

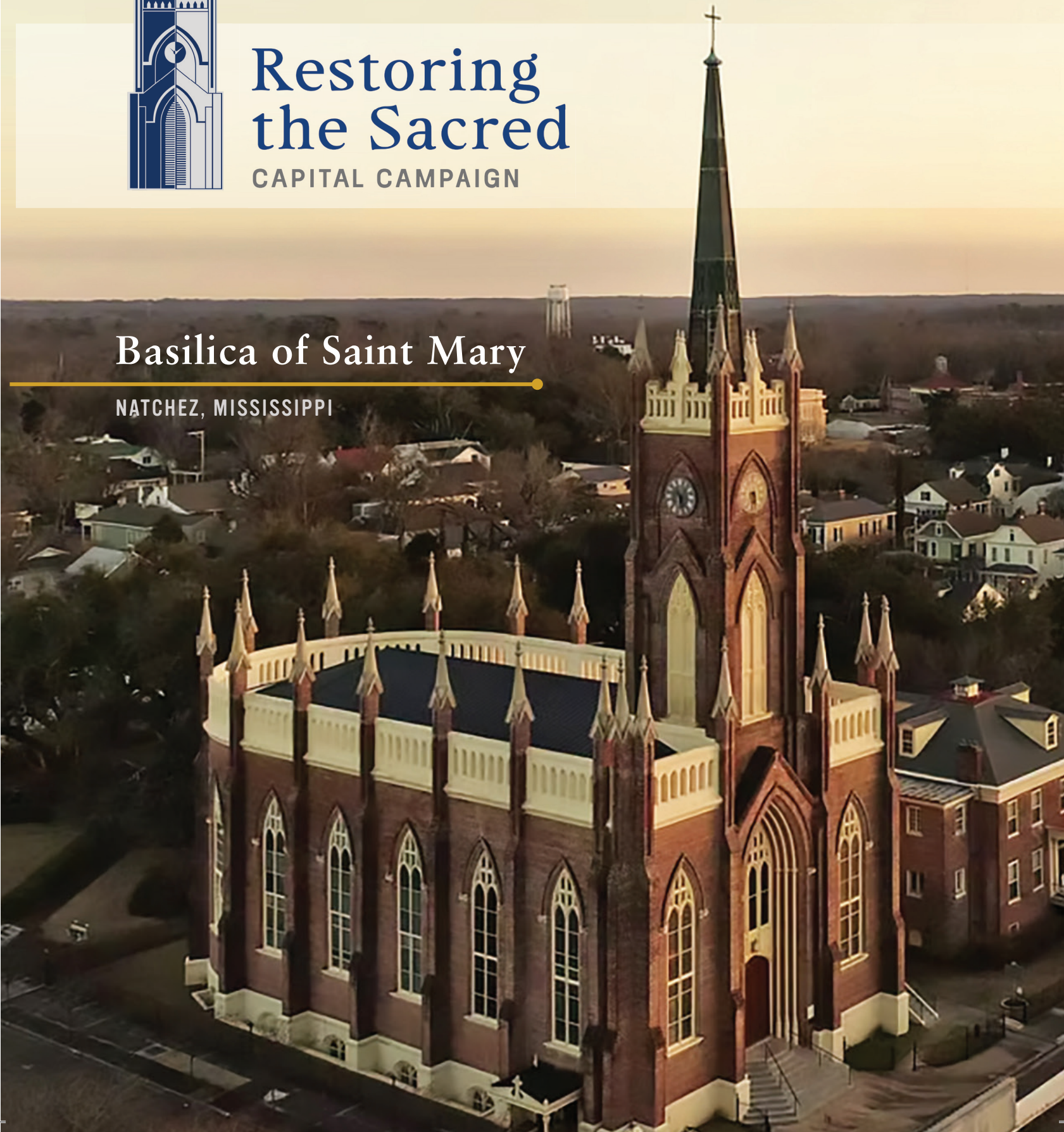


# Restoring the Sacred

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

## Basilica of Saint Mary

NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI





A Message from Fr. Aaron

Since 1842, Our Lady’s Basilica has stood as a sacred witness to the Catholic faith in the heart of the American South. Each year, thousands pass through these doors—pilgrims, parishioners, and visitors—drawn by the beauty of our worship, the richness of our tradition, and the quiet presence of the Lord.

