



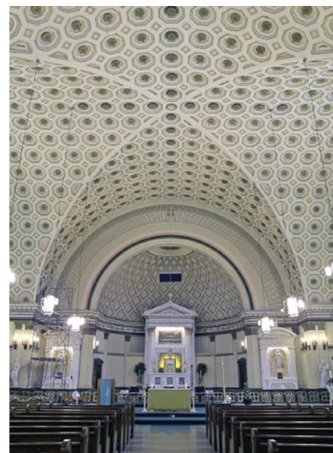
The Architect

Joseph William McCarthy was the architect for Corpus Christi Church which was built in 1914. McCarthy was an apprentice for eight years to the great Chicago planner, *Daniel Burnham*. McCarthy was famous for his work on buildings for the Catholic Church. In Chicago he designed St. Philip Neri Church in the South Shore neighborhood and St. Sabina Church in the Auburn/Gresham neighborhood. Other designs include the entire campus at Mundelein Seminary and the 15-story building at Mundelein College, which is now part of Loyola University in Chicago.

The Church Structure

The church is built in the *Italian Renaissance style* using *Bedford stone*. The domes of the two towers were made of brass and could be seen for miles. The reflection of the sun would make the domes glow during the day. Due to structural damage, the domes were removed around 2007 for safety.

The interior of the church is a column-free, groin vault ceiling. The steel frame construction, similar to a skyscraper, allows for unobstructed views of the sanctuary.



The *ceiling* is made of five hundred octagonal coffer tiles. They were originally suspended from the ceiling frame with horsehair wire covered in plaster. In 1977, the horsehair wire was replaced with wire cables.

In the mid 1970's, Corpus Christi

incorporated African-American culture into the church with the addition of the *Black liberation* colors of *Red*,

Black and *Green* around the borders of the interior.

The Courtyard

The original courtyard had a square fountain in the center with an outdoor altar. There was an open colonnade with a view of the courtyard from the street.

The church's office building was built around 1940 utilizing the "Peristyle" colonnade for the facade. To accommodate the new building, the original fountain was demolished and replaced with a pond on the exterior wall of the office building.

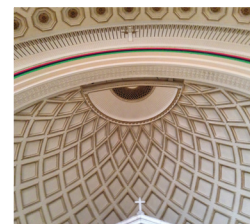


The High Altar

The high altar is the focal point of the church. It is elevated in the sanctuary where it can be seen by all.

The Tabernacle

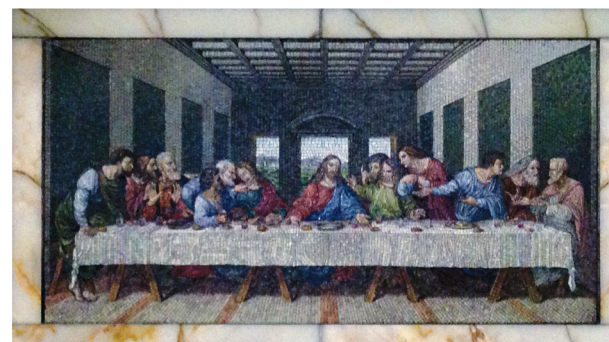
The Tabernacle is the receptacle positioned on top of the High Altar's table. A vessel called a Ciborium, holds consecrated hosts.



The Mosaics

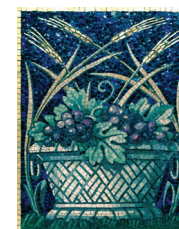
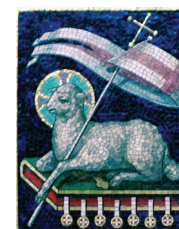
Last Supper

A richly detailed mosaic of the Last Supper, inspired by the Leonardo di Vinci painting, is positioned above the tabernacle. During the Last Supper, Jesus consecrates the Bread and Wine into His Body and Blood to be shared with all who come to the table.



The Pelican

At the base of the altar are three brightly colored mosaics symbols. The first one is of a pelican feeding her young. The pelican is a symbol of the atonement and the Redeemer.



The Lamb

The Paschal Lamb or the Lamb of God, represents Christ who redeems the world by the shedding of his blood.

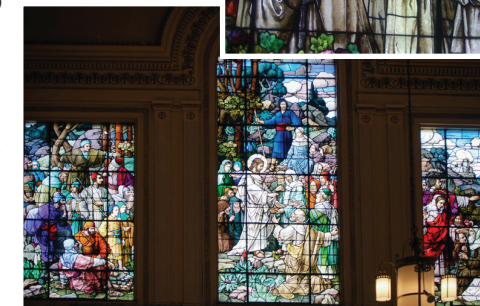
The Wheat and Grape

The Wheat and Grape represent the bread and wine or the Body and Blood of Christ.

Stained Glass Windows

F. X. Zettler, of the *Royal Bavarian Institute for Stained Glass*, Munich, Germany, created our stained glass windows. At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, a Zettler window won the top prize over a Tiffany!

