

*Preserving  
the past.*

*A study  
in church  
restoration.*



*The Benedictine Chapel of Perpetual Adoration*  
*Clyde, Missouri*



The majestic stained glass windows, also produced by the Tyrolese Art Glass Company, represent some of the apostles and evangelists, each displaying the instrument of his martyrdom.

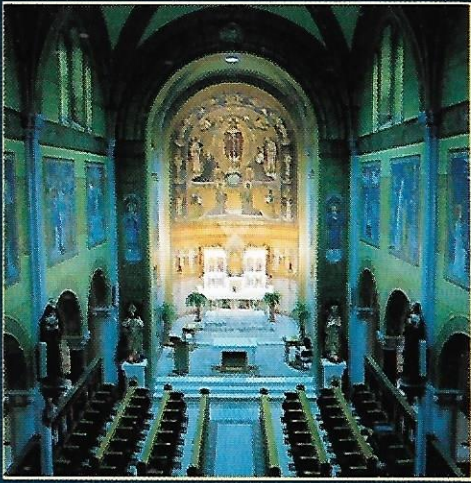


**MAY 21, 1901** — the date the cornerstone was put in place for the Benedictine Chapel of Perpetual Adoration. Over the next ten years, the chapel at Clyde slowly took shape under the direction of Father Lukas Etlin. Father Lukas, a monk of the nearby Conception Abbey, and chaplain for the Sisters, planned and supervised the execution of all the chapel artwork. The completed chapel was consecrated on Nov. 15, 1911.

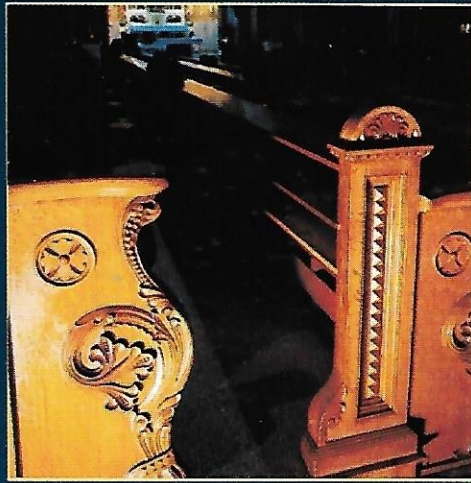
The exterior of the massive, turreted sanctuary is constructed entirely of Bedford stone. The interior contains outstanding examples of early day ecclesiastic art and statuary. The most striking decorations are the beautiful mosaic works that highlight the walls and altar area of the chapel. These richly colored murals are made of tiny pieces of glass and stone that are hand-fitted together, and inlaid in the cement walls. They are executed in the celebrated Beuronian Benedictine style of art, which is very formal and serene in design.

The brilliant mosaic above the high altar is one of the largest in the country. It measures 25 feet in height and 24 feet in width. Two other mosaics depicting the "Last Supper" and the "Crucifixion" adorn the side walls of the sanctuary, and measure 12 feet by 7½ feet in size. The walls of the nave are decorated with eight 7½ sq. ft. mosaics, each portraying an event in the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary. In the rear of the chapel, are two more of these timeless "paintings" picturing St. Anselm and St. Gregory the Great. All of the mosaics in the Adoration chapel were executed by the Tyrolese Art Glass Company of Innsbruck, Austria.

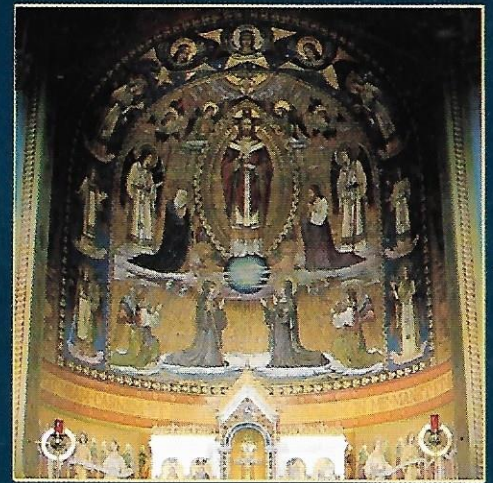
For over seven decades the Benedictine Sisters, by themselves, maintained these mosaics and all the rest of the precious decorations inside the chapel. In spite of the Sisters' best efforts, time began to fade, erode, and even erase the beauty that was fresh in 1911.



