



OLV

# National Shrine & Basilica

A Father Baker Legacy



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WELCOME TO OLV NATIONAL SHRINE & BASILICA

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## CONSTRUCTION OF THE BASILICA



In 1916, a devastating fire tore through St. Patrick's Church in Lackawanna, destroying its spire and leaving parishioners heartbroken. But their pastor, Father Nelson Baker, remained calm. At 74, he urged his flock to trust in God, already envisioning a new shrine that would rival the great churches of Europe and



stand as a fitting tribute to his life-long devotion to the Blessed Mother.

That devotion began in 1874, when young Nelson visited the Basilica of Notre Dame des Victoires in Paris. Captivated by its main altar, he vowed to dedicate his life's work to Mary under the title of Our Lady of Victory, later insisting, "She did it all!"

After the fire, Father Baker had faith but little money. He launched a creative "Buy a Block of Marble" fundraising campaign,



inviting supporters to donate \$10. Gifts poured in nationwide, reflecting the trust people placed in him.

Father Baker then enlisted architect Emile Uhlrich, a graduate of the École des Beaux-Arts, along with contractor Edward Jordan. Together they sourced fine materials and assembled skilled craftsmen. By Christmas 1925, just four years after construction began, the Shrine to Our Lady of Victory was complete, fully paid for and shining as a beacon of faith. On May 25, 1926, it was joyfully consecrated, fulfilling Father Baker's greatest dream.



To learn more about Father Baker and his devotion to the Blessed Mother, scan this code.





## EXTERIOR

In August 1921, following the Novena for the Feast of the Assumption, thousands gathered as Bishop William Turner and Father Nelson Baker laid and blessed the cornerstone of what would become OLV National Shrine & Basilica. Today, that same cornerstone rests on the Shrine's northwest corner.

The Basilica's exterior, gleaming in white marble, was crafted almost entirely from stone supplied by the Georgia Marble Company of Tate, G.A., a firm still known today for its work on landmarks such as the National Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Inside and out, 46 different types and colors of marble combine to create a breathtaking mosaic of texture and light.

Extending from the Basilica's façade are two sweeping colonnades, reminiscent of Bernini's design for St. Peter's Square in Rome. Each welcomes visitors with marble figures that

tell OLV's story. On the west colonnade stands a statue of Father Baker, a surprise tribute kept secret from him until its unveiling. The east colonnade pays tribute to the Sisters of St. Joseph, the order that had arrived in the 1850s to care for the little ones at St. Joseph's Orphanage and who remain part of the OLV organizations to this day.

Crowning it all is the Basilica's magnificent copper dome. At 65 feet tall and 80 feet wide, it was second in size (only to the U.S. Capitol) when it was completed in 1925. Atop it, four 18-foot copper angels sound their trumpets to the four corners of the world, proclaiming Father Baker's message of faith and charity.





## ANGELS

Father Baker was fond of saying: “There are 1,000 angels in the Basilica!” The truth is, though, there are far more than that. According to estimates, the Shrine’s interior contains anywhere between 2,000 and 2,500 angels.

Father Baker’s intent was to put one in every conceivable sight line. Why? Their role in proclaiming God’s good news and the reality of heaven.





## STATIONS OF THE CROSS



Lining the east and west sides of the nave, the 14 marble Stations of the Cross are masterpieces of Italian craftsmanship. Each life-sized scene, carved from a single block of marble from the same quarry that was used for Michelangelo's *Pietà*, took the artist, Pepini, and his school of sculptors a full year to complete.

One station in particular, *Jesus Meets His Afflicted Mother*, holds a place of significance within the Basilica. Because of his devotion to Mary, Father Baker could often be found in front of the sculpture, his back against the column, contemplating the emotional scene.



## ORGAN & NAVE



The choir loft houses a 54-rank pipe organ built by the Delaware Pipe Organ Company in 1981, featuring metal and wood pipes from six inches to 18 feet. It replaced the original Wurlitzer, which no longer met post-Vatican II liturgical needs. After the newer organ failed during a 2023 Mass, a smaller restored chancel organ was installed the next year near the St. Joseph Altar on the west side of the Shrine.

