

This completes the self-guided tour of our church. If you have any questions or would like additional information, please feel free to ask one of our priests or the parish staff for assistance.

S t B r i d g e t C h u r c h

E a s t B l o o m f i e l d , N Y

SELF-GUIDED TOUR

Welcome to St Bridget's Church. This self-guided tour was designed to help our parishioners and visitors familiarize themselves with our worship space. St Bridget's parish was formed in 1850 by the Rev Edmund O'Connor, pastor of St Mary's in Canandaigua, who had begun visiting the sixteen Catholic families in East Bloomfield. In 1852, Fr O'Connor and the few parishioners succeeded in erecting a small 30 feet by 40 feet wooden white church near the southwest corner of the present parking lot. In 1865, the current pastor, Fr William Hughes purchased land for the cemetery, land that would also be used to eventually build a larger church. The cornerstone was laid on August 2, 1874, and construction continued until the church was dedicated by Bishop McQuaid on June 13, 1875.

Our beautiful Romanesque-style Church is 40 feet wide by 110 feet long and is built of red brick with stained glass and etched windows, covered by an exceptional Vermont slate roof.

The first sacred place you come upon after entering the main doors of our church is the **baptismal font**, which is found on the left. This is appropriate since baptism is the sacrament which marks the beginning of the Christian's journey toward communion with God in the Eucharist. As you look down the length of the church your eye naturally lands on the Eucharistic Table or altar and then to the right of that the ambo or pulpit which nourishes us with God's word on our faith journey.

As you can see, this movable baptismal font is made from white marble in two sections. The size and placement of the font symbolizes the importance of baptism in our sacramental lives. And the round shape harkens to the tomb and womb imagery of baptism, in which we die to sin and are reborn in the Spirit of Christ.

Near the baptismal font in a tall stand is the **paschal candle**. This candle, which is blessed and lit for the first time each year at the Easter Vigil, reminds us of the light of Christ into which we were baptized. For baptisms and funerals the Paschal Candle is moved to the foot of the sanctuary in the center aisle.

As we enter the body of the church, we dip our hand in one of the **holy water fonts**, and bless ourselves with the sign of the cross. In doing so, we recall our baptism.

As you head down the center aisle toward the altar notice the **stained glass windows** and the symbols that painted into upper border. Can you identify each of the symbols?

Symbols of the arch on the right: The Sacraments

Baptism—The Sacrament of new life in Christ. The seashell and water as reminders of the symbol of water used in this sacrament

Eucharist—One of four Eucharistic symbols on this wall, this one illustrates the monstrance, in which the consecrated host is displayed for adoration

Reconciliation—Reminiscent of the keys given to Peter as symbol of his authority, the action of reconciliation, when sins are loosed and forgiven.

Confirmation—The dove is the symbol of the Holy Spirit. In this sacrament we are “sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Eucharist—One of four Eucharistic symbols on this wall, this one illustrates the image of Jesus, the Lamb of God.

Eucharist—One of the four Eucharistic symbols on this wall, this one showing the host and chalice, as bread and wine are consecrated into Jesus' Body and Blood.

Eucharist & Reconciliation—One of the four Eucharistic symbols on this wall, this one depicts IHS (which form the monogram of His holy name, derived from the Greek six-letter word for Jesus) and ten red circles representing the ten Commandments

Matrimony—The rings given as a symbol of unity and oneness between husband and wife form the principle sign of this sacrament.

Ordination—This symbol includes the stole of the priest, the gift of Eucharist he provides to the community and the Book of Scripture as the source of God's Revealed Word.

Anointing—The form of this symbol is highly reminiscent of the title formerly given to this sacrament: *Last Rites* or *Extreme Unction*. The hour glass is filling as the person nears death. The wings of angels picture a soul rising to Heaven, supported by a bed of olive branches as a sign of peace and forgiveness



Symbols of the arch on the left: The Passion and Death of Christ

Bag of Coins—Judas was paid thirty pieces of silver to hand over Jesus to the authorities.

Pillar and Whip—After being arrested, Jesus was tied to a pillar and scourged with a whip.

Fire and Clubs—When Judas brought the soldiers to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, they used torches to light the way and clubs as weapons.

Crown of Thorns—To mock Jesus who had been called King of the Jews a “crown” made of thorns and brambles was fashioned and placed on Jesus’ head.

Bowl of Water—Pilate finds no reason to execute Jesus. He “washes his hands” of the wishes of the crowd.

Pliers—Although not recorded in any of the Gospels, pliers were likely used to pull nails of execution from the cross.

Spear—After Jesus had died, instead of breaking the bones of his feet, one of the soldiers thrust a lance into his side.

Crosses and Ladder—The crosses remind us of the two criminals who were executed on either side of Jesus. The ladder symbolizes the path to Heaven given to each of us in Jesus’ dying for our sins.

