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ST. CATHERINE UNIVERSITY

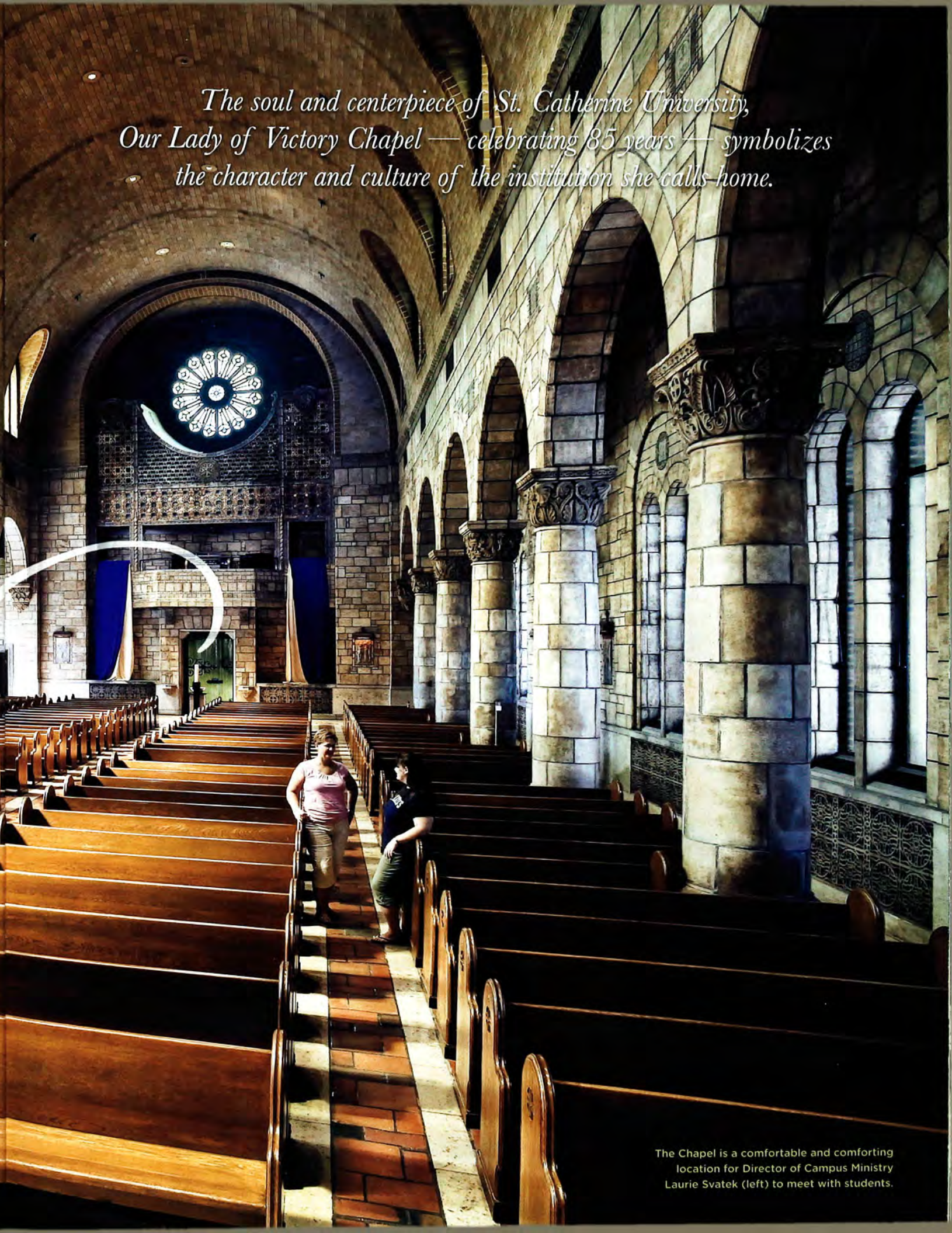
Our Lady of Victory
CELEBRATES 85 YEARS

LIVING THE LIBERAL ARTS

ALUMNAE REUNIONS

WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP

*The soul and centerpiece of St. Catherine University,
Our Lady of Victory Chapel — celebrating 85 years — symbolizes
the character and culture of the institution she calls home.*



The Chapel is a comfortable and comforting location for Director of Campus Ministry Laurie Svatek (left) to meet with students.

