MARY'S SHRINE

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The Immaculate Conception

» Rector's Message

Mary's Shrine

By Reverend Monsignor Walter R. Rossi, J.C.L.

On the Solemnity of the Epiphany, Pope Leo XIV closed the Holy Door at Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and brought to a close the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025. Pope Leo emphasized that while the Holy Year has ended, the spiritual mission continues, stating "the hope that this Year has given us does not finish: we will continue to be pilgrims of hope! Without hope, we are dead; with hope, we come to the light" (General Audience Address, December 20, 2025). The Holy Father urged the Church to remain a living community rather than a monument, and encourages us to ask ourselves, "Is there still space for something new to be born?" (Homily, January 6, 2026).

Pope Leo XIV closes the Holy Door

Vatican officials reported that more than 33 million pilgrims from 185 countries visited Rome during the Holy Year. Here at Mary's Shrine, the Jubilee Year welcomed multi-cultural and diocesan pilgrimages, group and individual pilgrimages, as well as pilgrimages by religious communities. In addition, we were honored to host the relics of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus and the Holy Face in which more than 6,000 of the faithful came to Mary's Shrine to venerate the relics and seek the intercession of this beloved saint who promised "after my death I will let fall a shower of roses. I will spend my heaven doing good on earth" (*Saint Thérèse of Lisieux: Her Last Conversations*).

While we did not receive the same number of pilgrims as did Rome, our visitor numbers returned to their pre-Covid levels during the Jubilee Year and Sunday Mass attendance increased more than 18% from 2024.

In the spiritual life, there is always "space for something new to be born." God is at work at all times in our life and as Pope Leo XIV observed, "like the first disciples, we are called to embrace the Lord's invitation" to journey with him and follow where he leads "with joy, knowing that every time and every place in our lives is permeated by his presence and his love" (Angelus Address, January 25, 2026).

Of course, none of us knows where God is going to lead, but, like Our Lady who placed herself completely in God's hands, we too, are called to allow God to work his wonders in our life. As Mary gave God space in her life for the birth of God's Son through her, we must trust that what God wants to bring to life in us, his "something new to be born" in us, will always be for the very best. We may not always see this at first, but through the eyes of faith, "with hope we come to the light."

"Pilgrims of Hope" was the theme for the Jubilee Year 2025, however this is truly a motif for life, not just for a Holy Year! "Hope springs eternal" is a famous idiom suggesting that people will always continue to hope and remain optimistic, even in the face of adversity or despite insurmountable odds. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus is the source of our hope which is "constantly renewed and confirmed by the working of the Holy Spirit. By his perennial presence in the life of the pilgrim Church, the Holy Spirit illumines all believers with the light of hope. He keeps that light burning, like an ever-burning lamp, to sustain and invigorate our lives" (*Spes Non Confundit*, 2).

The faithful go on pilgrimage to shrines throughout the world seeing the hope the world cannot give. Pilgrims travel in hope for new meaning in life, new fulfillment in life, "to sustain and invigorate" their life, thirsting for a direction in life which only God can give. Pilgrims turn to the saints for guidance, inspiration and intercession. Here at Mary's Shrine the faithful come before Our Lady placing their concerns, their cares and their burdens in her hands, confident that our Heavenly Mother will hear their pleas and intercede with her Son, as in the *Memorae*, "O Mother of the Word Incarnate despise not our petitions, but in your mercy, hear and answer them."

Pilgrims also bring hope to me. I never cease to

be impressed by the faith of those who come on pilgrimage to Mary's Shrine. As I walk through the Shrine and see people deep in prayer, lighting a candle, sometimes with tears in their eyes, my certainty in the efficacy of holy shrines and places of pilgrimage in the Church and in our individual lives, is affirmed and fortified. Shrines are a beacon of hope in an often-dark world. Pilgrims are a light in a world that sometimes lacks faith. Pilgrims testify that faith is alive!

While the Ordinary Jubilee Year 2025 has concluded, each of us must allow the graces which the Holy Year brought to blossom in our lives. Grace is fostered through spiritual disciplines such as future pilgrimages, more frequent participation at weekday Mass, regularity in daily prayer and reading Sacred Scripture.

