

Immaculate Heart of Mary

CATHOLIC CHURCH





Introduction

When the parish of St. Joseph's in Hays had grown to approximately 1600 families, it became necessary for another Catholic church in the city. In 1952, Rev. Alfred Carney, OFM Cap., then pastor of St. Joseph's parish, received canonical permission to erect a church/school complex in "east" Hays. Construction began in 1953 on land donated by the Peter C. Dechant family. The cornerstone was laid on October 4th, 1953 by Bishop Frank A. Thill.

The auditorium was designed to seat 750 people and was to be used as a "temporary church" until a church and rectory could be built. Over 50 years later, on December 23rd, 2007, the building of a new church finally began.

The new church was dedicated on March 14th, 2010 with Bishop Paul S. Coakley presiding.

In August of 2023, the project to complete the church basement began, providing a parish hall, large kitchen, and meeting rooms for the parish. It was completed in April of 2024. In September of 2024, the project to complete the upstairs of the church began, being completed in November of 2024.

The church combines contemporary architecture with Romanesque art to create a vision that is truly unique and traditional, beautiful and edifying.



LOOKING UP

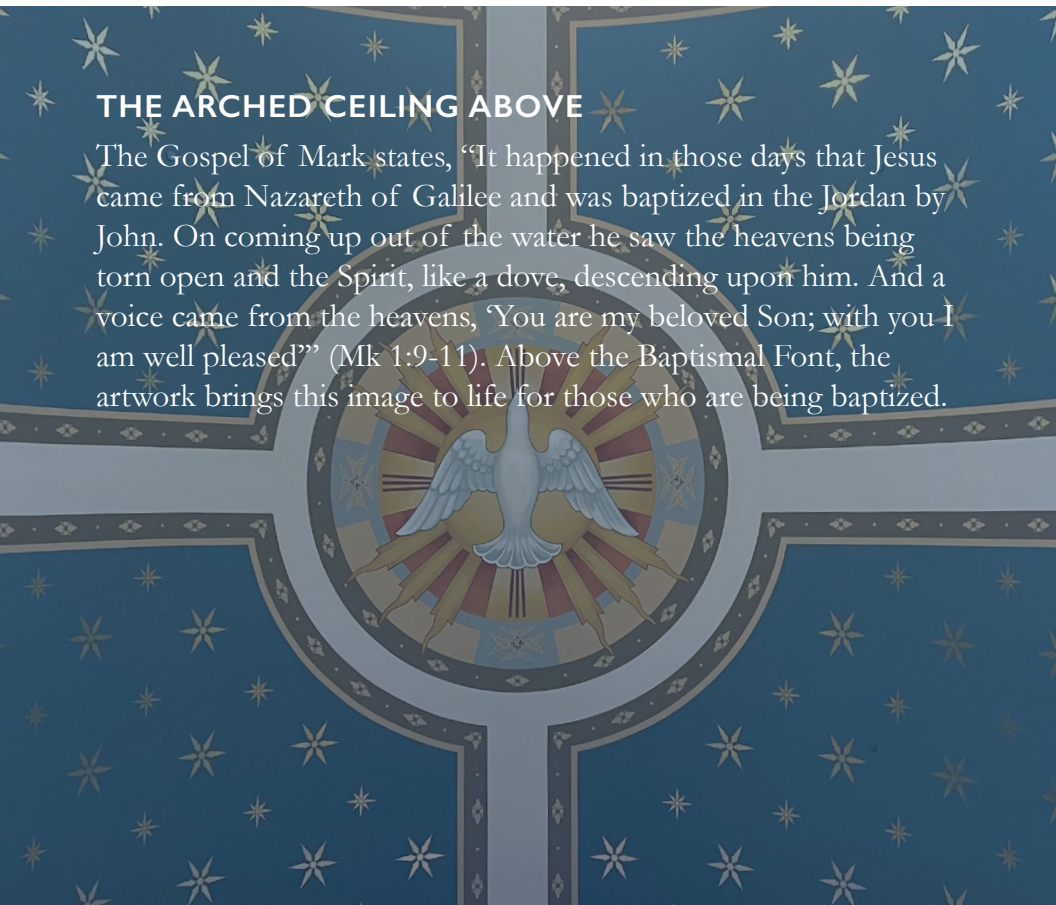
As one enters the church, the natural reaction is to look up, whether that is at the ceiling, towards the stars, or towards the dome with the image of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. For many churches, directing one's gaze in this direction is intentional – it compels the person to look up towards Heaven and towards God.