Another distinctive feature is the Basilica's pews that are crafted of the African Mahogany pieces now more than 100 years old. They were removed, refinished, fully restored and reinstalled in 2023.



Scan this code to watch a short video about the pew-restoration process.



## STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

The Basilica's exquisitely detailed stained-glass windows illustrate the stories of the Old and New Testaments. They complete Father Baker's vision by casting an intimate glow over every corner of the Shrine.

In the fall of 1923, renowned Buffalo-based artisan, Otto F. Andrlé, was commissioned by Father Baker to produce the Basilica's stained-glass windows. He was overjoyed to be a part of the project and worked tirelessly until the pieces were installed in 1926.

The Shrine's windows range in size from 20 inches wide to more than 13 feet in diameter! Those depicting the joyful and sorrowful mysteries of the rosary are located in the apse, encircling the main altar. The clerestory (the second floor within the nave) includes scenes depicting Jesus' ministry and the Holy Family.



Scan this code to watch a short video recapping the work done to restore the Basilica's stained-glass windows.





## CEILING & DOME

From the choir loft to the dome, the vaulted ceiling of the Basilica is covered by a number of giant murals. They depict Mary as: Queen of Patriarchs, Queen of Apostles, Queen of Angels, Queen of Prophets and Queen of Martyrs.

Of all of the breathtaking works of art, perhaps the most dramatic can be found within the dome itself. Measuring 80 feet in diameter and rising nearly 120 feet from the floor, the painting of the Assumption and Coronation of the Blessed Mother is a true masterwork.

The dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, is at the center of the work and, fittingly, the apex of the Shrine.





## MAIN ALTAR

The focal point of the Basilica's interior is the sanctuary's Main Altar. At its center is a nine-foot-tall marble statue of the Blessed Mother that was personally blessed by Pope Pius XI before being shipped to the U.S. A gracefully unfurled canopy supports a large gold cross held aloft by four angels.

Of particular note are the four columns surrounding Our Lady. The swirling pink, Spanish marble structures are patterned after Bernini's baldacchino found in St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

## PAPAL ITEMS



There are three items within the Basilica that signify the Shrine's prominence within the Catholic Church and its special relationship to the Holy Father: the papal coat of arms, the *Canopeum* and *Tintinnabulum*.

The *Canopeum* is a symbolic shield of protection for the pope during his travels. It remains open in anticipation of the day the Holy Father visits the Basilica.

The *Tintinnabulum* is a small gold bell that would lead the procession down the center aisle if the pope were to celebrate Mass here.





## OTHER ALTARS

Near and around the Basilica's ambulatory, radiating chapels can be found. Each pays tribute to those who served as inspirations to Father Baker throughout his life's work in building his "City of Charity." They include: St. Patrick, commemorating the original church on the site; St. Vincent de Paul, whose works with the poor and needy inspired Father Baker's own; the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and St. Joseph.



Often discovered at the end of people's visits, there are a number of smaller chapels located behind the Main Altar. Here, among others, are the likes of Mary Immaculate, St. Aloysius, St. Anne, St. Anthony and St. Therese.





## GROTTO SHRINE TO OUR LADY OF LOURDES



A truly unique area, the Grotto Shrine is carved out of lava rock from Mount Vesuvius in Italy. At the time of its construction, Father Baker insisted on finding a material that was untouched by human hands to pay tribute to the vision of Our Blessed Lady to St. Bernadette.

