

Immaculate Conception Parish *a brief history*

On February 22, 1906, when Immaculate Conception parish church and school were dedicated, the first 80 students filled four first floor rooms of the original building on Division at Second Street. Masses were celebrated on the second floor.

The church, the central focus of the building complex, designed by the Pastor, Monsignor Passeno and the architectural firm of Harford Field Associates, was built in 1952. The exterior form of the building has not changed in over 40 years of service.

Immaculate Conception church takes its form from the hall churches of late medieval and early renaissance Europe. In the 13th through 16th centuries, the Franciscan, Jesuit and Dominican religious orders required large, open-floor plan, hall-like facilities for public oration as well as celebration of the Eucharist. Punctuating this hall axis or nave of the church are two striking elements: the sanctuary tower and the bell tower.

The sanctuary tower, even in the flat-roofed, abstracted form of Immaculate Conception Church, recalls the magnificent domed sanctuary towers of the renaissance period. The tower has a powerful impact as an interior space reaching toward the heavens.

The bell tower or campanile serves a practical purpose of calling the people to communal worship. It stands high above the surrounding rooftops and its ringing bells peal into the community. The bell tower carries a much greater spiritual significance. Its tall, slender, vertical shaft stands in defiance of gravity. The dramatic sculptural form represents the "axis

mundi" (world axis) -- making a connection between earth below and heavens above.

The church interior is complemented by its liturgical artwork. Slabs of solid Italian rose and white marble comprise the altar table. Additional slabs of the same material, salvaged from the original side altars, have been re-used in the form of a marble ambo designed by architect Richard Skendzel and fashioned by local stone craftsman Mark Knisley in 1996. The right side altar contains the church's original brass tabernacle and sanctuary lamp. And the left altar contains the original cylindrical marble baptismal font and cases for the sanctuary oils, designed and crafted by Tom Doherty. Following the Roman Catholic tradition, the organ and choir loft are situated in the rear balcony. Restored in 1992, the organ is a Moller-Lauck opus 30 pipe organ. It was originally installed in 1953.

The recent addition of the Centennial Hall to the Immaculate Conception Parish campus creates a cluster of building structures dedicated to sacred functions, social activities and education. The hall was designed by Cornwell Callahan Architects. In addition to the strong architectural forms of the church nave, sanctuary tower, and campanile, the tradition of Christian architecture also influenced and shaped the design of the Centennial Hall. In the middle ages, monastery buildings for worship, work and community were joined together. In a modest way, the building complex of Immaculate Conception Parish follows this tradition and serves the needs of the congregation for prayer, reflection, learning, and community activities.

Credits:

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| Text: | Richard Skendzel, Theresa Fowler Eduard Adam Skendzel |
| Images: | Richard Skendzel |

The Art and Architecture of Immaculate Conception Parish



North-east view of church, and hall

Printed to commemorate the
*** * * centennial year * * ***

2002

The dedication of the Centennial Hall recalls the founding of Immaculate Conception parish at the turn of the century (circa 1902).

Though largely immigrants of various ethnic backgrounds and though they encountered many obstacles, they forged ahead in the establishment of a new parish.

It was to them a citadel of faith and hope and the core of their community.

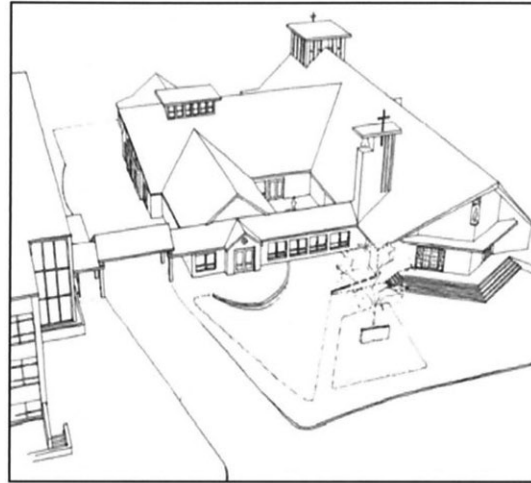
At this dedication, today's parishioners envision the role of the Centennial Hall as heightening that faith, hope and community in ensuing generations.

720 Second Street
Traverse City, Michigan

Centennial Hall

In 1996, the parish built the Centennial Hall, dedicated to the memory of the founders of the parish, circa 1900. The placement of the Centennial Hall between the church and the Middle School building symbolizes the intimate connection between the activities of worship, community, and education as co-imperatives of the Catholic Church. Although the design of the building does not replicate the great religious monasteries, there has been a conscientious and deliberate objective throughout the design process to include the elements of traditional Christian architecture. The building materials and architectural style relate to the design of the church. The building is set back so as not to compete visually with the "sacred place." Note how the existing bell tower plays a role as the link between the hall and the church. Entry to the building begins in a low portico-like breezeway. It then leads into the large, open communal space, the Centennial Hall, made from simple, massive materials, with exposed timber trusses. A clerestory tower punctuates the main hall and mimics the existing sanctuary tower of the church. It ties the new and the old together into a single, unified composition. The tapestry that decorates one wall of the main hall once served as the reredos of the main altar of the present church. The lamps on each side of the tapestry illuminated the original Immaculate Conception Church building at the turn of the century.

The lower level provides additional space for ministries of the parish, choir practice, and meetings of various church groups. Parish Council and other church groups hold their meetings in the Sally and Tim Hanley Conference Room



building masses and open spaces

Space and Place

Plazas and courtyards were important components in early Christian architecture. At Immaculate Conception Parish, the open plaza in the front of the church is a place of transition from the "public" street to the "private" realm of the Church.

In the John and Matilda Shumsky Plaza, situated between the Centennial Hall and the School, the trees, landscape and benches provide a place for enjoyment by school children and parishioners.

An atrium courtyard is formed by the intersection of the Centennial Hall, the church, and the glass breezeway that connects church and school. For worshipers, this is a place of reflection before entry into the church; for catechumens, it is a place of spiritual preparation as they prepare to enter into membership of the church body itself. Religious ceremonies and processions traditionally intended to originate out-of-doors will now continue from the atrium.



the atrium and sculpture

Christ with Children

A river of stone cuts through the brick-floored atrium. A child lifts a foot across the divide, holding Christ's hand. Jesus carries a younger child, his eye on the path ahead.

The sculpture is by Chicago artist Jerzy Kenar. This image, in the permanence of bronze, is what the people of Immaculate Conception want to endure through the next millennium.

Children always have been the heart of the parish as reflected in its educational, social, and salvific mission. This artwork's powerful imagery symbolizes Christ's guidance in life's many personal challenges.

In this space there is a synergy between sculpture and architecture. The atrium becomes part of the sculpture, while the sculpture is enhanced by the transparency of the wall planes and the geometry of the building massing around it.

Kenar, born in Poland, came to the United States in 1979. His ecclesiastical works can be seen in places of worship around the nation.