

Chapel of Our Lady

To the left of the main altar is the Chapel of Our Lady. The white marble statue depicts Our Lady of the Assumption, patterned after the famous painting by Murillo. Inserted in the upper part of the altar is a faience entitled The Crucifixion, which is attributed to an old renowned pottery in Capo di Monte, Italy. On either side of the tabernacle are niches containing statues of the following: from the extreme left, Sts. Margaret, Lucia, Cecilia, Catherine of Alexandria, Barbara, Agnes, Agatha, and Rose of Lima. Framing the base of the altar is a series

of tiles with some titles of Our Lady selected from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin. In the center is a fragment of Italian marble depicting the Nativity. Arching over the altar are seven doves, which represent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit.

The large stained glass window is titled Mary, Queen of the Sea; above it is the Archangel Raphael.



Mary, Queen of the Sea

The ornately carved door to the sacristy is hand carved tiger oak and is titled, The Good Shepherd. Of Spanish design, the title on the scroll is Latin, *Pastor Bonus*. Above the door is a 17th century painting of the Visitation. The artist is Massimo Stanzione (1586-1656).

On the walls of the chapel are icons of the Blessed Lady. Clockwise from the exit door, Our Lady of the Oppressed (Africa), Our Lady of Guadalupe (Mexico), an icon of the Annunciation, Our Lady of Czestochowa (Poland), Our Lady of Perpetual Help (*legend tells that the original was painted by St. Luke on wood*).

Between the door and the church interior lies the resting place of the architect, Rafael Guastavino. The face of the crypt was designed by his son, Rafael Guastavino, III and displays glazed tiles framed in bronze.

Exterior



The style, chosen by the architect, is Spanish Renaissance. The central figure on the main facade is that of our patron, the 3rd century archdeacon, St. Lawrence, holding in one hand a palm frond and in the other a gridiron, the instrument of his torture. On the left of St. Lawrence is the first martyr, St. Stephen, holding a stone, the method of his martyrdom. He also holds a palm. On the right stands St. Aloysius Gonzaga, a 16th century Jesuit seminarian from Spain who perished in the plague. In art, a subject holding a palm has been martyred for the Christian faith.

The lunette over the main entrance is made of polychrome terra cotta and represents Christ giving the keys of the kingdom to Peter and appointing him head of the Church. Immediately below this lunette is a stained glass window displaying the Coat of Arms of the Basilica of St. Lawrence.



The building is remarkable, there are no beams of wood or steel in the entire structure. All walls, floors, ceilings and pillars are of tile or other similar materials. The roof is of tile with a copper covering.

The massive stone foundation, of North Carolina granite, and the solid brick superstructure give silent testimony to the architect's desire to build an edifice that would endure for generations.

Rafael Guastavino

Guastavino (1842-1908) an architect and builder of Spanish origin, emigrated to the United States from Barcelona in 1881. There he had been a successful architect and builder, designing large factories and homes for the industrialists of the region of Catalan. He was also credited there with being responsible for the revival of an ancient tile and mortar building system that had been used in Catalonia and other parts of Spain for centuries. This method of building uses layers of thin tile bedded in layers of mortar to create curved horizontal surfaces. Floors, roofs, ceilings and stairs can all be formed with this system, usually in the shape of vaults or domes. Perhaps Middle Eastern in origin, this way of building creates a strong, fireproof, attractive surface. In the Basilica of Saint Lawrence every horizontal surface in the building is made of this combination of tile and mortar.

The Guastavino system represents a unique architectural treatment that has given America some of its most monumental spaces and deserves to be preserved and treated with care.

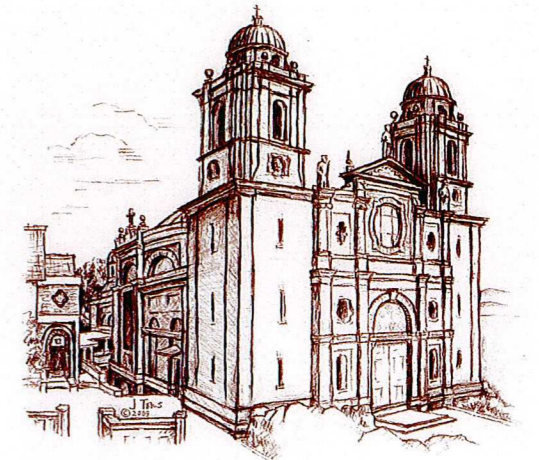
*Theodore H.M. Prudon,
Progressive Architecture
(September 1989, p 138)*

Guastavino came to Asheville, North Carolina to work on the Biltmore House in the mid-1880s. Liking the area, he bought land and built a house near Black Mountain - the present site of Christmount. In 1905 his design of the present church went into construction and was completed in 1909.

By 1900 Guastavino had successfully transferred his patented tile building-method to the United States, and was working with the leading architects of this country. His work may be found in over a thousand buildings - mainly in the Northeast, particularly in New York City and Boston. Among the buildings are: Grant's Tomb, the Great Hall at Ellis Island, Grand Central Station, Carnegie Hall, and the Chapel at West Point. In North Carolina his work is found in the Duke Chapel in Durham, the Jefferson Standard Building in Greensboro, the Motley Memorial in Chapel Hill, and St. Mary's Catholic Church in Wilmington.

The Art & Architecture of The Basilica of Saint Lawrence, D.M.

A Roman Catholic Church



Self Guided Tour

A
National
Historic
Site
Completed 1909

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Asheville, North Carolina
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What is a Basilica?

