



Welcome to
Our Lady of Mercy Church
Boca Grande, Florida

Six Royal Palm trees lead you to the entrance of Our Lady of Mercy Church built in 1950, donated by Mrs. Gertrude Hill Gavin, designed by the noted architect F. Burrell Hoffman. The church was dedicated by the then Bishop of St. Augustine, Archbishop Joseph Hurley.

Before the first resident priest was assigned in 1984, the Catholic community in Boca Grande was served by priests from parishes in Arcadia, Punta Gorda, Port Charlotte, and Grove City. Prior to the building of the bridge and the church, priests came by boat to celebrate Sunday Mass during winter season in the Boca Grande Hotel. In 1988, the Mission of Our Lady of Mercy was raised to the status of a Parish with Father Jerome Carosella as the first pastor.

The design of the church is early Italian Renaissance and is reminiscent of the Spanish colonial mission churches erected in the 17th century.



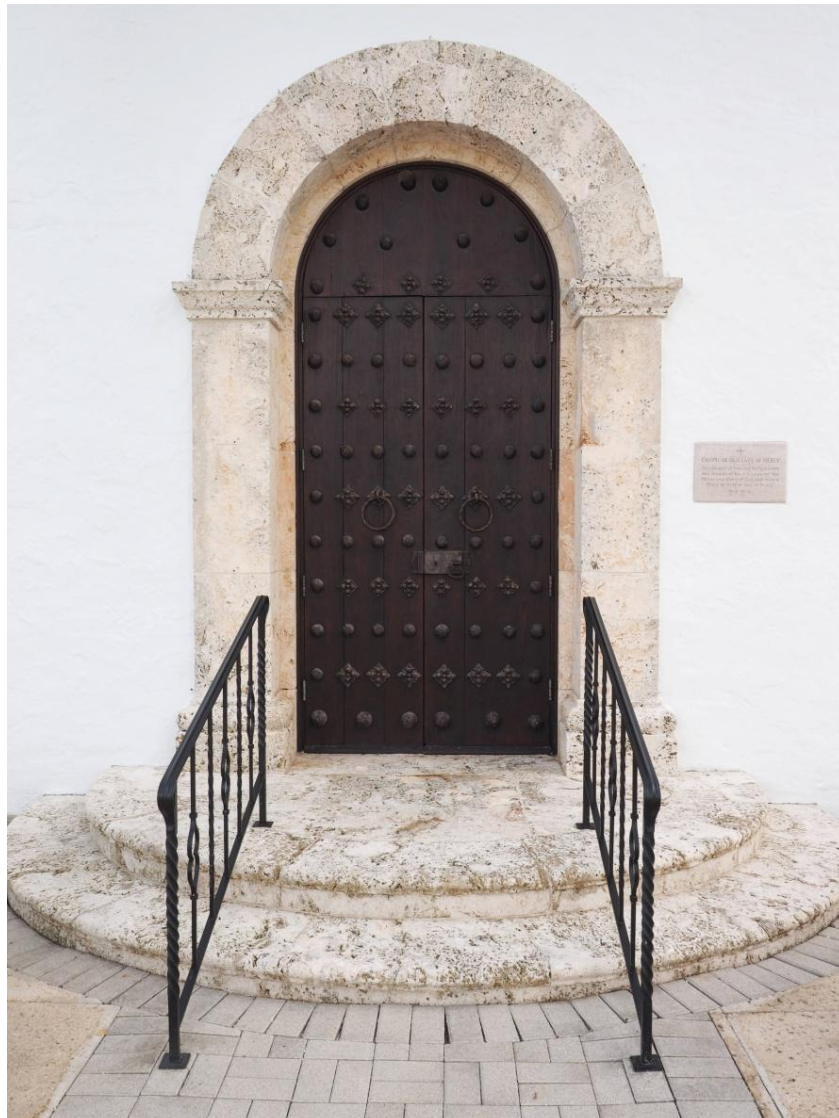
The double carved wooden entrance doors were donated by Rodney Sharp.



