



Sacred Light: Holy Places in Louisiana

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Renowned photographer A. J. Meek takes the novitiate on an inspired visual journey with eighty-eight color photographs of the interiors of churches and synagogues located in south Louisiana, mostly along the lower Mississippi River valley. Tourists may crowd the famous European cathedrals such as Notre Dame in Paris and Westminster Abbey in London. Yet the splendors of local churches in America all too often remain cloistered and unheralded. Meek's beautiful photographs correct this oversight for Louisiana, a state that features a great many beautiful and long-standing holy places.

Often incorporating long exposures and select framing, the images in the first section of *Sacred Light* encompass altars, chancels, and sanctuaries. The second section contains photographs of statues representing deities, angels, madonnas, and saints, often seen with intense color derived from stained-glass windows or artificial light. Light itself is the subject of the third and last section. In several photographs, light is transformed by a window into a kaleidoscope of color on a wooden pew or pulpit chair. Other times the light seems to radiate a living presence of its own. Additionally, the book includes an essay by Louisiana State University art historian and liturgical space consultant, Marchita Mauck.

Sacred Light also contains photographs of some of the church and synagogue restoration projects after Hurricane Katrina. Meek relates that the now-famous storm of August 2005 was the shadow he was looking for that defines blessed light. He places emphasis on restoration, not destruction, as a testimony to the resilience of the human spirit.

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