When Kathy Daniels '73 enters Our Lady of Victory, St. Kate's 85-year-old chapel that anchors the St. Paul campus, she feels as if she is passing from one world into another. § "The outside, with its angular pattern of stone and brick, makes me think of our hectic lives today. It's the spirit of the secular world," says Daniels, director of the nearby Catherine G. Murphy Gallery. "But inside, the feeling changes. The warm tile that covers every surface is calming, natural, organic and very welcoming. You feel part of something great, real and supportive."

Like thousands of other Katies, she has drawn peaceful inspiration from the Chapel since it was dedicated on the Feast of Our Lady of Victory, October 7, 1924.

Since that unusually warm and bright fall day, the Chapel has become a symbol and a center point for St. Kate's. It's the place where the community gathers for rituals both religious and secular, where important moments in the life of the University are celebrated. And it holds a host of memories, both individual and collective.

"Our Lady of Victory is where we mark the end of orientation, the beginning of the new students' career at St. Kate's," says Laurie Svatek, director of campus ministry. "The students process from The O'Shaughnessy to the Chapel; there are scripture readings, prayers and hymns — including 'The Hymn to St. Catherine.' We celebrate the beginning of the academic year with the Mass of the Holy Spirit, and the Baccalaureate Mass honors those who are being granted degrees at the end of the year. We celebrate weddings, funerals and memorial services for members of the community."

Brides for decades have returned to the Chapel to lay their bouquets at the feet of the Blessed Virgin Mary. And when the College became St. Catherine University last June 1, community members chose to celebrate the milestone with a procession to and ceremony in Our Lady of Victory. "Coeur de Catherine, our student center, is the heart of St. Kate's," Svatek concludes. "But the Chapel is its spirit."

When Ruth Brombach '60, executive director of the Alumnae Association, talks to former students about Our Lady of Victory, the memories come tumbling out. "Older alumnae remember the capping ceremonies for our nursing students, which were held in the Chapel," she says. "The nurses got their caps, the symbol of their new profession. And there used to be a Eucharistic procession in May, in which the students moved through the campus in caps and gowns, ending up at the Chapel for communion."

"The Chapel's grandeur has become a symbol, for me, of Mother Antonia's expansive vision and what I expect of St. Catherine and its mission today and always."

Associate Professor Mary Ann Brenden, *With New Eyes: Rediscovering Mother Antonia McHugh through the Lens of Our Lady of Victory Chapel*, March 2009

Brombach, whom many count on as the institutional memory of St. Kate's, has other stories. "During alumnae reunions, there was a chapel ceremony for 25- and 50-year alumnae — they got silver and gold pins," she recalls. "And I think everyone loved, and still loves, the parts of the Chapel liturgies in which women take leading parts: the choirs, the scripture readings, the sheer presence in the Chapel of so many women, young and old."

'WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CATHOLIC'

So how did this powerfully meaningful building come to be? Mary Ann Brenden knows. An associate professor of social work, Brenden was the 2007 winner of the Bonnie Jean Kelly and Joan Kelly Faculty Excellence Award, which carries with it a \$10,000 prize. Brenden used that money, in part, for a study-travel adventure to Arles in the south of France. There, she studied and photographed St. Trophime, the famous Romanesque church (once a cathedral) on which Our Lady of Victory was modeled.

