above two projects, namely the Classrooms & Adoration Chapel and Taylor Lodge, were erected and became financially debt free over a period of six years.

2012: June 11, 2012 marks the 25th Anniversary of the founding of the parish. However, it was decided to celebrate this important milestone in the month of September when the weather would be cooler, children would be back at school, and more importantly, it allowed us the much needed time to give our church a makeover and attend to various maintenance issues. For this reason, the main church was closed for construction and masses were held in the Parish Life Center and Taylor Lodge.

Some years ago we dedicated a statue of St. Benedict in the front of our church. Due to construction at that time, we had to remove several bricks that were dedicated to honor or remember a loved one. Thankfully with the erection of our Respect Life Garden, we were able to relocate these bricks in a very suitable and sacred space. This garden is open daily and encourages parishioners, family and friends to sit and meditate on the Gift of Life.

While the good Lord has blessed us with these marvelous facilities, it is the faith, dedication and fidelity of our founding parishioners and those who have followed, who have left a Legacy of Faith for future generations to enjoy. We are the recipients of the sacrifices of those who have gone before us. For this, we are humbly grateful and we pray that the good Lord will see us celebrate our 50th Golden Jubilee. The fifth building of the parish facilities, the 25th Anniversary Renovation of the Church, was dedicated to the Glory of God, by the Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, Archbishop of Atlanta on September 15, 2012.