

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

Listed 3/4/2024

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mater Dei Chapel

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

Street & number: Mount St. Joseph University, 395 Neeb Road

City or town: Cincinnati State: Ohio County: Hamilton

Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide \_\_\_X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_A \_\_\_B \_\_\_XC \_\_\_D

<p><i>Barbara Powers</i> DSHPO/Dept. Head Inventory &amp; Registration</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>State Historic Preservation Office, Ohio History Connection</u></p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p><b>January 18, 2023</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>Date</b></p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <hr/> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b> _____</p> <hr/> <p><b>Title :</b> _____</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	sites
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	structures
<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION / Chapel

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RELIGION / Chapel

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Modernistic

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, STONE / limestone, Virginia Greenstone, CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Completed in 1962, Mater Dei [Mother of God] Chapel is a two-story, flat-roofed collegiate chapel in the Mid-Century Modern style. Located on the Mount St. Joseph University campus (historically known as the College of Mount St. Joseph on the Ohio) at 5701 Delhi Road, the Chapel is surrounded by one- to six-story campus buildings constructed in a complementary Mid-Century style. Mater Dei Chapel is 67'-4" wide by 157'-0" in length and is approximately 31,400 square feet. Irregular in shape, the building has a concrete foundation and reinforced concrete walls concealed behind gray face brick. The west façade and east elevation are accentuated with vertical green stone panels. There is an irregularly shaped two-story extension at the rear (east) of the building (facing Neeb Road), that houses the sanctuary and sacristy rooms. The interior of the Chapel is adorned with Mid-Century liturgical works of art that have a high degree of artistic value. Under the direction of Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C., works of art, created by Sister Ann Austin Mooney, Sister Loretta Ann McCarty, Margaret Rolfes Brungs, Judith Dettenwanger, and Marlene Hoffman, include twenty-eight stained-glass windows, fourteen mosaic stations of the cross, a mosaic reredos, a bronze crucifix, a wooden baldachin, numerous statuary, and a decorative tabernacle. Minimal alterations have occurred since its construction in 1962. Mater Dei Chapel and the associated works of art are in excellent condition and have a high level of historic integrity.

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## Narrative Description

### SETTING

Mater Dei Chapel is located on the west side of Delhi Township on the campus of Mount St. Joseph University (formally known as the College of Mount St. Joseph on the Ohio). The main campus is bordered by Neeb Road to the east, Delhi Road to the north, and Bender Mountain Preserve to the west and south. (Maps 1-4) Mater Dei Chapel is situated on the east side of the campus west of Neeb Road and south of Delhi Road. The campus was constructed between 1958 and 1962 and was designed in the Mid-Century Modern style by Laurens P. Cotter. Campus buildings range in height from one to six stories and were placed around an interior quadrangle and designed among the rolling topography landscape. The west façade of the Chapel faces inward towards the interior campus quadrangle and serves as the focal point of the campus. (Photo 1, 2) Directly south of Mater Dei Chapel is a one-story transitional building that leads to the Office of Administration, the Welcome Center, and dormitories. To the north is a one-story transitional building that leads to science labs and the University library. Surrounding the campus quad is the administration building, the University theatre, classroom buildings, a science building, music wing, and arts building. On campus' far west end, a new student center was completed in 1998 and in 2021, a Field House was built on the student center's west side.

### EXTERIOR

Mater Dei Chapel is a large (31,400 sq. ft.), forty-foot, modified rectangular and grand building. It was the last building constructed on the campus and was completed on December 17, 1962. (Figures 1, 2) It is located at the southwest corner of the intersection of Delhi and Neeb Roads and the building site/footprint has not changed since it was originally built. It is a reinforced concrete structure with Roman gray face brick, a limestone cornice, a concrete foundation, and original stained-glass windows. (Photos 2-6) Certain identifying features, such as rectangular forms, flat roof, streamline forms, understated coping, and modern materials, describe the Mid-Century Modern architectural style. All the architectural features – windows, stone panels, tower - are symmetrical in their placement.

The west façade is forty-feet tall and has three bays with a concave stone coping. (Photo 2) The outer bays are gray Roman brick for forty-feet. The center bay is accented in Virginia Greenstone panels that form three wide vertical bands above each main entry door. Flanked by the center greenstone band, are two pillars of vertical reinforced concrete panels that form the structure of Corona Tower which was named after former President Maria Corona Molloy, S.C. The panels extend one hundred and twenty feet into the air and support three large bells from Holland named Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. A sixteen-foot aluminum cross is anchored between the top two concrete panels. The tower and cross serve as a spiritual beacon for the community. The centered entry is comprised of three sets of wooden doors that are slightly recessed under the stone panels. The doors have stained-glass panels and stained-glass transom lights.

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The north (Photo 3) and south (Photos 5, 6) elevations are identical in plan with ten bays. Reading from east to west on either elevation, bays one through seven of the main block, which corresponds to the sanctuary, nave, and narthex, are large vertical fenestrations of rectangular stained-glass windows (2/9) that terminate at greenstone panels along the roofline below the coping and a small greenstone panel at the ground level. Bays eight through ten are the same, but the windows are 2/5 and correspond to the confessional rooms and balcony. These remarkable stained-glass windows were designed by Mount St. Joseph student Marlene Hoffman '61 under the direction of Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C. who was an internationally renowned artist and chair of the Art Department at Mount St. Joseph University. Bay 2 is a solid door entrance at the transept with two narrow stained-glass windows flanking a Latin Cross made of 1" projected bricks. (Photo 5)

The north and south elevations of the east (rear) extension have the same vertical fenestrations of the main block (five on each side) oriented to the west half of the wall and are evenly spaced. The east half of the wall is solid Roman gray brick.

The east elevation (rear) of the extension slightly curved to the west and is accentuated by centered Virginia Greenstone panels that extend from the top of the entryway to the underside of the stone coping. (Photo 4) The flanking wall is gray Roman brick. The centered aluminum framed entry is a solid metal door flanked by 6 lights.

## INTERIOR

Today, the interior of the Chapel retains its original appearance. The three entrance doors along the west façade lead into the narthex. (Photos 7, 8) A mechanical closet and restroom remain on the southwest side of the narthex. A single concrete staircase finished with linoleum treads and risers remains at the northwest end of the narthex. The staircase leads to the choir loft (67'-4" wide by 22'-8" deep) and a music room. (Photos 9, 10) The narthex and choir loft have many historic materials still intact. These historic materials are exposed running bond brick, plaster wall and ceiling finishes, terrazzo flooring and wall base, rubber flooring and tile base, aluminum doors and frames, aluminum handrails, and stained wood doors.

Back downstairs at the first floor, an exposed single-story brick wall with four sets of aluminum, full light double doors distinguish the narthex from the nave. (Photo 9, 10) The nave is a two-story space that can seat up to eight hundred people. (Photos 11-14) Two side aisles flank the nave and terminate at the transept. Two sets of single egress doors are located on either side of the transept. A wide center aisle is defined by green and black terrazzo.

To the east of the nave is the sanctuary, altar, and two sacristy rooms accessible by a central corridor in the east extension. (Photo Key 2) The sacristy rooms are separated from the sanctuary by a two-story brick wall with 1" projecting Flemish headers. (Photo 15) Above the sacristy rooms is a large two-story mechanical room that is accessed through a ceiling hatch in the Work Sacristy room on the south side of the building. Intact historic materials throughout the nave, chancel, sanctuary, and altar are terrazzo flooring, exposed brick walls in running bond, painted

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plaster walls, painted acoustic plaster ceiling, marble window sills, walnut wood paneling, and wood doors. The finishes in the two sacristy rooms are also intact. These materials include rubber tile and wall base, plaster wall finishes, original oak and plywood cabinets and casework, Formica countertops, and aluminum windows.

## WORKS OF LITURGICAL ART

Unlike the other buildings on the Mount St. Joseph University campus, Mater Dei Chapel is significant for its associated works of art which poses high artistic value. The overall interior design of Mater Dei Chapel and associated works of art were fabricated under the direction of the University's art department chair, Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C. The original Chapel design was proposed by the campus architect, L.P. Cotter in 1958. Cotter's original design was more ornate and focused on architectural forms. (Figure 3) According to Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, "Mater Dei Chapel was designed, furnished, and decorated by the vision of Sister Augusta under the title 'Mother of God.' She was inspired by the words of Pope John XXIII during the opening of the Second Vatican Council, when he called on Mary under that title to watch over the Church during the work ahead."<sup>1</sup> Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C. along with three Mount St. Joseph University students (Margaret Rolfes Brungs '60, Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, and Marlene Hoffman '61), are responsible for the interior design, furnishings, and works of art within Mater Dei Chapel. Sister Augusta was assisted by Sister Ann Austin Mooney and Sister Loretta Ann McCarty who also contributed liturgical art to the newly constructed Chapel.

According to Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, Sister Augusta led the charge in the design of the most prominent building on campus, Mater Dei Chapel. Sister Augusta tasked her senior art students with designing pieces of liturgical art for the new chapel as part of their Senior Thesis project. Three out of eight students were commissioned to complete their work after graduation. The majority of the furnishings and works of art were designed and created by the three talented ladies mentioned above under the supervision of Sister Augusta. These works of art remain in excellent condition and have a high level of historic integrity.

Inside the narthex, a statue of Mater Dei (Mother of God) is displayed along the east wall between the entry doors into the nave. (Photos 7, 16) The stone statue was designed by Marlene Hoffman '61 who portrayed a tenderness in Mary's face and a playful relationship between Mother and Son. This image portrays emotional depth which was uncommon for other Mater Dei images during this period (pre-Second Vatican Council). The statue was carved out of St. Gotthard stone in Florence, Italy (a city in which Sister Augusta received her Master of Fine Arts degree) from a half-size model created by Marlene. Marlene's Mater Dei statue is in excellent condition and has not been altered or relocated since the Chapel's construction.

The beauty of the female students' artwork continues throughout the nave. Unlike other conventional Catholic worship spaces, one's eye is not focused on the architectural design but on the impression of the artwork. Perhaps one of the most impactful and inspirational pieces of

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<sup>1</sup> Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler, interview by Sister Karen C.PP.S., Sister Judith Metz S.C., and Madeline Williams, Mater Dei Chapel, 15 June 2023.

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artwork is the design of the stained-glass windows. (Photos 17-41) The stained-glass windows were oriented (under the direction of Sister Augusta) in such a way to maximize the amount of natural light from the south and refract the light back into the space. The stained-glass windows were designed by Marlene Hoffman '61 who spent one year researching, designing, and producing the windows. During the design process, Marlene would produce small sketches and then would create full scale patterns of each panel. After the full-scale patterns were developed, she would hang the patterns out of a 4<sup>th</sup> floor classroom in Marian Hall (located on the original college campus on the property of the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity) to evaluate the finished product. Once her final designs were approved by Sister Augusta, Marlene and fellow art student Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 traveled to West Virginia to select glass pieces from the Blenko Glass Company. According to school documents, the Blenko Glass Company was the only company that was willing to work with female students from Mount St. Joseph University. Marlene selected shades of gold, brown, and auburn which are known to symbolize worth, virtue, and the glory of God. These earthy tones also mirror the colors that were popular during the Mid-Century Modern period. Marlene then worked with the art department on campus, under the direction of Sister Augusta, to create all the lead work associated with the windows. In an interview between Judith and Marlene, Marlene recalls working on her hands and knees on the floor to produce the full-size templates required to produce the final creations.

There are twenty-eight stained-glass windows in the Chapel. The largest windows are approximately thirty-five feet tall. There are ten windows located within the sanctuary which are evenly divided on either side of the altar. The ten windows represent aspects of the Blessed Sacrament of Christ through symbolism. (Photos 17-22) These symbols are considered forward thinking and modern at the time of construction. Sister Augusta, Marlene's mentor, believed in progressive thinking and inspired her students to explore outside the traditional ideology of liturgical design. The windows surrounding the sanctuary contain symbols of Christ and the Eucharist. The symbols on the south side of the altar include a Latin Cross inside an Oval Archway (representing the birth of Christ), Gladiolus Flower (incarnation), Anchor Cross (Hope in Jesus Christ), Circle (eternal existence), AGNUS DEI (Lamb of God), Lamb (symbol of Jesus), Circle joined to the Latin Cross (Jesus' eternal existence), LUX MUNDI (Light of the World), and Crown of Thorns (Christ's glory in resurrection).

Symbols on the north side of the altar include Chalice and Host (symbolizing sacrifice of Christ), Grapes (symbolizing the blood of Christ), Wheat (symbolic of bread), IC XC / NI KA ("Jesus Christ Conquers"), Staff and Serpent (refers to John 3:14), Rainbow (Christ's throne), Triangle (symbolizes the Holy Trinity), Basket and Bread (Christ's sacrifice), Fish (represents Christ), CHI RHO Cross (abbreviation for the name of Christ), IXOYC (Greek word for fish), Water (symbol of the sacrament of baptism), and Seven Pebbles (signify seven tribes, loaves, and fish).

Fifteen out of the eighteen windows in the nave are symbolic of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Again, the symbology used within the windows was progressive, inclusive, and different from traditional liturgical design at the time of construction. Symbols of the Virgin Mary along the south side of the nave (east to west) include CHI RHO Cross (symbolizes that Mary is the "Mother of Christ"), Scales of Justice (Mary was called the "Mirror of Justice" and scales



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symbolize equality), Lilies (symbol of Mary's virginity and innocence), Three Intertwined Circles (unity between the three Godheads), Three Candles (Holy Trinity), Sunflower (symbolizes the soul turning to Christ), Olive Leaves (symbolizes the peace God made with humans), Laurel (triumph), Chi Rho Cross with a Lily (Mary is the Mother of God), Heart with Inserted Dagger ("Sacred Heart of Mary"), Open Book (Holy Bible), and Seven Red Flames (tongues of fire representative of the Holy Spirit). (Photos 25-30, 32) There are two additional windows dedicated to St. Joseph and St. Thomas on the south side of the nave which display a carpenter's angle, a hammer, and a portrait image of St. Thomas. (Photos 23, 24, 31)

Symbols on the north side of the nave (east to west) include Jesse Tree (representing Jesus's royal genealogy), Single Candle (representing Jesus, the Light of world), Crown (Mary, the Queen of many things), Tower of David (Mary is sometimes referred to as the "Tower of David"), Mystical Rose (symbol of Nativity and Messianic prophesy), Gates of Heaven (another title given to Mary), Moon (symbolic of Mary), Chalice with Open Book (represents the Blood of Christ and the Word of God), Morning Star (symbolizes divinity, supremacy, and the eternal), Descending Bird (Holy Spirit descending upon God's people), Ark of the Covenant (symbolizing Mary as the vessel which carried Jesus), Candles (refers to the Light of the World), Equilateral Triangle with a Circle (resembles eternity and the Holy Trinity), and Sun (symbol of Jesus). (Photos 33-38, 40-42) The final stained-glass window displays Volumes of Closed Books which represent Elizabeth Seton. (Photo 39)

Above the exit doors on the north and south side of the nave are vertical punched openings filled with thick glass. (Photos 43-45) These stained-glass pieces were also designed by Marlene Hoffman '61. The stained-glass designs were formed using faceted chunk glass which Marlene discovered at the Blenko Glass Company in West Virginia when she visited the company to select glass for other stained-glass pieces throughout the Chapel. Having never seen chunk stained-glass manufactured, Marlene decided to use the glass within the Chapel entry doors. The blended colors of amber and gold are indicative of Mid-Century design.

The stained-glass windows have a high level of historic integrity in design, workmanship, materials, location, setting, feeling, and association. They have been maintained over the years and do not show any sign of distress or deterioration. Clear glass storm windows have been applied to the exterior of the windows protecting the historic glass from airplane pollution; the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport is across the Ohio River south of the University. The storm windows do not reduce the quality of light refracted into the Chapel and do not impact the historic appearance from the exterior.

Between the stained-glass windows are the Stations of the Cross designed and produced by Margaret Rolfes Brungs '60. (Photos 46-59) (Figure 4) There are fourteen Stations, each containing approximately one thousand imported Venetian glass tiles imbedded in concrete. According to Margaret Rolfes Brungs '60, Sister Augusta had samples of the mosaic glass which she had imported from Venice, Italy. During Sister Augusta's studies in Italy (1955), she developed an interest in Venetian glass mosaics and became Margaret's guide and mentor.

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Margaret trimmed and cut every Venetian glass tile that was used to complete the fourteen Stations to get the subtle effect she envisioned.<sup>2</sup>

The Stations of the Cross depict Jesus Christ on the day of his crucifixion. The Stations begin on the south side of the Chapel near the south exit door and conclude on the north side of the Chapel by the north exit door. The images depict (#1) Jesus condemned to death, (#2) Jesus carrying His cross, (#3) Jesus falling for the first time, (#4) Jesus meeting His Mother, (#5) Simon of Cyrene helping Jesus to carry the cross, (#6) Veronica wiping the face of Jesus, (#7) Jesus falling for the second time, (#8) Jesus meeting the women from Jerusalem, (#9) Jesus falling for the third time, (#10) Jesus' clothes being taken away, (#11) Jesus nailed to the cross, (#12) Jesus dying on the cross, (#13) the body of Jesus being taken down from the cross, and (#14) Jesus laid in the tomb. The stations are vibrant in color and contain rich blues, a variety of greens, yellows, and dabs of reds. Unlike other images of Jesus being portrayed during the 1950s and 1960s, Jesus is represented with a darker skin tone rather than the traditional "white" tone found in Catholic institutions across the country. In a recent interview, Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 recalls the moment she saw Jesus being portrayed as a Jewish man for the first time in Margaret's artwork. It was groundbreaking for a young female student to display Jesus in such a way. Margaret united a variety of tans, khaki, burgundy, olive, orange, and cinnamon colors to achieve a darker skin tone that was revolutionary in the way He was portrayed prior to the end of the Civil Rights movement in the late 1960s. The women's expressions, particularly Mary's, are also extraordinary in that the facial expressions are complex and show a variety of sorrow and empathy.

