A place of contemplation
Jennings prayer garden evokes tranquility

By John St. Ores

JENNINGS — Several years ago, local pastor Msgr. Joseph Bourque decided to commemorate the Marian year by creating a prayer garden dedicated to the mother of Jesus.

The result is a living affirmation of the advocacy and allegiance of Jennings' Catholic communicants.

The 190-foot by 160-foot Marian Prayer Garden is located on the south side of the rectory of Our Lady Help of Christians Catholic Church at 710 N. State Street.

Offering felicitations to visitors at the entrance is a bronze statue of Christ, Prince of Peace. The serenity of the effigy evokes of spirit of tranquility that is omnipresent as one steps along the floral-lined pathways throughout the garden.

Over 200 different varieties of foliage and blooming growth, indigenous to Louisiana, furnish the professionally-landscaped expanse.

There are four prayer stations, each fashioned differently in an effort to serve any particular mood or function. There is a lattice work prayer station with wooden benches for seating; a stone prayer station with chairs; a wrought iron prayer station with built-in seating and a covered memorial chapel equipped with chairs and tables.

Located at the axis of the garden is a flowing fountain surrounded by interlacing sidewalks which allow strollers to meander among the plants and flowers, perhaps stopping atop the little wooden footbridge to gaze over its wrought iron railing.

Photos by Terri H. Fensel

Bernadette. Enclosed behind an elaborate wrought iron gate, the pallid statuary is breath-taking in its holy radiance.

Since its completion and dedication in 1987, thousands have visited the prayer garden. People come to stroll through, to eat lunch (or picnic), to make the stations of the cross, to say the rosary, to visit with friends, or simply to sit quietly and meditate. Gatherings, including Bible groups, rosary groups and share groups have come to hold meetings or to have a time of reflection.