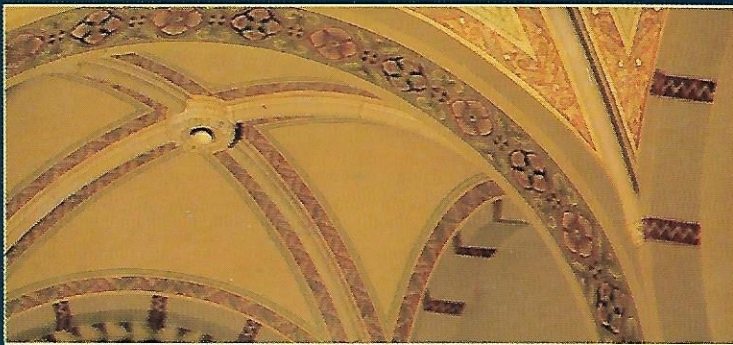
The 25-foot mosaic above the high altar and all of the other mosaic pieces were carefully cleaned by hand with warm water, mild dish washing solution and a vegetable-based soap. Chipped fragments were repaired, color matched and repainted.



The golden oak choir stalls were sanded down and refinished by the Sisters of the community and their employees during the restoration of the chapel.



The ceiling of the chapel towers 50 feet above the floor, and contains much of the 1,300 linear feet of hand painted arch designs. These designs were very faded, and in some areas, completely obscured by candle and incense soot.



The wide variety of arch designs are most evident in the ceilings and archways of the side aisles of the chapel. Stencil patterns could not be used in recreating sections of missing artwork. The original art was freehanded, as was its restoration.

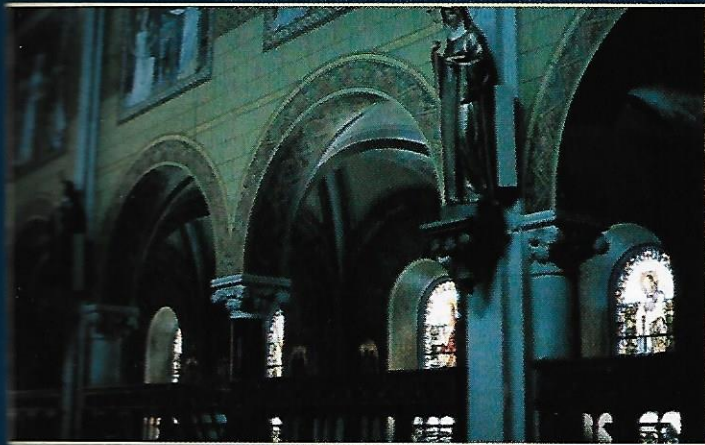
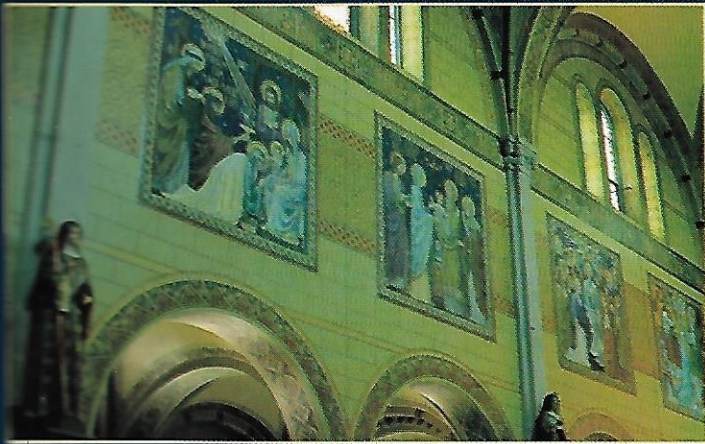


Statues of Benedictine women saints face the nave or center section of the chapel. These include St. Scholastica, St. Hildegard, St. Gertrude and St. Walburga. Each figure is shown with a distinctive symbol characterizing her life.



The six man crew of Church Decorating and Design often worked 10 and 12-hour days during the five month restoration project. The work was sometimes almost hypnotizing in sheer scope and complexity. Wall, ceilings, arches, window ledges—virtually every chapel surface was cleaned by hand before repair and repainting was done. If the original designs and patterns were in good shape, they were left intact. If they

were salvable, they were retouched. If they were badly deteriorated or obliterated, they were painstakingly recreated. Colors were matched, delicate shadings were duplicated—fully 80% of the restored design work was done freehand with artist brushes. The Sisters of the Community were always at hand, and often helped decide whether or not a certain color had “just the right tint” that would match the original.

