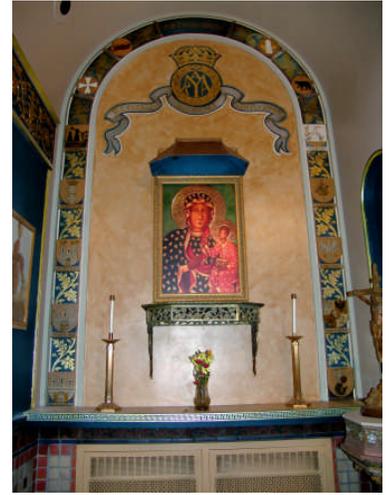


The Restoration of St. Luke's: The Church Re-Born!



2008 will mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of St. Luke's parish, and we plan to do it up big! St. Luke's Mission of Mercy has continued the proud tradition of Catholic worship since the purchase of the church and grounds in 1993, and the upcoming anniversary will not go without fanfare. The restoration of the church has begun in earnest, and the results have been nothing less than spectacular!

Henry Swiatek, church painting and restoration specialist, has already restored and enhanced several areas of the church, including the side chapels, the baptistery, the Sacred Heart side altar, and the entrances. He is currently working on the Stations of the Cross and arches, the Lourdes side altar and the rear wall of the church. We are saying goodbye to the pinks and sky



blues of the past and giving the church a more authentic, warm feel.

The restoration of St. Luke's is not only important to our community here at the Mission, but to the entire Western New York community, as well. The mural of the Annunciation, God the Father in the dome, and the angels above the side chapels were painted by John De Rosen (Jan Henryk de Rosen), a world-famous Polish muralist and painter whose works grace many important places of worship.

Who is John De Rosen?

Born "between easel and sword" in Warsaw, Poland, in 1891, De Rosen was the son of a court painter to the last Russian czars. Raised in France, he served with distinction in World War I, joining in turn the French, British and Polish armies. In the latter, he participated in one of the last armored cavalry charges ever mounted. Unhorsed, he was unable to rise due to the weight of his armor!

A translator at the Versailles conference that ended the war, John De Rosen later returned to Poland where he began to paint. "I did not want to be a painter but could not help myself," he once admitted. Early commissions included murals in the private chapel of Castel Gandolfo, the papal summer residence. Their prophetic Polish historical/religious theme was fitting for the arrival of the first Polish pope, John Paul II. A Polish embassy aide in Washington D.C. during World War II, he subsequently made that city his home. Major works followed, including what may be the world's largest mosaic, covering the dome of the Roman Catholic cathedral in St. Louis, and vast murals in the Immaculate Conception Shrine in Washington. During this period he created the wonderful murals in St. Luke's.

Like nearly all his work, De Rosen's St. Luke's murals are in durable wax tempera (a mixture of pigment and beeswax liquified by alcohol) set in fields of shimmering gold leaf, on plaster. De Rosen is said to have used Dutch beer to liquify the wax! Working at times behind a curtain, De Rosen used live models and his lifelong companion "Wilfred," a little manikin used to determine drapery patterns. Despite an abhorrence of exercise, De Rosen kept in excellent shape climbing ladders and scaffolds.

John De Rosen died in 1982, and a fitting epitaph might be his description of his murals - "They do not fade, but, like most of us, mellow with time."



Divine Mercy: a prophetic sign?

St. Luke's is also known for the wonderful mosaic of the Divine Mercy, the very first to grace a church in our area. Intricate and beautiful, this masterful mosaic was created in 1954 at the request of the Polish immigrants of the parish. Devotion to the Divine Mercy was very popular in Poland at that time, but still very new to the rest of the world. On March 6th, 1959 the devotion was banned by the Vatican because poor translations of the Diary of St. Faustina presented an incorrect portrait of her life and work. Nearly twenty years of silence followed, until April 15th, 1978, when the original documents were thoroughly examined, the Vatican reversed its decision and allowed the devotion to flourish again. The man primarily responsible for this re-examination was a cardinal of Poland by the name of Karol Wojtyla, who would be elected Pope John Paul II just six months later!

During this entire time the image of the Divine Mercy stayed close to the heart of the faithful men and women of St. Luke's parish. When the parish closed and was put up for sale in the early nineties, how could Amy Betros and Norman Paolini not believe that the church for sale was meant to be the Mission of Mercy they hoped for? Today the mosaic symbolizes the

countless acts of mercy extended to the poor of the community. A prophetic mosaic? We certainly believe so! Come and see!