

A Visit To Seven Dolors Shrine

conducted by the *FRANCISCAN FATHERS Valparaiso, Indiana*

Shrine History

Welcome to Seven Dolors Shrine, a peaceful spiritual oasis in Northwestern Indiana in the diocese of Gary. Comprising approximately 160 acres of land and located near South Haven Estates, the Shrine grounds are dedicated to the Sorrowful Mother and conducted by the Franciscan Fathers of Most Holy Savior Commissariat.

Beginnings of the Shrine date back to 1928, when the Friars first arrived in the Midwest. Year by year a portion of the wooded land and weed-covered terrain was slowly cleared. Grottos, monastery, service buildings and chapel began to dot the scene. Today, after thirty years, the Shrine grounds present a picture of spiritual grandeur in a natural setting of field and forest.

The purpose of the Franciscan Fathers in building and maintaining Seven Dolors Shrine is twofold: to honor the Seven Sorrows of Mary and to conduct spiritual pilgrimages and days of recollection during the months from May to October.

Shrine Entrance

A paved road leads directly from U.S. Highway 6 to the entrance of the Shrine grounds. Immediately within this entrance stands a life-size statue of the Sorrowful Mother holding in her arms the body of a fallen soldier. This figure was sculptured in stone by Eugene Kormendi of the Notre Dame University Art Department in 1946, and dedicated to the Catholic men and women who gave their lives for their country during World War II.

Main Grotto

The main grotto, from which the entire Shrine receives its name, *Seven Dolors Shrine*, was dedicated by Archbishop John Noll of Fort Wayne, Indiana on May 10, 1931. "Dolor" is a Latin word meaning sorrow. Literally translated, the title means "Shrine of the Seven Sorrows."

Constructed of tufa rock, the grotto is dominated by a life-size figure of the Sorrowful Mother with seven golden swords piercing her heart. Directly beneath the statue, in a cave-like opening, is the sanctuary where outdoor Masses are celebrated on Sundays and Holydays during the summer. The sanctuary altar, made of stone, is enhanced by another beautiful statue of the Sorrowful Mother holding in her arms the lifeless body of Jesus. This statue is a replica of the *Pieta* by Michelangelo, the original of which can be seen in St. Peter's in the Vatican.

Directly behind the sanctuary, within catacomb-like surroundings, is a figure of the bound and scourged Christ, the Prisoner of Love.

Lourdes Grotto



A second grotto on the grounds was built and dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes in 1938. The exterior is modeled after the internationally famous Lourdes Shrine in France. Inside, the center of attraction and prayer, is a perpetual Nativity scene. Added in 1953, the Christmas crib is a constant reminder of Christ's love for man and Mary's share in this act of love. The life-like portrayal of Christ's birth is especially dear to the Franciscans, since history relates that the first crib was designed by St. Francis in Greccio, Italy in 1223.



There are four additional crypts within the grotto which, at the present time, honor St. Francis, St. Anthony, St. Anne and St. Theresa of the Little Flower.

To the left of the grotto, a path leads over the Marian Bridge, so named because it was constructed in 1954, the Marian Year.

St. Francis Altar

In the center of the Shrine grounds is the altar of St. Francis of Assisi. The bronze statue depicts St. Francis embracing the Crucified Savior, after a painting by Murillo. This altar gives prominence to the founder of the Franciscan Order, which had its beginning in 1209.



Encircling the area about the altar are stations in tufa and bronze depicting the Seven Sorrows of the Blessed Virgin Mary. To the right of this area is the cemetery where lie the bodies of the Franciscan Fathers and Brothers who have passed on to their eternal reward.

Way of the Cross

Completely encircling the main grotto are the fourteen Stations of the Way of the Cross, made of tufa and bronze. The Stations enjoy a great favor with pilgrims to the Shrine. Not only are they a reminder of the price of man's redemption, but also they are associated with Mary's most poignant sorrows.



The Way of the Cross has a distinctly Franciscan origin. In the thirteenth century, the Holy See commissioned the Franciscans to maintain and safeguard the places consecrated by Our Lord's footsteps in Palestine. As more and more people desired to relive the principal scenes from Christ's passion and death, the Friars, especially St. Leonard of Port Maurice, introduced the Stations in Europe. Traditionally, St. Leonard arranged them in their present form and erected the first such Stations in the Coliseum in Rome.

Friary

The Friary serves as a Residence for the Franciscan Fathers and Brothers. The original Friary, which today forms the right wing, was solemnly blessed on July 4, 1935, whereupon the Friars took up their permanent abode on the Shrine grounds. For approximately six years they had lived in a large home about a mile west of the present site. As the years passed and more living space was required, an addition was completed and dedicated on August 15, 1953.

In the courtyard stands a marble statue of St. Francis and the wolf of Gubbio. Solemnly blessed on September 17, 1961, this scene represents an incident taken from the life of St. Francis. According to Franciscan tradition, St. Francis tamed a ravenous wolf of Gubbio with a simple sign of the cross. Until his death, the wolf became a familiar sight in the streets and a favorite pet of the citizens of Gubbio.

Service Accommodations

In the early 1940s two service buildings were erected to provide necessary accommodations for visitors, pilgrims and guests. The smaller, home-like structure serves as a guest house as well as a religious souvenir shop. Here, religious articles, Shrine souvenirs and refreshments are available to the public. The larger, hall-like edifice contains kitchen and dining room facilities as well as public rest rooms.

