

1845 - - - 1920

DIAMOND JUBILEE
ST. PETER CATHEDRAL

ARCHDIOCESE
OF CINCINNATI



OCTOBER 24th, 1920

HISTORY OF ST. PETERS' CATHEDRAL.

Seventy-five years ago on the second day of November, 1845, the solemn consecration of St. Peters Cathedral took place. Seldom, if ever, in the United States, never before in the West, was there seen together, on any occasion of the kind, so numerous or so august an assemblage. Never before were the ceremonies of consecrating a church performed with more splendor. The day was very impromptuous; the rain was falling except at brief intervals during the entire morning. Yet in spite of all this, from eight to ten thousand persons, nearly all of them men, were assembled at an early hour in the spacious lot outside of the church, and there they remained for many hours patiently waiting the throwing open of the Cathedral doors, which did not take place until after eleven o'clock. The ceremony had commenced at eight o'clock, and the whole of it did not terminate until after three o'clock in the afternoon; yet that immense crowd continued riveted to the spot during the whole time. There were in attendance one Archbishop, eight bishops, and nearly sixty priests. The Most Reverend Dr. Eccleston, Archbishop of Baltimore, was the consecrator, and the Rt. Rev. Dr. Portier, Bishop of Mobile, celebrated the Mass. He was assisted by the Rev. E. T. Collins as assistant priest, the Rev. John McGill and the Rev. C. Hammer as deacons of honor, and Very Rev. J. Van de Valde, S. J., as deacon of Office and the Rev. G. A. Carrell, S. J., as subdeacon of Office.

After the Gospel had been sung the Rt. Rev. Dr. McCloskey, Bishop Coadjutor of New York (afterwards Cardinal) ascended the elevated platform of the altar, and kept the immense audience enchained for nearly an hour by a most chaste, appropriate, classical and eloquent discourse, taking for his text words from the eighty-third Psalm, "How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord God of hosts." Seldom has it fallen to our lot, says the writer of the above, to be more deeply impressed or to feel more thoroughly the surpassing beauty, the touching simplicity and pathos, and the sublime eloquence of our ceremonial. We have stood, he writes, in the aisles of St. Peters and Mary Majois, at Rome; we have there witnessed much more magnificent and august assemblages than the one we have alluded to above; have heard much finer music; and have looked upon a much more brilliant ceremonial; but we are free to confess that, whether it was from local associations, or from the reflection that this beautiful temple dedicated thus magnificently on a spot where but a half century ago little was to be heard but the howl of the wild beast, and the war-whoop of the savage, or whatever else was the cause of it, we never before felt, at least, more deeply impressed, and never before were more inclined to break forth, in the fullness and exultation of our heart, with the patriarch of old, where he awoke from the mysterious slumber on Mount Moriah; How terrible is this place; truly this is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.

The above description of the consecration of St. Peters Cathedral was taken from the United States Catholic Magazine of the year 1845, published in Baltimore, Md., and edited by the Rev. Charles I. White, of Baltimore, and the Very Rev. M. J. Spalding, D. D., of Louisville, Ky. In the same edition of that magazine we find the following description of the building itself. The external appearance

of the edifice is very imposing. It occupies a central position on a spacious lot which is already near the center of the city. The external dimensions of the Cathedral are two hundred and eighty-two feet, including in its length the tower which projects in front. The average thickness of the walls is four feet, and they are built entirely of cut stone; the basement story and the rear, or blue limestone found in or near the Ohio River, and the front and two side walls, including the tower and massive cornice, of whitish limestone brought on the canal from Dayton, Ohio, a distance of sixty miles. The tower is a massive structure forty-five feet square, surmounted by a steeple built in octagonal form entirely of stone, and terminates in a tapering spire surmounted by a cross, the whole being more than two hundred feet high. In the spire is a full chime of bells. Entering the Cathedral by the large portal through the center of the towers or by one of the two smaller side doors, a new world of architectural beauty and magnificence breaks upon your view. You find that the beautiful Corinthian order of architecture is carried out in all its richness of detail, and what charms you most is that within, as without the edifice, there is no tinsel, there are no paltry ornaments nor "gun cracks," but everything simple, tasty, well proportioned, and massive. The eye rests upon two rows of stately fluted columns, of gray granite, resting upon white pedestals, and terminating in snow-white capitals. The columns are eighteen in number, nine on each side within the sanctuary. They are three and one-half feet in diameter, and including the base and the capital, thirty-five feet in height. Nothing could be more beautiful than the capitals with their turned heads, or involutes, acanthus leaves, interspersed with those of the lotus and gracefully intertwined with other foliage, scrolls and tendrils, all terminating in the plain and simple abacus. The base of the columns is three feet and a half high, the shaft twenty-seven feet, and the capital, including the abacus, four feet and a half. One might be tempted to think that the colonnades are too near to the side walls for the preservation of due architectural proportion, but the spectator will not find the effect ungrateful to the eye, and he will be moreover assured that there are for this arrangement architectural precedents of undisputed excellence and taste. Besides this distribution of the internal space makes the center aisle the great body of the church and affords the people a full and unobstructed view of the altar and the pulpit.

