

TREASURING NEWARK'S RICH PATRIMONY

One Solution to a Worldwide Crisis

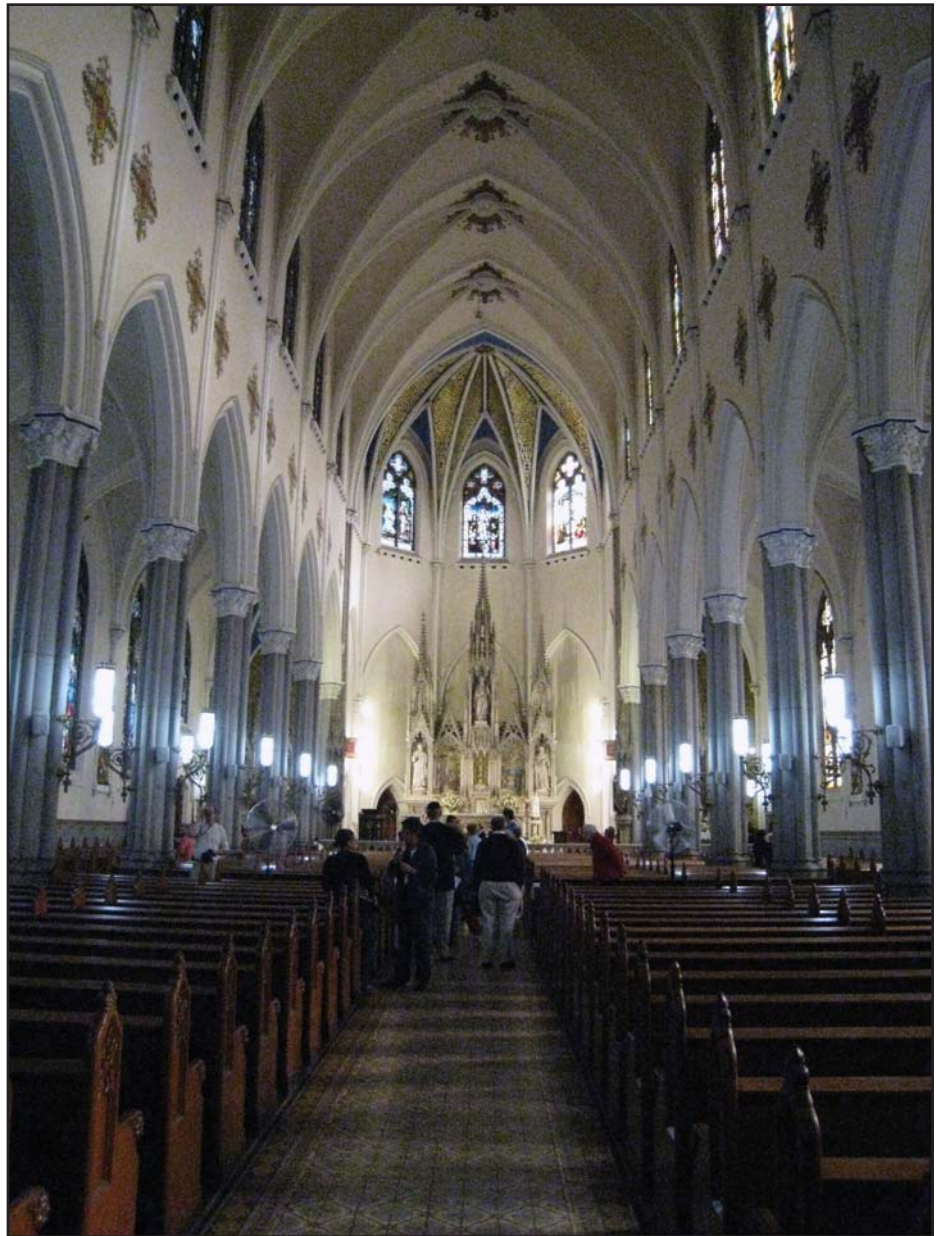
by Judith Hiemer van Wie

The Catholic Dioceses of the United States are the caretakers of many great works of liturgical art. Their collections include statuary, marble work, wood carvings, mosaics, frescoes, paintings, textiles, literature and, of course, stained glass. They hold valuable representations of the artistry and craftsmanship that generations of creative and often devoted individuals dedicated to the liturgical arts.

With the passage of time has come the deterioration of not only the structural foundations of older buildings but of the artistic embellishments as well. At inner-city churches where attendance has dwindled and Catholic populations have moved, the ability to find the funding to maintain their inspiring artistic works is becoming difficult, if not sometimes impossible. Most of these churches have done their best to keep things up, but, when issues such as leaky roofs or the ravages of time lead to severe damage, the funds for full restoration by qualified experts are often not available.

In our firm's experience, we have found that these churches with inadequate financial support are usually able to take care of accidental breakage or vandalism of stained glass through their own savings, insurance income or the financing of a donor. Since it can be difficult for the public to recognize the bigger issues of buckling and bulging common to aging stained glass, it is usually left untreated until damage is evident in the form of dislodged pieces and the appearance of daylight around perimeters.

