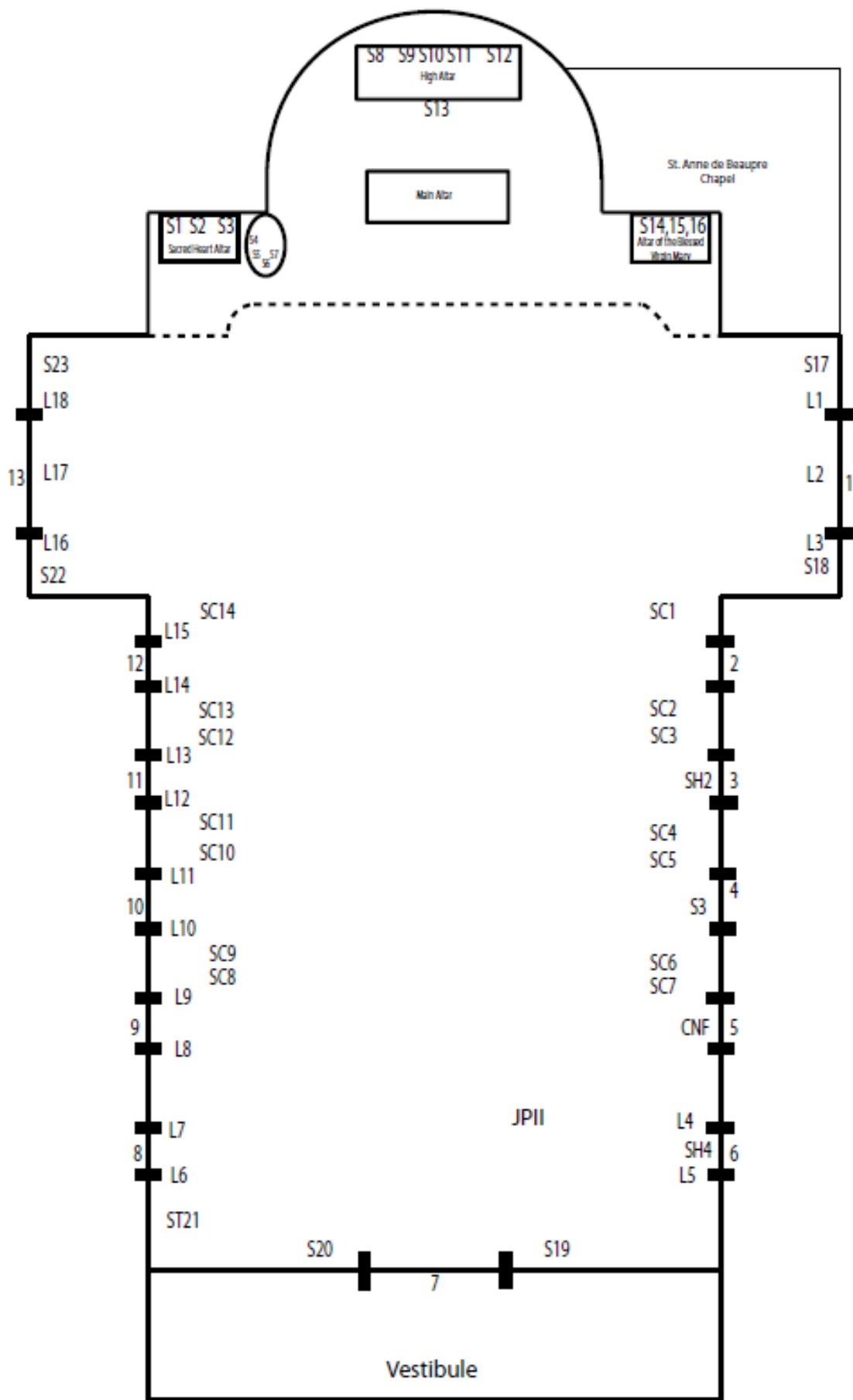


*Welcome
to the
Basilica of the Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary*



Self Guided Tour & Brief History of St. Mary's



Legend

Upper Windows

1. The Death of St. Joseph
2. Nativity of Mary
3. Presentation of Mary in the Temple
4. Espousal of Mary and Joseph
5. The Annunciation
6. The Visitation
7. Rose Window. Vision of the Messiah in Paradise
8. Nativity of Jesus
9. Presentation of Jesus in the Temple
10. Finding Jesus in the Temple
11. Holy Family at Nazareth
12. Return from Calvary
13. Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Stations of the Cross

- SC1: Jesus before Pilate
SC2: Jesus is Laden with the Cross
SC3: Jesus Falls for the First Time
SC4: Jesus Meets His Blessed Mother
SC5: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross
SC6: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus
SC7: Jesus Falls the Second Time
SC8: Jesus Consoles the Women of Jerusalem
SC9: Jesus Falls the Third Time
SC10: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments
SC11: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross
SC12: Jesus Dies on the Cross
SC13: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross and Placed in His Mother's Arms
SC14: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb and on the Third Day Rises Again