THE FONT

The symbols incorporated in the Baptismal Font, as well as all that surrounds it, portray how the Sacrament of Baptism is linked with the saving work of Christ. The stonework of the font is meant to match the altar, creating a connection with Baptism and how it is to lead one ultimately to the altar of God. The 8-sided font points to the tradition of how Jesus rose from the dead on the 8th day (because of the Resurrection, Jesus has made the 1st day of the week also considered the 8th day of the week, and it is on this 8th day that Jesus has restored all of creation to God). The engraved ☩ symbol is a symbol for Christ, while the bordering laurel wreath echoes Christ's victoriousness over death (these symbols will be found on the upper back walls of the church as well).

THE ARCHED CEILING ABOVE

The Gospel of Mark states, "It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, 'You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased'" (Mk 1:9-11). Above the Baptismal Font, the artwork brings this image to life for those who are being baptized.





STENCILING AND THE SURROUNDING WALLS

The surrounding walls reiterate the connection of Baptism with Resurrection and salvation. Behind the font, on the back wall, the Resurrected Jesus is displayed with the title “Emmanuel.” Stenciling in churches often are composed of floral work, which is meant to symbolize a return to the Garden of Paradise (i.e. Eden, or Heaven). Certain stenciling will contain additional meanings to this as well. Behind the Resurrected Jesus, and in other places of the church, is a heart pattern in honor of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, with palm branches, once again referencing the palm branches of the trees of Paradise. Surrounding the Resurrected Jesus is a gold pattern of a cross (reminding us of the Cross of Christ), with hearts in the corner (in homage to the Immaculate Heart of Mary), with the 3-leafed fleur-de-lis inside the hearts (a symbol of the Trinity). Around the font, the acanthus scroll stenciling has often been a symbol of everlasting life. The *IHS* lettering is another symbol of Christ, as these are the first 3 letters of Jesus’ name in Latin.





THE BACK STATUES

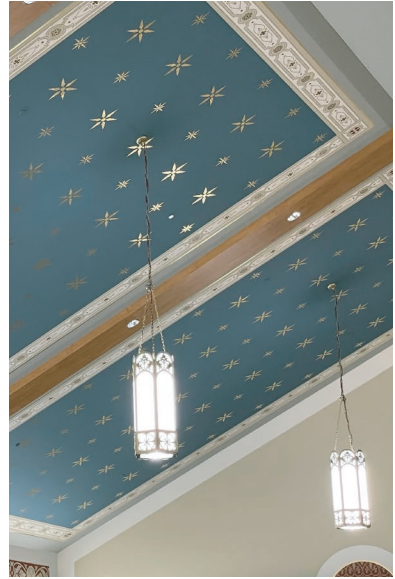
In the back of the church are 4 statues. From left to right is Our Lady of Guadalupe, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. Francis of Assisi, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus.



Our Lady of Guadalupe and the Sacred Heart of Jesus were present prior to the church painting. St. Elizabeth Ann Seton was selected because she is one of the Saints from the United States who particularly was devoted to Catholic Education. St. Francis of Assisi is one of the patrons of the Salina diocese, and also pays homage to the Franciscan Capuchins who have had a strong history in Ellis county and began Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish.

THE CEILING AND STARS

The ceiling portrays the celestial stars. These stars, made of 23 karat gold leaf foil, once again compel the person to look up towards the heavens. The portions of ceiling are separated by faux wooden beams. Wooden elements on church ceilings have often been used to depict a ship-like image, showing that the Church is the Barque of Peter.



THE CEILING IMAGES

The upper ceiling is inspired by the ceiling of St. Michael's in Hildesheim, Germany. The images are scenes of the life of Mary based on the liturgical calendar. They are as follows:

- 1) Immaculate Conception of Mary (*December 8th*)
- 2) Birth of Mary (*September 8th*)
- 3) Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary (*November 21st*)
- 4) Annunciation (*March 25th*)
- 5) Visitation (*May 31st*)
- 6) Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God/Nativity (*January 1st*)
- 7) Presentation of the Lord (*February 2nd*)
- 8) Holy Family (*Sunday after Christmas*)
- 9) Crucifixion (*Good Friday*)
- 10) Mary with the Apostles at Pentecost (*50 days after Easter*)
- 11) Assumption (*August 15th*)
- 12) Queenship of Mary/Coronation (*August 22nd*)



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10



11



12



THE LIGHTING

Prior to the painting the church only had uplighting; now, downlighting and pendant lighting has been added. The pendant lights once again contain elements of floral work, often in the shape of a Marian “M.” Canned down-lighting has more modernly been inspired by the Chapel of the Shepherds Field near Bethlehem. It is meant to give the impression of star light providing illumination for the church.

TITLES AND WINDOWS

The lower stained-glass windows were fabricated during the original construction of the church; they depict the mysteries of the rosary, the 4 Gospel writers, and the archangels Michael and Gabriel.