May the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of Hope, sustain us on the pilgrimage journey of life and strengthen us "to persevere in hope and trust" all the days of our life (cfr. *SNC*, 24).

New Spiritual Director Announced

Monsignor Walter Rossi, Rector of the Basilica, has announced the following transition of Spiritual Directors at Mary's Shrine:

Father Raymond Lebrun

"After 22 years of service to Mary's Shrine and as he reaches a milestone birthday this spring, Father Raymond Lebrun decided it was time for him to step back from full-time ministry. Father Ray has provided exceptional service as our Spiritual Director, assisting countless individuals who approached Mary's Shrine with various needs. Father's always calm demeanor, ever ready smile and quick wit were a welcome presence at Mary's Shrine and will certainly be missed. We wish Father every blessing as he begins a well-deserved retirement.

Father Andrew Knop

I am pleased that the leadership of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate desire to continue our nearly seventy years of collaboration by having an Oblate serve as a member of the priest staff of the National Shrine. Father Andrew Knop began his ministry as the Shrine Spiritual Director on March 15. As an Oblate of Mary Immaculate for 43 years, Father Andy comes to the Shrine after having served in parish ministry as well as the Director of the Oblate Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows in Bellville, Illinois. We welcome Father Andy to Mary's Shrine and are confident that his ministry among us will be a blessing."

Thank you, Father Ray! Welcome Father Andy!

MISSION STATEMENT

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, a Catholic church dedicated to the patroness of our nation, is a place of worship, pilgrimage, evangelization and reconciliation. It offers visitors the occasion for a deepening conversion, a step forward in the journey to God, with Mary as the model for that journey. This monumental church, raised by Catholics of the United States because of their devotion to Mary the Mother of God, gives visibility to their faith and Catholic heritage. Mary's Shrine invites people from across the country and beyond into the saving moment of faith, hope and charity, so that they may be reconciled and transformed into living symbols of Christ's presence in the world. It is here that the faithful gather to worship God, give honor to Mary, and are sent to spread God's word wherever they go.

Mary's Shrine: A Pilgrimage Church

Designated a national sanctuary of prayer and pilgrimage by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Mary's Shrine welcomes tens of thousands of pilgrims through its doors each year. This was especially true during the Jubilee Year when dioceses, religious and ethnic groups, families, and individuals flocked to the National Shrine as *Pilgrims of Hope*.

Annual Haitian Catholic Community Pilgrimage brings joy to Mary's Shrine

Though the Jubilee Year ended on the Solemnity of the Epiphany when Pope Leo XIV closed the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, Mary's Shrine remains open 365 days a year to host pilgrims from near and far. With more than 80 chapels and oratories dedicated to the Blessed Mother from around the globe, a pilgrimage to Mary's Shrine can be a journey to many of the great Marian shrines of the world.

Annual Walk with Mary Celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Authentically reflecting the diversity of the United States and the unity and universality of the Catholic Church, Mary's Shrine is the perfect place to make a pilgrimage anytime, and perhaps especially during the 250th anniversary of our nation.

Upcoming Pilgrimages to Mary's Shrine

May 2	Asian and Pacific Island Catholics Pilgrimage
May 17	Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA, Pilgrimage
May 23	National Maritime Day Pilgrimage
May 30	Mother of Miracles Pilgrimage
May 31	Our Lady of Lujan Pilgrimage
June 6	National Eucharistic Pilgrimage
June 13	National Filipino Pilgrimage
June 28	Military Council of Catholic Women Pilgrimage
August 1	Salvadoran Pilgrimage
August 15	Catholic Golden Age Pilgrimage

Celebrating America's 250th Birthday

Fireworks adorn Mary's Shrine

Affectionately referred to as America's Catholic Church, the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the patronal church of the United States, will commemorate the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation with the highest celebration it can offer: the celebration of Mass.

National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Mass "One Nation Under God"
Mary's Shrine will welcome the 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage during its stop in the nation's capital on June 6. Perfectly timed to coincide with the Vigil of Corpus Christi, Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese of the Military Services USA will celebrate the Mass and lead a Eucharistic Procession at 4:30 p.m. in the Basilica's Great Upper Church.