Margaret's talent in mosaics was not only evident in the Stations of the Cross, but also in the creation of the reredos (an ornamental screen behind the altar). (Photos 60-62) This breathtaking art form was created with 130,000 pieces of Venetian glass tiles embedded in concrete. The reredos is twelve feet wide by twenty-seven feet high. The commanding art piece resembles the rising incense of prayer and sacrifice with the descending grace of the Holy Spirit; a descending dove surrounded by a solid red nimbus resides at the top of the reredos. The colors of the reredos replicate the same colors found in the adjacent stained-glass windows within the sanctuary. These colors are variations of tans, yellows, greens, and blues with highlights of red and amber. During specific times of day, the light diverted through the stained-glass windows reflect off the reredos and floods the Chapel with divine light.

In a letter written by Margaret addressed to Judith, Margaret recalls,

Sister Augusta had the samples of the mosaic glass which she imported from Italy, Venice I think. She asked me to draw up the stations and backdrop and I worked from there. I transferred from my initial design to large sheets of brown paper on the floor. It really took up a lot of space on the floor as you can imagine. That involved a lot of crawling around on hands and knees which was no problem then, now it would be an entirely different story. After it was all done, we adhered some

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<sup>2</sup> Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler, interview by Sister Karen C.P.P.S., Sister Judith Metz S.C., and Madeline Williams, Mater Dei Chapel, 15 June 2023.

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sticky paper to the mosaics in sections and numbered them as to where they fit the design. These were put up on the wall behind the altar in cement, and polished. I can't remember who installed the backdrop but I'm sure Sister Augusta was right in there directing and working on the operation.

In 2019, the mosaic tiles were in need of restoration work and a world-renowned restoration artist was called upon to restore the tiles. Jim Foltz of Radiant Arts Company remarked that he was impressed by the beauty and craftsmanship of the art pieces. The mosaic works of art, hand crafted by Margaret, retain integrity through design, workmanship, materials, location, setting, feeling, and association. Apart from minor restoration and cleaning work in 2019, the mosaic Stations of the Cross and reredos appear as they did when they were installed in 1962.

Art student Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 is responsible for the impressive bronze Crucifix hanging in front of the reredos. (Photos 60, 61) (Figure 5) The Crucifix is a nineteen feet cross with a ten-foot corpus (figure of the crucified Jesus). Judith began by creating a five-foot clay model for her senior thesis. The Sisters of Charity commissioned Judith to create a full-size model of the corpus. To create the sizable model, Judith worked with the maintenance men from Mount St. Joseph and constructed a metal structure using welded pipes and metal lath. Judith encased the metal structure with one-hundred and fifty pounds of oil clay. As described by Judith in a recent interview,

I then needed to make a model that could be transported without being damaged, so I had to form a plaster mold on the oil clay, which I would use to make a plaster positive. When the clay work was finished and approved by Sister Augusta, I divided all of the figure into sections with metal shims. Then I built layers of wet plaster onto the clay to a thickness that would make a strong mold of the entire figure. When the plaster was removed from the clay, and each piece was sprayed with a release medium, put together in sections, and filled with plaster. When they had dried completely, I carefully removed the plaster molds with a hammer and chisel and fixed any imperfections by adding plaster and sanding. The model remained in sections so we could transport it to be cast at a foundry in Chicago. According to Sister Augusta, it was the only place in the United States that could cast a figure that large by the lost wax method.

The sections were driven from Cincinnati to Chicago in the winter of 1961. Judith's brother, Father Dennis Dettenwanger, drove Judith, Sister Augusta, and Sister Ann Austin Mooney (Mount St. Joseph faculty member and fellow artist) to Chicago where they delivered the sections. The cast corpus was transported back to Cincinnati along with a bronze cross that was constructed to the specification provided by Sister Augusta. The Crucifix remains a focal point within the Chapel since it was installed in 1962. Its beauty, design, craftsmanship, and placement within the reredos makes this piece distinguishable among the completed works of art in the Chapel.

Complementing the reredos and Crucifix, is a painted wood baldachin which is a canopy that hangs over the altar. (Photos 17, 60, 61) The baldachin was also designed and constructed by

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Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61. Judith painted symbols of the Holy Eucharist within the baldachin which represent the Chalice and Host (symbolizing the sacrifice of Christ), Fish (symbol of Christ), Water (symbol of the sacrament of baptism), and the Sunrays (Light of God). Judith's choice of colors highlight the greens, blues, reds, and yellows of the adjacent reredos and stained-glass windows. The brown color of the wooden baldachin structure compliments the brown mosaic tiles in the reredos, the bronze Crucifix, and the brown background of the face brick demonstrating collaboration between the students under the direction of Sister Augusta. The baldachin is also reminiscent of the Mid-Century Modern period with emphasis on wood construction, bright accent colors, clean lines, and lack of frills. The baldachin has a high level of historic integrity for its artistic design, workmanship, and contribution to the Chapel's overall feeling.

Two original statues are on either side of the altar and sanctuary. The statues are in pristine condition and have not been altered since the 1962 construction of the Chapel. On the south side of the Chapel remains a statue of St. Joseph. (Photo 63) Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 is the artist responsible for the design and original model of St. Joseph. It was her desire that St. Joseph be presented as a protector and supporter of his family. On the north side of the Chapel, the statue of Mary Mother of God looks out over the congregation. (Photo 64) According to Margaret Rolfes Brungs '60, the statue was Sister Augusta's design while Margaret contributed to the model and finishing work. Both statues were created from half-size plaster models that were shipped to Florence, Italy. The statues were carved in limestone under the direction of Sister Augusta who chose the stone for its simplicity. Simplistic forms and natural materials were a hallmark of Sister Augusta as well as the Modernist period.

The all-female design team has also been credited for designing many of the accessories and fixtures throughout the Chapel. Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 is recognized for the design of the pendant light fixtures in the nave, confessional doors, and communion rail (previously removed). The pendant light fixtures and confessional doors are located in their original locations and are representational of the Mid-Century Modern style. The fixtures have clean lines, smooth finish, exposed metal, and geometric forms. (Photos 10, 11-14) The confessional doors are located on the left and right side of the nave underneath the choir loft. (Photos 9, 42) The doors appear to be stained oak and have two varying patterns of wood inserts. Both patterns are geometric in form and emphasize clean lines, organic shapes, and sleek edges.

Sister Augusta is credited with the overall design of the silver, bronze, and enamel tabernacle (sacrament house) located on the side altar underneath the statue of Mary Mother of God. (Photos 65) Oral history passed down through the University, suggests that Sister Ann Austin Mooney was the artist behind the construction of the tabernacle. Sister Ann Austin was known for her skilled enamel work and works in metalcraft. The tabernacle is an irregular cylinder shape with a narrow bottom and a wide top. The bottom, top, and doors were constructed out of bronze. The vibrant red side panels are accented with silver frames which create a uniform pattern. Similar to the other works of art within the Chapel, the tabernacle is adorned with symbolism. In this case, curvilinear lines within the enameled panels represent Sunrays (Light of God) and Wheat (symbolic of bread).

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Sister Ann Austin Mooney was the artist behind the six altar candlesticks flanking the altar. (Photos 66) At the University, it is said that Sister Augusta gave the artistic direction behind the candlesticks as well. The candlesticks are constructed from vibrant colored enamels and brass. The lively colors of red, blue, yellow, and umber are reflective of the stained-glass windows and the reredos in the background. The candlesticks are in excellent condition and were recently restored (2019) back to their original glory. Sister Ann Austin is also credited with the design of the silver chalice and paten (a small plate used during mass to carry the bread of the Eucharist) which are kept within the sacristy at the front of the Chapel. Lastly, credit must be given to Sister Loretta Ann McCarty who was instrumental in providing all the calligraphy throughout the Chapel, such as all the Latin altar pieces.

### ADDITIONAL INTERIOR FEATURES

The Sisters of Charity and their three art students not only created the works of art throughout the Chapel, but also had influence on the design of the commercial furniture. The pews and sacristy chairs were designed to blend in with the Mid-Century Modern feel of the artwork and architecture. The pews and chairs were constructed out of light-colored natural wood and have sleek designs with simple lines, rounded edges, tapered legs, and flared backs. (Photos 11-14) The pews and chairs were restored and repaired in 2019 after Sister Karen Elliott, C.P.P.S. (Chief Mission Officer at Mount St. Joseph) discovered the furniture and pews had fallen into disrepair. All fifty-six pews were removed from the Chapel and transported to a woodworking company in Michigan for restoration work. New cushions were made for the seats in a soft tan color which is compatible with the historic character of the Chapel.

After construction was completed in 1962, three additional works of art were introduced into the Chapel (circa 1975). Robert Koepnick, Dayton artist and sculpture art instructor at Mount St. Joseph University, designed the statue of Sacred Heart which rests above the south exit door adjacent to the statue of St. Joseph. (Photo 67) Roberts was also responsible for the statue of Mother Seton which stands above the north exit door adjacent to Mary Mother of God. (Photo 68) The statues appear to have been constructed in the same manner as the original statues, but unlike St. Joseph and Mary, the newer additions were fabricated from a different stone and have a crosshatch texture on the surface of the stone as opposed to the smooth surface of the original statues. The additional stone statues appear to have more crisp detail in the creation of the body and clothing as well. Despite not being original to the Chapel, the statues do not impact the historic integrity of the Chapel and contribute to the overall feeling and association of the space.

The third additional art installation was the reredos (altar screen) behind the Tabernacle designed by Cuban artist Edgar Tafur. (Photo 65) Sister Augusta was an admirer of Tafur's work and created five ceramic murals for Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, from Tafur's designs after her retirement from Mount St Joseph (circa 1983). Tafur's reredos is comprised of brass colored metal and earthy tone ceramics. The ceramics have a variety of gold, bronze, tan, and brown tones that mimic the colors of the adjacent brick and the original 1962 color palette throughout the Chapel. The reredos was installed after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

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and is complimentary of Sister Augusta's tabernacle in scale and color. The additional reredos is compatible to the historic design of the Chapel and does not impact the historic character of the setting.

## HISTORIC INTEGRITY

The works of art and the interior design of Mater Dei Chapel, under the direction of Sister Augusta Zimmer, retain much of its original appearance, including original artwork, the majority of the furnishings, the architectural layout, and characteristics of Mid-Century Modern design. (Figures 6-8) The historic works of art remain unchanged, and no alterations have been made to massing of the Chapel building. The historic works of art retain integrity of design and materials.

Minimal modifications have been made to the interior design of Mater Dei Chapel particularly after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965). The sixteen documents produced out of the Second Vatican Council helped direct the life of the Church. These documents had a direct impact on the traditional layout within worship spaces. For instance, the communion rail, designed by Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, was removed as members of the worshipping community were able to receive Communion standing. One can see the original outline of the communion rail within the floor patches of the original terrazzo flooring. The original rail was a simple wood structure with emphasis on geometric shapes. Another change was relocating the tabernacle. The tabernacle designed by Sister Augusta was relocated from the center of the altar to the northside altar under the statue of Mary Mother.

Over the years, the Chapel has also been altered to accommodate the needs of the University. These alterations and modernizations include new speakers to the right and left of the altar, a newly designed ambo (lectern), new chairs within the sacristy, a new presider's chair, and replacing the screens in the confessionals (designed by Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61) with solid panels. Modifications made after the completion of the Chapel space do not impact the historic integrity, as the Mater Dei Chapel retains its original feeling and association through the original design and workmanship of the historic works of art.

The setting in which the works of art are displayed, in an active Catholic Chapel, has remained unchanged. In summary, the works of art and interior design retain the grandeur of their original design and photos taken at the time of the dedication (May 1, 1963) look much like present-day views. (Figure 6) Therefore, Mater Dei Chapel retains integrity under all its aspects: design, workmanship, materials, location, setting, feeling, and association.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ART  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1962-1963  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1962  
1963

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Cotter, L.P.  
Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C.  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Mater Dei Chapel, built 1961-1962, is significant at the local level of significance under Criterion C and Criteria Consideration A in the area of Art. The interior of the Chapel is adorned with Mid-Century liturgical works of art that possess high artistic value in design, subject matter, materials, form, and historic integrity. The overall interior design of Mater Dei Chapel and associated works of art were fabricated under the direction of the University's art department chair, Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C. Works of art, created by Sister Ann Austin Mooney, Sister Loretta Ann McCarty, Margaret Rolfes Brungs, Judith Dettenwanger, and Marlene Hoffman, include twenty-eight stained-glass windows, fourteen mosaic stations of the cross, a mosaic reredos, a bronze crucifix, a wooden baldachin, numerous statuary, and a decorative tabernacle. The development of Mater Dei Chapel in the 1960s came on the cusp of significant changes in the Catholic Church theology and the social and gender history of the Nation. In the Catholic Church, the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) was reinterpreting and modernizing traditions, and in the Nation, the second wave of women's rights was starting to redefine professional roles woman could play within society. The intersection of these influential movements made it possible for Sr. Augusta and her students to become design leaders in a field that was primarily controlled by men. Based on research completed within the University's archival department, Mater Dei Chapel interior is the only collegiate Catholic Chapel in the country designed by women. The justification for the period of significance, 1962-1963, is based on when the building was constructed and the year in which the Chapel was blessed and dedicated, at the feast of Saint Joseph the Worker on May 1, 1963. Today, the Chapel continues to be used as a campus chapel by Mount St. Joseph University.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

## **BACKGROUND HISTORY**

### **DELHI TOWNSHIP AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY & THE HISTORY OF MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY**

Mater Dei Chapel is located in Delhi Township which is in south central Hamilton County along the Ohio River. To better understand the setting in which Mater Dei Chapel exists, it is helpful to understand how the immediate area was developed, and how Mater Dei Chapel and the Sisters of Charity serve as a record of those developments. The area surrounding Mater Dei Chapel has been predominantly rural since the early 1800s. (Figure 9-13) The topography of the area prohibited settlers from developing the area as Delhi Township is bounded by ridgelines and steep basin walls. The land along the ridgelines was predominantly used for farming grapes, flowers, and vegetables. Modest farmhouses were scattered across the landscape between 1796

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and 1915. Many of these homes are still standing today and according to Ohio Historic Inventory reports, these homes vary in style from Greek Revival, Classical Revival, and Gothic Revival. A Classical Revival farmhouse owned by W.L. Williams remains intact and is located approximately one mile from Mater Dei Chapel. The Williams farmhouse (1830) is the oldest home within Delhi Township and is the only building listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NR ref# 77001066) within the township limits.

The Sisters of Charity first settled in the area in 1869. As the city of Cincinnati expanded around them, the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati began looking for a quiet setting and purchased four farms (approximately 400 acres) in rural Delhi Township to the west of the Williams farmhouse, where they built Mount St. Joseph Motherhouse. (Figure 14) Unfortunately, a fire in 1884 destroyed most of the motherhouse and a new motherhouse, designed by renowned ecclesiastical architect Adolphus Druiding, was completed in 1886. (Figure 15) In 1906, Mount St. Vincent boarding academy (1854) was relocated to the Motherhouse and renamed Mount St. Joseph Academy. The new Motherhouse and boarding academy ultimately brought additional resources to Delhi Township. The Sisters of Charity were the first to bring water to the hilltop area from the Cincinnati Water Works and a new railroad station (Mount St. Joseph Station) opened along the Ohio River to accommodate the students and Sisters. This historic Romanesque revival Motherhouse remains intact and is located northwest of Mater Dei Chapel. The property was honored with an Ohio Historical Marker (62-31) in 2004.

Through the early years of the 20th century students at the Academy requested additional coursework after their graduation. In response, the Sisters offered additional classes that were dubbed "graduate courses." Unfortunately, the Sisters failed to receive accreditation from the State of Ohio for their programs, although the courses they offered were recognized by the University of Cincinnati for students who matriculated there.

In 1918, a graduate of the Academy was denied a teaching position in her home state of Indiana because she could not produce an official certification of her course work. When she informed the Sisters of her experience, they immediately applied to the Education Department of the State of Ohio for recognition of their program. When state officials saw the caliber of education offered at the Academy, they suggested that the Sisters also file an application to open a college. By early 1920, the Academy received official recognition, and in April the charter for the College of Mount St. Joseph was signed. In September 1920, the college opened classes becoming the first Catholic college for women in Southwest Ohio offering a four-year degree. Simultaneous to these events, the Sister-teachers were advancing their own educational credentials and earning degrees from universities such as Catholic University of America, Notre Dame, Fordham, Xavier, and the University of Dayton.

