200 Attend Rite at Bayou Goula Shrine

By ERBY AYCOIN

Some 200 people gathered at Bayou Goula to attend a Catholic Mass offered to the Most Holy Virgin in the smallest chapel in the world.

The chapel exists because in 1902 Anthony Gullo, an Italian farmer, became very ill. He promised that on his recovery he would erect a chapel to the Madonna. This he fulfilled with a seven-foot square building. In 1924 the new Mississippi River levee necessitated the chapel's removal and it was reconstructed on a nine-foot-square basis.

Gullo placed a large statue of the Madonna in the chapel and it has been there for 62 years.

People visiting the small edifice seeking favors of the Madonna would promise valuable pieces of jewelry if their prayers were answered. About 70 pieces of jewelry representing favors granted to the chapel are today pinned to a blue silk sash placed on the statue.

The pastor of Our Lady of Prompt Succor Church in White Castle, the Rev. George Barbier, celebrated Mass of the chapel Saturday, the Catholic feast day of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The fame of the little chapel has spread and many travelers stop at the River Road to visit the Madonna in her cane-field shrine. People from Illinois, California, and various parts of Louisiana were at the Mass, including four direct descendants of Gullo.

The unique chapel does not have the problems of large churches in air-conditioning, seating, or lighting but it does have its own hardships.

This leaves the people standing outside and at the mercy of the weather. This year though, an invasion of ants gave the congregation a unique problem at the smallest chapel in the world.