Consecration of the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus
On the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 12, the National Shrine will join the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in consecrating the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The consecration will take place during the 5:15 p.m. Mass which will be celebrated by Archbishop Timothy Broglio of the Archdiocese of the Military Services USA.

Mass on the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day
Before the festivities and fireworks, America's Catholic Church will celebrate a special Mass on the Occasion of the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day, the birthday of our nation. On July 4 at 12:10 p.m., Mass will be celebrated in Basilica's Great Upper Church by Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington and Chairman of the National Shrine Preservation Trust. The Mass will be offered in thanksgiving and petition for our beloved nation.

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception invites all the faithful to join us in celebrating these Masses and our nation's 250th Anniversary in person or via livestream at www.nationalshrine.org/Mass.

Upcoming Basilica Broadcasts on EWTN *(all times Eastern)*

also livestreamed at nationalshrine.org/mass

March 29	Palm Sunday	12 noon
April 2	Choral Meditations on Eucharistic Themes	5:30pm
April 2	Holy Thursday – Mass of the Lord's Supper	6pm
April 3	Choral Meditations on the Passion of the Christ	2:30pm
April 3	Good Friday - Liturgy of the Lord's Passion	3pm
April 4	Solemn Easter Vigil	8pm
April 5	Easter Sunday – Solemn Mass of the Resurrection	12 noon
May 24	Pentecost	12 noon
June 6	National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Mass and Procession	4:30pm
June 7	The Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ	12 noon
June 12	Mass & Consecration of the U.S. to the Sacred Heart of Jesus	5:15pm
July 4	Mass on the 250th Anniversary of Independence Day	12:10pm
August 15	Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary	12:10pm

2026 National Prayer Vigil for Life

Building a culture of life and love at the National Prayer Vigil

More than 10,000 of the faithful participated in the National Prayer Vigil for Life at Mary's Shrine, January 22-23, 2026, marking the 47th year of the Vigil, which is held each year before the annual March for Life in Washington, DC.

Standing room only at the Opening Mass

The Opening Mass

"It is a deep honor and privilege to celebrate this Vigil Mass here at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception," Bishop James Conley of Lincoln, Nebraska, said during his homily.

"I have been coming to this Vigil Mass and to the March for Life, on and off, since my days in the seminary…over 40 years ago," he reminisced, adding, "Each year it's like a shot in the arm to be with so many of you, particularly you young people, who share a passion and a joy for the gift of life."

While thanking God for the *2022 Dobbs vs. Planned Parenthood* Supreme Court decision that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, returning authority to the state to regulate abortion, Bishop Conley sadly cited statistics that "there are still over a million abortions each year in our country — mostly through chemical and non-surgical means."

He urged, "While we continue to work to change laws so that babies remain safe in their mothers' wombs, and women are cared for and protected in times of crisis and need, we must redouble our efforts to continue building, in the words of St. John Paul II, 'a culture of life and a civilization of love.'"

Bishop Conley concluded, "Our goal is not just to make abortion illegal. Our goal is to make abortion unthinkable!"

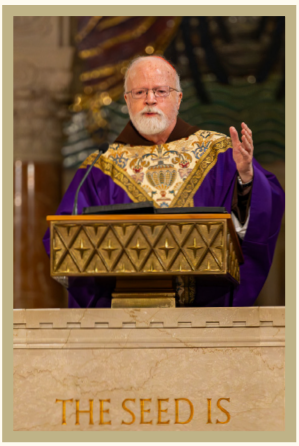
The Holy Hour

Bishop James Ruggieri of Portland, Maine, presided over the National Holy Hour for Life. Offering a reflection, he said, "We gather in this holy place, in the presence of our Eucharistic Lord…. Before we walk tomorrow, we kneel tonight."

Referencing 1 John 4:18, "perfect love drives out fear," Bishop Ruggieri said, "So often, abortion does not begin with a rejection of life, but with fear, fear that overwhelms love." He continued, "When fear suffocates the experience of being loved, the capacity to welcome life can feel impossible."

