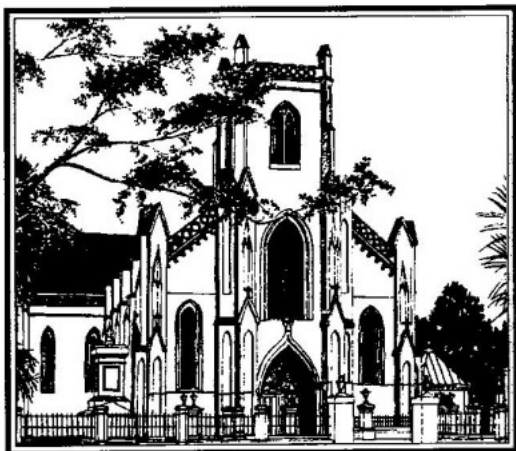


# A Guide To



## THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CATHEDRAL

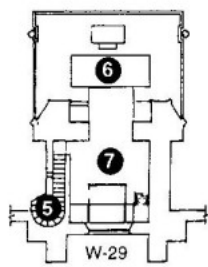
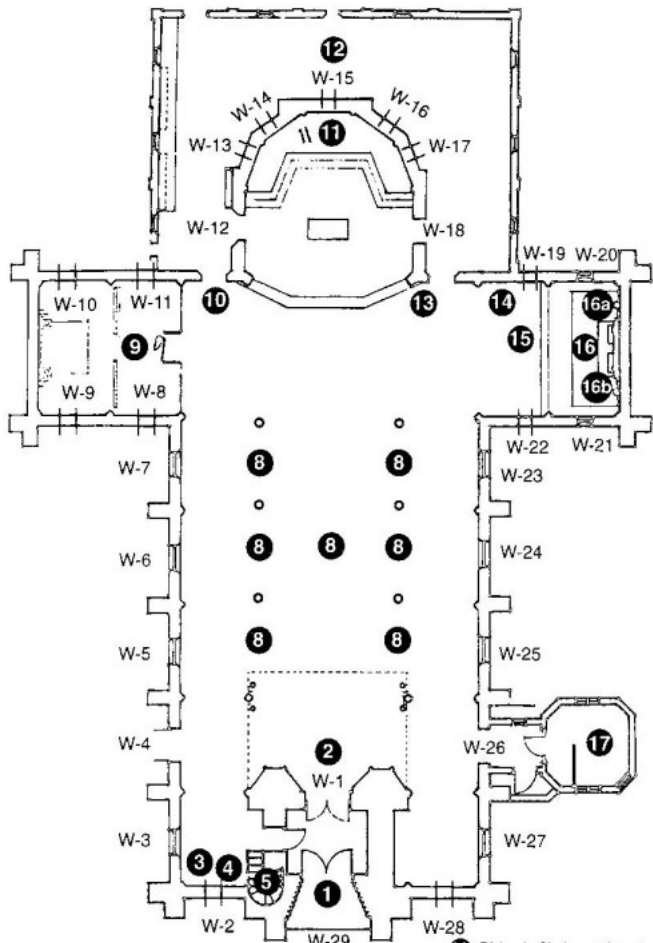
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THE MOST REVEREND RAYMUNDO J. PEÑA, D.D.  
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF BROWNSVILLE  
THE REVEREND PASQUALE LANESE, O.M.I., RECTOR-PRIMUS  
THE REVEREND RICHARD SHEEHAN, O.M.I., ASSOCIATE VICAR