Lower Windows

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. St. Paschal | 10. St. Genevieve |
| 2. St. Anthony | 11. St. Roche |
| 3. St. Francis | 12. St. Agatha |
| 4. St. Augustine | 13. St. Agnes |
| 5. St. Monica | 14. St. Michael, Archangel |
| 6. St. Lucy | 15. Guardian Angels |
| 7. St. Rita | 16. St. Elizabeth of Hungry |
| 8. St. Patrick | 17. St. Margaret of Cortona |
| 9. St. Henry | 18. St. Clare |

Statues

- S1: St. Roche
S2: Sacred Heart of Jesus
S3: St. Anthony of Padua
S4: St. Matthew
S5: St. Mark
S6: St. Luke
S7: St. John
S8: St. Paschal
S9: Mary, Mother of Jesus
S10: Crucifix
S11: St. John
S12: St. Francis
S13: The Last Supper
S14: St. Rose of Lima
S15: Mary Queen of Heaven
S16: St. Elizabeth of Hungry
S17: St. Jude
S18: St. Anthony
S19: St. Peter
S20: St. John the Baptist
S21: Infant of Prague
S22: St. Pope Pius X
S23: St. Therese of Lisieux

Shrines, Confessional,

St. John Paul II Place of Prayer

- SH1: St. Joseph
SH2: St. Kateri Tekakwitha
SH3: Our Lady of Guadalupe
SH4: Pieta

CNF: Confessional
JPII: St. John Paul II knelt in prayer here in 1987

A Brief History

The **Basilica of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary (St. Mary's Basilica)** is the **oldest Catholic parish in Phoenix**. Until **1924**, it remained the only Catholic parish in the city. Its roots reach back to the home of **Mr. Jesus Otero** at First Avenue and Washington Street, where, from **1872 to 1881**, priests from Florence would travel by horse and buggy every three months to celebrate Mass for the growing community.

In **1880**, construction began on an **adobe church** at the present site of St. Mary's under the direction of **Fr. Edouard Gerard**, the first priest ordained in Arizona. Measuring 60 feet by 40 feet with a pitched, shingled roof, the adobe church was **dedicated by Bishop Salpointe on June 24, 1881**. **Fr. Joseph Bloise** arrived the following year as the **first resident priest**, succeeded in **1887** by **Fr. François X. Jouvenceau**. That same year, Fr. Jouvenceau invited the **Sisters of Mercy** to open a school, and by **1885** they had also established **St. Joseph's Hospital**, which continues to serve Phoenix to this day.

In **December 1895**, **Bishop Peter Bourgade** invited the **Franciscan Friars** to assume responsibility for St. Mary's, an arrangement approved by the Holy See the following month. The **first friars arrived on January 12, 1896**. By then, the little adobe church was showing its age. Under the leadership of **Fr. Novatus Benzing, O.F.M.**, plans were drawn up for a new church. Work began in **1903** with the construction of a **basement church**, which served the parish until the upper church could be completed. This "basement church," now the parish social hall, was **dedicated on February 11, 1903**, under the patronage of the **Immaculate Heart of Mary**. A decade later, in **July 1913**, construction of the **upper church** began. Built in the **Mission Revival style** with a **Romanesque interior**, it quickly became known as an outstanding example of Mission Revival architecture. In **1916**, the parish was entrusted to the newly created **Franciscan Province of Santa Barbara**.

The completed church was laid out in the **form of a cross**, symbolizing Christ's sacrifice. The **main altar** rests beneath a **stained-glass dome**, depicting the **Holy Spirit descending as a dove surrounded by tongues of fire**, a powerful reminder of Pentecost. The arms of the cross form the east and west **transepts**, each containing a large **stained-glass window** depicting the triumph of eternal life over death. The **Monroe Street entrance** forms the foot of the cross. Measuring **160 by 90 by 60 feet**, the church was built of **brick**, with a **parabolic sanctuary wall** to project sound clearly. Decorative elements echo rich Christian symbolism: triangles and trefoils recall the Trinity, while lilies, grape clusters, and wheat sheaves point to Mary and the Eucharist

Between **1913 and 1914**, the **Emil Frei Art Glass Company of St. Louis**, possibly with help from the **Franz Zettler Company of Munich**, designed the stained-glass windows, **depicting the life of Christ, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and many saints**, drawing worshippers into the mysteries of faith. The **Stations of the Cross** and the **Last Supper panel** at the high altar were created by the **Andrew Kaletta Company of St. Louis**. The woodwork—altars, pews, confessional, pulpit, and sacristy furnishings—was crafted of **solid oak in 1910** under **Br. Eugene Obert, O.F.M.**, produced by **Theodore Kunts of Cleveland**.

