

Our Lady, Queen of the Most Holy Cathedral - Toledo, Ohio

“Rosary Cathedral is not only a treasure house of art. It is a school of history and religion as well. Upon a massive background of bold and telling grandeur there is a laid a wealth of pictorial and symbolic detail, the full beauty and meaning of which cannot be won at a glance or in one visit. “

Msgr. Anthony J. Dean

Soon after the Diocese of Toledo was established in 1911, Bishop Samuel Stritch began planning for a new cathedral. The Cathedral Chapel Parish was established in 1915 and a chancery and school was built on the corner of Collingwood Boulevard and Islington Street. Plans for a Spanish Plateresque style building were prepared by architect William Perry of Combs, Perry, & McMillen (Pittsburg, PA). Ground was broken in 1925 and the building was structurally complete in 1931. Bishop Stritch was elevated to Archbishop of Milwaukee in 1930 and Bishop Karl J. Alter oversaw the interior decoration of the cathedral and dedicated it in October, 1940. The final cost of the cathedral when dedicated was \$3,250,000.00

The exterior of the cathedral is covered with seam-faced Massachusetts granite and Indiana limestone. It is ornately decorated with an array of carved statuary and symbols. An intricately carved frieze extends along the sides of the building. Just below are fifty bas-relief panels depicting the history of the Church from ancient times to early 20th century Toledo, Ohio. The stone carving inside and out was executed by Frank Aretz. The cathedral is 285 feet long and 215 feet wide. The bell towers reach 96 feet high and each contain a bell cast in the famed Gillett & Johnston Foundry of Croydon, England. The large main doors of European cypress can be rolled into wall pockets to create a grand entrance on special occasions.

The large **FRONT DOORS (1)** are paneled European cypress, as are all the exterior doors, and decorated with stained glass and bronze rosettes. The entire front door can be rolled into the walls for processions on significant occasions.

As one enters the cathedral a rich array of artwork greets the eye. The **CEILING FRESCOES (3)**, 83 feet above the nave floor, were designed by Felix Lieftuchter, a native of Cincinnati, Ohio and a well-known ecclesial artist of the early 20th century. Arching over the rose window, the *Creatio Mundi* mural depicts the Creation as related in the book of Genesis. The seven bays over the nave contain images of 28 Old Testament prophets and kings. Continuing above the sanctuary is the sacrifice of Jesus that established the New Testament. Old Testament references are on either side, Melchizedech on the left and Abraham on the right. The apse depicts the church triumphant as described in the Book of Revelation.

The **SIDE AISLE CEILING FRESCOES** depict the mysteries of the Rosary and were painted by Jan de Rosen. Each panel is divided and displays the New Testament event and a related Old Testament event. The fifteenth mystery, Mary crowned as Queen of Heaven, is prominently depicted in the apse ceiling above the baldachino.

The **STAINED GLASS WINDOWS** are made of Norman Slab and English Antique Glass and were crafted by the Angelo Pitassi Studio of Pittsburgh, PA. The large panels depict the various “orders” of the church, for example St. Peter- the Papacy; St. Vincent de Paul – Priesthood; St. Roch – the Laity; St. Joseph – Workers, etc. The small windows below depict patron saints of European nations and the continents of North and South American and Asia. The “Children’s Rose Window” **(2)** above the balcony was donated by the children of the Diocese through a “penny campaign” that raised \$25,000.00. An image of Mary and Jesus is in the center with scenes from the life of Mary depicted in the lancets radiating from the center. Just below the window is a mural depicting the *Dormition of Mary*.

The interior walls are covered with Jeanne d’Arc limestone quarried in Domremy France, the birthplace of St. Joan of Arc. Above the north side aisle door is a mural depicting the Battle of Lepanto (1571) which resulted in a naval victory over the Turks. Over the south side aisle door is depicted the Battle of Temesvar (1776). Both these victories were attributed to the intercession of Mary through the recitation of the Rosary. Lining the nave below the large windows are **SHIELDS** that bear the titles of shrines dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary throughout the world.

The **ALTAR (9)** is crafted of cream colored Florida marble. The base is decorated with carved trefoil arches that incorporate three interlocking rings symbolic of the Trinity. It originally was located beneath the baldachino and was moved to its current location in 1979. Two of the relics in the altar are North American missionaries: Jesuit martyrs John Brebouf and Gabriel Lalemant.