The Restoring the Sacred Capital Campaign is our opportunity to preserve this treasured place for future generations. Through your support, we will renew the beauty of our Basilica and continue offering a reverent home for all who come to pray and encounter Christ.

Thank you for your generosity and love for this historic church. May God bless you and those close to you, and may you be sustained by the powerful intercession of Our Lady of Sorrows.

Yours sincerely in the Lord,

Fr. Aaron M. Williams

Very Rev. Aaron M. Williams



A Case for Saint Mary Basilica

Saint Mary Basilica is more than an architectural treasure—it is a spiritual home, a center of sacramental life, and a witness to the enduring Catholic faith in the South. As the Mother Church of Mississippi Catholicism, it holds a place of profound significance for generations of the faithful. But time and the elements have taken their toll.

That is why we are launching Restoring the Sacred Capital Campaign to:

- Phase 1: Complete a comprehensive exterior restoration and waterproofing of the church
- Phase 2: Install a new pipe organ
- Phase 3: Establish an endowment



Phase 1  
COMPREHENSIVE EXTERIOR RESTORATION  
\$2,600,000 investment

This project aims to preserve both the beauty and the structural integrity of the Basilica by addressing the full exterior:

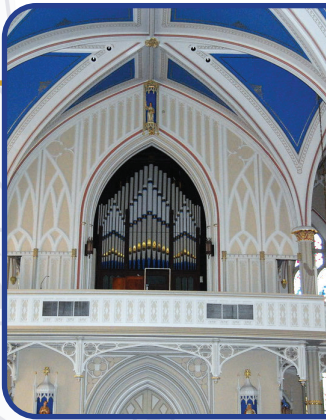
- Repointing and restoration of all masonry
- Paint removal and installation of breathable waterproof coatings on concrete elements
- Restoration of historic wood windows
- New laminated protective glass and venting systems
- Application of clear waterproof sealant over restored masonry



Phase 2  
INSTALLATION OF A NEW PIPE ORGAN  
\$600,000 investment

Today, the beauty of our liturgical music is at risk, as our 17-year-old digital organ has recently undergone multiple repairs. To preserve the fullness of sacred music at the Basilica, we will install a new pipe organ. This instrument will:

- Offer a timeless investment in worship, as a pipe organ can serve the Basilica and its community for multiple generations
- Recreate the historic façade of the Basilica’s original organ’s design, complementing the Gothic architectural style with custom wood and pipe details
- Provide a versatile and durable instrument suitable for both sacred music and public performances



Phase 3 – Stretch Goal:  
SAINT MARY BASILICA ENDOWMENT

The final phase of the Restoring the Sacred Capital Campaign seeks to establish an endowment that will increase the long-term care and vitality of the Basilica. This permanent fund will provide ongoing resources for maintenance, preservation, and sacred programming, safeguarding the beauty and mission of Saint Mary Basilica for future generations.



The Mother Church of Mississippi Catholicism

The Catholic presence in Natchez traces back to 1682 when explorer Robert de la Salle’s expedition celebrated the first documented Mass just south of the city. A formal French Catholic parish was founded in 1722, and later, under Spanish rule, a church was built on Commerce Street in 1778.

From 1798 to 1839, the Catholics of Natchez faithfully sustained their community without the presence of a resident priest. In 1837, the Diocese of Natchez—the first in Mississippi—was established. Bishop John J. Chanche arrived in 1841 and laid the cornerstone for a new cathedral in 1842. Though unfinished, the church was dedicated on Christmas Day 1843 and completed over the next 40 years. Consecrated in 1886, the Cathedral of Our Lady of Sorrows served the diocese until 1977 and is now honored as a minor basilica and a treasured Catholic landmark in the South, being known as the Mother Church of Mississippi Catholicism.