PARISH ESTABLISHED 1849  
BY THE  
MISSIONARY OBLATES OF MARY IMMACULATE  
CORNERSTONE LAID JULY 6, 1856

12-22-01

- 1 Main Entrance of the Cathedral.** The original, hand-carved, walnut doors to the main entrance came from France, circa 1860. Their Gothic style sets the tone for the entire structure.
- 2 O.M.I..** Initials of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate embedded in the floor of the main aisle. Arriving from France in 1849, the Oblates were the first missionary priests in this area. Known as the "Cavalry of Christ", they routinely traveled the immense brush-land by horseback to ranches and settlements with a Mass kit carefully attached to their saddles, administering the sacraments and saying Mass. Between 1849 and 1856 the Oblates established the Mother Church of the Valley in Brownsville, The Immaculate Conception Church. These priests laid the foundation of Catholicism some two-hundred miles east and west on the Texas border from Brownsville to Rio Grande City, as well as northern Mexico. Today, the Oblates continue to be administrators of the Cathedral, although the complex itself was sold to the Diocese of Brownsville in the 1970's.
- 3 Statue of Our Lady of Grace.** Originally brought from France in the 1860's.
- 4 Painting of St. Eugene de Mazenod, O.M.I..** Born in France in 1792, de Mazenod founded the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate in 1826. On Dec. 3, 1995, Pope John Paul II canonized de Mazenod a Saint. This painting was unveiled in 1999 in recognition of the 150 years the Oblates had served the Valley. It was a gift from the artist, Jose Salazar of Mexico City and the Ralph Cowen Family of Brownsville.
- 5 Staircase to Tower.** The brick staircase which connects the Organ Loft and Belfry Tower is the original built in 1856.
- 6 Pipe Organ.** Originally the loft housed an organ of 340 pipes. In 1937 that organ was replaced by the one presently used.
- 7 Belfry Tower.** Rising eighty-eight feet in the air, the tower is twenty feet above the roof of the Church. It houses four bells; the bell from the original chapel first built before the main Church was built, plus the three bells given, circa 1860's, by Mifflin Kenedy, who with Richard King (King Ranch) operated a steamboat company along the Rio Grande. Today the bells are rung with the same clarity and beauty as in the Church's early years; daily at noon, before Sunday Masses and on special occasions.
- 8 Chandeliers.** Crystal and stamped brass chandeliers donated by the Honorable Jerry Galvan, were ordered from Paris by Father Pierre Parisot, O.M.I., circa 1866. Originally each chandelier held dozens of candles lit for all occasions. With the advent of electricity, the fixtures were wired and later ceiling fans installed below each fixture. In the 1960's, five chandeliers were removed from the Church. The seven remaining ones were refurbished in 1997 to their original luster through the generosity of several Brownsville families. Father Pasquale Lanese, O.M.I., Rector-Primus, initiated the restoration of the inside of the Cathedral at that time.
- 9 Madonna Chapel.** Designed in 1959 as a gift from Chauncey Devereux Stillman, whose great-grandfather, Charles Stillman, founded Brownsville. Stillman, a convert to Catholicism, dedicated the Chapel to the Blessed Virgin Mary as a memorial to his great-grandparents, Charles & Elizabeth Stillman. The Altar of Repose of the Most Blessed Sacrament houses the burning flame prescribed by church law to signify the presence of Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament. Centered above the gold leaf retable is the painting, **Madonna and Child** by Bartolome Esteban Murillo. This fine reproduction replaced the priceless original painting which was returned to the Stillman family in the 1970's. The Chapel is a reproduction of 16th century Spanish style architecture and is accented by four stained glass windows made in Holland. The altar table is rare Carrera marble that extends to the floor of the Chapel. The two angels flanking



- 1** Main Entrance
- 2** O.M.I. Initials
- 3** Statue of Our Lady of Grace
- 4** Painting of St. Eugene de Mazenod, O.M.I.
- 5** Staircase to Tower
- 6** Pipe Organ
- 7** Belfry Tower
- 8** Chandeliers
- 9** Madonna Chapel
- 10** Statue of St. Joseph with The Christ Child
- 11** Bishop's Chair and Sanctuary
- 12** Statue of our Lady of The Immaculate Conception
- 13** The Crucified Christ
- 14** Statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe
- 15** Baptismal Font
- 16** Statue of The Sacred Heart of Jesus
- 16a** Statue of St. Francis of Assisi.
- 16b** Statue of St. Therese
- 17** Confessional

the altar date back to the early years of the Church. In the 1900's, the angels were on the main altar. Designed by Guildhall of New Jersey, the wrought-iron grillwork features the Coat of Arms of His Excellency, Mariano S. Garriga, D.D., Bishop of the Diocese of Corpus Christi, of which Brownsville was a part in 1959. The most sacred place in the Cathedral, the Chapel requires quiet and reverence.

**10 Statue of St. Joseph with the Christ Child.** One of the earliest statues, this exceptional example of wood carving was bought from the Daprato Co. of Italy, circa 1860.

**11 Bishop's Chair and Sanctuary.** "Cathedral" is derived from the Greek word "cathedra" meaning "seat". The Cathedral has served as the seat of the Diocese of Brownsville since it was established by the Vatican in 1965. Brownsville served as the seat in 1874 for one year, then it moved to Corpus Christi in 1875 and returned to Brownsville in 1965. It is the link that Catholics in the Diocese have, through its Bishop, to the teaching authority (Magisterium) of the Church in Rome.

The pastor of the Cathedral is known as *rector-primus*, since he is the pastor of the "first" or primary church of the Diocese.

The present Bishop's Chair was installed in the 1980's when the entire sanctuary was modified to accommodate the new liturgy. Mass is celebrated at the main altar of the sanctuary.

**12 Statue of Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception.** Another of the earliest statues in the Cathedral, this rare wood carving was purchased by the Church in 1874. It is the exquisitely detailed work of the Daprato Co. The statue stands in front of the equally beautiful stained glass rendering of the Immaculate Conception, almost duplicating it.

**13 The Crucified Christ.** From the Church's early beginnings until now, this large crucifix has been a focal point of the main altar. The wooden cross with its ceramic corpus is an art unequalled.

**14 Statue of our Lady of Guadalupe.** Patroness of Mexico and the Americas, it depicts the Virgin Mary as protector of the poor native peoples of Latin America. Mary appeared to Juan Diego, an Indian convert, in December of 1531 in Mexico. She promised to help his people if the Bishop would build a chapel on the hill in her honor. Upon his third vision of the Holy Mother, Diego made a visit to the prelate with an incredible array of blooming flowers from the site. He had carefully arranged them in his tilma (apron) upon which, to his astonishment, the likeness of Mary had been etched. The church built a shrine in her honor soon after, commemorating the only documented appearance of the Virgin Mary in the Americas. The Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe stands in Mexico City.