On March 11, 1999, Father Baker “came home” to the Basilica. During a special Mass, his casket was carried from nearby Holy Cross Cemetery and placed in a

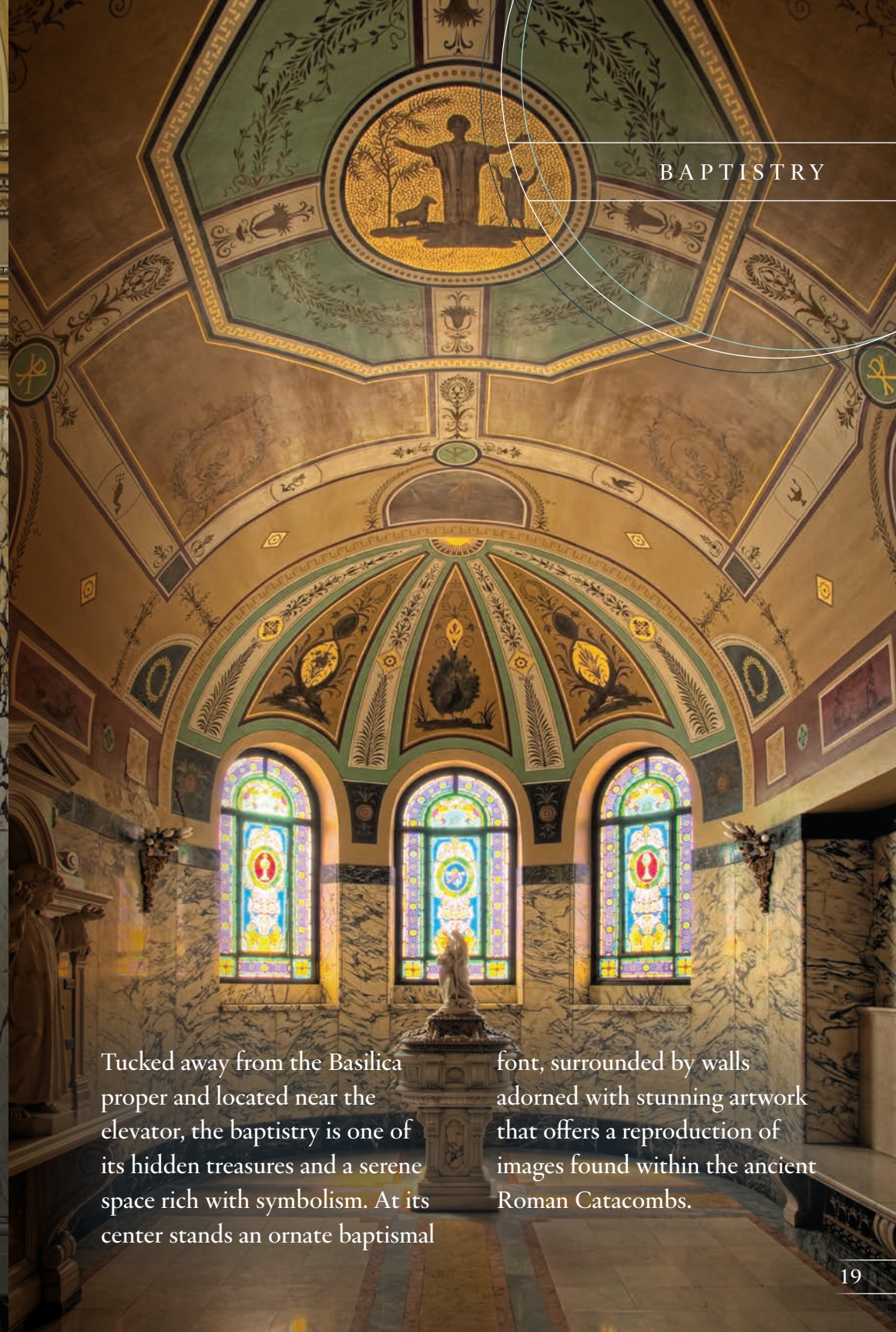
tomb within this area.

Adjacent to the Grotto is the Father Baker Shrine. Designed, hand-crafted and installed in 2025 by OLV parishioners Jon and Victor Trabucco, it is intricately decorated with symbols that honor the humble priest and his patroness, Our Lady of Victory.



Watch a short video about the moving of Father Baker's body into the Shrine.

## BAPTISTRY



Tucked away from the Basilica proper and located near the elevator, the baptistry is one of its hidden treasures and a serene space rich with symbolism. At its center stands an ornate baptismal

font, surrounded by walls adorned with stunning artwork that offers a reproduction of images found within the ancient Roman Catacombs.



