

The National Shrine of St. Therese

Darien, Illinois



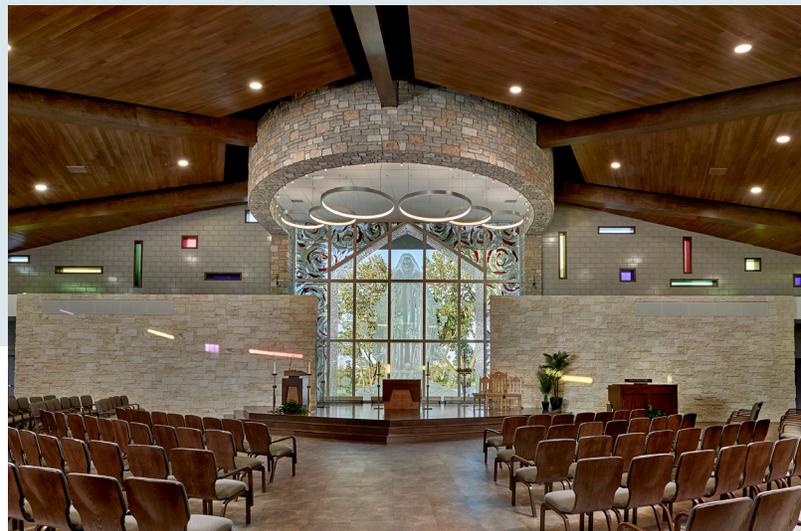
CLIENT Society of the Little Flower
ARCHITECT Charles Vincent George Architects
ROLE Construction Manager

The National Shrine and Museum of St. Therese is at the heart of the 40-acre Carmelite Campus in Darien, Illinois. The Shrine, Museum and surrounding campus grounds are a worshiping and gathering space for The Society of Little Flower, a Roman Catholic group founded in 1923 dedicated to carrying out the mission and values of St. Therese (whose nickname was "Little Flower"). The devoted group of followers today has grown to nearly 300,000 members.

The Shrine, Museum and campus improvement project consisted of demolishing the existing Shrine that did not provide sufficient space for the community of worshipers and construction of a 14,500 square foot chapel and museum in its place. The new Shrine and Museum incorporates connections to all major buildings and newly added statuaries on the campus with arterial walkways and a walk-through stone clock tower and illuminated colonnade. [CONT'D]

The National Shrine of St. Therese [CONT'D]

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[CONT'D] Both the chapel entryway and sanctuary match the building exterior with full-thickness radial walls with limestone caps. The radiuses are cantilevered on the interior, clad in thin stone veneer, and supported by concealed tube steel rings. The entryway ring features a circular skylight which highlights a rose tile inlay floor. The sanctuary ring also supports a nearly thirty-foot-tall aluminum cross. Stone walls flank the chapel altar area and are braced at the backside to burnished block walls.

The building was not assembled in a traditional fashion. There was a meticulous, repetitive process for constructing the sections of the cantilevered roof that consisted of temporary shoring, followed by masonry and then steel installation to ensure that the entire building came together properly. The success of the project relied heavily on a careful, sequential construction process. The building opened to a warm reception and the number of visitors has increased dramatically.