The ceiling over the center aisle is raised nearly twenty feet higher than that of the two side aisles. Everything about it is in excellent taste and proportion, and with the exception that it is covered and ornamented with massive stucco work done in plaster of paris, whereas that of Mt. Mary Majois in Rome is richly gilt, it strongly reminds one of the latter. Nor is this the only circumstance in St. Peters Cathedral which reminds you of perhaps the most beautiful Christian church in the world, though the latter is of the Roman Ionic style of architecture. Upon the columns rests a beautiful and massive intabulation, about twelve feet deep, running around the whole interior of the edifice, including the sanctuary. It is ornamented with dentals and other ornaments and mouldings in stucco. On it, immediately over the column, rests twenty stone pedestals, six feet high, in a recess.

History of St. Peter's Cathedral

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These support a handsome architrave which, like the in-tablature, sweeps around the whole interior of the church. Upon the architrave are placed twelve large tie beams of timber, which go across the whole center aisle and support the ceilings. The ceiling is deeply carved into receding square panels, four deep, there being a double square panel at the termination of each. Approaching the upper part of the church and bounded on the side next to you by a massive iron railing or chancel, three feet high, surmounted by a mahogany rail. The door in the center was modeled by Mr. Jones, of Cincinnati. On it are represented in alto relievo two angels guarding the sanctuary and bearing in their hands emblems of the Holy Trinity Eucharist, etc. But the most beautiful part of the Cathedral, as it should be, is the altar of fine Carrara marble, made in Genoa by Chiappri expressly for the Cathedral and presented to it by two distinguished converts of Cincinnati, Mr. Reuben R. Springer and Mrs. O'Shaughnessey. You ascend to it by six steps from the door of the sanctuary. Nothing could be more beautiful than the altar. It is ornamented in the center by a circular piece, carved in alto relievo, containing a gilt bronze cross surmounted by a halo of rays, which are further decorated without the circle by tastily carved foliage. On the right you perceive also in alto relievo, a mitre, a crozier, and a double or archiepiscopal cross; on the left, a tiara, a crozier and a triple cross. On the projecting wings on each side behind the altar table are carved pelicans feeding their young with blood streaming from their own bosoms, favorite emblems of the wondrous love of Jesus Christ to us in the holy eucharist. These groups, as well as other portions of the altar, are decorated with carved foliage of different kinds. The tabernacle is likewise of Carrara marble. It is a most tasty and exquisite little Ionic temple, with a door of gilt bronze, bearing sculptured on it the emblem of the guardian angel with wings above and below. The gilt crucifix, the gilt candlesticks and all the remaining furniture of the altar are rich and in good taste, and the effect of the whole is to make it the most lovely altar upon which your eyes have ever rested in this country. The Cathedral of St. Peters will stand for centuries—it cannot decay with age—an imperishable monument of the zeal, the taste, and the noble spirit of Bishop Purcell, and of the faith, piety and liberality of his flock.

During the seventy-five years of her existence many and far reaching events have transpired within her sacred precincts. From her portals have gone forth the laws which have governed the faithful of the province of Cincinnati, comprising the states of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and the greater part of Michigan solemnly enacted in five provincial councils by the bishops from those states assembled in her sanctuary.

In her with the magnificent ceremonies of the Church and in the presence of a great number of dignitaries of

the Church, many bishops have received their episcopal consecration and likewise hundreds of priests have therein received their sacred orders. From here, after a long and glorious career in the service of the Church, have been carried forth the remains of the venerable Archbishops Purcell and Elder, whose funeral obsequies were performed in the presence of almost all of the archbishops and bishops of the United States, of a great number of clergy and an immense concourse of people and with all the solemn grandeur of the litiugy of the Church. On her altars the most eminent dignitaries of the Church in America have offered up the sublime sacrifice of the mass and from her pulpit has poured forth the eloquence of Cardinals Gibbons, McCloskey and Mercier; of Archbishops Ireland, Keane and Blenk and other brilliant orators among the bishops and clergy, both diocesan and regular, too numerous to mention. From the ranks of her faithful have gone forth scores of her young men to minister the word of life to the members of the church and hundreds of her young women have consecrated themselves to the service of God and the welfare of man in various religious communities.