Although the College of Mount St. Joseph (CMSJ) started with only twenty students, it grew steadily through the decades as the demand for college education for women increased. Sisters of Charity was the largest employer in Delhi Township and the College continued to expand its offerings and introduce additional programs. For instance, when Sister Augusta Zimmer arrived at the College in 1937 there was no art department – only a few students taking private painting

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lessons – as most students did not consider art an academic field. Over the years Sister Augusta overcame many hurdles, gradually building the art department into one of the most respected at the College.

As the College grew and matured, the Sisters dreamed of building a new campus, but the Great Depression and World War II pushed these dreams into future decades. By the 1950s, planning had begun. A site was chosen on land adjacent to the Motherhouse and owned by the Sisters of Charity. (Figure 16) Ground was broken in the late 1950s, and by the opening of the 1962-63 academic year an entirely new campus was ready for occupancy. (Figure 17)

As the College of Mount St. Joseph expanded, so did the surrounding community. Between 1930 and 1950, the first subdivision was constructed in Delhi on the eastern edge of the township limits. By 1950, the housing market began to decline in the eastern communities. Residents looked to the west, and more specifically to Delhi Township, for a rural setting. Delhi remained a rural community up until the 1970s when the area experienced a residential construction boom. The construction boom lasted approximately ten years and the population has stayed steady at 30,000 for the past forty-three years. Residential neighborhoods (circa 2010) were constructed to the east and north of Mater Dei Chapel. Shortly after the expansion of the adjacent residential neighborhoods, the College of Mount St. Joseph changed their historic name to Mount St. Joseph University in 2014. Today, the area surrounding Mater Dei Chapel remains quiet with pockets of residential communities to the north and east and wooded lands to the south and west. The University continues to play a vital role within the Delhi Township community and offers many cultural opportunities to the citizens such as musical and dramatic performances, lectures, traveling companies presenting plays and other entertainments, and summer institutes that bring in speakers from around the country and around the world. (Figure 18)

## HISTORY OF SISTERS OF CHARITY

When discussing Mater Dei Chapel, it is also helpful to understand the history of the Sisters of Charity and how they shaped a diverse and all-encompassing ministry. The Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati look to Elizabeth Bayley Seton as their founder. Born in 1774, Seton was a well-educated woman who moved in the highest circles of New York society, married, and had five children. Soon after the death of her husband, when she was twenty-nine years old, she converted to Catholicism. Facing discrimination as a Catholic divorcee in Protestant New York, she moved to Baltimore, where she would have the support of the Catholic community. Here she opened a school for girls. Soon other women joined her, and in 1809 they formed the first Catholic religious community founded in the United States. Elizabeth was elected Mother of the group, a position she held until her death in 1821.

The Sisters' motherhouse was located in the small village of Emmitsburg, Maryland, where they opened a free school and a boarding school for girls. One of the first Catholic boarding schools in the country, St. Joseph's Academy attracted young ladies from the entire eastern seaboard and became one of the premier schools for young women. The curriculum offered courses in philosophy, rhetoric, mathematics, and sciences, as well as choices in the fine arts. The

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community placed a high priority on the education of the Sisters to prepare them for the work they would do. In addition to course work, new teachers were mentored and supervised by those more experienced.

Even before Elizabeth Seton's death the Sisters began receiving invitations to open schools and orphan asylums in cities throughout the country. In 1829, four Sisters arrived in Cincinnati to open St. Peter's Orphan Asylum, a free school and pay school that grew to educate and care for over 300 young ladies by mid-century. In 1854, the Sisters opened Mount St. Vincent Academy in Cincinnati that, like its counterpart in Emmitsburg, offered a comprehensive curriculum including the fine arts. The community always made an effort to identify and cultivate the talents of the Sisters to enable them to minister as competent teachers in the Academy as well as in the other schools where they taught. A good example is Sister Ernestine Foskey who entered the community in the 1880s. Her artistic talent was "discovered" when she was found drawing pictures for the other novices. She, along with three other Sisters, later attended the Cincinnati Art Academy and became both teachers and producers of art throughout the rest of their lives. This culture of cultivating individual's talents was evident in Sister Augusta Zimmer's case as well. She was "discovered" because of the beautiful chalk drawings and bulletin boards she created in her elementary school classroom. Subsequently, she was instructed to enroll at the Chicago Art Institute where she began her formal training as an artist.

### SISTER AUGUSTA ZIMMER

Born and raised in Colorado, Frances Zimmer joined the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati in 1921 at the age of seventeen when she took the name Sister Augusta. Spending her early years teaching elementary school in Chicago, her talent was recognized by the Sisters when she began drawing delightful pictures on her and her fellow teachers' blackboards and bulletin boards. She began taking summer classes at the Art Institute of Chicago when, after a few years, she learned that the Community was planning for her to teach art at the College of Mount St. Joseph in Cincinnati. In protest, she wrote to her Mother Superior who told her instead to enroll as a full-time student at the Art Institute. Upon graduation in 1935 with a BFA, Sister Augusta was awarded the James Nelson Raymond \$2,000 Foreign Traveling Scholarship. For the next fifteen months, she, with a Sister companion, visited England, France, Spain, Germany, the Holy Land, and Egypt. "Planning our own itinerary and staying as long as we chose in any given spot," she said, "we sought out the most valuable places for a greater understanding of the people, the artists, and the history of the period." At each point of her travels, Sister Augusta took time to paint and sketch, returning home with hundreds of her creations. Upon her return in late 1938, she accepted a commission to create oil paintings covering 2,500 sq. ft. of the sanctuary walls and dome of St. Boniface Church in Cincinnati.<sup>3</sup> The oil paintings are murals of "Mary's Mysteries" (Joyful Mysteries) and "Christ in Glory" (Center figure was Christ the Eternal High Priest with Old Testament patriarchs and prophets to the left of Christ and Saints in the New Testament to the right of Christ) in the dome of the sanctuary of the Church.

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<sup>3</sup> The oil paintings were painted over in circa 1975.

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Assigned again to teach at the College of Mount St. Joseph in 1939, she found three or four students taking art lessons in a small studio. She soon organized a student exhibit that aroused interest, introduced courses into the curriculum, and transformed a “romantic” old stone building on the original campus into an art department that allowed her to expand offerings and add faculty. In her early years at the College, she focused on her teaching and building up the department, although she did execute oil murals for the offices of the National Catholic Education Association in Washington, D.C. (non-extant). Returning to Europe in 1955 for an additional two years of study and research at the Pius XII Institute in Florence, Italy, Sister Augusta received an MFA.

When she returned to the United States, Sister Augusta resumed her administrative duties as head of the art department as well as teaching classes. In addition, she executed several commissions including a mosaic mural, measuring 7’ 9” in height and 23’ 8” in width, at the main entrance of Seton High School in Cincinnati; created Stations of the Cross for Seton High School and St. Mary-Corwin Hospital in Pueblo, Colorado; designed the chapel and executed a life-size statue of St. Joseph and the child Jesus for St. Joseph Hospital in Mt. Clemens, Michigan; and created tabernacle doors, a glass mosaic base for the alter, and a baptismal font for Corpus Christ Church in Cincinnati.<sup>4</sup>

While Sister Augusta was in Italy studying, the College of Mount St. Joseph was planning for a new campus that would include a large chapel. When she received architectural drawings showing the art department located in two classrooms, she responded with her own drawings showing the department located on the entire north wall of a different building that included ample natural light for aspiring artists at work. “The architect thought the idea was perfect – just what he had in mind,” she recalled. As part of the new art building, she designed and later managed Studio San Giuseppe, an art gallery that has consistently offered students and local artists the opportunity to show their work.

The largest project she undertook on the new campus, however, was directing the work on Mater Dei [Mother of God] Chapel. By this time in Sister Augusta’s career, she had had the opportunity to study art both in the classroom and by visiting many sites in Europe and Asia, taught at the College for twenty years fostering students’ talents and assessing their potential, and had vast experience designing and executing large pieces of art for various religious venues. She had executed works in a number of media including mosaic murals, ceramic murals, oil portraits, watercolors, sculptures, and etchings. Mater Dei Chapel was a work she was prepared for and ready to put her energies into. Her energies resulted in the most comprehensive and best representation of her work in expertise, execution, philosophy, and theology. Mater Dei Chapel holds the largest collection of Sister Augusta’s works of art and demonstrates her mastery in art, interior design, and project management.

In addition to designing the chapel itself, she directed students and art faculty in executing the art in the entire chapel. To appreciate how this was possible, it is important to note that Sister

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<sup>4</sup> Works of art created by Sister Augusta Zimmer S.C. remain at Seton High School, St. Mary Corwin Hospital, St. Joseph Infant Home, and Corpus Christi Parish.

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Augusta was a widely recognized art educator. She published articles, edited books, and lectured for various art associations during her years at the Mount. In addition, she was widely respected and admired by those who worked directly with her. She encouraged, inspired, and mentored those with whom she worked. Faculty member, John Nartker, recalled, “I came to the Mount many years ago because of her. I was much impressed with her dynamic, informed attitude toward art. She was an exceptional lady. Brilliant. Talented, yet good, humble and caring. She was a distinguished mentor, and a true, caring friend.” A former student, and later a colleague at Mount St. Joseph, remembered how Sister Augusta’s enthusiasm, genuine contagious dedication, and animation when she taught inspired her throughout her life. Another former student noted, “You didn’t just teach – you changed us and made our lives different – more rich – than they would have otherwise been. You opened our eyes to many beautiful things. Just about anybody who took Fine Arts would say the same thing.” Considering these comments, it is understandable that she was able to mentor, inspire and direct her art students to create the work they contributed to make Mater Dei Chapel the beautiful place of worship.

Sister Augusta continued her work at the College of Mount St. Joseph until her retirement in 1971. During those years she continued to accept outside commissions, and after her retirement she focused on exploring styles of modern art she had never before worked in, and in executing several large ceramic murals that remain intact today. She died in 1981.

## **CRITERION C: ARTISTIC SIGNIFICANCE, HISTORIC CONTEXT, COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

### **BACKGROUND OF THE LITURGICAL MOVEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON MATER DEI CHAPEL**

In contemporary Catholic theology, the act of communal prayer in the Eucharistic liturgy is understood as the “source and summit” of the life of the believer.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, life and worship are intended to be integrated with one another. This belief is largely the product of the international Liturgical Movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Mater Dei chapel and Sister Augusta Zimmer, SC, are both expressions of these reforming energies.

### **The Liturgical Movement of 19th and 20th Century Europe**

After the French Revolution rocked the Catholic Church at the end of the 18th century, various movements began in Europe which sought to regain the vital energies of a Christianity that many viewed as decadent and associated with absolutist regimes. This brought about a series of intellectual and social movements in Catholicism that are collectively known as *ressourcement*—or a return to the sources of the faith in order to regain its purity. These tendencies culminated in the reforms of the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965.

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<sup>5</sup> See Vatican II, *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (Sacrosanctum Concilium).

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Beginning in the universities and monasteries of Europe, this “return to the sources” played out in many ways. Biblically, it caused scholars to return to the original texts of the bible as a source of theology, symbol, and prayer. The study of the early Church Fathers and Mothers was intensified to understand how the thought and practice of the early church might reinvigorate that of the modern age. Theologically, the notion arose (developed from the first two in the teachings of St. Paul and Augustine, among others) that the church is not simply a collection of individual believers nor a hierarchy, but rather the Mystical Body of Christ made visible in the world and called to work towards the coming of God’s kingdom. Accordingly, greater attention was paid to the social dimensions of Christianity, and the work of justice began to be seen not as simply individual good works but constitutive of the church’s very identity. A Christian life of faith necessarily had implications for how life should be lived, even in secular society. As these became more the focus across Christian denominations, this common tradition, that all inherited, helped emphasize the likenesses among Christian groups rather than simply their differences. This, in turn, led to an opening to other Christian (and even non-Christian) groups in the ecumenical movement.<sup>6</sup>

All of these movements in turn contributed to the growth of the liturgical movement which sought, following the example of the early church, to restore liturgical prayer to the center of Christian life. Gathering for the Eucharist or Liturgy of the Hours was not simply an act of personal devotion to God, but where the church, in its fullest sense, was concretely gathered together. In baptism and Eucharist, individuals didn’t only come to pray and worship God, but to be incorporated into a true people—the Mystical Body of Christ. And as that people was formed by participation in Christ’s body in communion, so to it called to go outside the Church walls and be Christ’s body to the wider world in working for justice. All of these themes were brought together by the liturgical movement, which was characterized above all in working to make these connections manifest to people at every level and to allow all to fully and actively participate in liturgical action, which was no longer seen as simply the role of the priest, but rather the whole church gathered together. This in turn meant seeing the non-ordained (including women) as having a vital role to play in church life that had hitherto been obscured.

### **Liturgical Situation prior to United States Liturgical Movement (1926-1965)**

Prior to the liturgical movement, Catholic liturgy in the United States was often seen as little more than another form of personal devotion. The service was only in Latin, which very few in the pews could understand, and was often regarded as something which the priest alone was doing. Rather than attending to formal prayers and readings, offering responses, and joining with others, it was often seen that simple attendance was all that was important. Many would do their own private devotions, like the Rosary, while the priest quietly muttered Latin up front. Communion—when it was taken at all—was often done before or after the service and was rarely consciously linked to life outside the church door.

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<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is a summary of information from Pecklers, “History of the Modern Liturgical Movement.”

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During this time, liturgical art was often marked by the presence of mass-produced statuettes and devotional items made of plaster or plastic. The goal was to make a church “pretty” rather than encourage full participation in the liturgical activity. Decoration and ornament were multiplied, often to give the lay faithful something to inspire their personal devotion while the priest was “saying” Mass. Many churches of this time could fairly be described as gaudy and the art was often seen as insipid and lacking in quality.<sup>7</sup>

### **The Liturgical Movement in the United States**

Scholars from the United States went to Europe and studied at the schools and monasteries where these ideas were percolating. One of them, a Benedictine monk and priest from St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota, named Virgil Michel, returned home eager to spread these ideas in the United States. Accordingly, he created two important avenues to disseminate these ideas: Liturgical Press and the journal *Orate Fratres* (later retitled *Worship*). The American Midwest, particularly Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, were particularly open to these ideas as many there were German immigrants who had already experienced some of the movement in their native land.<sup>8</sup>

Having studied in Europe in the 1930s and 1950s, Sister Augusta was exposed to the early reform movements moving through the church. In Cincinnati, Sister Augusta was involved with the Archdiocesan Liturgical Arts group as early as 1959 according to the archives at Mount St. Joseph University.<sup>9</sup> In 1967, Sister Augusta served as president of the Liturgical Arts group and served with two other Mount St. Joseph faculty members: Robert Koepnick and John Nartker. In her early years within the group, she was contributing works of art to the Archdiocesan Liturgical Arts group that portrayed modern interpretations of traditional ideas, such as the *Agony in the Garden*. Meanwhile, the American Catholic Church was showing resistance to the movement. Author Jay Dolan notes, “the U.S. Bishops did not provide a leadership role in the liturgical renewal,” between the 1930s-1950s.<sup>10</sup> While the design of Mater Dei Chapel was being developed under Sister Augusta, the vast majority of U.S. Catholics were holding on to the old-style religion and traditions.

Sister Augusta’s early exposure, particularly the time spent in Italy (1956) at a Catholic institute conducted by the Dominicans, is evident in the design of Mater Dei Chapel and the modernistic display of liturgical works of art. Within the archives of Mount St. Joseph University is a quote from Sister Augusta after the completion of the Chapel that is representational of the Chapel design pre-Vatican II, “There is character to the right line, the right color and color combination, and this character is transferred to the message that this visual language presents. It is the

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<sup>7</sup> For more, see Harmon, “Drawing the Holy,” 8-10. See also her *There Were Also Many Women There*.

<sup>8</sup> Pecklers, “History of the Modern Liturgical Movement,” Section “United States.” For more, see Pecklers, *Unread Vision*.

<sup>9</sup> The Liturgical Arts group was an official Archdiocesan agency that was tasked with helping the Archdiocese as a whole implement the reforms of Vatican II. The group would advise parishes on redesigns, what was appropriate, what to avoid, how to make sure the art furthered the liturgy and didn’t distract from it.

<sup>10</sup> Jay Dolan, “The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Ties to the Present.”



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business of the liturgical artist to help put the messages of Vatican II into the best possible language that will convince the laity of the true spirit of the Church.” She and her associates were trailblazers and innovators who designed outside of the mainstream American Catholic church at the time and placed their complete confidence in their female art students who delivered works of art that expressed truthfulness and purpose.