Dice and Cloak—Since the clothing that Jesus wore was made from a single piece of cloth and would be worth more whole, soldiers rolled dice for it.

Empty Cross—The white garment resting from the side arms of the cross remind us of Jesus’ resurrection. INRI are the first letters of the Latin inscription which by Pilate’s order, was placed on the cross: “Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews.”

The Sanctuary

The elevated space immediately around the altar, which is called the sanctuary, also contains the ambo, processional cross, altar candles, high altar and chairs for the presiding priest and deacon.

The **altar** stands at the center of the sanctuary at the ends of the main aisle. The altar is the symbol of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration. Hence the priest and deacon bow toward and kiss the altar at the very beginning and the end of each celebration of the Eucharistic celebration as a sign of reverence. And, as the focal point of the church, the altar is not moveable. Because of its significance, flowers or candles are not placed on the altar table.

This altar is solid walnut with a cherry oil finish to harmonize with the high altar. The mensa, four by five feet gives the appearance of floating lightly above the base and stretcher. Its edges are all “radiused,” or softened by a curve. There are five crosses carved in the altar (one on each corner and one in the center of the altar) which symbolize the five wounds of Christ. Early stone altars were actual tombs of martyrs in the Roman Catacombs. In modern times altars have a little marble sepulcher in the center where **relics** are sealed when the altar is consecrated. When the current altar was installed in 1992, the altar stone from St Joseph’s Church in West Bloomfield was placed in the new altar table.

The **high altar** is located just behind the Mass altar. In 1950 this large walnut altar was redesigned and a new bronze tabernacle put in place. The **tabernacle** is an elaborately decorated container where the Eucharistic bread, the body of Christ, is reserved. The hosts contained within are reserved primarily for the purpose of Viaticum (holy communion) for the dying, and secondarily for Communion outside of Mass (for the sick and homebound) and for adoration and devotion. It is customary to reverence the tabernacle by genuflecting (kneeling on one knee) when passing in front of it. This altar was used at Mass until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council which required an altar in which the celebrant could face the congregation.

Placed on the high altar are the **holy oils**. These oils are blessed by the bishop at the Chrism Mass during Holy Week – the Oil of Catechumens, Sacred Chrism, and the Oil of the Sick. They are made from ordinary olive oil like that is used for cooking. The Sacred Chrism also contains a perfume called balsam.

To the left of the high altar is the **sanctuary lamp**. The candle in this lamp is kept burning at all times as a reminder and a means of honoring Christ's presence.

You'll find the processional cross along the back wall, just to the left of the high altar. The **processional cross** which is carried by an altar server who leads the ministers to and from the sanctuary at the beginning and end of Mass.

Continue to the outside wall on your left and you'll find the **ambry**. This ambry is the wooden box designed to hold the Holy Oils. Underneath the ambry is a **credence table** that during Mass will hold the **lavabo bowl, towel, cups, and chalice and paten**.

As you walk to the front of the sanctuary and begin to cross to the opposite side you'll pass the **presider's chair**. Continue on to the **ambo** or pulpit which is located near the front of the sanctuary, to the left of the Mass altar. This stand is given a place of prominence because from it the Word of God is proclaimed and preached. Its position allows all those gathered to turn their attention toward it during the Liturgy of the Word.

Just past the ambo is the choir area where the choir leads the congregation in sung worship

The Sacristy

Walk through the door at the back of the choir area and you'll find yourself in the sacristy. The sacristy is the room where vestments, altar linens, Eucharistic vessels, and other liturgical wares are stored. The presider and other liturgical ministers prepare for ceremonies by vesting and sharing last-minute instructions.

The Nave

Continue out the opposite door to the sanctuary and sit in one of the pews in the **nave**, the body of the church. Along the walls of the nave are the fourteen **Stations of the Cross**, which depict the Passion, Christ's journey to Calvary.

The **reconciliation room** is located on near the main entrance to church. The room is arranged to provide the option of celebrating the sacrament of Penance either face to face or with the more traditional kneeler and screen.

As the centenary of the present church building approached in 1975, the services of Walter O'Brien, a church decorator and artist from Canandaigua were secured to redecorate the interior of the church that had become worn with age. The whole interior of the church was made lighter with new stencils and faith in artwork. In the two front arches Fr MacNamara and Mr. O'Brien together decided to coordinate the religious representations and symbols so as to teach in art the Catholic Faith. It was so in the ages of Faith in Europe when the stained glass windows and paintings of the church were a visual instruction in the Faith. So on the arch to the left of St Bridget there are ten center blocks, each portraying an instrument or symbol of the Passion and Death of Christ. And the ten blocks to the right of St Bridget represent the Sacraments (four given to the Eucharist).

A dramatic picture of the Altar of Sacrifice with a priest elevating the Sacred Host and above that, a figure of the risen Victorious Christ is featured above the frontal arches. The interior of the church was repainted in January 1994.