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**A SELF GUIDED “POINTS OF INTEREST” TOUR OF THE**

**EXTERIOR OF ST. SEBASTIAN PARISH**

**STARTING POINT: THE PLAZA OF THE CHURCH**

Let’s begin your tour by facing the front of the church.

**FACADE: T**raditionally, the main entrance to a Church is decorated almost like a high altar with an elaborate reredos.

DEEP DIVE: This is because, just as in the Mass we pass from this world to heaven at the altar, so when we enter a church, we leave our earthly cares and enter God’s house. Notice, never do churches decorate more than one door so exquisitely even if they are in the round. There is only one entrance to Heaven! The opening, pillars and doors all have symbolic meaning. One giant arch is Christ through Whom we enter into heavenly mysteries, the two pillars are His two natures, human and divine, and the three doors stand for the Trinity. Compare this entrance to the entrance of the old church (Zwisler Hall) when you get there.

**COAT OF ARMS:**  At the apex of our church is our coat of arms.

DEEP DIVE:The version of our arms seen here was introduced in the mid 1950s. The two bottom fields come from the original coat of arms divided per pale. The field dexter (the shield’s own right) contains seven crosslets. These represent the sacramental mission of the church. The sinister (left) has three arrows. The arrows allude to the first attempt on St. Sebastian’s life in which he was tied to a tree and shot with arrows by his own company. That there are three of them pointing upward gives testimony to his trust in God, one in three Persons, for which he gave up His life and to Whom the parish offers her worship.

Added to the arms is an area called the chief (across the top.) It was once suggested that what is represented here is chevrons denoting Sebastian’s rank in the Roman army. But this would be completely anachronistic. These are more likely stylistic representation of palm branches, the symbol of victory over death; most appropriate for Sebastian who was a martyr.

In the year 2009, there were several versions of the coat of arms being used in the parish. A decision was made to return to the original coat of arms in all further uses in order to give a unified identity to the parish. Architectural flourishes on the new church building are one of the few places where this 1950’s version is still prevalent.

This particular set of arms is the only one on the campus with weapons and a helmet. According to international laws governing coats of arms, no Church arms should have instruments of combat attached to them.

**OTHER ITEMS ON THE FACADE: I**nside the cross at the apex of the roof is another Chi Rho representing Christ on the Cross and so, in a fashion, making this a crucifix. To the right and left are, respectively, another *Chi Rho* and an *Alpha and Omega* intertwined as was defined in the Interior Self Tour.

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**THE CORNERSTONE:** To the right under the portico is the cornerstone of the church. It was laid in 1959 but the church was not finished until 1960. The words on the stone are the Latin words, “*AD MAIOREM DEI GLORIAM*.” Sometimes “J” are substituted with the letter “I”. Later we will see this written again on our campus

with a “J.” The translation of this is, “For the greater glory of God.” “*ANNO DOMINI*” is translated, “The year our Lord.”

**PLAZA:** Look down! Originally, the architect for our new plaza planned a giant cross as the design. Instead, you see a design. This design is a copy of the design of the tiles on the front of the church (though much larger.) My hope was that it would be an interactive design for our younger parishioners who might like to jump from darker tiles to darker tiles!

**BELL TOWER:** **E**ach side of the bell tower has a relief taken from the four living creatures prophesied in Ezekiel (1:5-21;10:20) and seen again in the Book of Revelation (4:6-8). Each of the figures have become associated with the four Evangelists.

DEEP DIVE: To the north is a young man associated with St. Matthew owing to his emphasis on the humanity of Jesus in his Gospel, to the west is St. Luke (ox) because he emphasized the sacrifice of Jesus, to the south is Mark represented by a lion because he focused on Christ’s resurrection. In ancient mythology it was thought the lion cubs were born dead and that three days after their death the lion that sired them would come and roar at them bringing them to life. Finally on the east side is St. John represented by the eagle because the theology of his Gospel seems to soar so high. Each of the four creators holds a Gospel book and on our left, the cover will have the first initial of the Evangelist’s name (M, L, M, J,) and the right a cross. As the bells ring out from the tower they carry the call of the Gospel with them.

