

CHOIR AND ORGAN

The vault design on the balcony retains the original proportions of 1895. A Verlinden pipe organ, which was in place for the dedication, was purchased by Mother Antonine for \$2185.00. In 1919, a “pneumatic works mechanism” costing \$2400 was added.

CONFESSIONAL ALCOVES

The former right confessional alcove has been renovated into a small Franciscan memorial (necrology) for the deceased members. It holds a replica of the San Damiano Crucifix, which became the occasion of Francis’ conversion to a life of prayer and penance. The opposite alcove is used for private confession.

RELIQUARIES

The two richly-decorated relic cases on either side of the rear of the Chapel enshrine relics of some 200 saints. The designs for these reliquaries were also provided by Architect Brielmaier. The meticulous gold filigree work, wrought into intricate patterns and mounted with rhinestones and other semiprecious stones on a plush background, was done by Sister Eva Eich and Sister Amata Thorn, who also placed the relics. The designs are from two significant presentations related to Eucharist—the Monstrance for exposition and the grapes for wine.

These reliquaries were acquired in 1934 “through the generosity of a friend,” and the relics were collected, in large part, by Mother Thecla Thren, Mother Antonine’s younger sister and her successor as Superior General, 1898-1930.

CHAPEL DOORS

The doors at the entrance of the chapel are the original color and design. These and other chapel doors retain the doorknobs and Victorian backplates of the 1890s.

ADORATION CHAPEL

Completed in 1946, the Adoration Chapel, which adjoins the St. Francis Chapel at the rear on the right, witnesses to the continuing prayer of the Sisters and Associates. The Blessed Sacrament is exposed here from 9:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. daily. The remaining hours of the day, Sisters and Associates observe times of prayer in their respective ministry locations.

Originally, this space served as the residence for the Chaplain, and the balcony served as the shoe repair shop.

MEANING OF THIS SACRED SPACE IN THE LIVES OF THE SISTERS

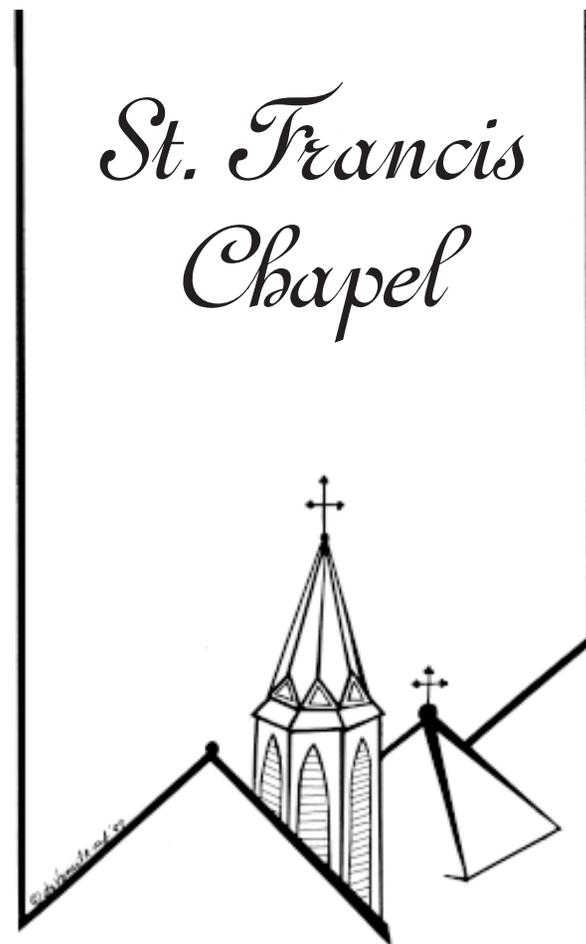
In the sacred space of the Chapel, the life of the Congregation and of each Sister takes sustenance. Here members are received and special events in the life of the Congregation are celebrated. In this space, nearly 1,500 persons have come to seek this way of life. At life’s end, the Sister is brought here to celebrate her life within the Congregation and her passing into Eternal Life.