### **Liturgical Art and the Liturgical Movement**

As stated above, the art in churches, prior to when Vatican II began in earnest in the United States, was usually mass-produced of plaster materials, with the emphasis placed on prettiness and distraction rather than as elements to more deeply integrate the congregation in the liturgical act. In Cincinnati, St. Francis Xavier, Old St. Mary’s, and Holy Cross – Immaculata Parish are examples of local Catholic parishes that have a large quantity of mass-produced works of art. The previously mentioned parishes have grand spaces with ornate interiors, elaborate Classical detailing, and abundant amounts of art. In order to help focus attention on the Eucharistic celebration and the Liturgy of the Word, the liturgical movement of Vatican II encouraged the simplification of spaces of worship, particularly those around the altar. The Eucharistic Prayer and communion should be the focus, not the decorations. Likewise, with the new attention to Scripture, biblical symbols were to take a more central role in church art. In order to enhance the dignity of the celebration, art was encouraged to be produced by professionals of quality material. Rather than antiseptic depictions of otherworldly saints, holy figures were also produced to show their humanity—particularly their lives in the mundane world. Implements of work and everyday living were brought into church art in order to show the deep relationship between the act of prayer and the rest of life. All of these elements are present in Sister Augusta and her student’s designs for the Mater Dei Chapel.

### **The Liturgical Movement in Mater Dei Chapel**

Upon entering Mater Dei, one is struck both by the elegant volume and proportions of the space as well as its simplicity. This is not accidental, as simplicity allowed for greater focus on the central liturgical action intended for the space. There is not a multiplicity of statues around the altar, but rather a single cross with mosaic, abstract designs to focus attention on the altar rather than detract from it. Sister Augusta stated, “We are in a period where people want truth. There is confusion as to what to think, what to do. This is reflected in today’s art, which is a revolt against being misled. We must keep aware of what is going on, and the artist is most aware – the most sensitive.”<sup>11</sup> Those statues that are incorporated in the space [St. Joseph (photo 63), Mary (Photo 64), St. Elizabeth Ann Seton (Photo 68), the *Mater Dei* (Photo 16)] are not mass-produced, but rather intentionally designed and carved of limestone—a simple but strong material reminding the congregation of the presence of the communion of saints but not overwhelming those worshipping.

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<sup>11</sup> “Contemporary Art Says What We are.” *The Post and Times-Star*, 23 February 1971.

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Within the stained-glass windows, the symbols and abstract designs immerse those present in the holy and the biblical while also not drawing attention away from the central liturgical action. One can find common biblical symbols like the Lamb (Photos 18, 19, and 29) and staff and serpent of Moses. (Photo 21, upper right hand in second column) These symbolize the cross and Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice and remedy for human sinfulness. The lamb was an animal used for sacrifice in ancient Israelite religion and thus linked to Jesus as sacrifice, a sacrifice made present in every Eucharistic celebration. The staff and serpent of Moses also alludes to biblical history, recounting a story in the Book of Numbers about serpents who attacked the Israelite population and how God cured them through a bronze serpent he told Moses to make and raise up on a post so all could see it, and those “who shall look at it will live” (Numbers 21:8).<sup>12</sup> Jesus himself compares his cross to this biblical precedent, saying that “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). The examples of biblical imagery could be easily multiplied, but in these two symbols we see how those gathered together for worship are linked to the biblical story itself: in remembering Jesus’ death and resurrection in the Eucharistic celebration, they are also plunged into a story with even more ancient resonances. God’s action for us in the present always evokes the faithful God’s actions in the past, and Sister Augusta use this worship space to emphasize that belief.

There are Eucharistic symbols like wheat and grapes, drawing attention to the very activity that takes place in the space. (Photos 21, 22) While these have evident biblical echoes, they are also intended to reinforce for the worshippers their common participation in God’s activity through the mass. Like in earlier churches, there are also windows depicting saints: particularly Mary, St. Joseph, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. Unlike other versions, though, these saints are depicted through symbol rather than through ornate pictures that might distract one from the action of worship itself. St. Joseph, the patron of the university, is symbolized by the carpenter’s angle and hammer, connecting the sacred and holy to the everyday life of labor in the world. (Photos 23, 24) Volumes of closed books in the St. Elizabeth window highlight the connection between prayer in liturgy and the academic work that makes up the life of the university. (Photo 41) Symbols of Mary are found scattered across almost all of the windows.

The ecumenical energies of the time can be seen in the use of symbols that suggest not only Christian belief, but also that of Islam and Judaism. One of the many symbols of Mary is that of the moon, but it is interesting to see how the student-artists chose to depict it: the moon is a crescent, which also calls to mind the use of the crescent moon as a symbol of Islam. (Photo 36) Likewise, the Ark of the Covenant is depicted. (Photo 38) Mary is sometimes referred to poetically as the Ark of the Covenant, since she bore within her the sign of God’s commitment to God’s people (Jesus), just as the ancient Ark bore within it the sign of God’s commitment to Israel (the Ten Commandments). These symbols, which overlap with both Mary and non-Christian traditions, testify to the openness Catholicism would soon make officially clear in

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<sup>12</sup> All biblical citations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the bible.

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Vatican II's *Nostra aetate*, which stated that "the Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy" in these other traditions.<sup>13</sup>

Nothing is simply assumed from the conventions of liturgical art from preceding decades, but rather intentionally conceived to bring the ideal of the liturgical movement (and eventually, of Vatican II) of "full, conscious, and active participation" of the entire gathered assembly to life for the service of the university and the wider community and world.<sup>14</sup> History, the Bible, Christian tradition, and the implements of daily life are integrated to create a space where worshipers will take all that is present in Mater Dei out with them as signs of God's work and presence in the world. In this, Sister Augusta well-fulfilled the goals of the liturgical movement. What's most remarkable is that she did all this before these tendencies were made principles of the entire Catholic Church at the Second Vatican Council (which was convened during the chapel's construction) and was given the opportunity to execute them in the grand scale of a Chapel in this vision.

#### WOMEN IN THE ARTS PRIOR TO THE SECOND-WAVE FEMINISM

Sister Augusta was not only a forward thinker within the liturgical movement. She was ahead of her time when it came to defining the professional roles of women in the 1950s. During the 1950s and early 1960s, it was the expectation that men managed, led, and created while women served in auxiliary positions. Even professional women like teachers, nurses, and social workers seldom served in administration positions like Sister Augusta. According to a report published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics in 2002, in the 1950s, the overall participation rate in the women's work force was a modest 34%.<sup>15</sup> During the 1950s, there was a common notion that a woman's satisfaction could be found in the life as a homemaker. According to Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, Sister Augusta encouraged young females to pursue their passions outside the suburban lifestyle that was expected of them. This was evident when Sister Augusta hired the three female students to help design Mater Dei Chapel.

During the design phase of Mater Dei Chapel in the late 1950s, art and architecture were male-centric professions. According to the American Institute of Architect (AIA), only 1% of registered architects in 1958 were women.<sup>16</sup> Women in other artistic fields were also overlooked. According to Diane Apostolos-Cappadona (author of *Encyclopedia of Women in Religious Art*), female artists, particularly women in religious art, did not receive public attention until the second-wave feminism movement of the late 1960s. Apostolos-Cappadona also noted that female artists were only hired when one of two things transpired; women had the political and financial support of their families and communities or were hired by other religious female figures. Under

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<sup>13</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions (*Nostra aetate*)," October 28, 1965, 2. Available at: [https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html) (accessed September 20, 2023).

<sup>14</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14.

<sup>15</sup> Mitra Toossi, "A Century of Change: the U.S. Labor Force, 1950-2050."

<sup>16</sup> Statistic published by the AIA Women in Architecture, January 6, 2020. <https://www.aia.org/articles/6252982-women-in-architecture>

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the leadership of former President Maria Corona Molloy, S.C. and Sister Augusta, Mater Dei Chapel became an early example of a female led project that utilized the unique and gifted talents of other female artists before it was socially accepted. Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61, recalls a conversation with a fellow artist, who happened to be male, at an Archdiocesan Liturgical Art Group event who said that he would not visit the newly designed Mater Dei Chapel because it was designed by women. This type of thinking plagued the nation during the late 1950s and early 1960s. After the completion of Mater Dei Chapel in 1962, the all-female design team was not given the appropriate credit for their work yet at the same time, they did not realize that they were a part of a much larger story that would take the country by storm; the second-wave feminism movement (late 1960s-1970s). The movement was led by feminist activists such as Betty Friedan, Gloria Steinmen, Susan Brownmiller, and Kate Millett. These women, comprised of authors and artists, challenged what the role of women in society should look like, just as the women of Mater Dei Chapel had done years before. Mater Dei Chapel serves as a visual account of women breaking gender barriers before traditional gender roles were questioned.

#### ROMAN CATHOLIC COLLEGIATE CHAPELS IN OHIO

In comparison to other Roman Catholic collegiate chapels in Ohio, the Mater Dei Chapel is the most well-preserved chapel with a strong sense of place, time, and a high degree of artistic value and integrity. Mater Dei Chapel was the first collegiate chapel in Ohio to display Mid-Century Modern liturgical art that stripped away embellishments and focused on spiritual meaning. The intact chapel and works of art have not been subjected to destruction, contemporary additions, or modern intrusions. It was also a chapel that was designed under the leadership of female faculty members and students, the only remaining in Ohio, prior to the Second Vatican Council which transformed the traditional Church culture into a modern society.

Today, nine out of eleven Roman Catholic collegiate chapels remain active and are associated with four-year institutions, which are comparable to Mount St. Joseph University.<sup>17</sup> Out of the nine remaining chapels, three were constructed prior to the Second Vatican Council and their original designs reflect the strict, traditional design philosophies of the old ways of the Church. These three chapels are the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the University of Dayton, Dayton (1869), Christ the King Chapel at Notre Dame College, South Euclid (1928), and Christ the King Chapel at Ohio Dominican University, Columbus (1933). Nearly the entire historic sanctuary of Immaculate Conception has been dismantled due to extensive reconstruction. (Figures 19, 20) The last remaining historic works of art, completed by well-known Catholic liturgical artists Johann Schmitt and Mr. Auer, were removed during a recent renovation in 2015. Christ the King Chapel was designed in the English Tudor Gothic style by Ohio architect Thomas D. McLaughlin and occupies the third and fourth floors of the Administration Building. (Figure 21) The building was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 (NR Notre Dame College of Ohio, ref# 83004267). Christ the King Chapel underwent major renovations in 1979 and then again in 2008. The remaining art within the Chapel is indicative of

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<sup>17</sup> Refer to Figure 31 for a list of Roman Catholic Chapels associated with Universities in Ohio.

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the Tudor Gothic style and includes sharp edges, pointed arches, a neutral color scheme, thick dark solder joints, and intricate motifs within the statuary and Stations of the Cross. Per the historic design, there is an emphasis on the use of transparent leaded-glass windows, painted wood, and marble finishes. Christ the King Chapel at Ohio Dominican University is a smaller chapel located on the north side of Sansbury Hall. (Figures 22, 23) Designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, the Chapel is adorned with Classical elements such as fluted pilasters, Corinthian capitals, open pediments, dentils, rosettes, and detailed moulding.

Three Roman Catholic collegiate chapels were designed in the Modernist style within the same era as Mater Dei Chapel. These chapels include Bellarmine Chapel at Xavier University, Cincinnati (1962), Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity at Ursuline College, Pepper Pike (constructed in 1968 and demolished in 2020), and Christ the King Chapel at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Steubenville (1969). Unlike Mater Dei Chapel, these chapels place emphasis on the architectural form; the works of art become a backdrop to the overall design of the building. Bellarmine Chapel was designed in the Modernist style by Cincinnati architect Albert V. Walters who was known for his modernist designs, attention to detail, and emphasis on form. (Figure 24) Bellarmine Chapel is unusual for its hyperbolic paraboloid roof form. The convex curved plane is supported by underground steel cables and two interior columns. In plan, the Chapel is oval in shape, with the main altar at the front of the sanctuary and the side altars, shrines, Stations of the Cross, and confessionals at the rear. The interior of the Chapel is very striking as one's eye focuses on the unique form of the structure. Unlike the interior of Mater Dei, the artwork at Bellarmine Chapel is sparse and acts as a background to the architectural forms; the stained-glass windows are narrow and small in scale, the glass colors are non-vibrant, the stations are monolithic in color, the statuary are located within niches at the rear of the Chapel, and the overall feel of the Chapel is understated. The works of art were not intended to and do not reflect the liturgical connection in the same way as Mater Dei. The Chapel was remodeled in 1998 and a new addition was constructed in 2004. These modifications impacted the historic integrity in terms of design, feeling, and association.

The Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity at Ursuline College was designed in the Mid-Century Modern style by architect Peter van Dijk. (Figures 25, 26) Completed in 1966, Van Dijk designed nine original buildings on the campus of Ursuline College. The Chapel was constructed as an addition to the original Educational Center in 1968 and was demolished along with the Educational Center in 2020. Similar to Bellarmine Chapel, Ursuline's Chapel was significant for its architectural style. Van Dijk was known for his innovative design ideas which were evident in the construction of Ursuline's Chapel. In plan, the sanctuary was the shape of a cross and had three different ceiling heights with clerestory windows that allowed natural light to cascade into the space. All the walls and columns were painted white and gave the space a stark feeling that allowed the architectural form to become the focal point. Rather than using the traditional Mid-Century color scheme, the stained-glass windows were designed in blue tones that fade into each other. Unlike Mater Dei Chapel, the windows did not have Christian symbolisms, but rather geometric shapes that played off the architectural forms. The stained-glass windows were designed by Sister Kilian Hufgard (founder of Ursuline's art department) who also contributed to the fourteen mosaic Stations of the Cross. Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity was perhaps the best

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comparison to Mater Dei Chapel in style, form, and collaboration between male architect and female designer. Unfortunately, because it was demolished, the interior space of Mater Dei Chapel now remains the sole collegiate Mid-Century chapel in Ohio that was designed by female artists and designers.

Christ the King Chapel at Franciscan University of Steubenville was the last Roman Catholic collegiate chapel constructed in the Modernist style within Ohio. (Figures 27-29) The Chapel was designed in 1969 by well-known Pennsylvania Modernist architect Joseph Felix Bontempo, who designed the original campus in 1955. Father Sean Sullivan TOR is also credited with the design of the Chapel. The Chapel is a concrete building, elliptical in plan that appears to rise out of the earth and extend into the heavens. A large massing comprised of geometrical forms and a large cross enhances the entry along the north façade. The design within the Chapel is very minimal. Similar to the original design of the Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity (Ursuline), the walls and structure are painted in light tones, creating a somber appearance. The works of art within the Chapel are understated and appear to be manufactured items as opposed to the works of art at Mater Dei Chapel which have a high level of artistic value. An extension was constructed on the west side of the Chapel in 1995. Recently in 2022, the University held a national design competition for a new chapel. The future of the Christ the King Chapel is unknown at this time.

While the majority of the chapels constructed in the 1960s were reflective of the Modernist style, Our Lady Queen of Peace at Lourdes University, Sylvania (1961) was constructed in the Spanish Mission style. (Figure 30) Comparable with Mater Dei Chapel, female artists contributed to the overall design of Our Lady Queen of Peace. Unlike the uniqueness and originality of works of art at Mater Dei Chapel, all works of art within the Chapel were replicated from art at San Damiano, Italy. According to the school records, Sister Ruth Marie Kachelek constructed the San Damiano cross, and Sister Michaeline Lesiak is credited with designing and painting 10,000 acoustical ceiling tiles with the help of fellow art students and faculty members. The stained-glass windows were designed by well-known glass artist and master medallion maker Stephen Bridges. In 1986, the Chapel was renovated and it appears the historic integrity of the Chapel was preserved reflecting the original design.

The three remaining Roman Catholic collegiate chapels were either designed within the last 50 years or have been demolished. Chapels constructed within the past 50 years include St. Francis Chapel at John Carroll University, University Heights (1987) and Our Lady of Perpetual Help Chapel at Walsh University, North Canton (2006). Our Lady of Perpetual Help, located at Edgecliff College, Cincinnati (1938), was demolished circa 1987. (Figure 31)

## CONCLUSION

Mater Dei Chapel is significant at the local level under Criterion C and Criteria Consideration A for Art, as the works of art within the Chapel are representative of the first female designed collegiate chapel prior to the modern liturgical movement. The works of art stripped away embellishments to embody a visual representation of spiritual meaning, indicative of the changes

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occurring within the Catholic Church prior to the Second Vatican Council. They also represent a shift in the design profession from a male dominating environment to females taking a leadership role within the design community. Sister Augusta was once quoted saying, “Good liturgical art should reflect both the times and the people who make it and use it.”<sup>18</sup> The works of art, produced by Sisters of Charity and three female students under the leadership of Sister Augusta, signify a social transformation not only in the design community, but within the Catholic Church and previously defined gender roles.

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<sup>18</sup> Sister Augusta Zimmer, interview by unknown, Sisters of Charity Archives.