Seven Dolors Chapel

The most recent and most significant site on the Shrine grounds is the Seven Dolors Chapel. It was dedicated on July 4, 1959 by Most Reverend Andrew G. Grutka, bishop of Gary. The chapel forms the north wing of the Friary, and is designed in a modified Gothic style; so that it might conform to the style and materials used in the Friary itself. The exterior construction consists of yellow-hued bricks with trimming of Indiana limestone.



Within, the chapel is designed to convey the impression of unusual height, dignity, warmth and Franciscan simplicity. This is due to the absence of supporting pillars, the use of exposed wooden trusses and wainscoting of oak, and an unhampered view to the majestic high altar.

Rising above the main altar is the *reredos* of varicolored marble from France, Italy and Asia Minor. These colors serve to emphasize the beauty and majesty of the hand carved Crucifixion group, a masterpiece in wood from Lombardy.

On both sides of the sanctuary, two murals depict scenes from the history of the Franciscan Order. The painting on the Gospel side shows St. Francis renouncing all earthly possessions as he kneels before the bishop of Assisi. The painting on the Epistle side shows St. Clare putting to flight a horde of Saracens with the Blessed Sacrament in her hands.

Also in the sanctuary, on either side of the altar, are choir stalls where the Friars daily chant the divine office. Four Shrines are significantly located within the nave of the chapel and dedicated to The Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph, St. Francis and St. Anthony. Like the main altar, the Shrine altars are made of marble.

Surrounding the interior and casting a glow of harmonious colors across the nave and sanctuary, are eighteen stained-glass windows along the sides and a large window above the front entrance. They were made in Grenoble, France. The large stained-glass window that dominates the facade tells the story of the Sorrowful Mother in symbol and depicts several world famous Shrines and Churches dedicated to *Mary*. The eighteen lesser windows recall events from various saints and blessed.

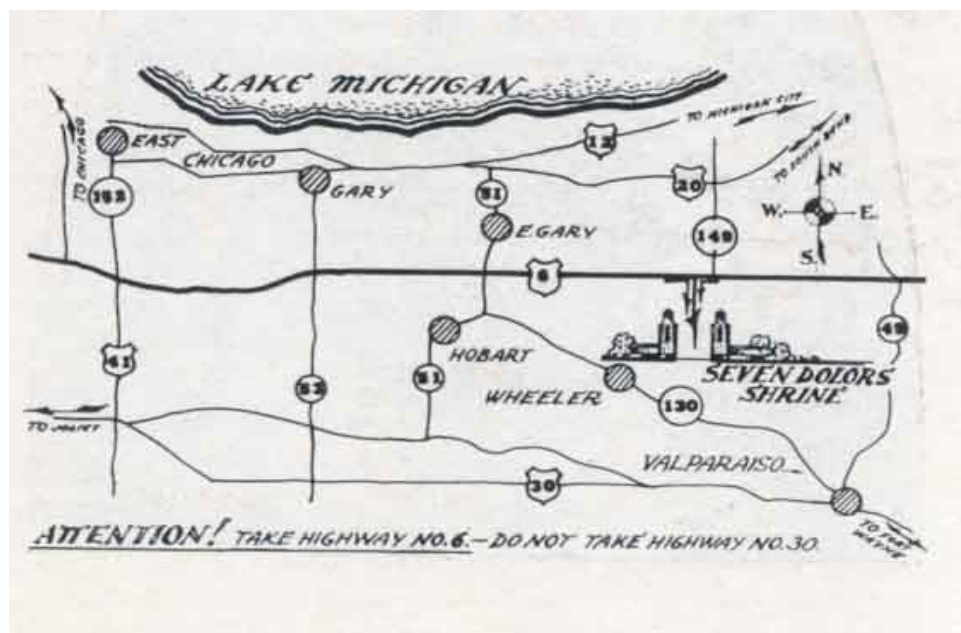
Seven Dolors Chapel and the Shrine grounds are a tribute to God and the Sorrowful Mother, a joy to the Franciscan Friars and a lasting memorial to the benefactors, friends and pilgrims who have made the Shrine what it is.

For any additional information write to:

FRANCISCAN FATHERS
SEVEN DOLORS SHRINE
356 W. SEVEN MILE ROAD
VALPARAISO, IN 46385.

Travel Guide

Seven Dolors Shrine is located one mile south of U.S. Highway 6 midway between Highway 49 and 51. For easiest directions, follow the signs to South Haven Estates. The Shrine is easily accessible from the Indiana Toll Road. From Chicago and points west, get off at the Gary East interchange; from points east, get off at the Valparaiso interchange. Both interchanges lead into U.S. 6 and are approximately 7 miles from the Shrine.



Addendum:

In June, 2007, David Martin informed us that "although Our Lady of Sorrows remains a diocesan parish, the shrine itself has been closed by the Franciscan Friars of the Holy Land Custody, and its grounds sold for real estate."

Also in June 2007, Dave Lasayko provided the information below on the aforementioned parish. For details click into the parish web site, [ourladyofsorrowsparish.org](http://www.ourladyofsorrowsparish.org).

"The pond and water-fall at Our Lady Of Sorrows Parish, which is a memorial to Magdalene Kubeck, a Navy Nurse who died for her country at Guam on February 15, 1945, has been restored to near original condition. The pond is part of the remaining World War II Memorial on the parish grounds. Visitors and historians are welcome to view the remaining statues and pond which were once part of the Seven Dolor's Shrine."

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