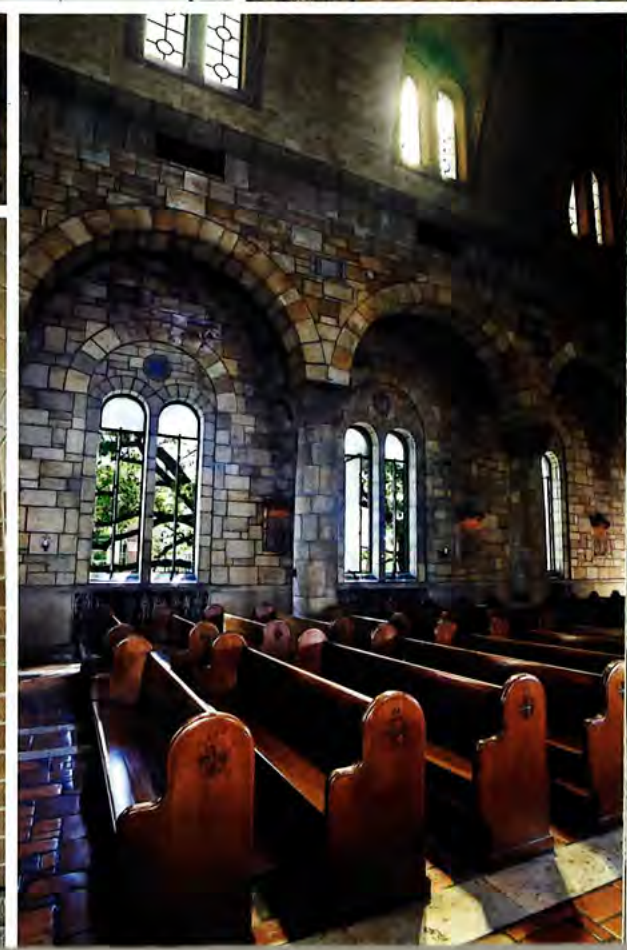
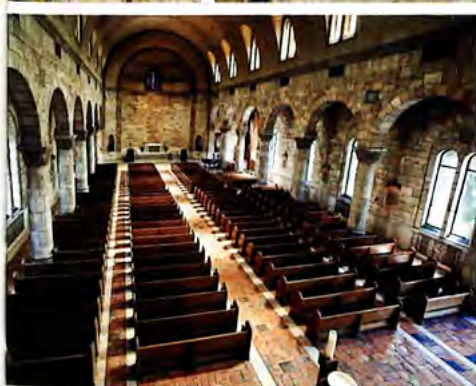
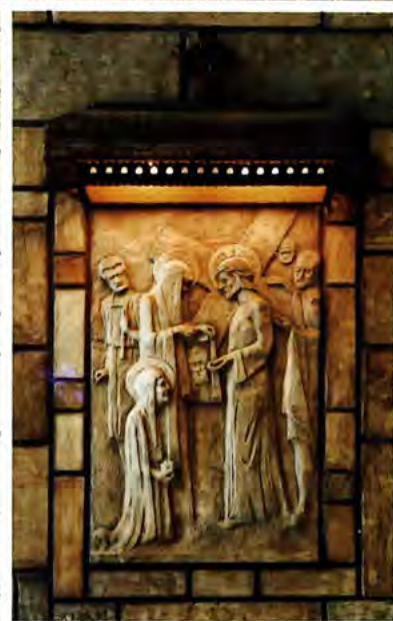
Brenden has delved deeply into the University archives to learn the story of how Mother Antonia McHugh — the first and, to date, longest-serving president of St. Catherine — dared to conceive and build a monumental church at a time when the then-College of St. Catherine was not yet two decades old. Brenden even created a presentation highlighting the Chapel's French heritage and celebrating Mother Antonia's role in making Our Lady of Victory a reality.

"How did Mother Antonia dare to dream so big?" she writes in the March 2009 issue of *Colleagues*, the Teaching-Learning Network's newsletter for the St. Catherine community.

"Women's education was still on trial in the court of public opinion and even in the Church. The College of St. Catherine could claim an enrollment of only about 300 and just 50 or so graduates per year. The campus had only three buildings: Derham, Caecilian and College (aka Whitby) halls.

OPPOSITE: Mother Antonia McHugh meticulously planned every detail of Our Lady of Victory Chapel "to symbolize the expansiveness and future orientation that makes St. Catherine University what it is today," says Associate Professor Mary Ann Brenden, who has thoroughly studied the Chapel's history. "Our Lady of Victory connects us to an enduring tradition of identity with a thick thread of stone and bricks and tile that symbolizes St. Catherine's enduring mission. The Chapel is a call to each of us, urging us to carry forth the vision our founders held for women in our world, for educational justice, for a Church that heals and inspires humanity and leads toward the renewal and redemption of all."