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Oxford Research Encyclopedias <https://oxfordre.com/>

## Interview

Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler, Mount St. Joseph University student of 1961 and artist of Mater Dei Chapel. Interview by Sister Karen Elliott C.P.P.S, Sister Judith Metz S.C, Ph.D, and Madeline Williams, June 15, 2023.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
  - Other State agency
  - Federal agency
  - Local government
  - University
  - Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** .22

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 39.095474 Longitude: -84.638058

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Mater Dei Chapel is located within parcel number 540-0100-0022-90. The boundary is described as the following: the beginning point starts 250.4 feet south and 44.9 feet west of the curb side of the northeast corner of parcel number 540-0100-0022-90; continue to travel 30.6 feet westerly at a 77.86 degree angle; continue 9.67 feet north; then travel 124 feet west; continue 67.33 feet south; then travel 124 feet east; continue 9.67 feet north; then 30.6 feet easterly at a 77.86 degree angle and finally travel 36 feet northly along a 170.87 degree radius ending at the point of origin. Map 4

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**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated boundary includes the footprint of the Mater Dei Chapel building during the period of significance (1962-1963). Although Mater Dei is connected to abutting buildings on the north and south, it is the only building that is significant for possessing high artistic value under Criterion C for Art. Therefore, the boundaries proposed for the listing exclude the remaining buildings on the campus of Mount St. Joseph University.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Sister Judith Metz S.C, Ph.D, Archivist and Historian for Sisters of Charity & Madeline Williams, Director of Preservation at MSA Design & Andy Buechel-Rieger, PhD  
organization: MSA Design  
street & number: 316 West Fourth Street  
city or town: Cincinnati state: Ohio zip code: 45202  
e-mail mwilliams@msaarch.com  
telephone: 513.241.5666  
date: July 1, 2023; October 16, 2023; December 11, 2023

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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## Photo Log

Name of Property: Mater Dei Chapel

City or Vicinity: Cincinnati

County: Hamilton State: Ohio

Photographer: Madeline Williams and staff at Mount St. Joseph University

Date Photographed: In 2009 and 2016, the works of art within Mater Dei Chapel were professionally photographed using the best light possible to capture the art pieces. Though the photos are not current, they still represent the current condition as the works of art have not been altered or modified. The remaining photographs (focused on the exterior and interior spaces) were taken on January 11, 2023 and November 29, 2022. One photograph that captures an aerial view of the campus was taken in 2021.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. View of Mount St. Joseph Campus, view looking southeast. (Photo taken in 2021)
2. West façade of Mater Dei Chapel, view looking east.
3. North elevation of Mater Dei Chapel, view looking south.
4. East elevation of Mater Dei Chapel, view looking west.
5. South elevation of Mater Dei Chapel, view looking northeast.
6. South elevation of Mater Dei Chapel, view looking northwest.
7. Narthex, view looking south.
8. Narthex, view looking west.
9. Nave, view looking southwest.
10. Nave, view looking northwest.
11. Nave, view looking east.
12. Nave, view looking northeast.
13. Nave, view looking southeast.
14. Nave, view looking west.
15. Sanctuary, view looking south.
16. Mater Dei sculpture, view looking east. (Photo taken in 2016)
17. Sanctuary, view looking southeast.
18. Sanctuary, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
19. Sanctuary, view looking south and up.
20. Sanctuary, view looking northeast.
21. Sanctuary, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
22. Sanctuary, view looking north.
23. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
24. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
25. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
26. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
27. Stained-glass window, in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)

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28. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
29. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
30. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
31. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
32. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
33. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
34. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
35. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
36. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
37. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
38. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
39. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
40. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
41. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)
42. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north.
43. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking north.
44. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
45. Stained-glass window in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
46. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
47. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
48. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
49. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
50. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
51. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2009)
52. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking west. (Photo taken in 2009)
53. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking west. (Photo taken in 2009)
54. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
55. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
56. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
57. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
58. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
59. Stations of the Cross in nave, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2009)
60. Reredos, Crucifix, and baldachin, view looking east.
61. Reredos, Crucifix, and baldachin, view looking northeast.
62. Reredos, view looking east.
63. St. Joseph statue, view looking southeast. (Photo taken in 2016)
64. Mary Mother of God statue, view looking east. (Photo taken in 2016)
65. Tabernacle and reredos, view looking east. (Photo taken in 2009)
66. Candlesticks at altar, view looking southeast.
67. Sacred Heart statue, view looking south. (Photo taken in 2016)
68. Mother Seton statue, view looking north. (Photo taken in 2016)

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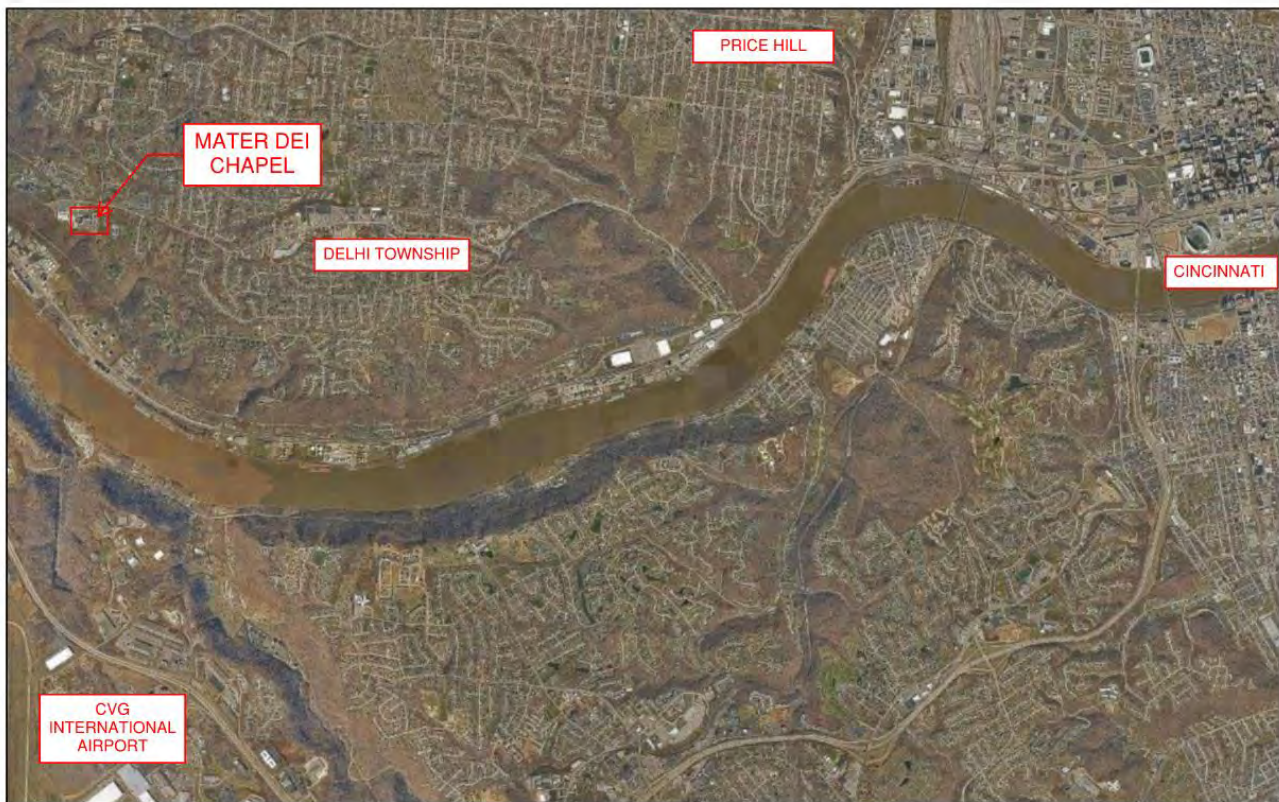
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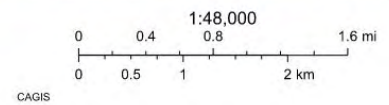
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Map 1  
Mater Dei Chapel Location in Relationship to Downtown Cincinnati



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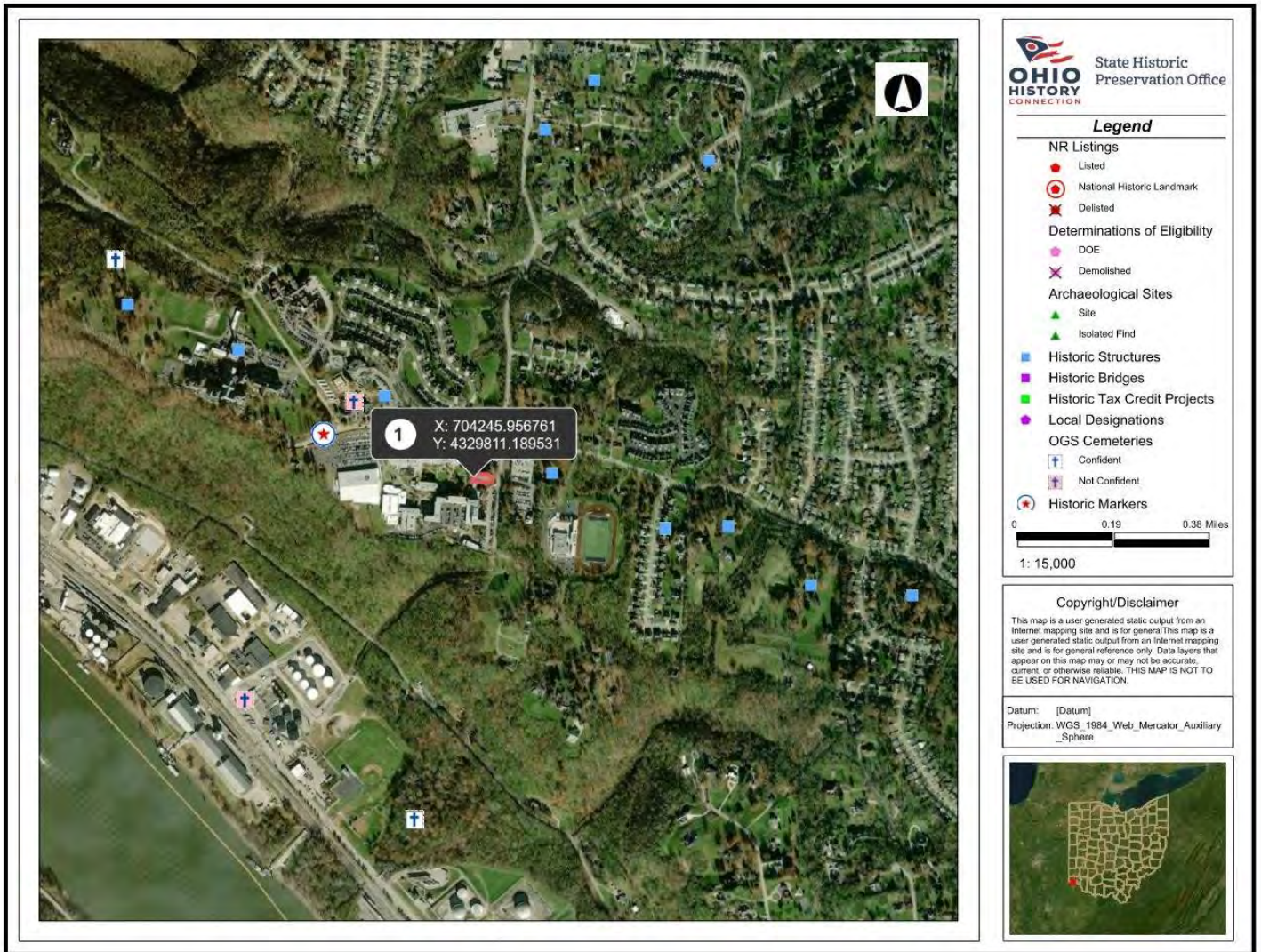
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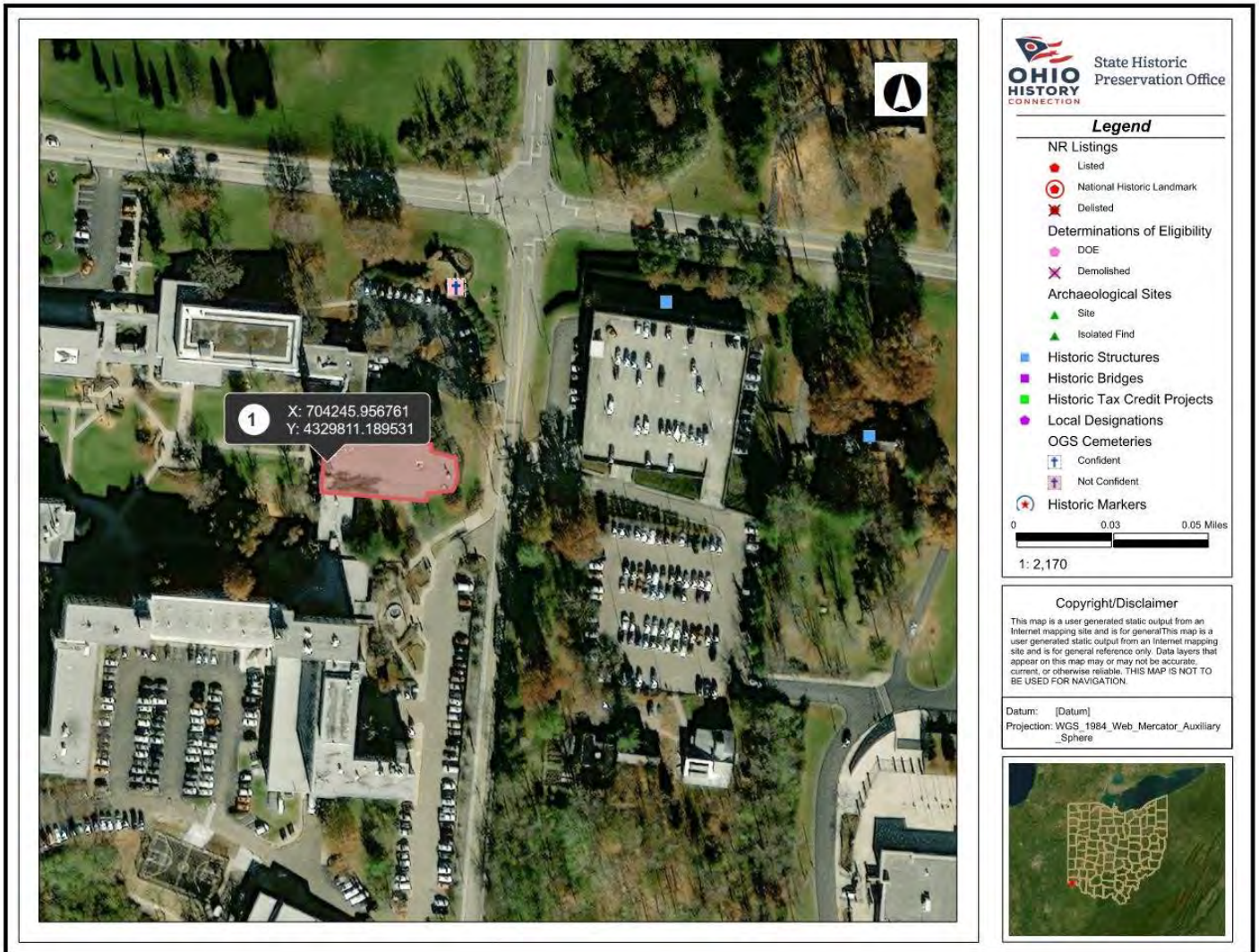
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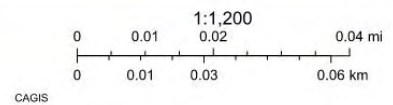
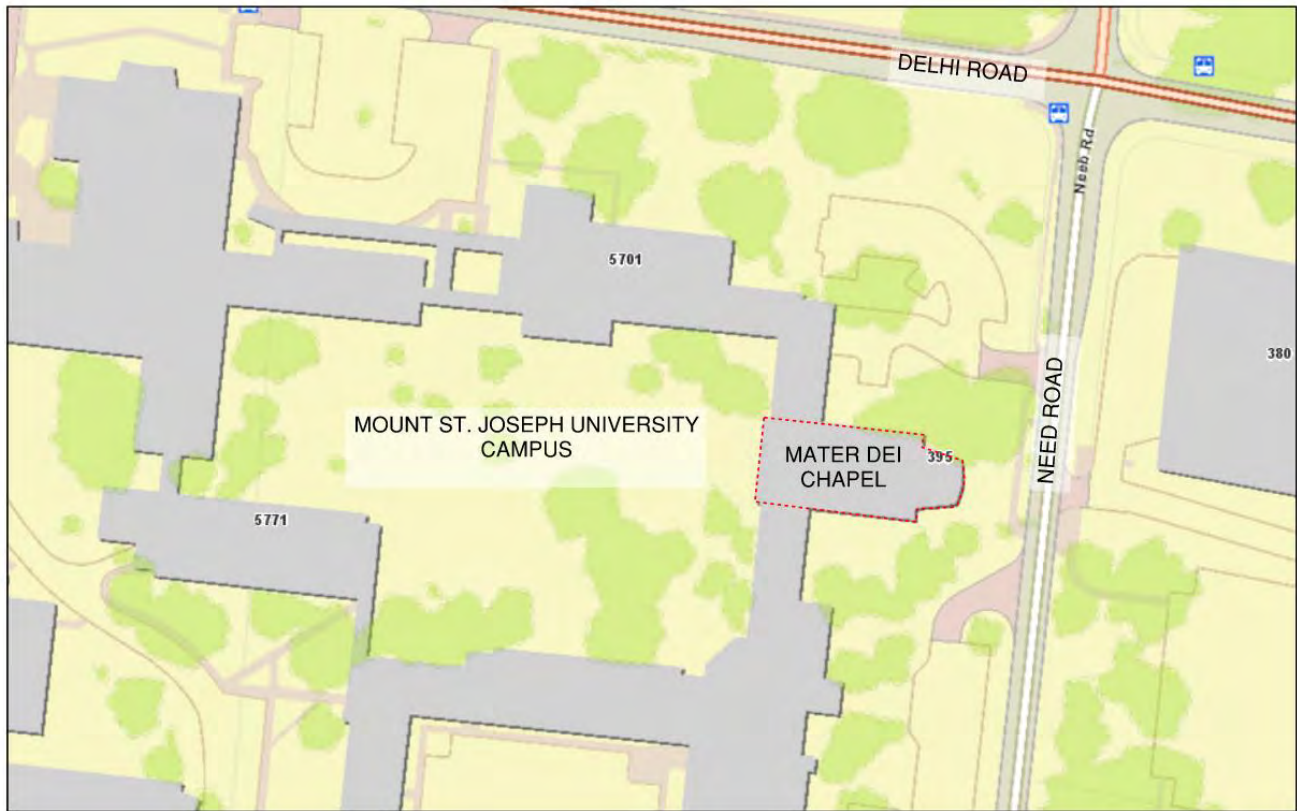
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Map 4  
Mater Dei Chapel Boundary

