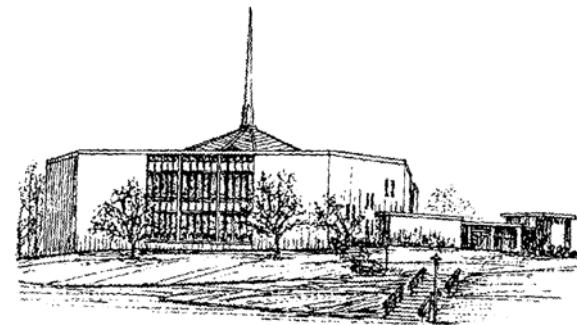


receives her grace from the Holy Spirit, who, in the form of a dove, forms the crown. The crown about her head contains twelve stars. The number twelve has always been significant in Sacred Scripture. It stands for the twelve apostles. The seven flames (in red) symbolize the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Mary is clothed in the sun (the light that surrounds her statue) and stands over the moon at her feet. The blue glass that is attached to her hands represents grace and reminds us, of course, that she is Our Lady of Grace.

Upon entering the sacristy from the door near the organ side, one notices in the marble wall a gold door with the words *Olea Sacra*. This is the *ambry*, the repository for the holy oils. The three holy oils used in the administration of the sacraments are kept in three distinct metal containers. The oil of catechumens which is used to bless and strengthen those preparing for baptism; the oil of the sick with which the priest brings Jesus' strength and healing to those who are joined with the suffering Christ in serious illness; and the sacred chrism which is used in celebrating the sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders.

310 Kane Boulevard
PITTSBURGH, PA 15243

Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church



History & Tour

HISTORY

Our Lady of Grace Church was founded on June 7, 1947. The events, the people, the efforts and the accomplishments leading to its achievements have been many since that day when Bishop Hugh C. Boyle created Our Lady of Grace Parish.

Fr. Oliver D. Keefer purchased the sight for the new parish on September 20, 1948. The first parish edifice, built ultimately for classrooms, was the home of Our Lady of Grace Parish. The beloved little church was dedicated June 18, 1950 by Bishop John F. Dearden, when the parish consisted of some 263 parishioners.

The first school and addition to the temporary church was blessed, dedicated and opened to grades 1-4 in September of 1954. The Sisters of the Humility of Mary made up the original faculty of Our Lady of Grace School – there were four of them.

The second school addition and eight room wing built to accommodate all eight elementary grades, welcomed pupils in September, 1956. The third expansion, forced by booming parish growth in 1958, supplied six more classrooms and some breathing room in the crowded little church.

The hard work of Monsignor Michael J. Conroy and his "helpers" led to the January 7, 1962 ground-breaking on the present day church. Bishop John J. Wright dedicated the new church on June 12, 1963. Ongoing improvements continued in 1988 with sanctuary renovation, new carpeting, interior painting and stain-glass windows in both the Blessed Sacrament and Marian Chapels.

NAME

The title of Our Lady of Grace goes to a picture that was discovered in Rome about the year 1610 by the Venerable Dominic of Jesus and Mary (1559-1630), who later became the fifth General of the Discalced Carmelite Order. One evening when Dominic was walking past an old house that was going to be converted into a convent, an interior impulse attracted him to a heap of debris.

The dome or canopy over the altar is called a *baldachino*.

On either side of the altar are *candles* representing Christ as the light of the world.

The *pulpit, lectern, or ambo*, are the names for the standing desk for proclaiming the Word of God and preaching. Its beauty and centrality reflect the dignity of the Word.

The *president's chair* is the place from which the priest, as leader of the assembly, leads the congregation in prayer.

The *tabernacle* is the receptacle in which the consecrated bread (the Holy Eucharist) is reserved so that Holy Communion may be brought to the sick and homebound and may be adored. The red sanctuary candle reminds us of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. Tabernacle means dwelling place or tent.

The *baptismal font* is the place where we entered the Church and become members of God's family through the waters of new life.

Standing by the baptismal font is a large candle, the *paschal candle*. At the Easter Vigil the candle was lit representing Christ as the light of the world leading us to new life through His Resurrection and Baptism.

The *crucifix* is the cross bearing the body of the dead Christ which appeared as an object of veneration in the fifth century.

Looking above the tabernacle is the stained glass window which reflects the miracle of the loaves and fishes, a clear sign of the Eucharist still to come. The seven loaves represent our daily bread. The two red fish represent the divine and human nature of Christ. The twelve baskets (the green v-shaped sections) represent the twelve baskets of food remaining which the twelve apostles gathered after everyone had been fed. Wheat stalks and grapes also appear.

The Marian Sanctuary reminds us of Mary, Our Lady of Grace. The blue glass symbolizes the grace flowing to us from Christ through her intercession. The crown above Mary's head symbolizes that she is the Queen of Heaven and earth and she

The glass panel to the left of the sanctuary proclaims grace and Christ's fulfillment of the promises exemplified by the banquet context of the Mass in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. The chalice, wheat, paten and host, fish and loaves, and the fruit of the vine, grapes, are all allusions to this theme as developed in the New Testament.

The other windows in the church are for practical purposes – letting sunlight in – and there are no symbolic values to be placed on them.

The *sanctuary* is the area of the church in which the altar, pulpit, presidential chair, tabernacle, baptismal font, paschal candle and crucifix are located.

The *altar* is the central furnishing of the church building. The altar is the common table of the assembly on which sacrifice and thanksgiving are offered and from which nourishment is received.