"And yet in the midst of these precarious beginnings," Brenden's essay continues, "Mother Antonia — a nun from North Dakota — got the notion that not only would she build a chapel at her fledgling women's college near the banks of the Mississippi, but that she would model it after a historic French cathedral. Go figure!"

Brenden credits not only the Kelly award but the Myser Initiative on Catholic Identity and the annual Scholars' Retreat for making the St. Trophime research possible. Drawing inspiration, perhaps, from Mother Antonia, she was nothing if not thorough. Brenden can point to most every detail in the Chapel — from its earth-toned interior tiles to the allegorical figures and ancient Christian symbols on its column capitals to its beautiful organ-loft screen — and tell a story.

"The Chapel embodies for me what it means to be Catholic," she says. That starts with the sculptures that crowd the portal: images of Jesus, of angels, of great saints like Joseph of Nazareth, Teresa of Avila, Anthony of Padua and Thérèse of Lisieux — and, of course, Catherine of Alexandria, the virgin and martyr for whom the school was named.

"As Catholics, we have a mission to build a better world, work toward a better future," says Brenden, who is a CSJ Consociate, a term for a layperson who makes a commitment to live the values of the Sisters in the context of her or his life. "For me, the story of the making of this chapel is very much bound up with that effort and that hope. Mother Antonia had a really vast vision for women's education and for the school and its future. Her plans for the Chapel show that St. Kate's was intended to be around for a very long time."

'THE EPITOME OF BEAUTY'

Mother Antonia made it clear from the beginning that she wanted the Chapel to be "large, Romanesque and beautiful," according to *More Than a Dream*, the 1992 history of the College written by Rosalie Ryan, CSJ, and John Christine Wolkerstorfer, CSJ.

Here, the story gets a little murky. Did Mother Antonia ever visit St. Trophime, one of the great ecclesiastical

monuments of Europe? She traveled to France in 1922, but Mary Ann Brenden can find no written evidence that Mother Antonia ever went to Arles, even though Ryan and Wolkerstorfer claim she did. "I'm willing to bet she did go there, on a side trip from her official itinerary," says Brenden. "She may have been advised to visit St. Trophime by one of the sisters studying in France. The account probably came down in CSJ oral tradition."

The authors of *More Than a Dream* also assert that Mother Antonia sent the Chapel's architect of record, Herbert Sullwold, to France and Spain to study St. Trophime and a number of other churches.

Whether she ever actually stood in Arles' spacious Place de la République, Mother Antonia was a serious student of history, architecture and art, and she picked a resonant prototype for her chapel. (In his vast epic, the *Cantos*, modernist poet Ezra Pound singles out St. Trophime as an epitome of the beauty and value of the entire European cultural tradition.)

Built in the 12th and 13th centuries, with major additions in the 15th, St. Trophime is a noble example of the Romanesque, a style that was already 200 years old when St. Trophime was begun. The solid, earthbound feel and the rounded arches of the Romanesque were giving way to the soaring, ethereal Gothic style in Paris, but the older mode still held sway in Provence, the heart of the south of France.

Provence also boasted a distinctive school of Romanesque sculpture, and the west portal of St. Trophime is generally acknowledged to be the greatest showcase of this style anywhere. The tympanum — the recess under the arch — that crowns the portal depicts Christ presiding over the Last Judgment, surrounded by the familiar symbols of the four Evangelists: an angel, a lion, a bull and an eagle. Above him, supporting the arch, are grotesque little figures: an eagle, a giraffe, gargoyles, bats and other mini-monsters. The 12 Apostles are lined up below the seated Jesus. To the left, the elect parade to heaven; to the right, sinners glumly jostle one another on the way to hell. (With a mischievous smile, Mary Ann Brenden points out that the hell-bound in the St. Trophime frieze are all male, while women are among the blessed.)