**ON THE MOVE!** Walk out to the sidewalk along Mull Avenue and turn right. When you get to the corner turn right and continue walking. If you look to your right you will see the *Chi Rho* symbol that is over the other entrances of the church. (See interior explanation.)

Also to your right, notice the statue of St. Mary. (More to come on that later! Just take note of it now.)

As you come to the 3rd apron to the church parking lot, look for a much faded paw print of Sebastian (my old dog) in the corner of the side walk!

Turning right at this second corner and walking down the sidewalk, at the rear of the church you will see the cutting garden. High up on the back of the church is another coat of arms of the parish.

**ST. THERESE:** The statue on the south west corner of the church is St. Therese of whom the parish has had a devotion since its founding. See more information on her found in the interior tour at her chapel.

**ST. FRANCIS:** The little statue by the church door is of St. Francis. Find more information about him from the description of his statue in the interior tour of the church.

**ST. MARY:** This statue by the rear rectory door belonged to Fr. Swirski who lived at the parish for a few years after retirement. We set the statue there to figure out where it might go and never moved it.

Continuing down the walk you come to the school courtyard.

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**CONVENT:**  Looking high on the convent you will see the original coat of arms (to which we have since returned.) This building was built in 1950 through 1951 so the change in the coat of arms occurred after this time. The wording found on the front of the convent is “*AD MAJORAM DEI GLORIAM.*” Here, the word “Majoram” has the letter “J” instead of the “I” found at the church.

**ZWISLER HALL:** Take a look at the back wall of Zwisler Hall and notice the large, bricked in, circular area. When this was the church, there was a rose window here. The window’s new location will reveal itself to you in a couple of minutes.

While you are here, remember to look up at some of the beautiful designs on the buildings. More will be said about the ones that you see on the back of Zwisler Hall in a few minutes.

Continue walking down the sidewalk until you come to the first entrance to the brick parking lot. Before you enter, look down the street to Byrider Hall and notice two things on the facade.

**BYRIDER HALL**: First is that here is the first evidence we have of a different coat of arms employing the stylized wheat. This building was completed in 1953, two years after the convent was completed. Why the coat of arms was changed at this point and who was it that suggested it is unknown at this point.

The other thing to notice is that the original name of this building was the St. Sebastian Recreation Center. Fr. Byrider does not even come to St. Sebastian unit 1968. The designation “Fr. Byrider Hall” comes much later.

**BRICK PARKING LOT: N**ow turn right into the brick parking lot and immediately to your left spy a brick that has written on it, “Belden Brick Company, 15 August 2015.” With the re-bricking of the parking lot, now almost all of the bricks on our property come from the Belden Brick Company, an Ohio company using Ohio clay! So literally our parish rose up out of Ohio ground! They named the color of this brick, “Sebastian Red.” The parking lot was dedicated on the Feast of the Assumption, August 15th, 2015.

Walk through the parking lot next to the sidewalk heading toward Zwisler Hall. Looking to your right at the Early Learning Center, there is a part of the building that projects out toward you. This was once the chapel for the nuns. The smaller part that sticks out closest to you was the sanctuary. You can still see the stained glass in the windows.

Just before you would walk up the first handicap ramp to the brick plaza, just to your left is another brick commemorating the dedication ceremony for the new parking lot which reads, “Zwisler Hall Brick Parking Lot, Dedicated and Blessed August 15, 2015.”

**SACRED HEART STATUE:** When the school auxiliary trailers were removed from the property, the area now know as the brick plaza needed to be redesigned and this plaza was the result. The statue in the middle is of the Sacred Heart, His arms raised, giving His benediction to all who come to the parish from the brick parking lot.

DEEP DIVE: The statue came from St. Procop, a Bohemian ethnic parish on West 41st Street in Cleveland. The parish was founded on September 17, 1872. A magnificent church edifice dedicated in 1903 and was later consecrated in 1929, the same year St. Sebastian’s first church was completed. The parish closed in 2009 and the statue moved to St. Sebastian.

