



ARCHBISHOP GREGORY AYMOND


Christmas Style

Enter the home of Archbishop Gregory Aymond

on the campus of the Notre Dame Seminary on South Carrollton Avenue, and you will experience a special, sacred feeling. Reminders of the birth of Jesus, the origin in the celebration of Christmas, are everywhere, from portraits of the Blessed Virgin Mary and baby Jesus to statues gracing the vestibule and the reception room walls and nearby tables. Inside the vestibule, a handsome winding stairway, lined with festive red poinsettias, will lead you to the sacred chapel that truly makes this home unique.

The home was designed by architect Allison Owen and built by contractor Joseph Fromherz in 1926, with the chapel added during the 1935 renovations under the direction of Archbishop Joseph Rummel. The chapel is a unique space with an elaborate ceiling that presents the motif of the *Te Deum*, which is sung every year on January 8 to fulfill the promise made by then-Bishop-elect Louis-Guillaume-Valentin Dubourg and the Ursuline nuns after the victory in the Battle of New Orleans.

The stained glass windows in the chapel represent the patrons of the Archdiocese of New Orleans: the Blessed Virgin Mary; St. Joseph; St. Louis, King of France; and St. Vincent de Paul. “The reason Vincent de Paul became a secondary patron was because the first conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in the United States was established in New Orleans,” explains Emilie Gagnet Leumas, archivist for the Archdiocese of New Orleans.

“The chapel is my place of peace and refuge,” explains Archbishop Aymond, the fourteenth archbishop of New Orleans and the first New Orleans native to serve in that capacity in the 216-year history of the local church. “I use it daily. It is a special place for me to meet our loving God, to reflect on the life of Christ, and on my own life. I pray daily for the people of the



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BELOW: Built in 1926, the home of the Archbishop of the New Orleans Diocese is located on the grounds of the Notre Dame Seminary.





Archdiocese, the needs of the local Church, and all of the ministries that serve our local community.”

The home has always been used as the residence of the archbishop of New Orleans since it was built. In September 1987, Pope John Paul II resided in the Archbishop’s residence during his visit to New Orleans, and it is easy to understand why Archbishop Aymond named the residence in honor of him.

Gayle Benson (Mrs. Tom Benson) is credited with the renovation of the first



TOP LEFT: The parlor is furnished comfortably. Interior designer Gayle Benson reapointed and updated the house to capture the original beauty and history of a building that dates back almost ninety years.



TOP RIGHT: A Christmas tree rests on a table in front of a window in the vestibule.

BOTTOM LEFT: Historic Bibles have a place of honor on the coffee table in the parlor.



OPPOSITE: The Blessed Mother and baby Jesus are the subjects of both the portrait and statue in the vestibule.







floor, which includes the vestibule flanked by a parlor, reception, and dining rooms. “Gayle generously reappointed and updated the house to capture the original beauty and history of a building that dates back almost ninety years,” Archbishop Aymond says.

Christmas is a special time in the Archbishop’s residence. “Throughout the Christmas season, I have gatherings at the house with people who serve in ministry for the Archdiocese, and we also have special holiday meals in the dining room from time to time.”



ABOVE: The winding stairway was added in the 1935 renovation to provide access to the second-floor chapel.

LEFT: A statue of Santa Claus respectfully pays homage to baby Jesus.





Archbishop Aymond is ever respectful that the house is very much a part of the history of the Archdiocese of New Orleans. "I enjoy the opportunity to use my residence as a place to meet with people from around the Archdiocese," he says.



ABOVE: Furnished in fine antiques, the dining room is the setting for special dinners.

LEFT: St. Louis Cathedral is replicated in one of the chapel's stained glass windows.