## An Invitation to *Restore the Sacred* – Together

The Basilica of Saint Mary is more than a historic church; it is a living witness to the beauty of the Catholic faith. Now is the time to come together to restore and protect this sacred treasure for generations to come.

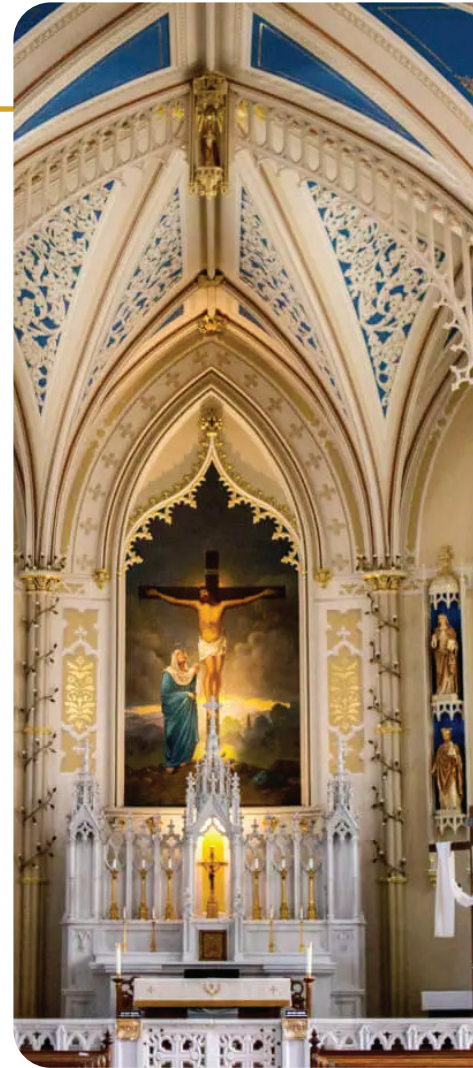
Through the *Restoring the Sacred* Capital Campaign, we are undertaking a three-phase effort to preserve the Basilica's physical integrity, enhance the liturgies, and establish an endowment to safeguard its future. This is our moment to honor what has been entrusted to us and to ensure that Saint Mary Basilica continues to be a place where the faithful continue to encounter the truth, beauty, and goodness of God.

### We cannot do this without you.

We are asking every member of our parish and extended Basilica community to do three things:

- **PRAY** for the success of this campaign, that it may glorify God and strengthen the mission of the Church in Natchez.
- **GIVE** a sacrificial gift—above and beyond your regular support—to help preserve and restore this sacred place.
- **INVITE** others to join you by sharing this vision and encouraging fellow parishioners, pilgrims, and friends to be part of this important work.

Your prayers, your generosity, and your witness will ensure that the Basilica of Saint Mary remains a radiant sign of faith, beauty, and sacred tradition in our time and for future generations.



### CAMPAIGN PRAYER:

*Almighty God, we give you thanks for the immense blessings which you have shown toward the Basilica of Saint Mary, the ways you have used our parish to touch the lives of generations of Catholics, and the generosity you have bestowed upon us through the families, friends, and benefactors of our Basilica.*

*Now we ask for your guidance as we work to preserve the gifts of your grace here in Natchez. Inspire us with a spirit of generosity and gratitude so that we may utilize our own gifts in a way that gives you greater glory and ensures that your holy temple will be restored and beautified so that future generations of Catholics will always see Saint Mary Basilica as their home and a place to seek your love and consolation. May we model our own personal sacrifices after the supreme sacrifice of your Son.*

*Guided by your Holy Spirit, and bolstered by the prayers of your most holy Mother, help us to hear how now you are calling us to serve you so that the sound of your praises may always resound here in our city and that the face of your love may be seen in us by everyone we meet. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

*Our Lady of Sorrows: pray for us.*