"The Church," he said, "is called to be light,

to be refuge, to be presence, to be a community that remains…. Tonight, we remain here before the Lord who gives Himself completely, and tomorrow, having received His love, we go forth to make that love present in the world."



Cardinal O'Malley, A Pioneer for Life

The Closing Mass

Introduced by Monsignor Walter Rossi, Rector of the Basilica, as "a true pioneer in the pro-life movement," Cardinal Seán O'Malley, OFM Cap., the Archbishop Emeritus of Boston and a member of the National Shrine Board of Trustees, celebrated the Closing Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life.

Cardinal O'Malley said, "I assure you, you could not be doing anything more important than being here today, and your presence here is not by accident. The Lord in His providence brought all of us here. Today is a Pilgrimage for Life, and it begins with prayer here in Mary's Shrine."

"Abortion," he said, "is the greatest moral crisis faced by our country and by our world. Our mission is not a political crusade. It's a response to God's command to love and to care for each other…. We have the arduous task of creating a pro-life culture of changing people's hearts and minds, of convincing them that life is a gift…a gift given by a loving God."

"The antidote to abortion is love—love manifest in community, compassion, and solidarity. Life is a gift. Every person is a gift. Thank God for the gift of life. Thank God for love. Thank God for you." ❦

Veneration of the Relics St. Thérèse of Lisieux *The Little Flower*

Catholic Standard photos by Mihoko Owada

Cardinal Gregory incenses the reliquary of St. Thérèse of Lisieux

In commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the canonization of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, the reliquary of the "Little Flower" visited Mary's Shrine November 20-22, 2025. More than 6,000 of the faithful came to venerate the relics of this beloved saint and Doctor of the Church.

Masses were celebrated at 12:10 p.m. each day by Cardinal Wilton Gregory, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington, Cardinal Seán O'Malley, Archbishop Emeritus of Boston, and Cardinal Christophe Pierre, the Apostolic Nuncio to the United States, respectively.

At the end of each Mass, the Blessing of the Roses took place in honor of St. Thérèse who said, "When I die, I will send down a shower of roses from the heavens; I will spend my heaven doing good upon the earth."

Winding through the Great Upper Church, the faithful waited in line for the precious opportunity to press their roses against the reliquary and pray for the intercession of the "Little Flower." ❦

Little ones venerating the Little Flower

The Immaculate Conception
Patroness of the United States of America

As we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the birth of our nation, we honor the patroness of the United States, the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception, to whom the National Shrine is dedicated.

Pope Pius IX entrusted the United States to Mary's patronage under this title at the petition of the American bishops in 1847—seven years before he declared the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception for the Universal Church.

In his papal bull of 1854, he defined that "the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, in the first instance of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege granted by Almighty God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ, the Savior of the human race, was preserved free from all stain of original sin" (*Ineffabilis Deus*).

Featured on the cover and located in the Basilica's Great Upper Church is *The Immaculate Conception*, a mosaic gifted to the National Shrine by Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI. This beautiful mosaic is a Vatican Mosaic Studio reproduction of the renowned painting by the famed Spanish artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo.

At the dedication of the National Shrine in 1959, the faithful—gathered in the Great Upper Church and in parishes across America—prayed an Act of Consecration of the United States to its patroness, the Blessed Virgin Mary under her title of the Immaculate Conception:

The Immaculate Conception mosaic gifted by Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI.

Photo by Matthew Barrick

Pope Francis praying before *The Immaculate Conception.*

Most Holy Trinity: *Our Father in Heaven, who chose Mary as the fairest of your daughters; Holy Spirit, who chose Mary as Your spouse; God the Son, who chose Mary as Your Mother; in union with Mary, we adore your majesty and acknowledge Your supreme, eternal dominion and authority.*

Most Holy Trinity, we put the United States of America into the hands of Mary Immaculate in order that she may present the country to you. Through her we wish to thank you for the great resources of this land and for the freedom which has been its heritage. Through the intercession of Mary, have mercy on the Catholic Church in America. Grant us peace. Have mercy on our president and on all the officers of our government. Grant us a fruitful economy born of justice and charity. Have mercy on capital and industry and labor. Protect the family life of the nation. Guard the precious gift of many religious vocations. Through the intercession of our Mother, have mercy on the sick, the poor, the tempted, sinners — on all who are in need.