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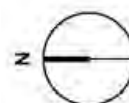
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Mater Dei Chapel Photo Key 1



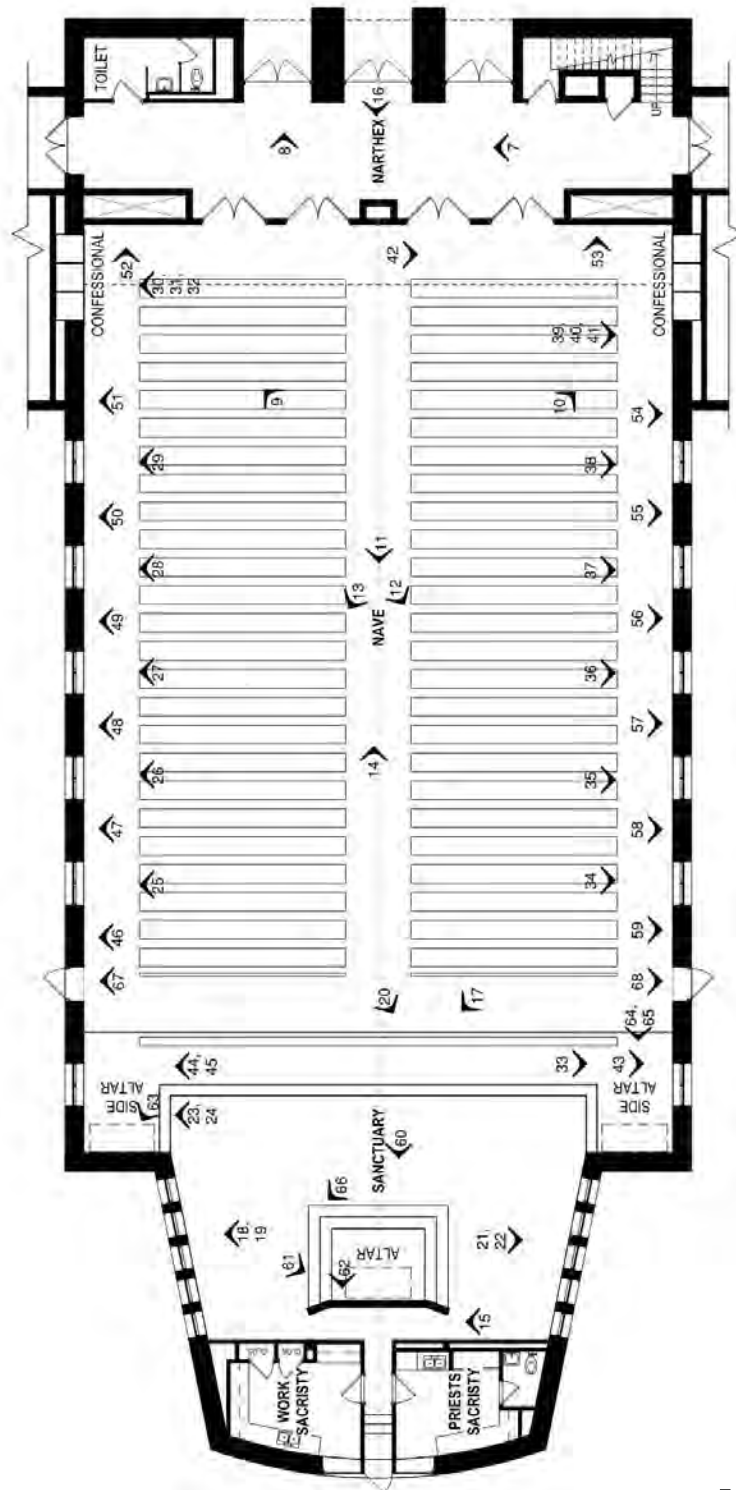
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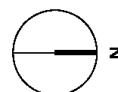


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Mater Dei Chapel Photo Key 2



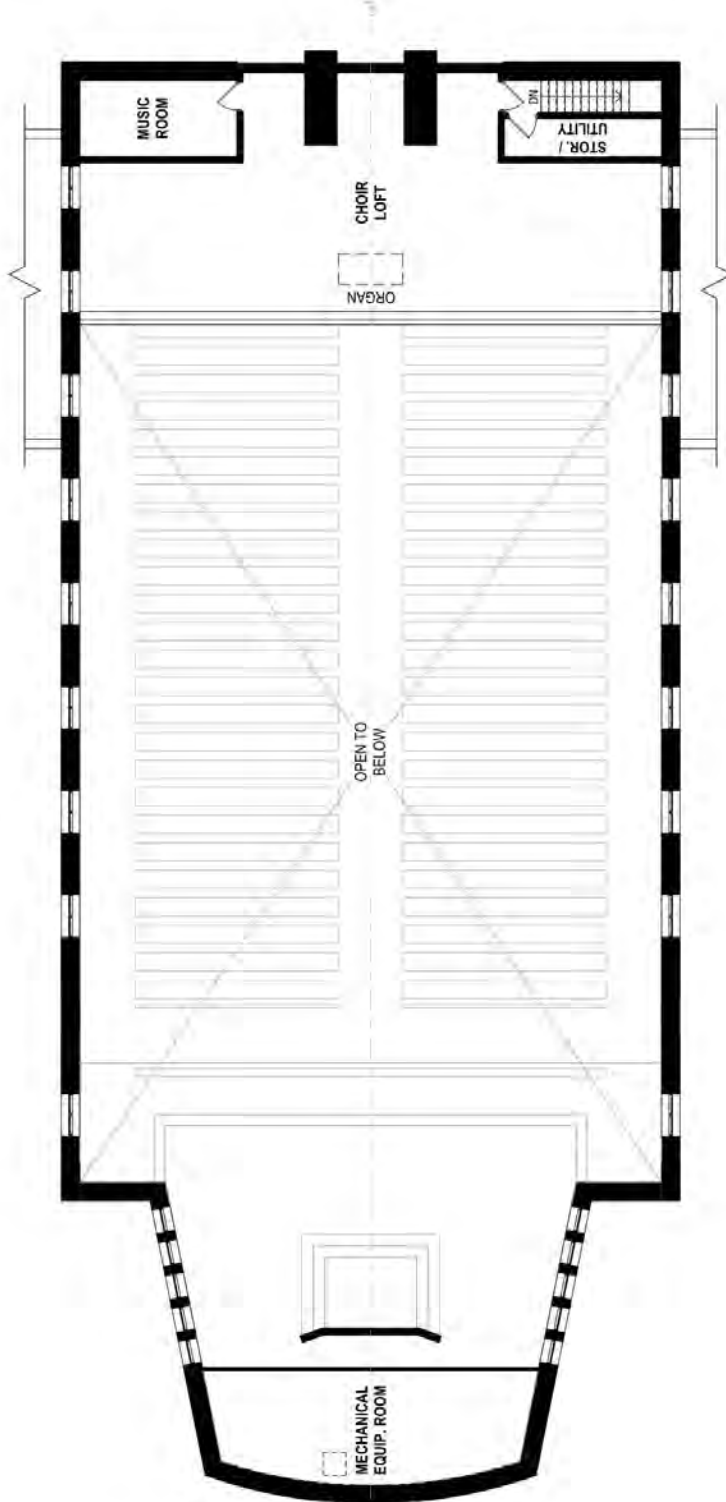
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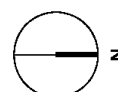


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Figure 1: Mater Dei Chapel, 1962  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)



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Figure 2: Mater Dei Chapel, dedication 1963  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)

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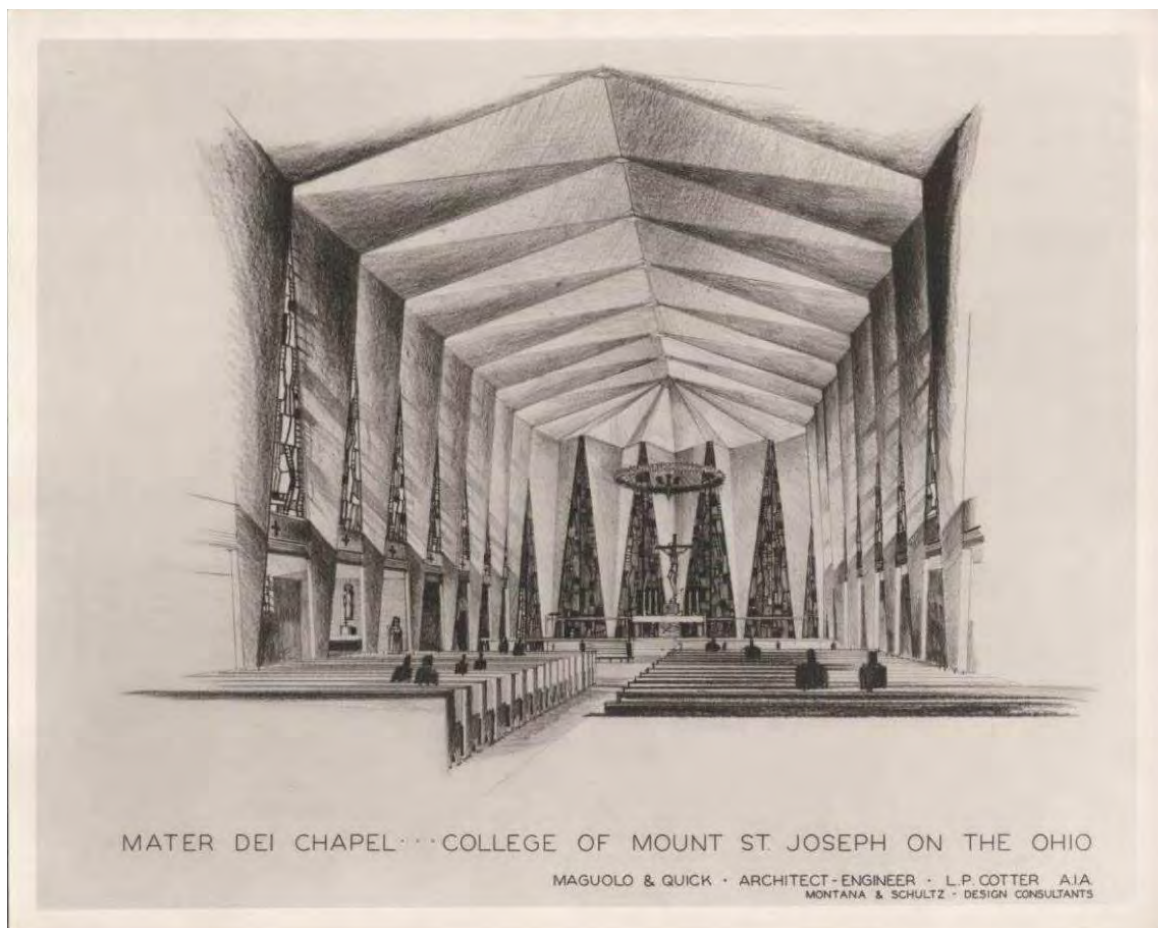


Figure 3: Proposed design of Mater Dei Chapel by architect, L.P. Cotter  
(Photo Credit: Mount St. Joseph Archives)

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Figure 4: Margaret Rolfes Brungs '60 assembling Stations of the Cross  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)



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Figure 5: Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler '61 constructing the full-size model of the Crucifix  
(Photo Credit: Judith Dettenwanger Ebbeler)

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Figure 6: Mater Dei Chapel, 1962  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)

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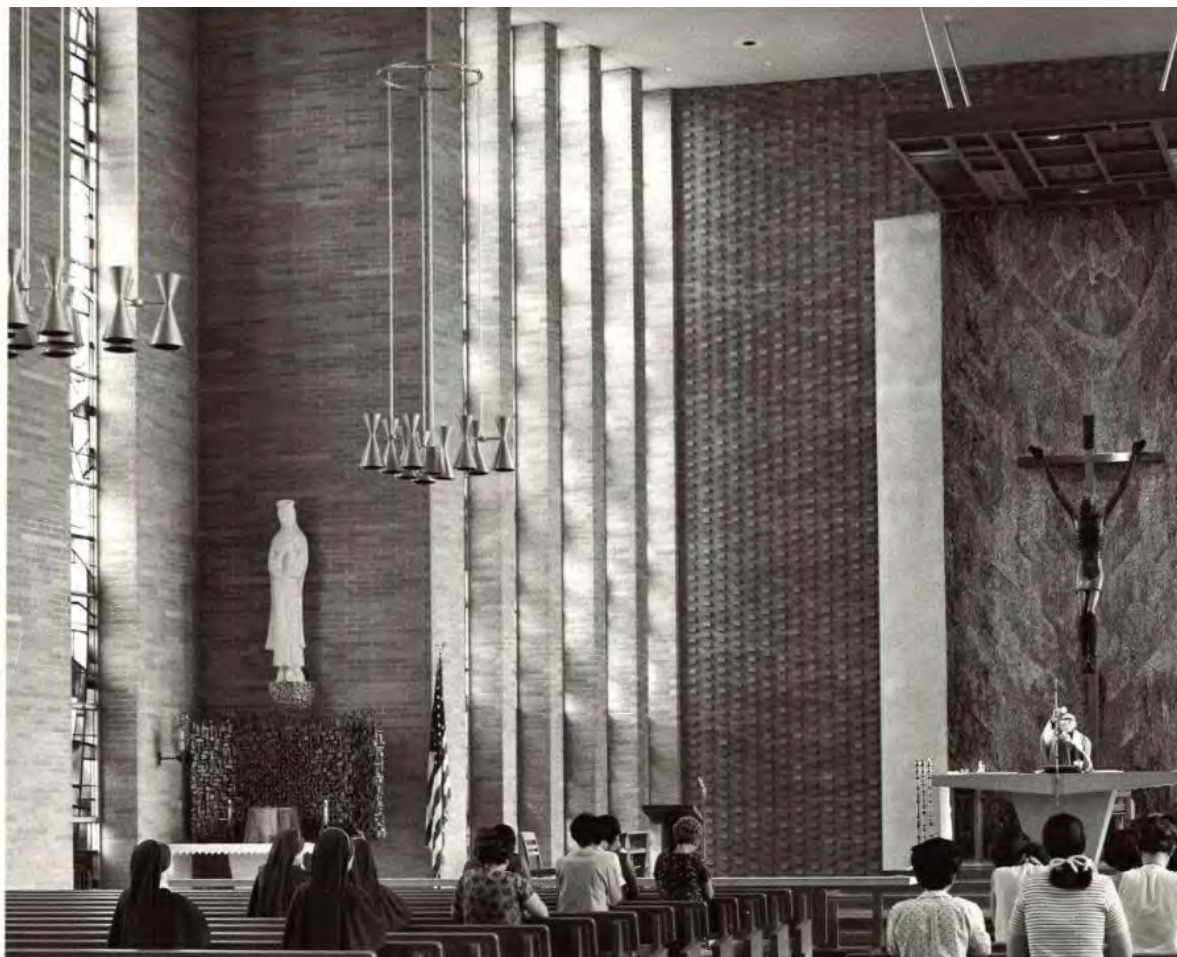


Figure 7: Mater Dei Chapel, c. 1964  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)



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Figure 8: Mater Dei Chapel, 1973  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)