The decorative iron work on the exterior of the doors is of special interest.



The church steps, the surround of the entry doors as well as the original altar are made of native coquina stone.



A bronze bell in the tower is rung by a sturdy, weight bearing rope hanging through the roof and the ceiling. The resonant tones carry throughout the village.

As you enter the church, above the front door is an oil painting of Our Lady holding the crucified Christ. St. Francis, St. Clare and St. Mary Magdalene complete this renaissance painting. It is framed in polychromed, gessoed wood (gypsum) and is of Spanish or South American origin.



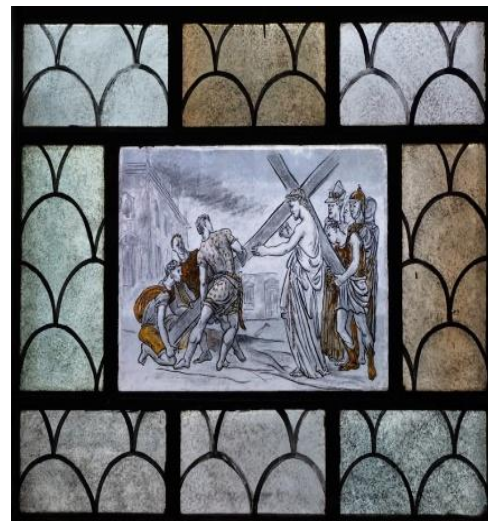
Above the painting is a circular, stained glass window presenting an unusual version of Mary crowned in heaven, seated beside her Divine Son.



On the left, the more than 200 year old confessional door, originally used as a sea captain's cabin door is done in a semi-classical Mediterranean design. Note the open work at the top and the multi-pointed star on the bottom panel.



The Stations of the Cross (both those in the cypress frames and those in the windows) were painted by Jerome Hill, of St. Paul Minnesota, the nephew of the church's donor and a noted artist.



The windows are designed with a fish scale motif. The majolica tiles framing the windows were imported from Spain. They feature a recurring blue flower design.

Ten-pointed star-shaped, leaded Spanish lights descend from the Florida pecky cypress wood ceiling.



To the right of the side door is an icon of the Holy Mother and Child (circa 14th century). It is painted on wood and mounted on antique velvet with four rosette corners. Research indicates that it is from the Venice-Crete School of iconography. Originally it was the center panel of a triptych.



St. Francis stands on the left of the sanctuary on a cypress bracket. This is a reproduction of a glazed terra cotta statue of the Saint by artist Andrea Della Robbia and displayed in Assisi, Italy.



The Madonna and Child grace the opposite wall. Of French origin, this is a hand-carved replica of a medieval statue venerated in a village in southern France. On the walls next to these statues are two colonial period Peruvian paintings; the Annunciation and the Visitation. These two paintings, part of a series depicting the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary, were donated by a parishioner. It is thought that they are from the 16th century Cuzco School, perhaps by Maestro Diego Quispe.



The nave floor is designed in red herring-bone tiles. A hand-carved fruitwood railing separates the nave from the sanctuary. Above the altar an antique silver-plated sanctuary lamp hangs from the domed ceiling. It was imported from Spain. Within the sanctuary stands a marble altar and a matching lectern to the left. They were acquired in 1980.



The crucifix (left) above the lectern is carved in fruitwood. It is reputed to have been created by a WWII Polish prisoner of war. It was presented to the church by a parishioner.



The prie-Dieu (kneeling bench) on the right, is a more-than-200-year-old work of Spanish artistry. On the altar is an ornate brass crucifix decorated with symbols from the Old and New Testaments. The design suggests Spanish origin. although no details are available, it is reputed to be from the 15th century and it appears to have once been mounted on a procession cross. For more than 300 years it was a treasured possession of the donor family.