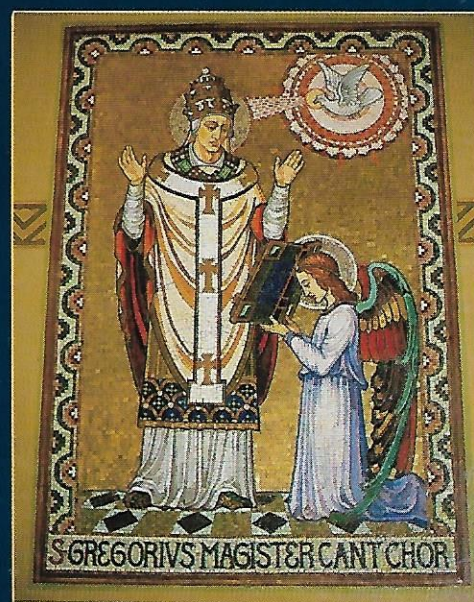
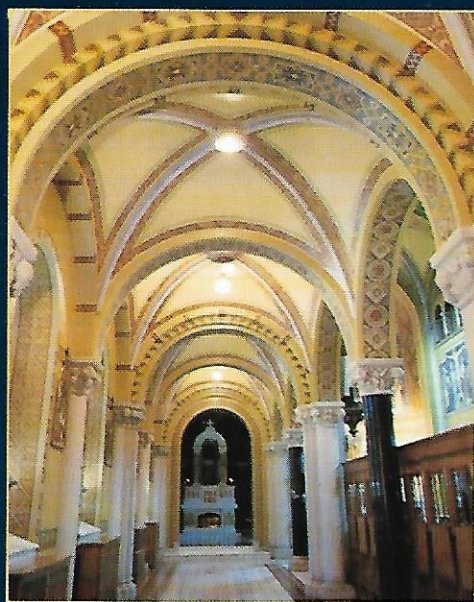
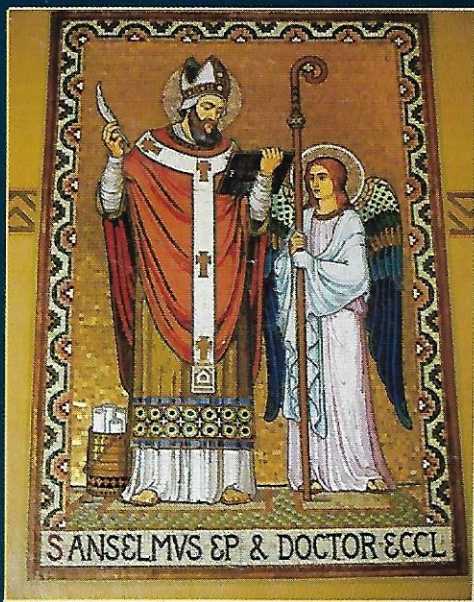
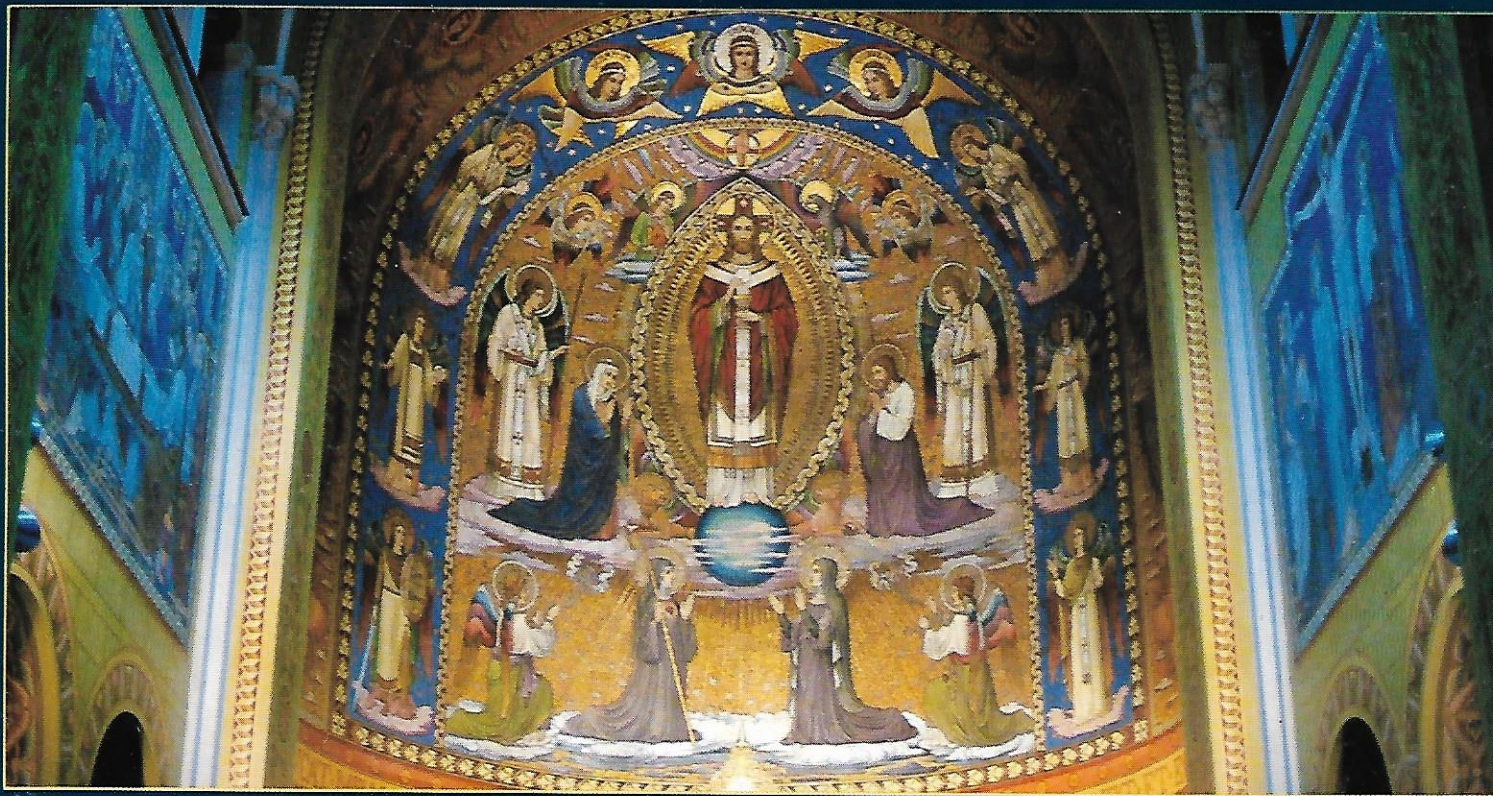