Below this apocalyptic scene, and separated by pillars, are two groupings of statues of saints who were important in the history of Arles, including the church's namesake, St. Trophimus (died c. 280 AD), traditionally the first bishop of Arles. St. James is present too, because Arles was an important stop on the crowded medieval pilgrimage route from France to the cathedral of St. James of Compostela in Spain, where relics of the apostle were venerated.

THE SAINTS OF ST. CATHERINE

When Brenden first set eyes on St. Trophime, she felt herself lost in time and place. "I thought for a moment that I was back on campus," she says. "Seeing the cathedral for the first time was like meeting the parent of a dear friend." But the differences between Our Lady of Victory and St. Trophime are as compelling as the similarities.

"The Chapel is a place where our Protestant students and our Jewish, Muslim and Hindu students don't feel excluded. And its simplicity helps create a mood of peacefulness that's very conducive to its mission as a chapel, a place for meditation as well as celebration."

Kathy Daniels '73, director of the Catherine G. Murphy Gallery





Presiding from the Chapel's tympanum is Our Lady of Victory herself, holding the young Jesus in a posture that predicts his crucifixion. And over her head, instead of medieval symbols, are beautiful saintly women standing for the virtues that Mother Antonia wanted to promote in her young women students: justice, charity, purity, faith, hope, simplicity, wisdom, fortitude, industry and meekness.

In the frieze at the Blessed Virgin's feet, the 12 Apostles also appear, flanked by the spirits of Divine Faith and Divine Science. To the left and right, the heaven- and hell-bound are replaced by the dramatic story of St. Catherine of Alexandria's martyrdom, from her efforts to convert pagan priests to her final moments with her head on the block.

The statues of the saints are a kind of Who's Who of the College of St. Catherine circa 1924. St. Anthony of Padua is there to evoke Mother Antonia herself; the image of St. Augustine of Canterbury honors Austin Dowling, the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis in 1924. St. Joseph is present in his role as patron of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, and St. John recalls the great John Ireland, the archbishop presiding when the College was first conceived. St. Teresa of Avila is there because the Sisters of St. Joseph

ABOVE: The tympanum of the campanile (north) portal (top, left) features a bas-relief in Batchelder tile of *Panis Angelicus*, the Eucharistic host and chalice flanked by two adoring angels. The remaining photos depict stone carving featured on the Chapel's grand portal, which, along with the rose window, are emblems of the Chapel's historic architecture. Presiding over the grand portal is Mary, Our Lady of Victory. The portal carvings also include 10 patron saints, the legend of St. Catherine, and numerous other symbols and stories relating to the University's heritage.

became a congregation on her feast day.

Thérèse of Lisieux is on the portal because Mother Antonia was passionate about the cause of her canonization — and also, the story goes, because prayers to her gave the president the courage to ask a benefactor for a major gift to complete the Chapel. (Thérèse became a saint just a year after the Chapel was completed.)

Brenden notes something else significant about this grouping: "The saints at Arles are all men," she says, "while our portal features five women saints and five men saints."

In many ways Our Lady of Victory distinguishes itself from St. Trophime aesthetically. "Our chapel has a wonderful, dramatic setting at the crown of a hill, but St. Trophime is crowded in next to other buildings," she says.

The intricate, subtly colored rose window, now the showpiece of the University's new logo, was one of Mother Antonia's additions; the façade of St. Trophime has no such window. The French church's exterior and interior walls are plain as well, made of stuccoed and whitewashed stone, while the walls of Our Lady of Victory, inside and out, are among its most imaginative and significant elements.

THE MEN BEHIND THE WOMAN

Architecture critic and former *St. Paul Pioneer Press* writer Larry Millett periodically gives architectural tours of the St. Paul campus for the Alumnae Association. The author of the American Institute of Architects' *Guide to the Twin Cities*, he calls the Chapel's exterior wall treatment "jazzy." Rows of brick, imitating mortar, run in horizontals and sharp diagonals between large slabs of travertine stone.

The stone was cut using steel shot, which results in tiny blossoms of discoloration. In this process, tiny spheres of steel are pulverized and added to the water that is poured over the stone as the saw cuts it. The water cools the friction of saw on stone and settles the resulting dust; the steel fragments

How did Mother Antonia re-create so many carefully chosen details of the cathedral in France with no e-mail or fax, no air travel, no digital camera, no medieval craftspeople who were experts at stone carving?