In **1958**, **Fr. Victor Bucher, O.F.M.**, with **Br. Cajetan Baumann, O.F.M.**, remodeled the sanctuary for the centennial of the Lourdes apparitions, trimming the high altar, lowering the communion rail, and simplifying decoration. In the **1970s**, St. Mary's gained recognition as a **historic treasure: Arizona Historical Society (1976), State Inventory of Historic Places (1977)**, and the **National Register of Historic Places (1978)**.

For the centennial, major changes were planned to conform to the **Second Vatican Council**, but **Fr. Warren Rouse, O.F.M. (1982)** led a **restoration instead of renovation**. Woodwork was refinished, confessionals turned into shrines, statues restored, and new kneelers and doors installed. In **1984**, the aging organ was replaced with an **Allen Digital Computer Organ**, later moved to the loft.

St. Mary's **original bell (1888)** cracked in **1932** and was replaced with **four bells**, the largest weighing **1,888 pounds**. In **1983**, a **carillon** was added. The stained-glass windows were fully **restored in 2004**. The old friars' choir became the **Blessed Sacrament Chapel (1986)**, later enhanced with stained glass in **1993**.

In **1985**, **Pope John Paul II** raised St. Mary's to the dignity of a **Minor Basilica**. The proclamation was celebrated on **December 8, 1985**, with **Archbishop Robert Sanchez of Santa Fe**. On **September 14, 1987**, **Pope John Paul II** personally visited, **praying in the center aisle** and addressing the faithful from the **balcony**. St. Mary's was later named a **Phoenix Point of Pride (1993)**. Restoration continues: **bells repaired (2008)**, **Shantz pipe organ installed (2012)**, and the **St. Kateri Tekakwitha shrine (2014)**.

In **2023**, after **127 years of Franciscan leadership**, the **Friars of the Santa Barbara Province** entrusted pastoral care of St. Mary's to the **Diocese of Phoenix**. **Bishop John P. Dolan** expressed gratitude for their legacy, praising their generosity and compassion.

What Is a Basilica?

The word *basilica* comes from a **Greek term meaning “royal house.”** In the Catholic Church, the title is a **special designation given by the pope** to churches of particular **spiritual, historical, or architectural importance.**

There are two types of basilicas: the four **major basilicas** in Rome (**St. John Lateran, St. Peter’s, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major**) and all other **minor basilicas** around the world.

St. Mary’s was proclaimed a minor basilica by Pope John Paul II on September 2, 1985. With this dignity come three visible signs: the **conopaeum** (a red-and-gold silk canopy symbolizing unity with the pope), the **tintinnabulum** (a bell carried in solemn processions), and the **papal crossed keys** (a reminder of communion with the Holy Father).

But the title of **basilica** is more than ceremonial. It carries obligations: special care in celebrating the **Feast of the Chair of Peter (February 22)**, the **Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul (June 29)**, and the **anniversary of the pope’s election.**

For the people of Phoenix, **St. Mary’s Basilica** is not only the city’s **first Catholic parish** and a **historic landmark**, but also a **living reminder of the Church’s universal bond with the successor of Peter.**

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Timeline

1880: Construction begins on original church

1881: Original church dedicated by Bishop Salpointe on June 21st.

1882: School founded and staff ed by the Sisters of Mercy

1895: Franciscan Friars agree to assume stewardship of St. Mary’s

1895: St. Joseph's Hospital Opens under the care of the Sisters of Mercy 1896: First Franciscan Friars arrive

1902: Original church structure razed

1903: Lower church (now the social hall) completed and dedicated. Assumes name The Church of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary 1913: Construction begins on the Upper Church

1914: Construction finished on Upper Church on New Year's Eve

1915: Upper Church dedicated by Bishop Granjon on February 11th

1923: Sisters of the Precious Blood assume stewardship of the school

1958: Remodeling begins under Fr. Victor Bucher, OFM

1969: Diocese of Phoenix is established

1976: Named Historic Site by Arizona Historical Society

1977: Placed on State Inventory of Historical Places of Arizona

1978: Added to National Register of Historic Places

1982: Restoration begins

1985: St. Pope John Paul II elevates St. Mary's to the rank of Minor Basilica 1987: St. Pope John Paul II visits St. Mary's Basilica and addresses the faithful from the front balcony

2004: Restoration of stained glass windows complete

2008: Restoration of the bells of St. Mary's complete

2012: 26 Rank Shantz Pipe Organ installed

2014: Side Chapel rededicated to St. Anne

2023: Pastoral care of St. Mary's transferred to the Diocese of Phoenix

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