Around the upper perimeter are titles of Mary from the Litany of Loretto. The new clearstory stained-glass windows each depict a symbolic image of Mary. They are as follows:

SOUTH SIDE

1 - Marian Letter (*"M" with Cross*)



2 - Gate of Heaven

3 - Mystical Rose

4 - Star of the Sea

5 - Fountain of Mercy/Wisdom

6 - Iris: *Symbol of Mary's Sorrow*

7 - Seat of Wisdom/Throne of Glory



8 - Burning Bush

9 - Columbine: *Symbol of Mary's*

Overshadowing/Indwelling, Divine Spouse

10 - House of Gold

NORTH SIDE

1 - Marian Letter (*curved "M" with crown*)



2 - Ivory Tower

3 - Lily: *Symbol of Purity*

4 - Fruitful Vine

5 - Root of Jesse

6 - Periwinkle: *Symbol of "Full of Grace"*

7 - Ark of the Covenant



8 - Moon

9 - Lady's Slipper: *Symbol of Mary's*
Visitation

10 - Archetype of the Church



ARCHES

Rounded arch forms are a key architectural feature of the Romanesque style. These are used throughout the church interior to highlight objects and symbols of liturgical significance. These also divide wall space, creating structure and rhythm in a practical sense. This can be seen utilized particularly in the back of the church around the Resurrected Jesus, as well as in the front of the church around the Saint statues, crucifix, and tabernacle.

FRONT STATUES

Four statues were added to the front of the church. In the center, you will find the Immaculate Heart of Mary and St. Joseph with the child Jesus. This Joseph statue was chosen in particular, as it provides an image relatable to children (the child Jesus), as well as one that speaks to the sanctity of fatherhood.

The Saint on the far left is Saint Francis Cabrini. She was the first American Saint, but she was also an immigrant from Italy, making her relatable to the immigrant culture of Ellis county and the United States. The Saint to the far right is St. Isidore, the patron Saint of farmers.



THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

In the sanctuary dome, the Immaculate Heart of Mary is depicted with her title above. She is in Heaven, looking down upon the altar of Christ; in this way, she is seen participating in the Sacred Liturgy of the Mass. Her finger points to her Immaculate Heart, which is emitting light that can even be seen reflecting off of her robe. It is pierced by a sword, fulfilling Simeon's prophecy, "And you yourself a sword will pierce" (Lk 2:35). Her heart is encircled with roses, symbolizing her purity. The flames represent her great love of Jesus, as well as for all people. She is surrounded by twelve stars, as she is portrayed in the book of Revelation (Rev 12:1). The gold halo behind her not only shows her being clothed in the sun (as in the book of Revelation), but has often been used in images of the Immaculate Conception as well. The silver rays emphasize her grandeur and holiness; 7 of these rays are longer and thicker than the others, symbolizing the 7 sorrows of Mary. She is stepping upon the head of the serpent, showing her own victory over the devil and being the first to share in the ultimate victory of Christ over sin and death. She stands upon the moon (once again, from the book of Revelation), and upon the earth (as she is Queen of Heaven and Earth).





THE CRUCIFIX AND TABERNACLE

The Crucifix is situated within a large arched panel with the fleur-de-lis stencil pattern behind. This panel frames the Tabernacle alcove of analogous form. Scrolling forms, combining flowering plants with grape vines and acanthus leaves adorn this space. These symbols also emphasize a Eucharistic theme (coming from the “fruit of the vine”). Sparrows have associations with Calvary in the historic Catholic bestiaries. This also points to the parable of the mustard seed (Mt 13:31-32). Finally, the angel statues have been moved to wall-mounted pedestals at either side of the Tabernacle as they adore the true presence of Christ. These are beneath the Alpha and Omega symbols in each corresponding panel.

Thank You

The *Immaculate Heart of Mary* parish community hopes your visit to our beautiful church was a prayerful and grace-filled experience. We also hope your visit inspires a deep appreciation for all those that inspired, sacrificed, and persevered to make this happen.

With heartfelt gratitude we thank the Volga German Catholics and the earliest settlers of Ellis county that together formed a vibrant Catholic community, that in spite of many hardships never wavered in their faith, laying the foundation for what has finally come to fruition.

We thank every Pastor, Parochial Vicar, Deacon, and Religious that has served the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish community since its inception in 1952, providing us the Sacraments and teaching us and guiding us in the faith, holding us together as a community of faith.

We thank those that sacrificially gave of their time, talent, and treasure to bring about the completion of a vision that first took shape some 72 years ago.

Most importantly, we pray that all know our toils were for the greater glory of God, and that all who set foot inside these doors come to know a greater love for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!



Immaculate Heart *of* Mary

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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