

Sacred Space

Are we a Marian Church?

“Roman Marian churches are religious buildings dedicated to the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary.” (Wikipedia) In 1846 Our Lady, under the title of the Immaculate Conception, was unanimously chosen the Patroness of the United States of America by the U. S. Bishops at the sixth Plenary Council of Baltimore (America’s first Catholic Diocese). The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D. C., America’s largest Catholic church, is our nation’s preeminent Marian shrine, dedicated to Mary as America’s Patroness.

Closer to home, Our Lady of La Leche shrine in St. Augustine is the historical site of the first parish mass and first shrine dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the United States. In 2012 the Vatican approved October 11th as our annual diocesan feast day for Our Lady of La Leche. A picture of the shrine statue of Our Lady hangs over the candlestands in our own Marian chapel.

We certainly have an appropriate name. The title Our Lady, Star of the Sea (or Stella Maris in Latin), has been in use since at least the early medieval period, seen as allegorical of Mary’s role as “guiding star” on the way to Christ.

It is believed she intercedes as guide and protector of seafarers in particular. (Wikipedia)

Our renovated church will have a much more visible Marian appearance. Six stunning stained-glass windows will literally embrace us from both sides. Standing at the rear of the church, on the north center wall (from left to right) will be the Annunciation, the Nativity (slightly larger) and the Marriage Feast at Cana. On the south wall (again from left to right) will be the Pieta (with Jesus’ body across Mary’s lap), Mary’s Assumption (slightly larger) and Mary’s Coronation.

These Marian windows are rich in symbolism and detail. The colors are soft yet vibrant due to the hallmarks of “antique glass” (the process of glass blowing, not the age). Our Florida sun will make them all the lovelier. The windows depicting Mary’s life, along with our Peruvian Stations of the Cross, will be wonderful, important learning and meditational opportunities for young and old alike.