Mary, Immaculate Virgin, Our Mother, Patroness of our land, we praise you and honor you and give ourselves to you. Protect us from all harm. Pray for us that acting always according to your will and the Will of your Divine Son, we may live and die pleasing to God." Amen.

Preserving the Heart of America's Catholic Church

Photo by Jaclyn Lippelmann

Mary's Shrine, America's Catholic Church

In 2026 our nation will commemorate 250 years since the founding of the United States. Milestones such as this do more than mark time. They invite us to remember. We reflect with gratitude on those who hoped through uncertainty, prayed through hardship, and believed in a future they might never live to see. Their faith built a nation. Their sacrifices became an inheritance. And we are asked, quietly and personally, what will endure because we were here?"

A Living Witness at the Nation's Heart
For more than a century the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, known as America's Catholic Church, has stood as a testimony to this faith. Built stone by stone through the devotion of immigrant families and faithful Catholics, the Shrine is more than architecture or history. It is a place where our nation's story meets our Church's story. Here the Blessed Virgin Mary is honored as Patroness of the United States, and here millions have placed their deepest intentions before God.

Across generations, ordinary people gave generously so that, this great Marian shrine might rise in Washington DC. Many gave without ever seeing its completion, trusting that their offerings would serve souls they would never meet. Their faith lives in every chapel, in every mosaic, in every candle lit in hope.

A Sanctuary Where America Prays
The Basilica has been blessed with moments of extraordinary grace, including the visits of Saint John Paul II, Pope Benedict XVI, and Pope Francis who in 2015 canonized Saint Junípero Serra during his historic visit to the National Shrine. Yet it is not only papal history that makes the Shrine sacred. It is the steady heartbeat of daily prayer.

Each day pilgrims arrive with gratitude and grief, with joy and longing. Candles glow softly. Rosaries are prayed with devotion. Tears fall in silence. Under the loving gaze of Mary, hearts open and countless lives are placed before God.

Honoring Yesterday and Strengthening Tomorrow
To preserve this sacred place is both a responsibility and a privilege. Time leaves its mark. Stone weathers. Art requires careful hands and patient restoration. Foundations must be tended, roofs repaired, systems sustained, and holy spaces preserved, not for beauty alone but so that every person who enters may find reverence, peace, and the living presence of Christ through His Mother.

As families plan for their children and grandchildren, we too must ensure that the Shrine remains strong spiritually and structurally for those who will kneel here after us.

A Legacy That Endures
One meaningful way to help secure the future of America's Catholic Church is through a legacy gift. Including the Basilica in a will, trust, or beneficiary designation often requires no sacrifice today. Yet this type of gift can safeguard the future for decades to come. It helps preserve sacred art and architecture, supports daily Mass and devotions for our nation, and welcomes future pilgrims seeking hope, healing, and peace.

A legacy gift is more than stewardship. It is a prayer carried forward in time. It is a way of saying, let this house of Mary and her Son stand firm for generations after me.

If you feel even a gentle stirring to learn more, I would be honored to speak with you. Your legacy can help ensure that long after we are gone, candles will still be lit, prayers will still rise, and this beloved Shrine will continue to hold the hopes of a nation within its walls at America's Catholic Church. ❦

Contact:
Rob Silbaugh, Director of Development
rsilbaugh@bnsic.org

A Monument Visible

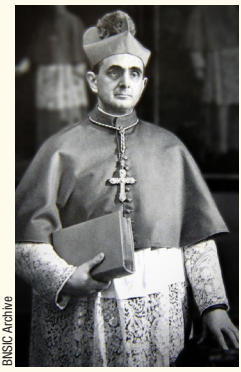
Geraldine M. Rohling, PhD, MAEd, DSG
Archivist-Curator Emerita

In 1903, Professor Thomas J. Shahan wrote:

> "As the life of the great National Capital, destined one day to be the most beautiful and attractive in the world, takes on wider development … we ought to construct here an enduring edifice that would be at once the becoming Tabernacle of the Most High … It should be at once spacious and inviting, the flower of American Catholic genius … a monument visible from far and near."