The **BALDACHINO**, a canopy of honor commonly placed over the altar, consists of various marble types. The column shaft is of Spanish Rojo Alicante and the capitals and base of yellow Bracatello. The bleached oak canopy was carved in the August Schmidt Studio (Cologne, Germany) and the polychrome decoration was painted by Carl Fuchs. It now highlights the baptismal font located beneath.

The intricately carved marble **BAPTISMAL FONT (10)** is octagonal, a symbol of the Resurrection of Christ on the “Eighth Day,” and has suspended above it a forged aluminum cover, embossed with numerous Christian symbols. It is crowned with a statue of John the Baptist. The cover was designed and created by Natale Rossi. A system of weights and pulleys allow the 130 pound cover to be easily raised with one hand.

The **AMBRY (15)**, at the back wall of the sanctuary behind the baptismal font, contains the three Holy Oils used in the sacramental rites of the Church; the oil of chrism, catechumens and the sick. The elaborate carved case is the original cathedra and was re-purposed in 1979.

The **CATHEDRA**, the chair of the bishop, symbolizes the bishop’s pastoral office and teaching authority. Centrally located and behind the altar it was fashioned by the Herman Brothers Studio in a simple style as part of the 1979 renovation.

The **PULPIT (8)** is carved of white oak from the Black Forest of Germany (August Schmidt Studio) and is highlighted with a profusion of delicate carvings. In the canopy are sculptures of four Latin Doctors of the Church, Saints Gregory, Augustine, Jerome, Ambrose and St. John the Evangelist.

The **CRUCIFIX** above the altar, a creation of the August Schmidt Studio, is made of European Walnut with the corpus (figure of Jesus) carved from 250 year old bleached oak. It is 8 feet wide and 12 feet long. Enclosed in the cross is a letter written by the wood craftsmen of the Schmidt Studio and placed there before it was shipped to the United States. It was discovered in the late 1990’s when the cross was refurbished.

The **CHOIR STALLS** are reminiscent of the ancient practice of the cathedral canons (priests) praying the daily Liturgy of the Hours. The **STATUARY** above, were carved by Alois Lang out of pin-grained Michigan oak. On the left are the Gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; on the right the Epistle writers Peter, James, Paul and Jude.

SIDE ALTARS – The statues of the Blessed Virgin **(12)** and St. Joseph **(7)** were carved from Italian Trani marble by the sculptor Vannucci. The mosaics surrounding the altar were designed by Jan de Rosen and executed by Maumejean. On the south side, “Mary, Queen of Peace” is holding the infant Jesus and the mosaic depicts six Virgin female saints with a scene of the Annunciation above. On the north side, St. Joseph holds the Boy Christ the King and the mosaic depicts six Virgin male saints with a scene of the Nativity above. The tabernacles and candlesticks on these altars are decorated with cloisonné and were designed by cathedral architect William Perry.

SACRED HEART SHRINE (13) was carved by Frank Aretz. Above the statue is a picture of Mary Margaret, a Visitation nun who was instrumental in establishing the nine first Fridays devotion to the Sacred Heart.

There are two **SHRINE ALTARS** along the side aisles. On the north side is a shrine altar to St. Therese of Lisieux **(14)** carved from marble quarried in Lisieux, France. On the south side stands the carved oak altar to Our Lady of Perpetual Help **(4)** created in the August Schmidt Studio.

The fourteen **STATIONS OF THE CROSS** that line the side aisles are carved in Black Forest oak and set in elaborate frames of delicate gold illuminated carvings with the thorn and passion flower predominating the design.

CONFESSIONALS (5) crafted of Wisconsin oak line the side aisles. Each door is decorated with a biblical scene of repentance and mercy carved by Louis Guggamus.