Among the priests who at one time or another have ministered to the spiritual needs of the faithful of St. Peters congregation have been several who were afterwards distinguished among the hierarchy of the church in the United States. Besides our present Most Reverend Archbishop, 1880-1900, were the most Rev. James F. Woods, Archbishop of Philadelphia, 1845-1853; Right Rev. S. H. Rosecrans, Bishop of Columbus, Ohio, 1852-1866; Right Rev. C. H. Borgess, Bishop of Detroit, 1859-1870, and the Right Rev. Thomas S. Byrne, Bishop of Nashville, 1886-1887. Other priests who have ministered at the Cathedral either as pastors or assistants were: The Revs. E. T. Collins, 1845-1865; Edward Purcell, 1845-1879; W. Whelan, 1848-1867; Thomas J. Coppinger, 1854-1860; Wm. J. Halley, 1860-1885; Rites McMahon, 1867-1868; George J. E. Glass, 1868-1870; J. F. Callaghan, 1870-1880; Augustine M. Quatman, 1870-1884; P. A. Quinn, 1870; F. A. Wimsey, 1880-1886 and 1895; E. P. Hickey, 1884-1887; Daniel A. Buckley, 1886-1890; Nicholas J. Kelly, 1887-1889; John M. Mackey, 1887-1905; James A. Moore, 1890-1894; John P. Downey, 1892-1894; Robert Connor, 1894-1899; Joseph Hyland, 1894-1895; Thomas F. Walsh, 1899-1900; John F. Gallagher, 1901-1904; Dennis Halpin, 1901-1903; Hugh L. Magevney, 1903-1905; Timothy Bailey, 1904-1906; John Gnau, 1905-1906; James G. Falls, 1906-1909; Henry Buse, 1907-1911; Wm. G. Conroy, 1909-1915; Marti nVarley, 1915-1918; Walter Roddy, 1915-1920; James Collins, 1919-1920, and the present pastor, 1890-1892 and 1905-1920. Other priests who have been at the Cathedral for a short time were T. O'Farrell, 1846; J. P. Cahill, 1850; R. J. Lawrence, 1850; F. A. Corcoran, 1857; L. D. Seuer, 1857; F. Bender, 1864; F. X. Dutton, 1864; Jos. Denning, 1894; W. P. Gotwaller, 1906; Jerome Regan, 1911, and George Gorry, 1915 and 1916.

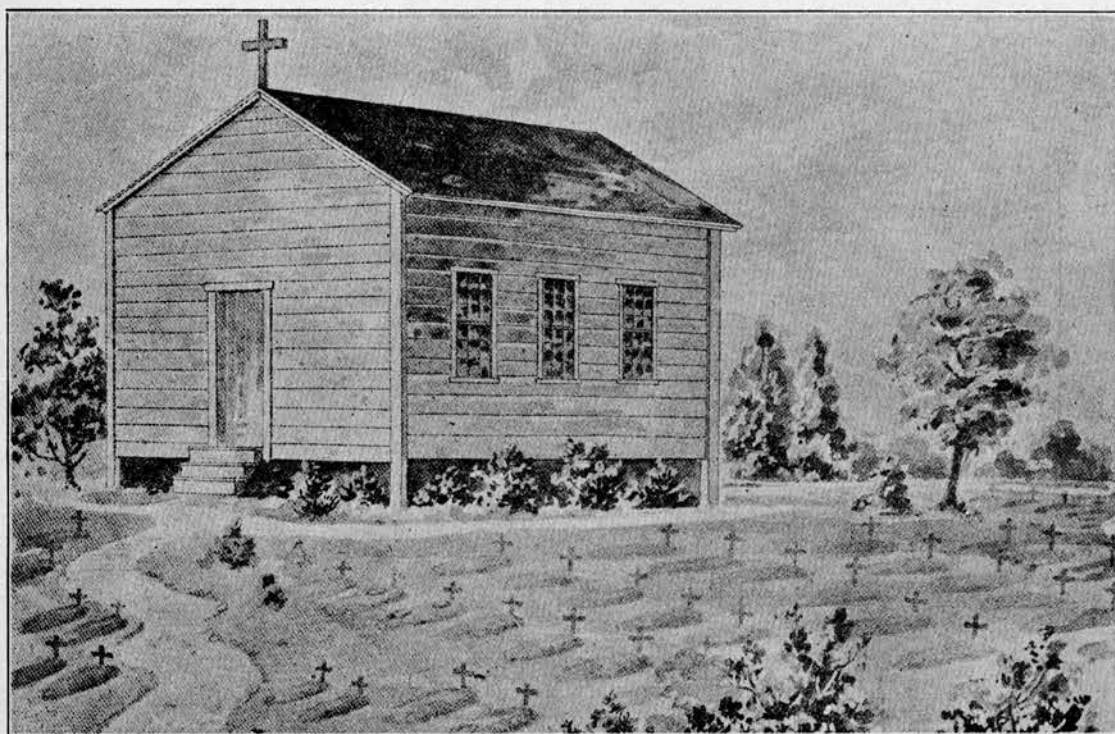




1. First St. Peters Cathedral, erected in 1825, by Bishop Fenwick, on Sycamore street, between Sixth and Seventh streets, upon the site of the present St. Francis Xavier's Church.

2. Episcopal residence.

3. Athenaeum, the first Catholic college of the Cincinnati diocese, and the beginning of the famous Mount St. Marys of the West Seminary.



CHRIST CHURCH—FIRST CATHOLIC CHURCH BUILT
IN CINCINNATI

Erected 1821

This church was erected upon the outskirts of the city proper, being located at the northwest corner of Liberty and Vine streets. The congregation was organized by a Dominican Father, Edward Fenwick, 1818. Father Fenwick was consecrated a Bishop in 1822, and went to Rome in 1824.