## FATHER BAKER MUSEUM



Located in the Basilica's lower level, the Father Baker Museum offers an inspiring look at the life and legacy of Father Nelson Baker. Visitors can explore artifacts, personal stories, and interactive displays that highlight his charitable works and enduring impact from the 19th century to

today. The museum provides an engaging, hands-on experience for all ages, inviting guests to connect with history, witness the power of generosity, and leave inspired to carry forward his spirit of compassionate service.



## RESTORATION WORK | EXTERIOR

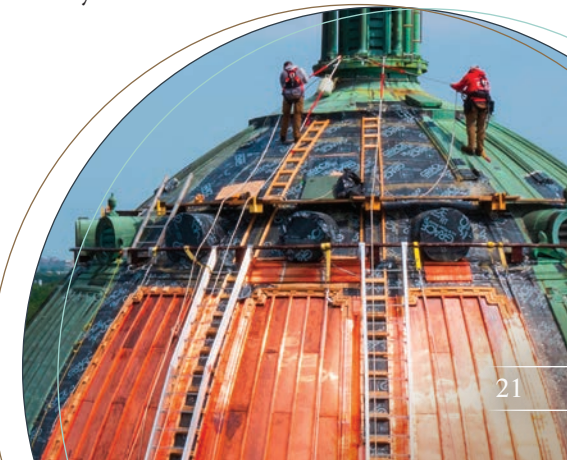


OLV National Shrine & Basilica is enjoying an era of renewal! Accompanying the five-year celebration of the 100th anniversary of its construction, an ambitious plan to restore and preserve it for another century has been underway.

Between 2021 and 2024, considerable work was done to address some of the more critical needs of the Shrine's exterior. This included repairing masonry, gutters and significant roof repairs.

More recently, one of the most

visible efforts got underway. Worn thin after a century of harsh weather, the Basilica's iconic dome is being rebuilt with copper sheeting that is expected to last more than 100 years.





## RESTORATION WORK | INTERIOR

Within the  
Basilica, its  
pews, floors  
and stained-  
glass windows,  
all showing signs of aging, were  
completely restored.



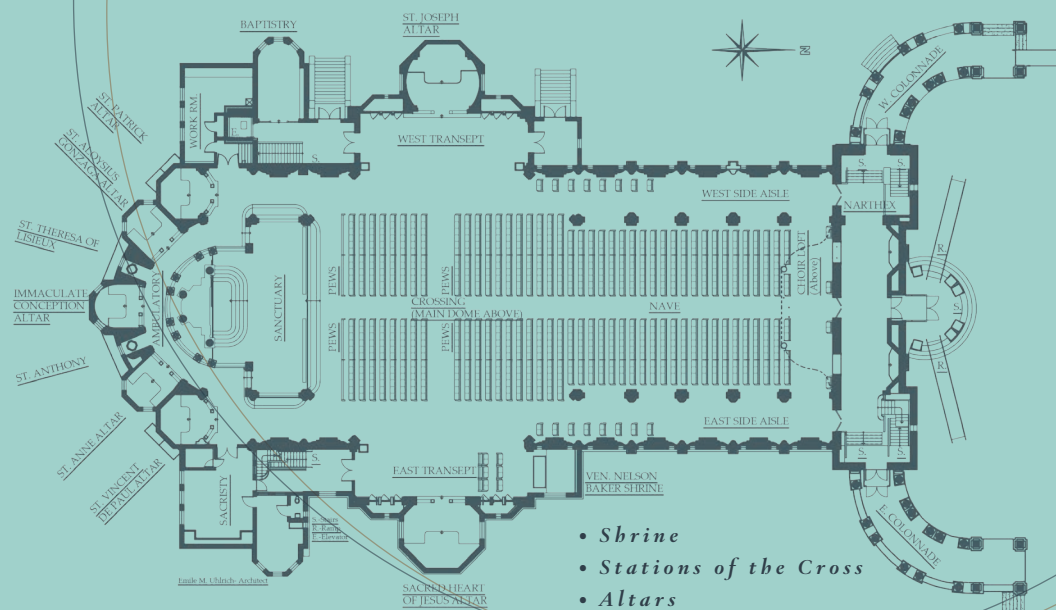
Two additional projects  
transformed the interior: the  
installation of a modern lighting  
system and the restoration of  
plaster, paint, and ornamentation.



