

The Assumption Scene: A Treasured Part of St. Mary's History

A little more history...

The Assumption scene behind our altar has been part of our parish's history for nearly 150 years, depicting the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for whom our church is named.

In 1876, Father Aloysius F. Kuhlman discovered this group of statues by a Parisian artist at Philadelphia's Centennial Exposition. While building a new parish church, he purchased the scene for \$177.12. It arrived in Lebanon that December, requiring an additional \$25 in repairs for damage sustained during shipping.

Parishioners first saw the scene at the parish bazaar in May 1877. From 1880 until the church closed because of structural defects in June 1971, it occupied the central position in the ornate, hand-carved wooden structure behind the altar.

The statues were then stored in St. Mary's School basement. Flooding from Tropical Storm Agnes in June 1972 destroyed Mary's detached arms and two of the original four angels. Fortunately, the two angels beside the tomb and the tomb itself survived.

When the present church was planned, the scene was again given a prominent place behind the altar. The vertical red oak pieces, mounted against blue velour fabric, were chosen to convey the upward movement of Mary being assumed into heaven.

The surviving statues were restored in Philadelphia, where Mary received new arms and the pieces were repaired and repainted. Installed in June 1974, the Assumption scene welcomed parishioners when the first Mass in the new church was celebrated on July 27, 1974.

Today, this treasured scene continues to connect our parish's history with the faith we celebrate.

Source: A CENTURY MORE AND LESS

Of The Religious Art Treasures and Furnishings of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church, Lebanon, Pennsylvania

Compiled by The Rev. Msgr. George W. Rost • December 14, 1980