ST. CATHERINE ARCHIVES

add their abrasion to the cutting process. Some of those fragments settle into the porous stone and rust colorfully, creating the patina.

Who knows whether this roughness and energy came at the direction of Mother Antonia or the architect, Herbert Sullwold, although those who knew Mother Antonia might guess it was her idea.

Little is known about Sullwold's contribution to the design, says Millett, or about the man himself — other than that he studied at the University of Minnesota and then transferred to MIT, earning a Bachelor of Science in 1907. He was a founding member of a social organization for St. Paul architects and designers quaintly named the Gargoyle Club. He apparently pleased Mother Antonia, for he later was retained to design Mendel Hall, completed in 1927.

Ernest Batchelder, the man who designed and produced the tiles that cover the walls and pillars of the Chapel interior, was the greatest American tile craftsman of his era and a major artist of the Arts and Crafts movement. New Hampshire-born, he taught at Throop Polytechnic Institute (later Cal Tech) in Pasadena, California. As his reputation grew, he came to Minneapolis often between 1904 and 1909 to teach drawing and design at the city's Handicraft Guild, one of many regional associations that sprang up in the early 20th century to promote Arts and Crafts ideals.

Batchelder left Throop in 1909 and by the 1920s had developed a nationwide business designing and producing tile of great beauty and originality — with subtle earth colors and blues "like those of old Persian rugs," as a company catalog put it, and designs that drew on medieval European, geometric and even Mayan motifs. By the time he was recruited for the Our Lady of Victory commission, he had 175 employees and many kilns on a seven-acre site in Los Angeles. Batchelder was by far the dominant decorative tilemaker in America, and Our Lady of Victory was the largest project he would ever undertake. The Depression ruined him, as it did many other purveyors of fine architectural ornament.

The plain tiles in the Chapel mimic stone but are subtly warmer in color and feeling, while the ornamental ones at the peak of each window add gentle accents. Larry Millett considers the mosaic-like organ screen at the back of the Chapel the high point of Batchelder's contribution. And Batchelder shows up on the exterior too — a calm band of blue and green encircles the building, and a lovely angel-chalice-and-Host vignette in tile tops the campanile door. (The Stations of the Cross were executed and fired in the Batchelder kilns but were designed by three members of the St. Kate's art faculty: Sister Marie Theresa Mackey, Sister Leon Lefebre and Sister Philomene McAuley, all CSJs.)

No one knows whether Mother Antonia met Batchelder during one of his Twin Cities visits or simply knew him by his outsize reputation. "Finding out would add an important chapter to the architectural history of Minnesota," Millett says.

Perhaps the most legendary story about the building of the Chapel — one that Brenden recounts in her essay — centers on Mother Antonia's persistence in the face of formidable doubt. None other than Archbishop Dowling "was skeptical if not resistant" to the plans, Brenden writes. "He encouraged

her to build the Chapel in the community, down the hill and off campus, so as to serve local residents as well as students."

Mother Antonia insisted that Our Lady of Victory have the best view, from the highest point of the St. Paul campus. "She quelled his concerns about the project by promising him it would be a small chapel," Brenden's essay continues. "And, when the archbishop saw the completed Chapel and proclaimed it to be more akin to a cathedral than a chapel, Mother Antonia reassured him declaring, 'I will fill it. I will fill it!'"

First, of course, she had to get the project done.

foremen to do it, which so pleased Mother that she gave each man a box of cigars. Steenberg would later write: "I believe I had satisfied Sister Antonia's wish, which I had been told could not be done."

The effort paid off. The Chapel was completed in time to be dedicated on the feast of Our Lady of Victory — October 7, 1924. By one account, the ceremony on that unseasonably warm day was nothing short of magnificent, with 70 priests, the Archbishop himself and the entire student body.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 42]

IF YOU BUILD IT . . .