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*Welcome
to*

*St. Francis
Chapel*



Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi

ST. FRANCIS CHAPEL

A BRIEF HISTORY

St. Francis Chapel, built in 1894, stands as a monument to God and to Mother Antonine Thren, the leader of the Congregation at that time. The architect was Erhard Brielmaier, who also designed St. Josaphat's Basilica in Milwaukee. Mr. Brielmaier had three granddaughters in the Congregation, S. Bede Brielmaier, S. Thomasita Fessler and S. Annette Fessler.

The Chapel, constructed in the Gothic style of the Cologne Cathedral, measures 46 by 112 feet, and 30-foot pillars support the vaulted ceiling. The cost of construction was estimated at \$75,000.

Begun in 1894, the Chapel was dedicated on August 2, 1895. The cornerstone is visible just outside the transept door on the right side.

ALTARS AND PEWS

The altars were carved from red oak, and the original altars were more expansive than those seen today. They held niches filled with statues of Anthony, Bonaventure, Louis and Giles. The triptych-style doors opening off the main altar screen held paintings of Elizabeth of Portugal, Colette, Margaret of Cortona and Elizabeth of Hungary. The paintings of these Franciscan saints, the paintings of Francis and Clare in the vaulted ceilings and the paintings on the rear walls were sent from Munich by Clotilde Brielmaier, daughter of the architect.

The original pews were made of white oak taken from the woods at this site. The stylized wildflowers of the pew ends were carved by Michael Schneider and the men who attended St. John's School for the Deaf at the time. In 1995, these pew ends were reused when the new seating was created.

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The stained glass windows, which enhance this space, were created by the Tyrolese Art Glass Company of Innsbruck, Austria, and installed by its New York City branch in 1898.

Each window provides a message to the prayerful observer. In the sanctuary are windows depicting the Annunciation and the Crucifixion.

Along the nave of the Chapel are 11 full length windows which were installed in 1898 at a cost to the Congregation of \$4,580.90. The names below each window were painted by a Congregational member, Sister Julia Seidenbecker, in the 1920s.

Three windows were donated by friends of the Congregation: St. Augustine by Msgr. Augustine Zeininger, chaplain during Mother Antonine's term in office; St. Frederick by Archbishop Frederick Katzer; and St. George by Rev. George Weiss, the first resident chaplain.

Several of the other windows represent saints having special meaning for the Congregation: St. Francis of Assisi, the patron; St. Louis of France, a lay Franciscan; Blessed Aemiliana; Blessed Ortulana, mother of St. Clare; and Blessed Pica, mother of St. Francis. The relationship of the remaining windows has been lost to history.

In addition to the windows already mentioned, there are others high in the vault of the sanctuary to either side of the altar which present our Lord with passages of His Word pertaining to the Holy Eucharist. To the left is the passage, "I am the Bread of Life," and to the right, "I am the Living Bread." Three clerestory windows of floral design are at the rear of the chapel and in the choir loft.

LIGHTING

Electric lighting was first installed in 1921, and in 1956 the current lighting fixtures were put in place. Each of them is hand-wrought and, at the time, cost \$800 each. In 1986 they were taken down and the electrical wiring was updated to increase the lighting level in the Chapel.

RENOVATIONS

As early as 1921, renovations and adaptations began. In that year, in addition to the electric lighting, the statues and stations were re-touched; the wooden floors of the sanctuary and aisles were replaced with terrazzo, and a ventilation system was added.

In 1957, much of the original ornamentation was removed with a view of achieving a more simplified decor. The Chapel was repainted; woodwork was refinished, and a marble floor was laid in the sanctuary. A new altar of white Botticino marble was installed.

Further renovations, in keeping with the spirit of Vatican Council II, were made in 1966. All appointments in the sanctuary were made from original carved pieces.

Water damage was noted in 1986. The roof was repaired, the chapel repainted and the floor carpeted. In the early 1990s, the stained glass windows were releaded, repaired, cleaned and given an exterior protection.