

Bethinking of Old Orleans

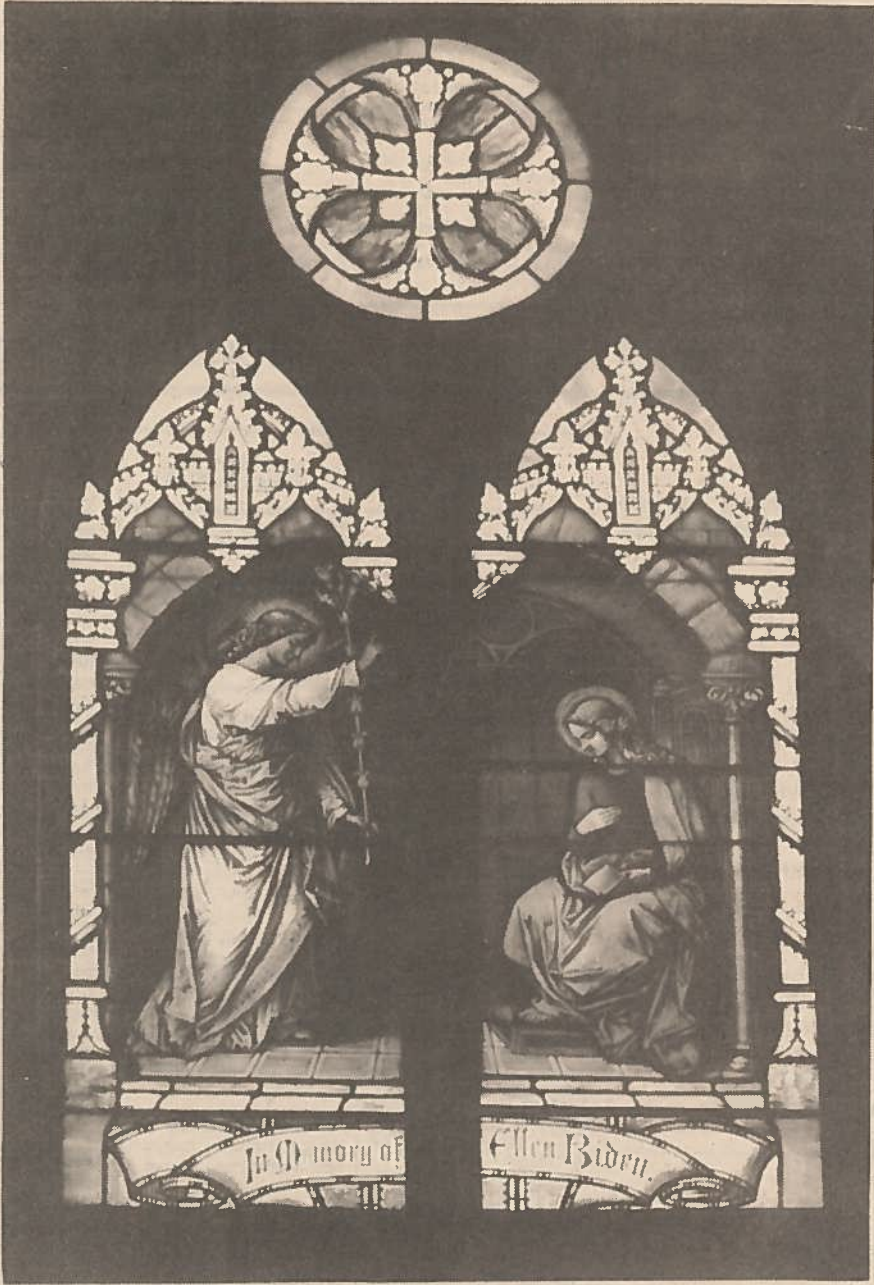
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LUMINARIES IN THE FIRMAMENT



In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy the angel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, to a virgin named Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, a descendent of David. The angel, as he approached her, said, "Greetings, favoured one. The Lord is with you".

But she was troubled at his message and reflected that sort of greeting this might be. The angel said to her, "Have no fear, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And lo, you will conceive in your womb and give birth to a son and you will call Him Jesus. He shall be great and will be called Son of the Highest, and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. He will be King over the house of Jacob for ever; there shall be no end to His kingdom."

Mary asked the angel "How will this be, since I have no husband?" The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore that holy Offspring will be called the Son of God. Also, your cousin Elizabeth is to be mother of a son in her old age, and this is now the sixth month with her who was called barren. For nothing is ever impossible with God." And Mary said, "Here I am, the Lord's bonds slave. Let it be with me as you say." And the angel left her. —St. Luke 1:26-38

Tucked high up in the sanctuary of St. Joseph's church in Albion is this clear story window depicting the annunciation. The foregoing biblical text explains the imagery as seen here. Thus in the left lancet we see the archangel Gabriel speaking to the Virgin Mary who is depicted in the right lancet.

The setting is undoubtedly Mary's home in Nazareth. Gabriel is portrayed in a white robe signifying purity with a gold colored mantle over it which suggests the goodness of God. He is holding a lily which may be seen here as a symbol of purity and is recognized as the flower of the Virgin signifying the Immaculate Conception in token of the purity she preserved amid the sins of the world. Particularly in scenes of the Annunciation, lilies will always be displayed.

Mary with her head bowed, in an attitude of prayerful commitment and loving submission to God, is dressed in her traditional colors of red to portray love and blue to suggest truth. She holds in one hand an open book which gives the impression she was suddenly interrupted from her reading. She states: "Be it done to me according to thy word." When the archangel departed he leaves the Word made flesh dwelling in Mary's womb.

In the base of the window we note a banner which is lettered "In Memory of Ellen Biden." The companion window to this is "Finding The Child Jesus In The Temple," both of which are original works of art dating to 1896.

This fall the Cobblestone Society will publish a book on stained glass windows from Orleans County churches entitled "Luminaries in the Firmament." The Cobblestone Society is now accepting patrons whose names will be published in the book to help defray printing costs. For more information call 589-9013.