**15 Baptismal Font.** Original of the Cathedral, donated by Don Francisco Yturria. Many known dignitaries have been baptized in the Font, among them, His Excellency Mariano M. Garriga D.D., Bishop of Corpus Christi 1949 to 1965. In the late 1960's the Font was arbitrarily removed from the site, but thankfully was once again returned to the Cathedral in September of 1997.

**16 Statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.** The rare wood carving from the Daprato Co., stands on an altar of Italian Carrera marble, Circa 1960.

**16a Statue of St. Francis of Assisi.** Purchased in 1999.

**16b Statue of St. Therese of The Child Jesus (The Little Flower).** Purchased in 2000

**17 Confessional.** Where the Sacrament of Reconciliation takes place. Originally the site of the Baptistry built in 1958.

**Special Notes:** The unique, vaulted canvas blue ceiling of the Cathedral was originally designed by its architect and builder, Father Pierre Yves Keralum, O.M.I.. Keralum, unsure of what weight a wooden ceiling would bear in relation to the building's foundation, conceived of this exceptional component as the covering for the ceiling. The specially prepared blue painted canvas was covered with gold stars at one time. This is the third rendition of the ceiling.

The pews of the Cathedral, donated by Doña Felicitas Yturria, are the originals. The Church will seat about 400.

The Stations of the Cross which line the walls were donated by Doña Eloisa Vela de Daughterty of Mission, Texas in 1907.

The exterior adobe bricks are the original, hand honed by the Oblates on Church grounds, with their O.M.I marked on each brick, circa 1856.

## *Stained Glass Windows*

- W-1**     ***Monstrance with the Blessed Sacrament***  
In Memory of My Wife-Elsie Crafts Barreda  
Gift of Henry M. Barreda.
- W-2**     ***Saint John the Baptist***  
In Memory of Juana Garza  
Gift of Mr. C. Garza
- W-3**     ***The Good Shepherd***  
Gift of the José Fernández Family.
- W-4**     ***Saint Paul***  
In Memory of James G. Browne  
Gift of M. C. Browne - San Roman
- W-5**     ***Saint Thomas Aquinas***  
In Memory of Salome Balli McAllen  
Gift of Messrs. John and James McAllen
- W-6**     ***Saint Joseph and the Christ Child***  
In Memory of Trinidad Gonzalez
- W-7**     ***The Sacred Heart of Jesus***  
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Sada
- W-8**     ***Bottom: The Annunciation***  
***Top: the Nativity***  
Gift of Chauncey Stillman  
Artist: Josep Nicolas of Tegelen, Holland (1959)
- W-9**     ***Genesis: Adam and Eve***  
Gift of Chauncey Stillman  
Artist: Josep Nicolas of Tegelen, Holland (1959)
- W-10**    ***Mary received into Heaven and Crowned***  
Gift of Chauncey Stillman  
Artist: Josep Nicolas of Tegelen, Holland (1959)
- W-11**    ***Jesus taken down from the Cross***  
Gift of Chauncey Stillman  
Artist: Josep Nicolas of Tegelen, Holland (1959)
- W-12**    A remaining section of original stained glass  
relocated for the installation of air-conditioning.

- W-13     **Saint Joseph**  
Gift of Mary Josephine Glavecke Browne.
- W-14     **Saint Michael the Archangel**  
Gift of Mrs. J. C. de Fernandez.
- W-15     **The Immaculate Conception**  
In Memory of M. and P.O. Kenedy
- W-16     **Saint Gabriel**
- W-17     **Our Lady of Guadalupe**  
In Memory of A. Correa and Family
- W-18     A remaining section of original stained glass  
relocated for the installation of air-conditioning.
- W-19     **Ave Maria**  
En Memoria de las Hijas de Maria difuntas  
(In Memory of the Daughters of Mary deceased).
- W-20     **Easter Lilly**  
En Memoria de Clara Fernandez  
(In Memory of Clara Fernandez)
- W-21     **Speared Heart of Roses**  
En Memoria de Felipa Tijerina  
(In Memory of Felipa Tijerina)
- W-22     **Nuestro Señor**  
Obsequio de las Hijas de Maria.  
(Donated by the Daughters of Mary).
- W-23     **Our Lady of the Rosary**  
Hermandad del sto. Rosario  
(Brotherhood of the Holy Rosary).
- W-24     **Saint Ann with Mary**  
Gift of Mrs. J.C. de Fernandez
- W-25     **Saint Cecilia**  
Gift of the Young Ladies of the Parish  
Studio: Ford Brothers Glass Co. of Minneapolis.
- W-26     **Saint Helena**  
In Memory of Helena R. Browne  
Gift of Mrs. M.C. Browne.
- W-27     **Mary Magdalene**  
In Memory of José Fernandez  
Gift of Mrs. Juana Champion Fernandez
- W-28     **Mother of Perpetual Help**  
Gift of Mrs. Juana Champion Fernandez.
- W-29     **The Immaculate Conception**  
In Memory of the Oblate Fathers & Brothers deceased  
Children of Mary  
(Window above the Cathedral doors to be viewed from  
outside)