At the beginning of Mass you might notice the priest kissing the altar. This is a symbol of reverence for the altar and to the relics that are placed in the altar. The *sepulcrum* or cavity for the relics has a stone cover. Our reliquary contains the remains of three saints, three grains of incense and a parchment certificate.

The three saints are St. Victor, Pope, reigned from 189-198 AD and who was a native African and a prolific writer. St. Felicitus, martyr, was born in the beginning of the fourth century who with her seven sons was martyred about the middle of the fourth century. The third saint is an unknown martyr.

After closely examining the rubbish, his eyes fell upon an oil painting, which was torn and covered with dirt. Grieved at seeing a picture of the Heavenly Mother in such a miserable condition, he took it to his cell and repaired it.

One night, while praying for a particular favor and kneeling before the holy image, he noticed that dust had settled upon it. While he was gently removing the dust, the face of Our Lady suddenly became animated. She smiled at Dominic and nodded her head in token of her gratitude. Dominic feared that he was a victim of a diabolical illusion, but the Queen of Heaven dispelled his uneasiness with the following word: "Fear not, for your request is granted. It will be accomplished and will be part of the recompense that you are to receive for the love that you bear to my Divine Son and myself."

When Our Lady invited Dominic to make another request of her, he asked for the release of one of his benefactors from Purgatory. The Holy Virgin promised to grant this request if several Masses and good works were offered for the soul. Shortly afterward, the Blessed Mother appeared with the soul of the benefactor, who had been delivered from Purgatory.

The Blessed Mother then promised Dominic, "All those who implore my protection, devoutly honoring this picture, will obtain their petition, and will receive my graces. Moreover, I shall hearken in a special manner to the prayers that shall be addressed to me for the relief of souls in Purgatory."

Since Dominic wanted others to venerate the image and receive the benefits of the Holy Mother's promises, he placed the picture in the Church of Santa Maria della Scala. Later it was moved to various countries. Now it can be found in the church of the Viennese Carmel.

(Excerpted from *Prayeres and Heavenly Promises* by Joan Carroll Cruz)

TOUR OF THE CHURCH

One of the first things we see when we enter the *vestibule* or the meeting or gathering place located near the front doors are the *holy water fonts*, the containers of blessed water, these serve as a reminder of our Baptism and commitment to the Lord.

The *Marian Chapel* is the old baptistery especially noted by stained glass win-

dows. The center rear window contains a dove that represents the Holy Spirit that we receive at Baptism. The shell is the sign of the living water being poured on us at Baptism. The fish is an early Christian symbol for Christ; as a fish cannot live except in water, the Christian has life through the waters of Baptism. The red color glass in all the windows is columns of fire, a sign of purification. The statue is of Our Lady of Grace with her arms outstretched extending the gift of grace to us through her intercession. The blue votive candles are a remainder of our prayers and special requests being raised to God through Mary even after we have left the church.

The glass doors to the vestibule are all marked with symbols dedicated to Mary. The doors on the right looking into the Marian Chapel mean the following: 1) Christ (Chi Rho) at the wedding in Cana – Mary intercedes 2) Fountain – Flowing waters – Mary is the fountain of all graces 3) Lily – Mary is conceived without sin – purity. Left doors looking into Marian Chapel 4) Morning star – Mary guides us out of the dark night of sin 5) Ship – Mary guides us to the heavenly port. Unfortunately doors 4, 1, and 2 were broken and with them went other symbols of Mary.

Between the doors are the *parish poor boxes*, these containers receive offerings which help our parish St. Vincent de Paul Society to reach out to the poor of the parish and the parish's food pantry.

The tiled mosaic walls depict Our Lady of Grace and the Holy Spirit.

There is a holder for holy water which parishioners are free to

take to use in their homes. It also is used to fill the holy water fonts at all the church's entrances.

Entering the body or main part of the church or the *nave* (meaning boat) we notice the large open the space of the church. In 1963, when the church was built, it was the first in the Diocese of Pittsburgh to be constructed in the fan-shaped style. One's first view of the church makes it clear that here is a structure dedicated to worship. It points heavenwards from every angle. The center of attention is the altar. The pews are placed as close to the altar (the farthest pew in the church is only 75 feet away) so that everyone may take their rightful part in the liturgy.

Besides the pews there are also along the back wall the *Stations of the Cross* and *Confessionals*. The Stations are artistic representations depicting events in the final hours of Christ's life as he was led to his crucifixion. There are fourteen stations showing a Gospel event or popular devotion dating back to the thirteenth century. The confessionals are small rooms in which a person privately confesses or receives the Sacrament of Confession. One can freely go anonymously or face-to-face with the priest with these confessionals.

Within the church are three sets of stained glass windows. In the window over the main entrance, the powerful movement of color is centered in the figure of Mary garbed in red. Red proclaims Mary's fullness of grace. A fullness which resulted from her encountering Christ in her life.

As we look to the right of the sanctuary, this window is dedicated to the sacraments. Remember these windows were put in 1965. In the very center are seven fiery tongues, a reminder to many of us that we have been confirmed in our faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation. To the immediate left of the column of tongues can be seen a fountain type of effect in bright yellow. It is a scourge, the symbol of Penance. A cross superimposed upon interlocking rings is the theme of Christian Marriage. Another symbol depicts a golden gate and white host. This represents the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick. In this symbol Christ is seen as the liberator from suffering by welcoming his followers into the glory of Paradise. Before the gate one finds the staff of divine life, Viaticum. An open Bible, a green stole and the cross of Christ symbolize the Priesthood and Victimhood of Jesus Christ.