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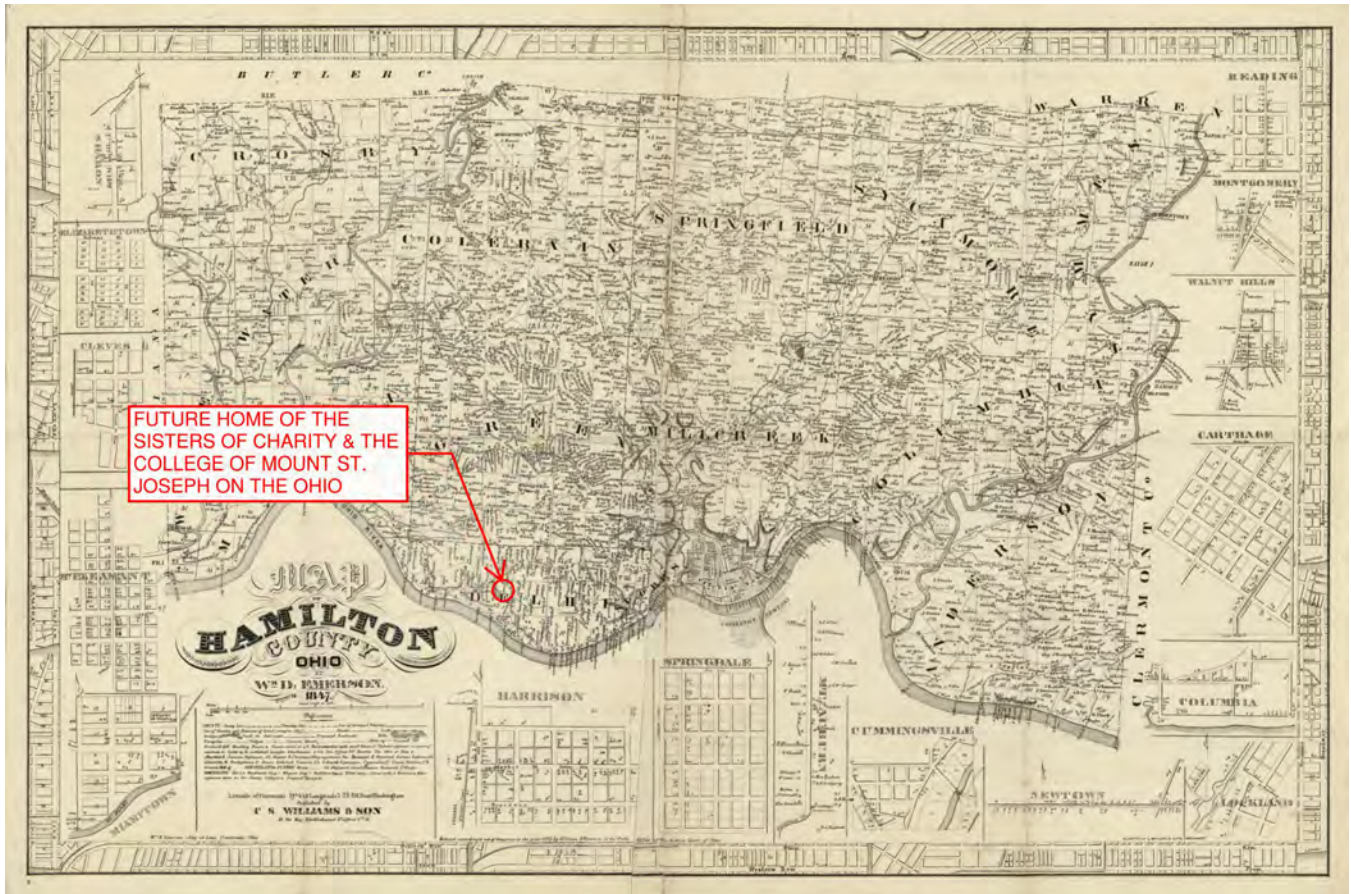
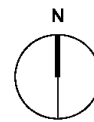


Figure 9: 1847 Map of Hamilton County, Ohio





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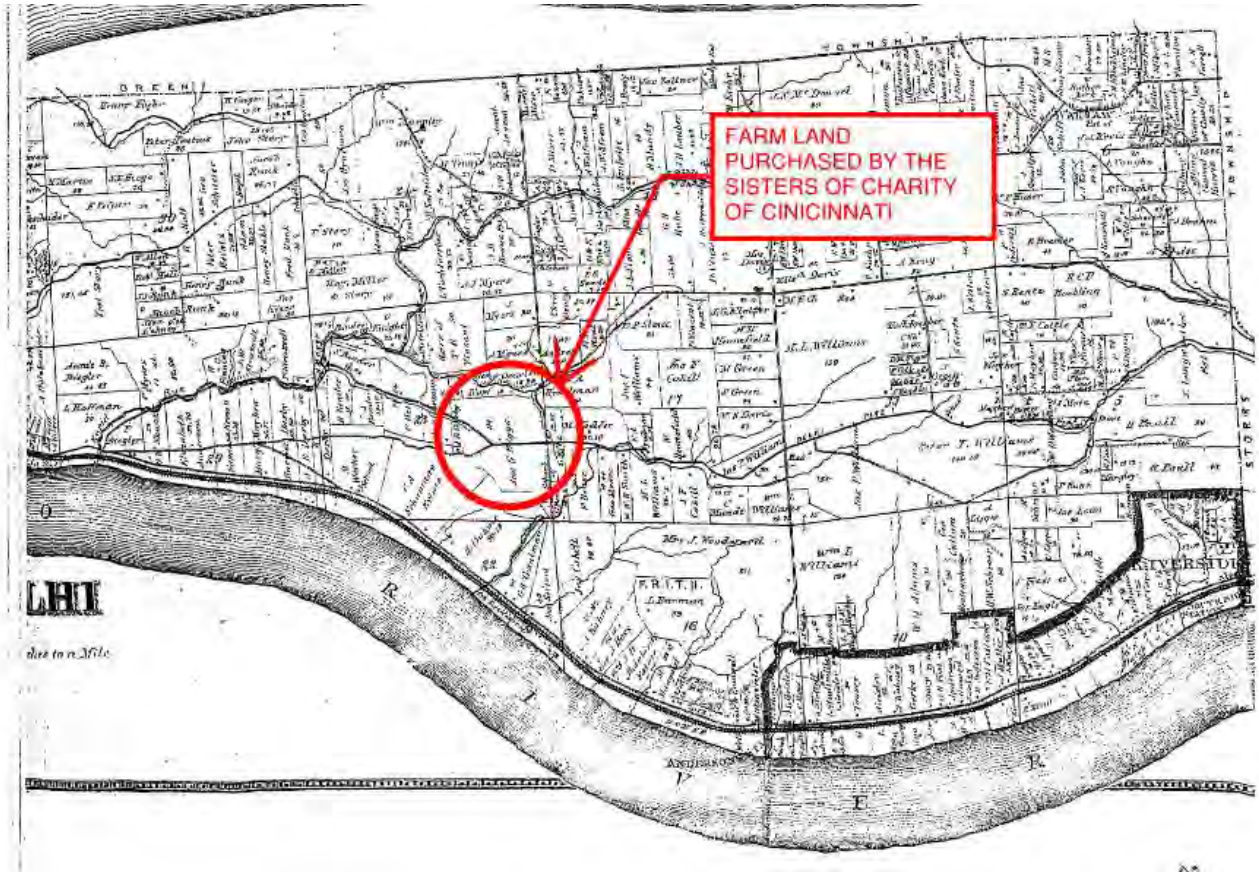
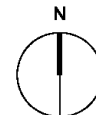


Figure 10: 1869 Titus Map of Delhi Township, Ohio



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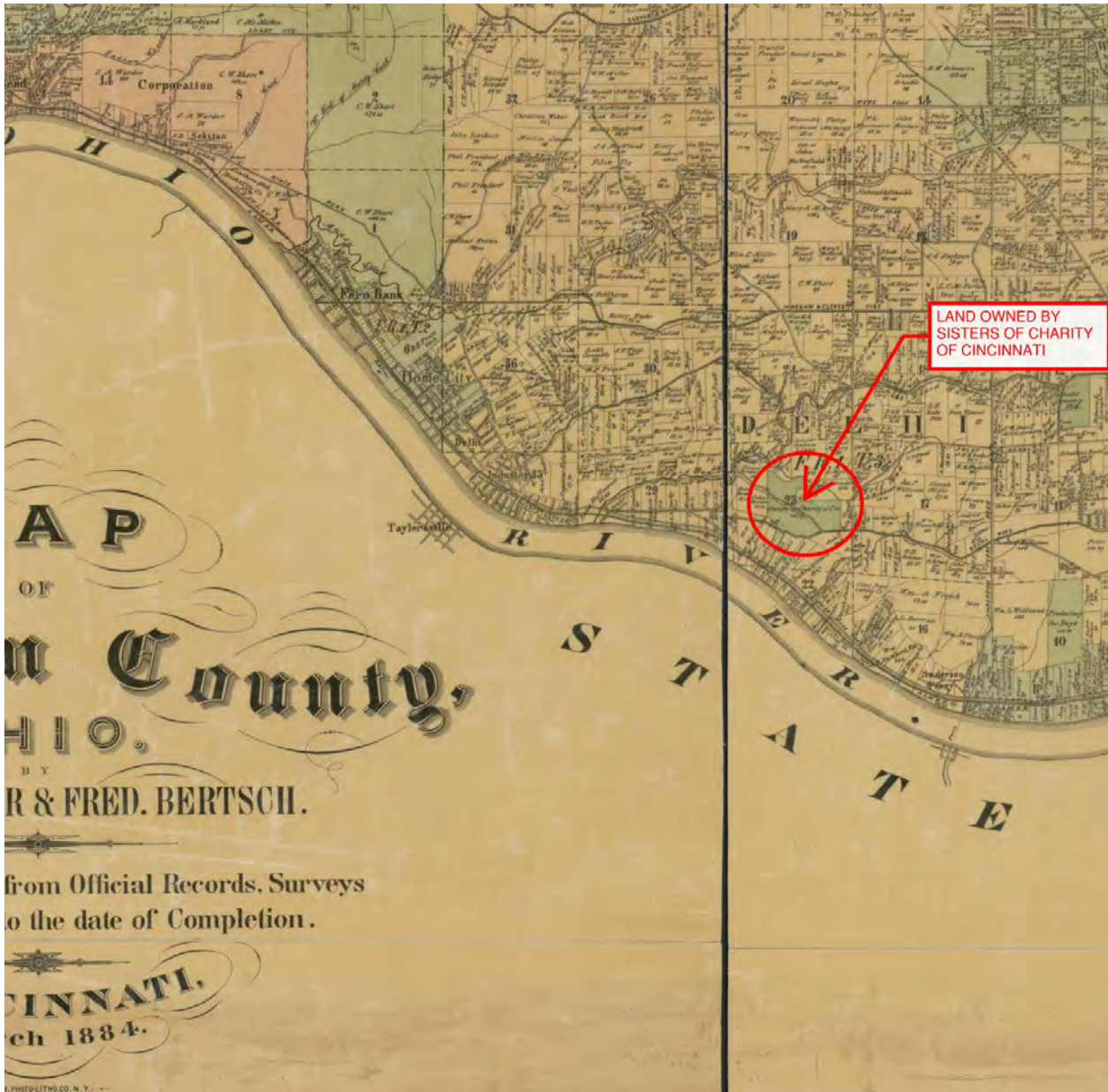
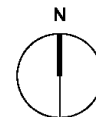


Figure 11: 1884 Geo. Moessinger & Fred Bertsch Map of Hamilton County, Ohio





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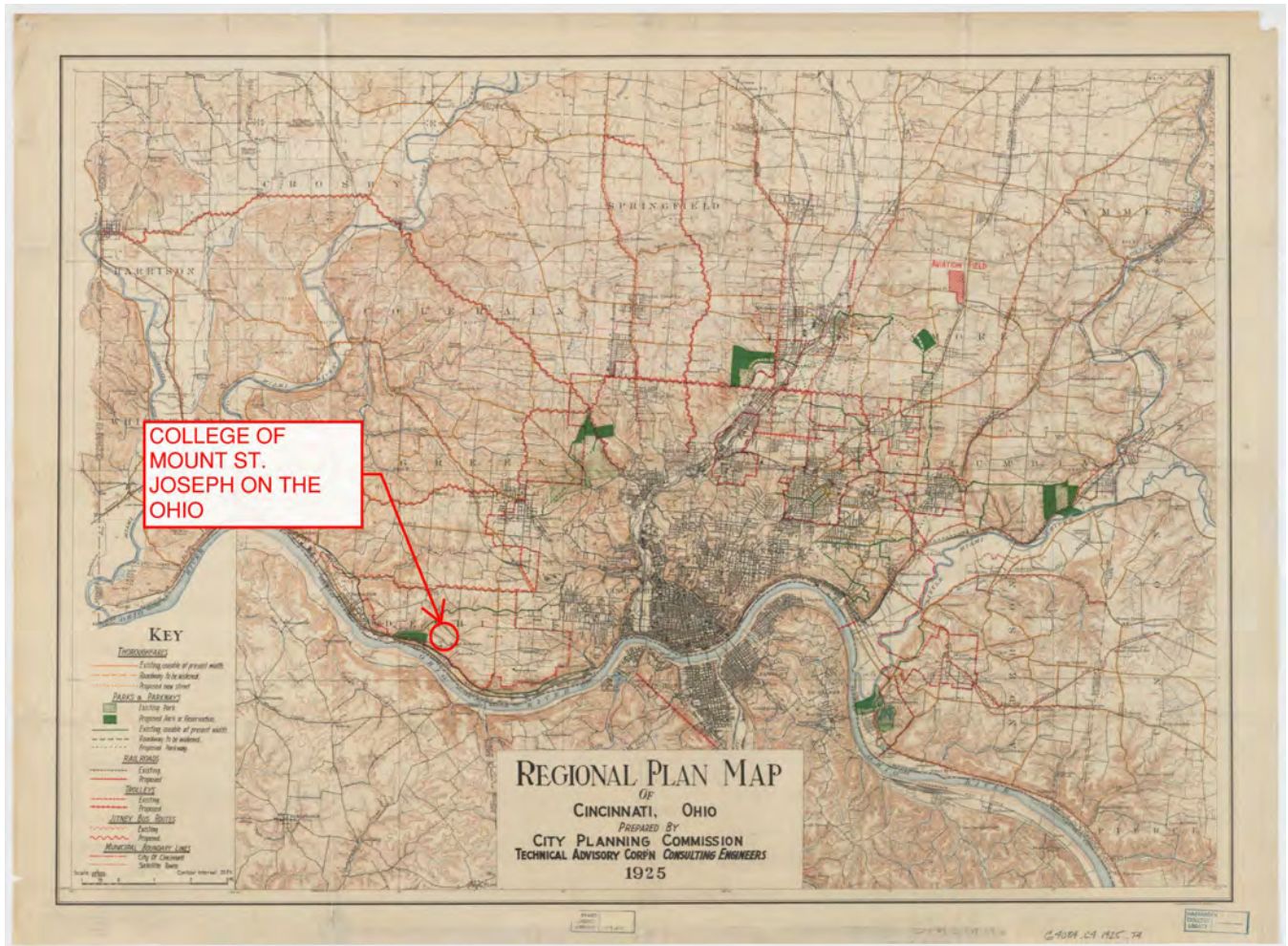
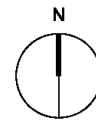


Figure 12: 1925 Regional Plan Map of Cincinnati, Ohio





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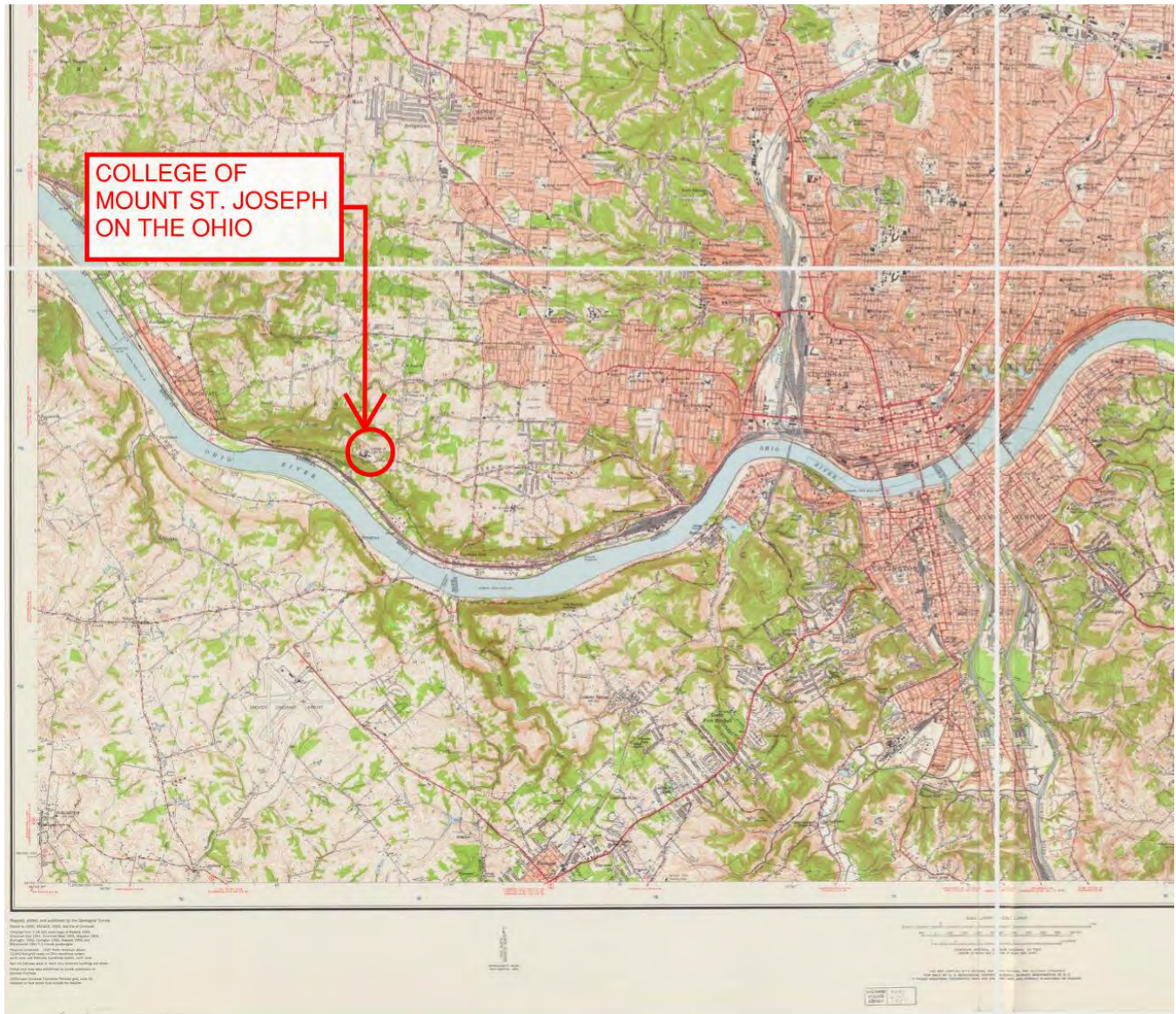
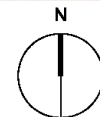