Extreme conditions like this are usually not isolated to the stained glass in an older building, and owners are usually facing the need for restoration of many artistic and structural components. They are not able to finance the restoration of the stained glass, let alone a complete overhaul required to keep the building



The Archdiocese of Newark, in New Jersey, has formed Heritage Tours as one facet of a program to raise awareness of the needs of the buildings and religious art in the archdiocese.

from literally falling apart. This is the point at which dioceses face the tough choice of closing a church or finding the funding for extensive restoration.

Diocesan officials are fully aware of these conditions and are doing their best to retain the treasures in their churches. There has been found a lack of awareness among the populace about

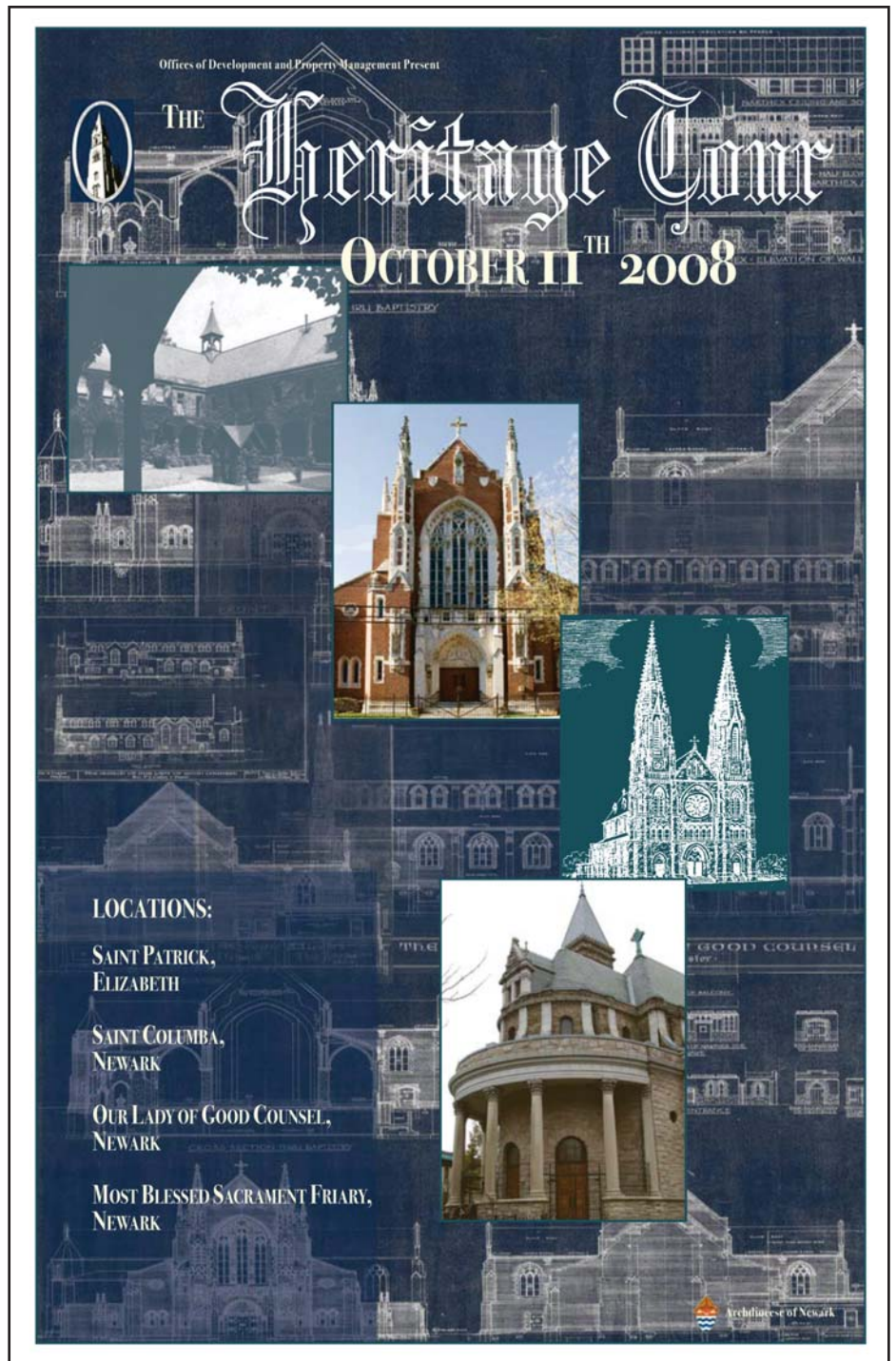
the value of these works of art and therefore a lack of appreciation and desire to contribute to their upkeep. The Archdiocese of Newark, in New Jersey, has carefully analyzed the needs of their churches and has developed a creative approach to building awareness outside of the inner city for the need to preserve their artistic legacy.