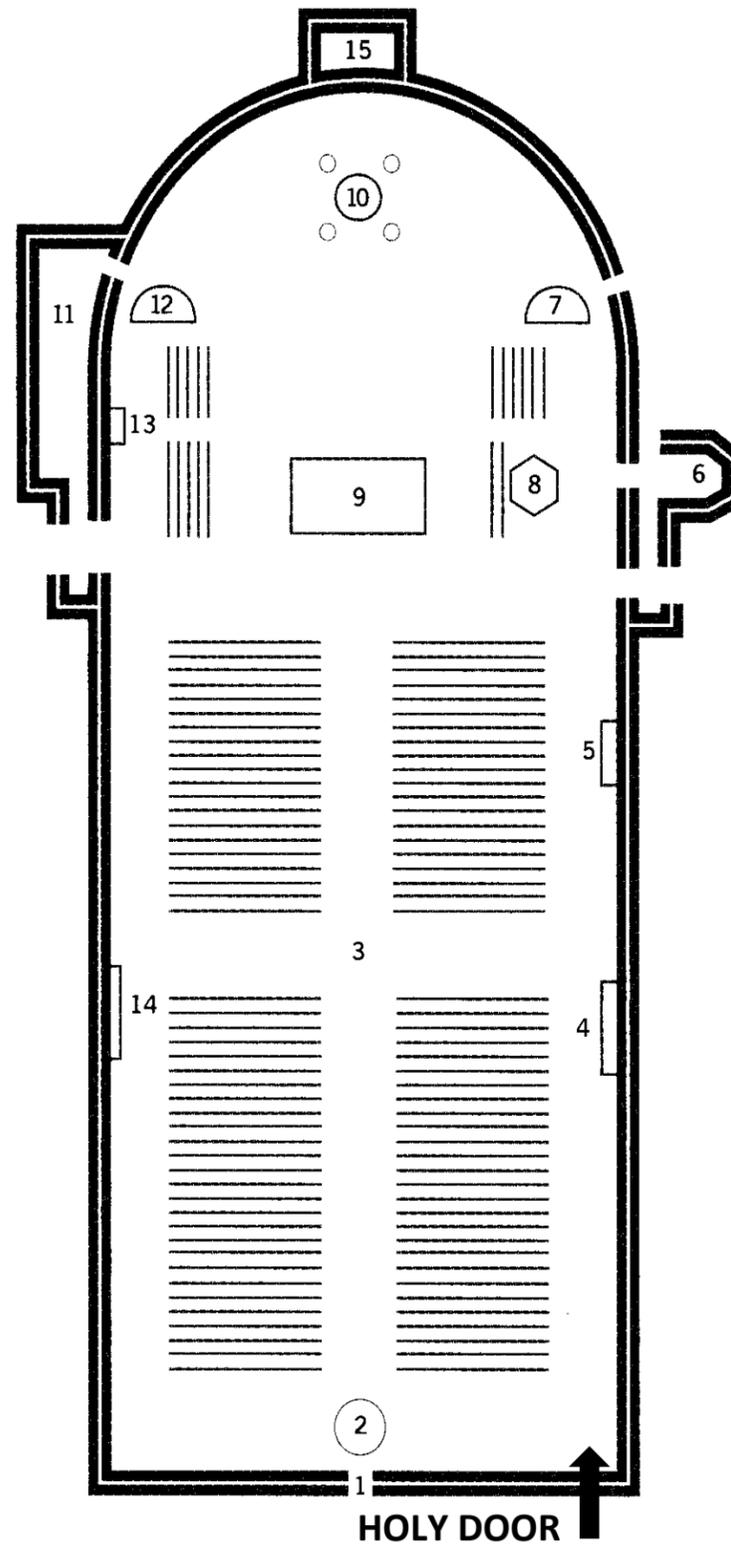
The **BLESSED SACRAMENT CHAPEL (6)** to the north of the sanctuary is the original baptistry which was repurposed in 1979. Symbols of baptism are still found in the artwork. The right window on the east wall depicts the baptism of native American Saint Kateri Tekawetha. The tabernacle is in the shape of a tower reminiscent of the seal of our sister city of Toledo, Spain. The bronze tabernacle, over 6 feet tall, rests on an Italian onyx plinth. On the west wall an El Greco replica, painted by Carl Fuchs at the Prado in Madrid, was donated to the cathedral by the artist.

The E.M. Skinner **PIPE ORGAN** was installed in 1931. It was one of the last instruments Ernest Skinner completed before he retired from the company and represents the culmination of his artistic career. The chamber containing the pipes is located at the triforium level in the south wall above the sanctuary. The console was originally housed in the choir loft opposite the pipe chamber but was moved in 1980 to the floor level of the sanctuary where the music area now is located.

To the south of the sanctuary is the **BISHOP'S CHAPEL (11)**. This area serves as a sacristy as well as a chapel for daily Mass. The portraits of former bishops line the south wall. A portrait of Monsignor Anthony Dean, rector of the cathedral during its entire construction is displayed on the east wall. The *Regina Angelorum* altar on the north end of the chapel is fabricated in the style of the Italian and Spanish masters, involving polychromic painting and gilding with burnished gold. It was a gift from Samuel Cardinal Stritch. The twelve stained glass windows are fabricated in the style made popular by Louis Comfort Tiffany, enamel baked on glass, and each depicts an apostle and an Old Testament prophet.

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**Self-Guided Tour
of
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