M*ore Than a Dream* tells the story of the president sitting daily on a little stool at the construction site, supervising the work of the builders and, when necessary, hurrying them along. Mother Antonia reportedly persuaded the workers laying the cement for the Chapel floor to work through the Thanksgiving holiday by promising them all a turkey dinner — which she delivered.

And when the men laying the interior tile objected to working on Saturday, contractor Paul Steenberg got the carpentry and bricklaying



The 12th century St. Trophime (above) in Arles, France, served as the model for Our Lady of Victory (right).

"That great day dawned ... summer sun, summer warmth, summer green on all sides," said one Sister Lioba, writing to another CSJ studying at Oxford, "and through this loveliness of combined beauty there passed from College Hall to the Chapel of Our Lady of Victory the procession of dedication. ... The seminarians sang the litany all the way down the aisle. ... Some of the college girls were ushers in the true sense of the word, for they seated a throng which must have numbered 1,000. All the pews were full with six in a pew besides hundreds of chairs."

Decades later, Our Lady of Victory continues to draw the community, both within and beyond the campus gates. Svatek, the campus ministry director, praises the Chapel's "both-and" quality, the way it holds up the University's Catholic identity while promoting a mission of inclusion for everyone, of any faith.

"The Chapel doesn't have Catholic paintings, a prominent Catholic-style crucifix or ranks of statues," says Daniels, the art gallery director. "It's a place where our Protestant students and our Jewish, Muslim and Hindu students don't feel excluded. And its simplicity helps create a mood of peacefulness that's very conducive to its mission as a chapel, a place for meditation as well as celebration. I love ornate churches, but sometimes they can be distracting when I am trying to pray."

Our Lady of Victory does have its share of Catholic and Christian imagery — some subtle, some bold. In addition to the statues of the Virgin and St. Joseph, of course, are the colorful Christ the King window and the freestanding altar, with its resonant quote from the book of Revelation: "Behold, I make all things new."

The floor tiles, which are from the Nemadji works in Moose Lake, near Duluth, Minnesota, are decorated with motifs of three — three leaves, three fleurs-de-lis and a triangle, all representing the Trinity. The capitals of the interior columns are adorned with the symbols of the Evangelists, with a phoenix — for resurrection — and with acanthus leaves, which evoke the Garden of Eden.

And there's a capital with a peacock on it, too, which stands for eternal life. The ancients believed the peacock's flesh did not decay and that the bird renewed all its feathers yearly. In antiquity it was associated with Juno, queen of the gods; in more recent times, the peacock has been equated with an aesthetic pride, a fierce love of authentic beauty.

In that way, the peacock is a fitting symbol of the making of the Chapel: the proper pride and joy of a powerful woman who wished to say to the world that her College — now her University — was here for the ages, for the glory of God and for the advancement of the human race.

JON SPAYDE is a St. Paul-based writer, editor and actor. His latest book is *How to Believe: Teachers and Seekers Show the Way to a Modern, Life-Changing Faith* (Random House). His blog on spirituality and the creative process can be found at creatorspirit.blogspot.com.



ANDY FERRON

Open Arms

In addition to her splendor and rich history, Our Lady of Victory Chapel offers sacred ritual and serves as cherished space for reflection and prayer.

She opens her doors and invites St. Kate's students, faculty, staff and neighbors to share in the Liturgy of the Mass every Sunday morning. She opens her arms to those who wish to celebrate in ways both secular and religious — as well as to those who need to grieve, to weep and to heal.

The Chapel serves as a touchstone for graduates who have come before and the graduates who are yet to come as each receives a hood during the Commencement celebration, signifying discipline, academic achievement and community.

Whatever the occasion, Our Lady of Victory speaks to the heart and spirit in each of us. Among the events traditionally held in the Chapel during the academic year are the faculty/staff awards ceremony, concerts for the Women's Chorale, the Doctor of Physical Therapy White Coat and Pledge Ceremony, and the Social Work Initiation Ritual.

In addition to the Sunday Liturgy, religious celebrations include prayer vigils for people in the community, Advent Vespers, Christmas Eve Mass and the Triduum (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, Easter Vigil).

— Maha El-Wailli



ANDY FERRON

ABOVE: Advent Vespers service. TOP: New-student orientation.