With the establishment of the Office of Development and Property Management and the installment of Art Historian Troy Simmons, MA, CC, in the department, positive steps have been taken in the analysis of the Archdiocesan properties, arts and holdings through professional appraisals and restoration proposals. More conscientious documentation of artistic works, their conditions and the cost for restoration have allowed Archdiocesan officials to develop a true knowledge of the projects that require attention and a fundraising goal to meet the needs of each church. Their years of dealing with the needs of their holdings have helped them to identify qualifying craftsmen to offer critical proposals and options to juggle the restoration needed and the available funds.

Public awareness has been raised through articles in the Archdiocesan paper and commemorative volumes with photographs and text of interest to a wide audience. Lectures and programs held in various churches bring people to the historic sites and allow caretakers to expound on the artistic and inspirational value of the liturgical arts. Perhaps the most ambitious undertaking has been the establishment of The Heritage Tour.

For the fourth year, The Archdiocese of Newark has raised awareness about their treasures and shared them with the public through a Heritage Tour. The churches selected for the most recent tour have not been subjected to extreme change as occurred with so many after Vatican Council II. Though not the goal of the Council, interpretation of some actions of the Council led to the removal of communion rails, reredos, altars and other components of the church proper. These changes were never implemented in the churches on this tour, and they remain as the designers and architects originally envisioned them.

The tour included transport by hired coach, continental breakfast and lunch at the Diocesan Center. First stop was at St.



Tour Program

Patrick Church in Elizabeth. When we pulled up to the Gothic structure, we felt as though we were traveling through Europe, stopping at one of the ancient cathedrals. Designed by New York architect William Schickel around 1886, the structure was inspired by the Cathedral of Cologne. At the time of its construction, it was the largest Roman Catholic Church in

New Jersey. The stained glass was designed by Mayer of Munich with the rose window costing \$700 and the pictorial nave windows at \$500 apiece.

The second church, St. Columba, Newark, designed by Charles Edwards, was inspired by the Chapelle Royale at Versailles and is simultaneously Gothic and Baroque in style. The opalescent



Without ongoing efforts to raise the funding needed to preserve the rich patrimony of religious art and architecture in the Catholic churches and dioceses of America, much of this art and architecture could be in danger of being lost.

stained glass windows were created by Arnold & Locke Studios of Brooklyn, NY, which was active from 1880 until 1893. The opalescent glass offers a softness to the portraits and a glowing luminescence that bathes the interior in golden light. The eight windows feature glittering details in the garments and backgrounds enhanced by the use of brilliantly colored glass beads. Each window depicts a single figure of a saint, with the most recognizable being the depiction of Mary in the style of Art Nouveau paintings by William Adolphe Bouguereau, 1825 – 1905, and others dealing with religious subject matter during that period.

Also in Newark, the third church visited was built in 1941 by architect Paul C. Reilly in the English Gothic style. The towering stone columns and vaulted ceiling within Our Lady of Good Counsel Church do create the impression of a cathedral in Britain. The stained glass was made by Hiemer & Company of Clifton, NJ, in the Romanesque revival style. The individual medallions placed in each lancet depict stories from Old Testament, New Testament and church history. Both

Georg Hiemer and Jacob Renner rendered the cartoons and performed the crucial painting on the windows. Both gentlemen studied in Munich and came to the Von Gerichten Studio in Columbus, Ohio, in the 1920s.

The transept windows feature four large single figures in the elongated, narrow styling characteristic of English Gothic stained glass. The approximately nine-foot-tall figures are surrounded by medallions depicting scenes from their lives. The Irish heritage of the founding community is reflected in their inclusion of St. Patrick and St. Brigid in the dominant transept windows.

The final visit was to Most Blessed Sacrament Friary in Newark. Originally a cloistered community of Dominican Sisters, the structure was built in 1884 in a classic cloister floor plan, with living accommodations surrounding a central courtyard. The chapel was designed to serve the Sisters and the outside community, with the altar placed in the middle of the room, surrounded by privacy gates. The sisters would attend mass on the cloistered side of the altar, and pews on

the other side were accessible from the street entrance.

Three styles of stained glass are found in this chapel: two single-figure Saint windows, two-figure scene windows above the altar area and six windows in the cloistered chapel clerestory. The first two appear to be late nineteenth-century French, which relates to the history of the community, as the Sisters came from Quillons, France. The two at the altar area are also not signed but seem to date to a later period, perhaps the 1930s. The cloister area windows were designed by Simon Beraslauce for Hiemer & Company in 1962. Beraslauce was a Basque artist renowned in his native Spain who spent the bulk of his career with Hiemer. These windows feature symbols from the Litany of Loreto, in Simon's distinctive modern style.

According to Troy Simmons, patrimony is a world crisis. With religious groups unable to support and maintain properties worldwide, we face potential loss of priceless religious works. Simmons and the Newark Archdiocese are facing the crisis head-on and are looking forward to expanded breakout tours of Churches, reaching an even wider demographic of individuals who wish to increase their knowledge and appreciation of the treasures to be found so close to home.

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