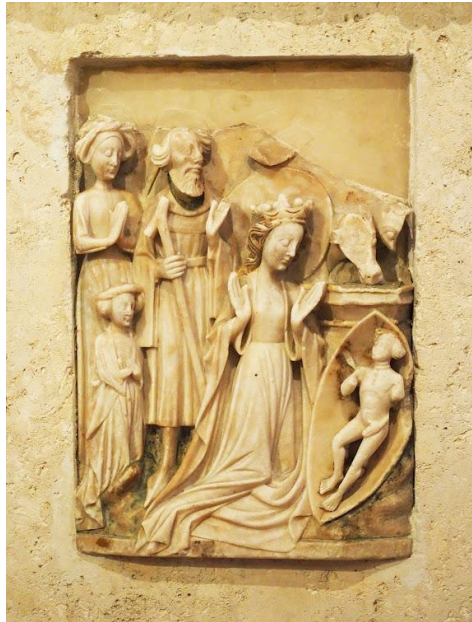
The leather-bottomed chairs, left and right are thought to be 250 years old. they, like so many objects in the Church, represent the work of Spanish artisans.

To the right of the main altar, the wall niche displays three wood panels painted in the Florentine Style. They originally adorned the inner walls of the tabernacle. The fourth panel is the interior door of the tabernacle. The recess was intended as a niche for the cruets.

In the center of the original altar is the tabernacle. Thought to be a late fifteenth or early sixteenth century work, it is constructed of finely carved fruitwood, enriched with gold leaf. The center panel shows a high relief carving of the Risen Christ, bearing the Cross with symbols of the Eucharist. Saint Peter, on the right holds the keys (Matthew: 16:19). Saint Paul, on the left holds a sword (symbol of his martyrdom).



The original altar is made of Florida coquina stone (sea shell fragments). The center Panel on the base of the alter depicts the birth of Christ. It is sculpted in alabaster and is representative of medieval artisans in Nottingham, England.



On either side of the alabaster medallion, chiseled in coquina stone, are wheat and grapes, symbols of the Eucharist.



Above the tabernacle is the reredos.



The large center panel is a polychromed, wood carving which tells the story of the Annunciation. This arresting depiction is probably of 16th century Spanish origin and may have been commissioned for a convent chapel in Valladolid, Spain.



At the top of the reredos is a wooden crucifixion scene; directly below it, the Flight into Egypt done in alabaster. In the lower center there is an oval marble carving of the Mother and Child, flanked by polychromed wood carvings of the two brother Saints and Apostles, John and James. A number of small oil paintings adorn the reredos. Among those depicted are eight paintings of the Blessed Mother, and one each of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Jerome, and St. Francis of Assisi.



The reredos is unusual, in that it was not conceived as a single piece. It is a compilation of works of different artists from many places and times. The reredos spans two centuries of religious art that has been skillfully arranged in the gilt frame to embellish the central panel of the Annunciation.

Circular stained glass windows were installed in 1981 where wooden louvers originally served for ventilation.



The decorative doors on either side of the sanctuary are made of wood, in a design typical of South American churches.

Set in the wall of the storage room to the right is a ceramic tile depiction of the Woman of the Apocalypse, surrounded by symbols taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A replica of this can be found on the north wall of the courtyard.

Our lady of Mercy Parish is indebted to the many parishioners and members of the community who have contributed to this peaceful, lovely House of God.

We invite you to visit our church and to remember in prayer all those who have made this Church possible. May you find peace and contentment within these walls, and receive the protection of our patroness and her Divine Son.

Mary's Song

(MAGNIFICAT)

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my savior, for He had looked upon His lowly servant"

From this day all generations will call me blessed; the Almighty
has done great things for me, and holy is His Name.

He has mercy for those who fear Him in every
generation.

He has shown the strength of His arm, and has scattered the
proud in their conceit.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has lifted the
lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He
has sent away empty.

He has come to the help of his servant Israel for He
remembered His promise of mercy, the promise He
made to our fathers, to
Abraham and His children forever."

(Luke 1: 46-56)