The title dates back to the early Greek and Roman times and referred to a type of public building. In the 4th century, Basilicas began to be used as places of worship. It was during this time that construction of the greatest Basilicas of Rome was started. Today, the term Basilica is a special designation given by the Holy Father to certain churches because of their antiquity, dignity, historical importance or significance as a place of worship. Presently, there are 56 Basilicas in the United States.

How is the title of Basilica obtained?

To qualify as a Basilica, a church must meet three criteria:

It must have a long history with the people of the area.

Architecturally, it must afford the possibility of more than one liturgy being celebrated simultaneously.

All of the rites should be executed in an exemplary way with fidelity to liturgical norms.

What are the privileges of a Basilica?

Basilicas have certain privileges such as the granting of plenary indulgences to the Faithful who come to the Basilica to participate in the celebration of specific days. At the Basilica of Saint Lawrence those days are:

- ~ Dedication Anniversary - October 10th
- ~ Feast of St. Lawrence - August 10th
- ~ Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul - June 29th
- ~ Conferring of Title Anniversary - April 6th
- ~ Once a year on a day to be determined by the Bishop of the diocese

Interior

Entering the side vestibule, one notes the solidity of the structure. A lighted cabinet to the right displays the variety of tiles used to create this church. The entire building is made of tiles and other masonry elements without the use of wood. The best vantage point for viewing the interior of the church is from the main aisle at the altar steps. From here, the dome stretches out 82' x 58' and is considered the largest free standing elliptical dome in North America.

The Windows

Just under the vault of the dome is a frieze of ten semicircular windows. To the right on the west wall the scenes represented are the: Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple, and Conversion of St. Paul. Over the Choir Loft is the magnificent Resurrection window. Continuing left on the east wall are found the Miracles of the:



Christ Healing the Sick

Wedding Feast at Cana, Raising of Jairus' Daughter, Calming of the Sea, Agony in the Garden, and the Resurrected Savior with Mary Magdalene. Centered on the east wall is the large window depicting Christ Healing the Sick, over His left shoulder we see Peter, James, and John. On the opposite wall we see the Transfiguration of Christ flanked by Moses and Elijah; again, at the base are Peter, James, and John. All of these windows were made in Munich, Germany.

The doors separating the main vestibule from the interior of the church are framed by windows depicting St. Joseph on the left and St. Aloysius, a bishop, on the right. These windows are from the *former* Saint Lawrence Church, a wooden structure that stood to the west.

The Statues

On the east wall there are two life size statues. Close to the altar is St. Patrick and near the choir loft is St. Rose of Lima, on whose feast day it was determined that a parish would be formed in this area. The niches on the opposite wall hold St. Cecilia, the patron of music and near the altar is St. Peter. The statues of Peter and Patrick were placed in honor of Frs. Peter and Patrick Marion, priests in residence during construction of this church.

The Sanctuary & Main Altar

The area inside the communion rail is referred to as the Sanctuary. Above the main altar stands a tableau depicting the Crucifixion. From the 17th century, it is hand carved walnut showing Mary, the Mother of Christ, and John, the beloved disciple.

The wall behind the altar is called a reredos. It has been executed in polychrome terra cotta and bears life size reliefs of the four evangelists, Matthew and Mark on the left; Luke and John on the right. Flanking the tableau are Michael the Archangel at the left and the Archangel Raphael at the right.

The altar was originally the base of the back altar. After Vatican II it was brought forward to enable the celebrant to face the congregation. The altar table was added when the base proved too low. Made of Tennessee marble and in the shape of a simple boat, it is a duplicate of the altar table of Pope Paul VI, and was created by the same artist, Napoli. In art a boat symbolizes the Church.

The image on the face of the altar is made of polychrome terra cotta and depicts the Last Supper. The symbols left and right are the Alpha and Omega; God, the beginning and the end of all things.

Eucharistic Adoration Chapel

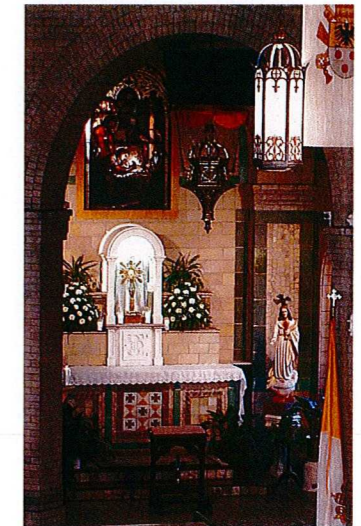
To the right of the main altar is the chapel originally called St. Joseph's, but is now referred to as the Eucharistic Adoration Chapel. Above the altar is a stained glass window of the Nativity. The large window on the east wall depicts the death of St. Joseph attended by Jesus and Mary. Both windows were taken from the former wooden church. The smaller window above on the right is of St. Lawrence.



Saint Lawrence

The altar and part of the apse wall are a mosaic of broken bits of tile assembled and inlaid by the pastor, Fr. Peter, and his brother, Fr. Patrick Marion.

Around the perimeter are familiar statues. On the left is St. Frances Cabrini, the first naturalized American saint. She faces St. Thérèse Lisieux, *The Little Flower*. In front of the large window stands the Sacred Heart and on the east wall are St. Joseph, St. Martin de Porres, and St. Jude.



Eucharistic Adoration Chapel

Suspended from the center is an antique vigil light under a red and gold umbrellino, symbol of a Basilica.

Atop the altar stands the Monstrance displaying the Presence of Christ in the consecrated Host.

Four candles burn continuously honoring the Presence.