The mosaic restoration was mostly a time-consuming task of cleaning, careful retouching and polishing. Only a few of the very small inlay pieces were chipped or broken. These were repaired, rather than replaced. The biggest fear that the crew experienced was that one of their own ladders or scaffolds might slip and damage one of the brilliant murals.

After all of the repair work and repainting was finished inside the chapel, a final preservative step was taken. A coating of water/white clear varnish was applied to all painted surfaces. This process not only made the colors more vivid and alive, but would also serve to seal and protect the chapel interior in the years ahead.

The exterior of the Adoration Chapel was the last item on the long restoration list assigned to Church Decorating and Design. The massive Bedford stone walls were water blasted clean, freshly point and tucked and, finally, thoroughly coated with a protective chemical sealant.

The restoration of the Adoration Chapel was, quite simply, one of the most arduous projects Church Decorating and Design had completed in their 18-year history. The task tested practically every company skill, and demanded the utmost in physical and mental exertion. The results were worth every minute.



**SPRING 1985**—The decision to completely restore the chapel was finally reached after a number of wall cracks were discovered following the harsh winter months. Further inspection revealed that ceiling plaster had badly deteriorated, and the intricate hand painted patterns decorating the archways had flaked off completely in some areas.

After it was decided that “outside” professional help was needed for the first time in the chapel’s history, the search was started to find the right firm and methods of repair.

The Sisters consulted with several curators of various art museums, studied different restoration techniques, and talked about the restoration project with several companies. After many weeks of interviews and discussions, the Sisters signed a contract with Church Decorating and Design, an Independence, Missouri – based company that specializes exclusively in church renovation.

The actual work began in January of 1985, and the first mass was celebrated July 7th. A total of over 5,000 man hours was spent in the restoration of the Adoration Chapel.