The "*Munich Style*" of windows is unique due to their blending of colors and extremely realistic details. Zettler was also credited as the first to use three-point perspective in stained glass windows.



Stations of the Cross

Father Gregory Gerrer, a Benedictine monk of St. Gregory's Abbey in Shawnee, Oklahoma created the "Stations of the Cross" paintings. In the 1904 World's Fair at St. Louis, he won a bronze medal for his painting of Pope Pius X. From 1917 to 1932 he was a faculty member and curator at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Indiana. In 1931 Gerrer was inducted into the Oklahoma Hall of Fame.

The Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art at St. Gregory's University in Shawnee, Oklahoma bears his name. The largest collection of his paintings are there. His works is also included in the Vatican art collection in Rome.



Above is one of two restored "Stations of the Cross" paintings. They were restored by Parma Conservation, here in Chicago.

History of the Parish

- Corpus Christi Parish was founded on June 27, 1901. It celebrated its first mass in the chapel of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd's Industrial School for Girls. The area was known as Grand Boulevard and was predominantly Irish American.
- The official groundbreaking took place on August 22, 1901 and the cornerstone of the church was laid on August 15, 1914. The first mass was celebrated on Christmas Day, 1915.
- At the beginning of the Great Migration (roughly 1910) the Grand Boulevard area began to transition from an Irish community to an African American community which became known as "Bronzeville."
- In 1924 Cardinal Mundelein instructed the pastor, Fr. Eckert to direct African Americans to St. Elizabeth's church for worship. Father Eckert did not agree with the Cardinal's decision.
- By 1928 fewer than 100 people attended mass. The Sisters of Mercy withdrew from the school, Monsignor O'Brien resigned from the pastorate and the church closed.
- On April 13, 1929, the Franciscan Friars of the Sacred Heart took charge of the parish. On July 14, 1932, Corpus Christi reopened its doors to the Bronzeville community.
- On September 5, 1933, Corpus Christi Grade School opened with an enrollment of roughly 320 students. The Franciscan Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, Iowa took on the role of educators.
- In 1937, a group of parishioners performed a dramatization of the Passion of Christ known as "*The Living Stations*." During the 1950's it was performed four times at the Chicago Coliseum and televised live on WGN TV in Chicago. World renowned Bishop Fulton Sheen of New York saw a performance in 1954 and gave a Sunday sermon at Corpus Christi. Also, Cardinal Francis George wrote an article in the Catholic New World newspaper in 2001 about seeing the play as a youth.
- In 1938, Father Clement Martin organized the Corpus Christi Credit Union to assist parishioners and the community.
- Corpus Christi High School opened its doors to both boys and girls in 1946 at 4620 South Park Avenue (now Dr. Martin Luther King Drive).
- After the 1961–62 school year, the high school was closed. Hales Franciscan High School, an all-boys high school on 49th and Cottage Grove was opened in 1963 replacing Corpus Christi High School.
- In 1970, parishioners Mary Cope, Joan McAfee and Rosie Walls along with Sr. Julia Luetkenhaus founded the Food and Clothing Committee. It provided assistance for parishioners and neighbors in need. In that same year Ms. Joyce Whitfield was hired as the first lay, African American principal at Corpus Christi Grade school.
- In 1973, Sr. Marilyn Freking organized the Retired Senior Volunteer Program. Along with Sr. Ann Rubly, the volunteers ministered to the sick and shut-in members of the community. Also during that year, following the directives of Vatican II, lay participation became an integral part of worship service. The priests and parishioners collaborated in introducing liturgical worship in the African-American idiom.

- In 1991, Corpus Christi celebrated its 90th anniversary. Cardinal Joseph Bernardin was the celebrant and U.S. Congressman Danny Davis gave an uplifting speech during mass.
- May 14, 1994, Br. Leonard Lawrence, started the Corpus Christi "Soup Kitchen" to serve the community. Volunteers continued the mission until 2020.
- In 2001, Corpus Christi celebrated its 100th anniversary on the feast of Corpus Christi with Cardinal Francis George.
- In 2003, The Missionary of St. Paul of Nigeria took over pastorship.
- On June 26, 2011, Corpus Christi marked its 110th anniversary with Bishop Joseph Perry celebrating the mass. (FYI: Bishop Perry's father was a member of Corpus Christi)
- May 21, 2015, Fr. Michael Perry O.F.M. was elected as the 120th successor of St. Francis (Head of Franciscans internationally). He preached and ministered at Corpus Christi during the 1990's
- June 5, 2016, the courtyard was rededicated to the Franciscans of the Sacred Heart Province and the Sisters of St. Francis of Dubuque, Iowa. Sr. Marilyn Freking and Sr. Ann Rubly were honored on their retirement for years of service at Corpus Christi.
- Sunday, June 13, 2021, the last official mass was celebrated at Corpus Christi after 120 years of service on the south side of Chicago.

Noted Black Alumni and Parishioners of Corpus Christi

Fr. Arthur Anderson, O.F.M., Former parishioner.