Figure 13: 1955 Cincinnati and Vicinity, OH-KY Map





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Figure 14: 1883 Sisters of Charity Motherhouse  
(Photo Credit: Sisters of Charity)

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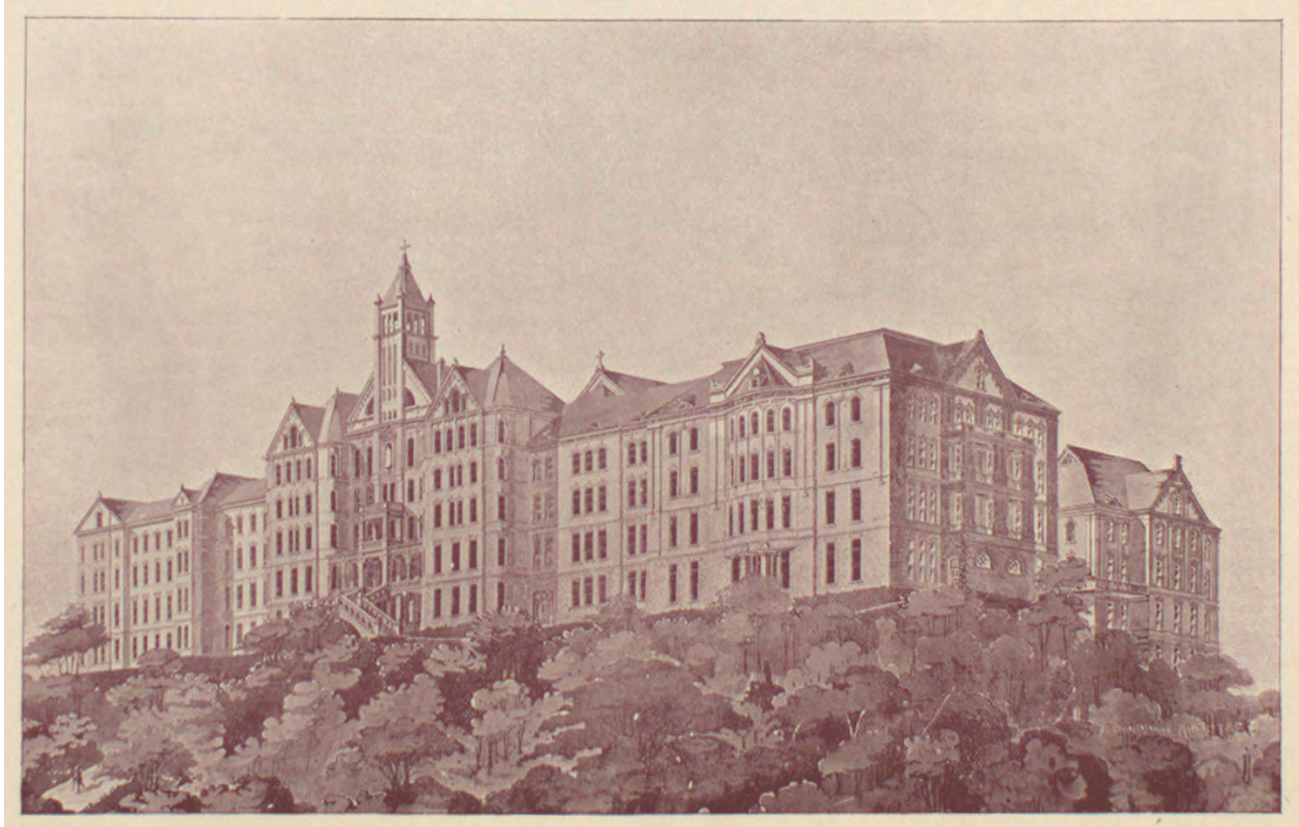


Figure 15: 1883 Sisters of Charity Motherhouse designed by Adolphus Druiding  
(Photo Credit: The Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County)



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COLLEGE OF MOUNT ST. JOSEPH ON THE OHIO

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Figure 16: Rendering of the College of Mount St. Joseph on the Ohio  
(Photo Credit: Mount St. Joseph University)

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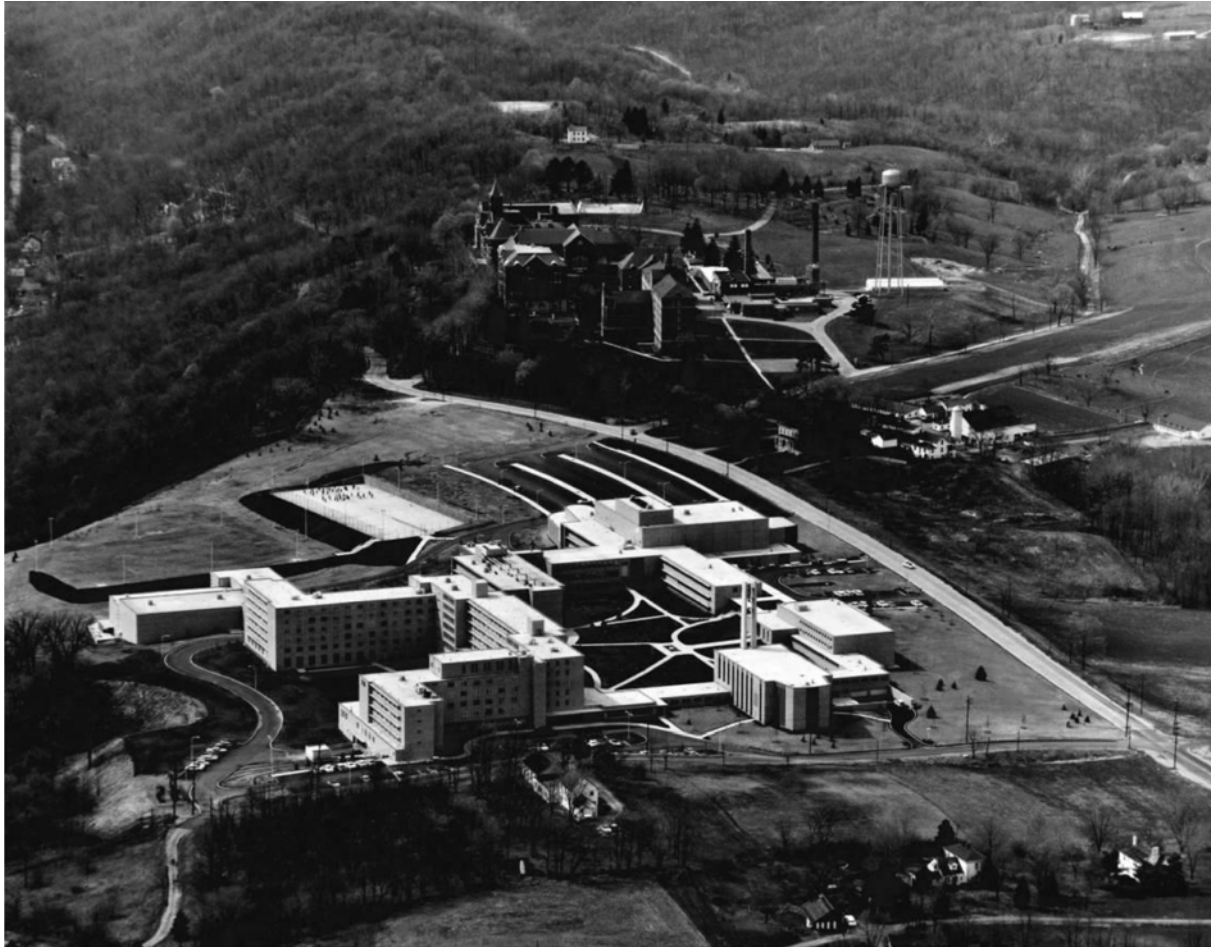


Figure 17: Aerial Photograph 1962  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Memory Collection)

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**Figure 18: History of the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse and Mount St. Joseph University**

- 1852**- Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati established.
- 1853** - Mount St. Vincent Motherhouse established in Cincinnati.
- 1857** - Mount St. Vincent Motherhouse moved to Cedar Grove in Cincinnati.
- 1869** - Sisters purchased Biggs Farm in Delhi Township west of Cincinnati and moved novitiate there.
- 1884** - Fire destroyed the Motherhouse.
- 1885** - Mount St. Joseph established as Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati.
- 1886** - Marian Hall opened as first building in new Motherhouse complex.
- 1892** - Construction on center and east wings, chapel, and St. Mary's Hall began.
- 1906** - Mount St. Joseph Academy opened.
- 1920** - College of Mount St. Joseph opened. College of Mount St Joseph opened the doors to its first 20 students in September 14, 1920 as the first Catholic college for women in Southwestern Ohio – the same year that American women gained the right to vote. It is the first college established by the Sisters of Charity in Ohio.
- 1927** - Construction and opening of Seton Hall, first new building on campus, a five level building with student housing on the top three floors. The first two floors housed classrooms, labs, library, offices and a reception room.
- 1933** - Sister Maria Corona Molloy becomes the Mount's first dean, serving in this role until 1959 when she is named president.
- 1937** - St. Vincent's Hall completed. During the great Cincinnati flood, the Mount supplies victims with refuge, water and medical assistance. Despite the Depression, enrollment passes 250.
- 1942** - Sister Maria Corona begins discussion for new College facilities. However, World War II puts all plans on hold.
- 1947** - Mother Margaret Hall opened; Mount St. Joseph Academy closed.
- 1954** - The Sisters of Charity announce plans to build a new campus to accommodate the growing number of students at the College.
- 1959** - The dean Sister Maria Corona, is named the first president of the College as Mother General. Enrollment increases to 650.
- 1960** - March 19, 1960, was the occasion of the official groundbreaking for the new campus.
- 1962** - The last class to graduate from the Old Mount was the 155 graduates of the class of 1962. The new campus opens on a 75-acre tract at the corner of Neeb and Delhi roads in Cincinnati with nine major buildings constructed around a central quad. First mass in Mater Dei Chapel and consecration of the Main Alter and side alters was held on December 17, 1962, the day before students left campus for the Christmas break.
- 1963** - Formal dedication of the new campus and the solemn blessing of Mater Dei Chapel took place in ceremonies held on May 1, 1963.

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Figure 19: Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, University of Dayton (1895)

(Photo Credit: Dayton Daily News)



Figure 20: Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, University of Dayton (circa 2017)

(Photo Credit: University of Dayton)



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Figure 21: Christ the King Chapel, Notre Dame College  
(Photo Credit: Notre Dame College)



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Figure 22: Christ the King Chapel, Ohio Dominican University  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Dominican University)



Figure 23: Christ the King Chapel, Ohio Dominican University  
(Photo Credit: Ohio Dominican University)

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Figure 24: Bellarmine Chapel, Xavier University  
(Photo Credit: Bellarmine Chapel)

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Figure 25: Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity, Ursuline College  
(Photo Credit: Cleveland.com)



Figure 26: Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity, Ursuline College  
(Photo Credit: Cleveland.com)



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Figure 27: Christ the King, Franciscan University of Steubenville  
(Photo Credit: Franciscan University)

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Figure 28: Christ the King, Franciscan University of Steubenville  
(Photo Credit: Franciscan University of Steubenville)



Figure 29: Christ the King, Franciscan University of Steubenville  
(Photo Credit: Franciscan University of Steubenville)

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Figure 30: Our Lady Queen of Peace, Lourdes University  
(Photo Credit: Lourdes University)



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NAME / CATEGORY	LOCATION	ESTABLISHED	SIZE	CHURCH TYPE	CHAPEL	CHURCH CONSTRUCTION DATE	ARCHITECTURAL STYLE	ARCHITECT / DESIGNER	CURRENT STATUS	NOTES
Roman Catholic Chapels associated with Universities in Ohio										
1. Edgewood College	Cincinnati, OH	1955	Small	4-year	Our Lady of Perpetual Help	1955	Italian Renaissance Revival	Unknown	Demolished 1987	Established as an all-women institution. Closed based in 1980. Reopened as an all-women institution. Reopened in 1985.
2. Mount St. Joseph University	Steubenville, OH	1946	Small	4-year	Christ the King	1946*	Moderndecor style	Joseph P.ks Bonfiglioli / Arthur Ward Spangler, ICB	Active	
3. John Carroll University	University Heights, OH	1886	Small	4-year	St. Francis Chapel	1927**	Conservative (within the style)	Unknown	Active	St. Francis window designed by Stephen Bridges. Window an early example of an Irish Gothic window. Other windows of an Irish Gothic style. Chapel designed by John S. Davidson (1886) and Sister M. Christine Lovell (revised design). Chapel was renovated in 1985. Reopened as an all-women institution. Now Catholic.
4. Lourdes University	Cincinnati, OH	1955	Small	4-year	Our Lady Queen of Peace	1955	Spanish Mission	Architect unknown	Active	
5. Miami, Saint Joseph University	Cincinnati, OH	1900	Small	4-year	Mater Dei Chapel	1981	Mid-20th Century Modern	J.P. Coffey / Sister Angela Zime	Active	Major renovations in 1979 & 2008. Established as an all-women institution. Chapel located in the 1st floor of St. Anthony Hall. The oldest residence hall.
6. Notre Dame College	Cincinnati, OH	1922	Small	4-year	Christ the King	1918	Traditional	Thomas D. McLaughlin	Active	Renovated in 1956. Now addition in 2004.
7. Ohio Dominican University	Columbus, OH	1911	Small	4-year	Christ the King	1913	Italian Renaissance Revival	Unknown	Active	
8. University of Dayton	Dayton, OH	1850	Medium	4-year	Chapel of Our Immaculate Conception	1869	Renaissance Revival	Unknown	Active	
9. Ursuline College	Pepper Pike, OH	1871	Small	4-year	Chapel of the Most Holy Trinity	1928*	Moderndecor style	Rebecca (Sister) Marie Mulford	Active	Demolished 2020
10. Walsh University	North Canton, OH	1958	Small	4-year	Our Lady of Perpetual Help	2006**	Conservative (within the style)	Renowned Architects	Active	
11. Xavier University	Cincinnati, OH	1853	Medium	4-year	Benedictine Chapel	1962	Moderndecor style	Robert W. Wilkins	Active	
University Group:										
12. Good Samaritan College of Nursing & Health Science	Cincinnati, OH	1986	Small / No existing	4-year	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
13. Mercy College of Ohio	Towles, OH	1916	Small / No existing	4-year	Unknown	Unknown	Conservative (within the style)	Shirley J. Shuman	Active	Chapel located in the 1st floor of the original building. Major renovation and modifications.
14. Mount Carmel College of Nursing	COLUMBUS, OH	1983	Small	4-year	Mount Carmel Chapel	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Demolished 2017	New Chapel located at Mount Carmel Work Hospital. Roman Catholic and Protestant services.
15. Trinity Health System School of Nursing	Steubenville, OH	1995	Small / No existing	4-year	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	
University										
16. Ballantyne University	Cincinnati, OH	2020	Small	4-year	St. Gregory the Great	1923	Italian Renaissance Revival	Unknown	Active	Renovated 2021-2021
17. Cleveland State University	Columbus, OH	1988	Small	4-year	St. Nicholas	1983	Conservative Revival	Richard F. Hill, AIA, Richard / Stephen James (artist)	Active	woodwork in 1956, 1965, 1995, 1999, 2012
18. Christian College	Stark, OH	1971	Small / No existing	20-year	Sacred Heart	1955	Gothic Revival	Esler Fulkow Dean	Demolished in 2023	Original Church was part of Brown County. Now part of Christian College in PEI.

\*Construction after Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

\*\*Within the 50-year period

Figure 31: Roman Catholic Chapels associated with Universities in Ohio