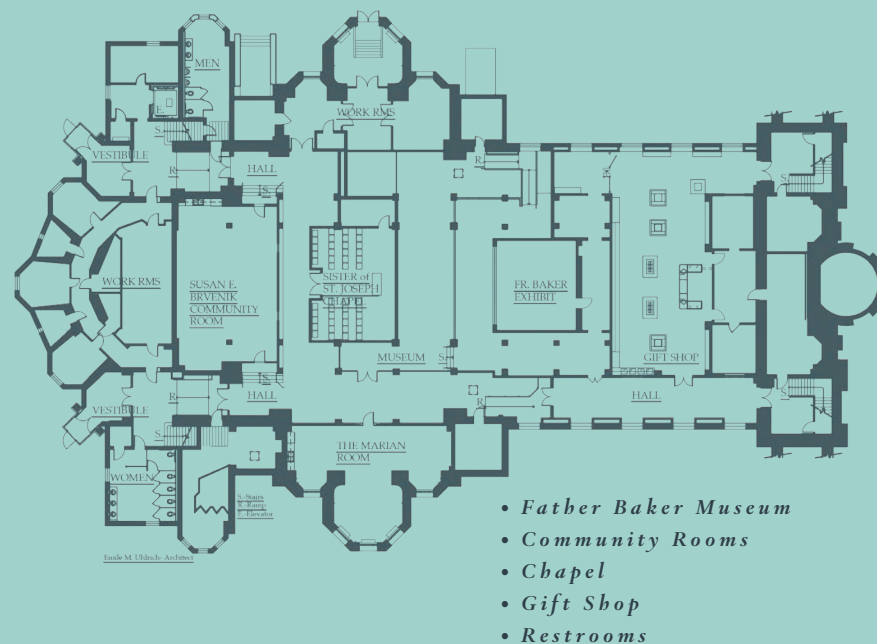
Together, all of these initiatives  
promise to preserve the Basilica's  
legacy as a radiant symbol of faith,  
beauty and hope. For information  
on how you can support our  
restoration efforts, call  
us at (716) 828-9610 or  
scan this code.



## BASILICA | UPPER LEVEL



## BASILICA | LOWER LEVEL





## VISITOR INFORMATION



OLV National Shrine & Basilica is open Monday-Friday 6:30 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
On Saturday, it is open until 7:30 p.m., while, on Sunday, it is open until 6 p.m.

Visitors of all faiths are welcome and there is no charge for admission!

Ample parking is available behind the Shrine and is accessible off of South Park Avenue (Rte. 62). The Basilica is wheelchair accessible via ramps and elevator.

Guided tours may be scheduled any time 1-5 p.m. throughout the week (except Fridays) provided they do not conflict with Masses, weddings or funerals. To make arrangements for your group, contact the Rectory at (716) 828-9444. Please plan ahead and provide ample time for scheduling.

Tours are offered free of charge, although donations are accepted and go toward the cost of ongoing renovations.

### MASS TIMES

- Vigil Mass | Saturday | 4:30 p.m. (Organ and Cantor)
- Daytime Sunday | 8 a.m. (Organ and Cantor) | 10 a.m. (Folk Music)  
Noon (Choir from September to June) | 4:30 p.m. (No Music)
- Weekdays | 7:30 a.m. | 12:10 p.m. (Monday – Saturday)

### GIFT SHOP

Our gift shop, located in the lower level of the Shrine, sells religious, faith-based, and inspirational gifts. For information, call us at (716) 828-9433.

### GIFT SHOP HOURS

- Sunday – Saturday | 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Closed 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. for lunch)



SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN HOW  
YOU CAN SUPPORT THE SHRINE!