Fr. George Clements, former pastor of Holy Angels parish. (Deceased)

Ari Brown, Jazz saxophonist

Br. Loyola Freightman, Former parishioner (Deceased)

Judge Blanche Manning, parishioner (Deceased)

Congressman Ralph Metcalfe, parishioner (Deceased)

Fr. Joseph Rodney, S.V.D., Former parishioner (Deceased)

Fr. Elric Sampson, O.F.M., Former parishioner (Deceased)

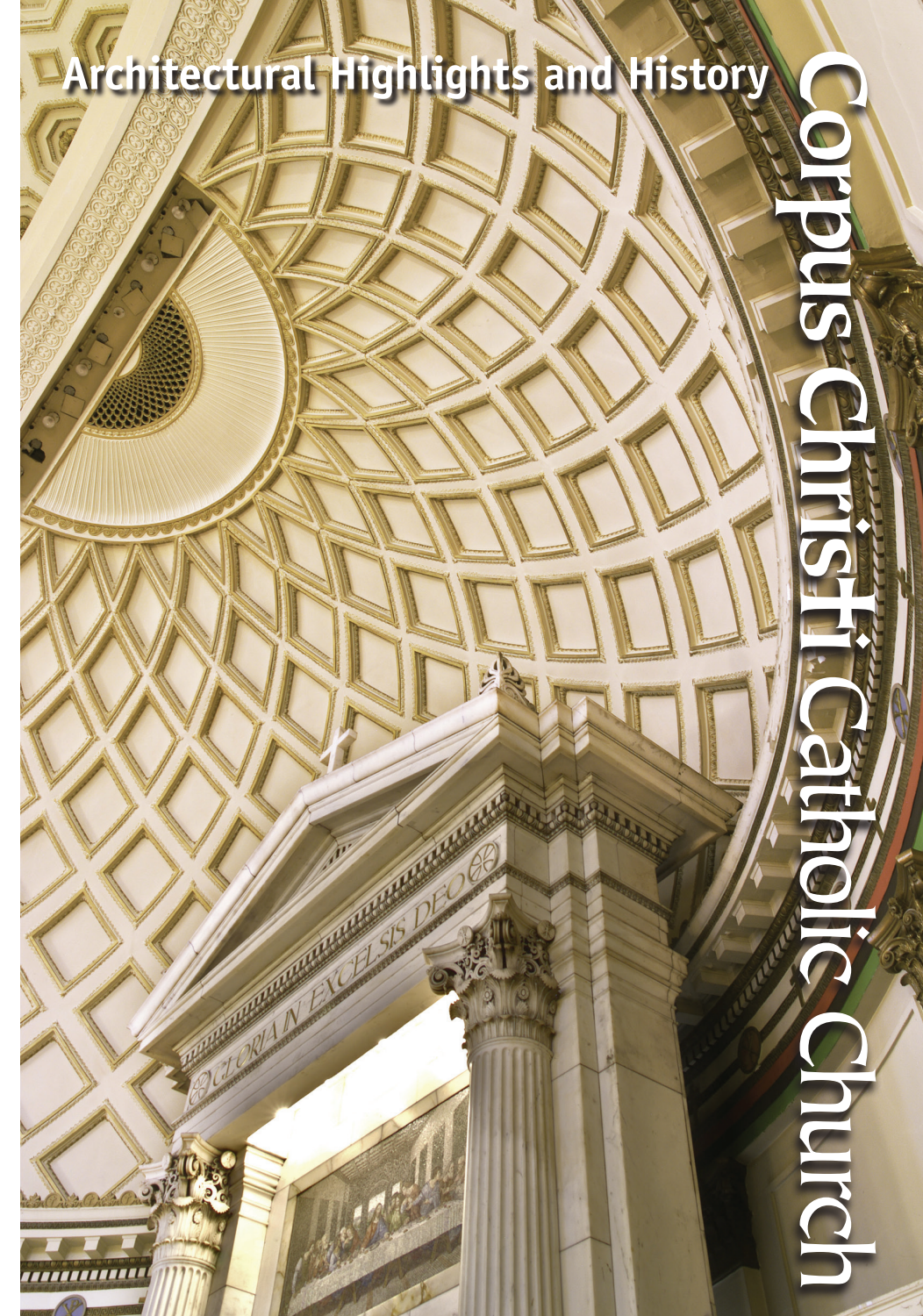
Warner Saunders, Channel 5 News Chicago, anchor, graduate of Corpus Christi H.S. (Deceased)

Fr. Bennet Spivey, O.F.M., Former parishioner (Deceased)

Sr. Lucy Williams (Sr. Martin De Porres), Former parishioner (Deceased)

God bless the parishioners of Corpus Christi and those who served past and present for enduring love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. May the spirit of Corpus Christi live on through the stories we tell future generations of Black Catholics in Chicago and the world.

Architectural Highlights and History



FAREWELL MASS

Sunday, June 27, 2021 • 9:30 AM

Corpus Christi Catholic Church • 4900 S. King Drive • Chicago