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**B**etween the brick plaza and the island in the parking lot, there are some bricks that are imprinted with the parish coat of arms. We took one of the coats of arms from the end of a pew and stamped them into the bricks when they were still pliable clay. (Also notice, then, they are reversed/mirror images!) I thought we made a few but when I went looking I only found four. How many can you find in this small area?

**A**s you walk onto the brick plaza heading north to the brick walkway, look right to the back wall of Zwisler Hall. There is an angel there who has seen better days. In one hand the angel once held a host and with the other pointed to heaven. Today the angel more resembles the Venus de Milo.

Over the main entrance to Zwisler Hall is where the rose window that used to be in the back wall of the building is now.

Swing around to the front of Zwisler Hall and face it from Mull Avenue.

**OLD CHURCH FACADE:** Remember what was said above about the main entrances to a church. It is interesting to compare this church facade to the one of the new church as it was designed by the same architect, for the same congregation, dedicated to the same saint, and with the same pastor! Notice what is different and what is similar.

Over the doors is the original parish coat of arms. The decorations at the top of the building are *the same as the decoration on the top rear of the building*. In the center is a cross and right next to it on one side there is the *Chi Rho* and on the other is the *Alpha* and *Omega.* (Both of these were explained in the Interior Self Tour.)

Out to the far left is another *Alpha* and *Omega* on a book which symbolizes the Gospel and on the far right is a lamp, which symbolizes holiness, goodness, knowledge, wisdom, grace, hope, and God's revelation.

Low down on the right side of the wall is the cornerstone of original church. The year in Roman numerals is 1929.

The arch represents Christ. The two doors represent the two natures of Christ.

**A**s you continue walking, look up at the buildings, especially the old bell tower. There is a lot of nice stone detail.

**BELL:** The bell that you will pass was once in the bell tower. A rope hung down into Sister Principal’s office and she would ring it for school or Mass. There is a ceremony in the church in which bells are “baptized” and given a name. Find the name, Anunciata, located on the bell and then, if you so desire, be careful, plug your ears, and give it ring!

**DOORS:** Over the far right door are the words, “*PRO PATRIA*” and on the far left, “*PRO DEI*” (This can found over the complementary doors on the rear of this building also.) They are translated, “For Country” and “For God.”

**SCHOOL WALKWAY:**  The winding walkway from Mull Avenue to the school has a few interesting features to it. The section closest to the school at one time had the parish coat of arms in it but it wore away. About half way down on the east side of the walk is another paw print from Sebastian that is largely worn away and is marked as being from ’16. Closer to the Mull Avenue end and more toward the center of the walk, see if you can find where a small maple leaf fell on the wet cement and left its impression.

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**MARY STATUE:** As you continue walking up past the rectory, look and see the Mary statue. Does it look familiar? It should. It is an exact replica of the one next to the church that you saw earlier! The only difference is that this one is not in such good shape. Many years ago, this statue used to be next to the church and somebody accidentally hit it with their car. It broke into several pieces. The person who did it felt terrible and replaced the statue though she was assured it could be repaired. The new state went next to the church and the repaired one (take a close look to see the repairs) ended up here.

**BACK TO THE PLAZA:** We are almost finished for these last two things. First, take a look at the old cement from the original plaza located in the center right next to Mull Avenue. You will see where someone drew into the cement a copy of the cross on top of the church!

The other thing to notice is that if you look straight at the church through doors, you can see all the way to the tabernacle. We might be used to this but this was an innovation at one point in the history of the Church. 500 years ago, the Jesuits built a church in Rome that commonly goes by the name “Gesu” but is dedicated to the Name of Jesus. It was really the first church that took to heart the mandates of the Council of Trent and made the Eucharist visible to the congregation in a radical way. This caught on wildly and spread through the Catholic world. Our church owes this visibility of the Eucharist, the source and summit of our lives, the center and cause of our community; which is not an idea, or a philosophy, or set of rules, but a Person, namely Jesus; and makes it possible for us to see Him even as we drive past His home. After all, this is, “THE HOUSE OF THE LORD.”

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