More than one hundred years later, an "enduring edifice," the National Shrine, stands as a "Tabernacle of the Most High … a monument visible from far and near." It is a distinctive and singular part of the D.C. skyline, visible from monuments and museums, trains and planes; seen in movies, in television shows, in newspapers and magazines, and in all manner of media. It occupies the imagination of artists and authors alike. In 1960, Giovanni Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan, spotted the church from the air, as his flight approached National Airport. Monsignor John J. Murphy, former director of the National Shrine, recalled the event:

> "On June 9, [1960] we received a telephone call from the [Reagan] National Airport, here in Washington, asking if a member of the Shrine staff would be available to give a VIP tour within the next thirty minutes. The caller was a member of the Apostolic Delegation staff; the VIP was Giovanni Battista Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan. I later learned that Cardinal Montini, en route by plane to Washington for a less than twenty-four-hour visit [a stopover on his way to Brazil], spotted the great dome of the Shrine from the air. When told it was America's Shrine to Our Lady, he asked the welcoming committee if he could be brought to the Shrine first, before beginning his official visit."



BNSIC Archive

Giovanni Cardinal Montini, Archbishop of Milan

Cardinal Montini was in awe of the church. Dedicated just seven months earlier (20 Nov 1959), the interior was a simple, plain gray brick. The only ornamentation was the north apse mosaic, *Christ in Majesty*. It would be years before the chapels, mosaics, and marble cladding would be added. Nevertheless, Montini, an avid devotee of the arts, appreciated the size, the architectural plan, and the articulation of traditional architecture in a contemporary mode. At the conclusion of his tour, Montini remarked, "The strength of this beautiful Shrine is much more than its massive dimensions; to me, it represents America's deep faith in Christ and his Blessed Mother." A similar sentiment would be repeated nineteen years later by Pope John Paul II, the first pope to visit the National Shrine: "This Shrine speaks to us with the voice of all America … of all the sons and daughters … who came together around the heart of a Mother" (7 Oct 1979).

J. Pipkin Photo

Pope John Paul II, 7 October 1979

BNSIC Archive

1976, Cardinal Baum, Pope Paul VI, Msgr. Murphy

In 1976, in a private audience at the Vatican, Montini, now Pope Paul VI, inquired about the progress of the National Shrine. He shared with Monsignor Murphy a thought he had been too shy to say aloud that day in 1960: "When I saw all the pews, I thought to myself, there are not enough trees in all of Milan to make so many pews."

For more than one hundred years, many people have filled these many pews. They sacrificed, contributed, and aided in the actual construction of this National Shrine whether by donations in kind, in funds, or both, and, most importantly, by their participation in the worship and Marian devotions at the National Shrine. A diversity of Catholics—even non-Catholics—raised this monumental church in honor of Mary, the Immaculate Conception, patroness of the United States of America. This pew population also calls to mind those who contributed to the building of this capital city; those who provided the land and the space for a "great National Capital," and by extension, the National Shrine.

The following vignettes tell of these people of history, their sacrifices and offerings, and the synchronicity, "meaningful coincidences," of their acts. They are worthy of our attention particularly during this year of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence (1776-2026).

Proprietors of Washington

Land and location are vital to people and to governments. This was true for the capital of this new republic. On 29 March 1791, General Uriah Forrest, an old friend of George Washington and "mayor of George town," hosted a dinner-meeting between the local landowners and President Washington. At this gathering an agreement was reached for the donation of half of the land for the ten square miles designated for the Federal District, the future capital city of the United States of America. For history buffs, the house where this meeting took place was purchased in 1800 by William Marbury, known for the landmark case of Marbury v. Madison, which established the principles of judicial review by the Supreme Court to ensure that the executive and legislative branches of the government abided by the Constitution. Bought by a developer in 1986, the house was restored, refurbished, and named the "Forrest-Marbury House." Since 1992, it has been the Embassy of Ukraine.

Public Domain

Forrest-Marbury House, Georgetown

Public Domain

Daniel Carroll (1792-94), oil painting by John Wollaston (c. 1710-c. 1775)

Among the founding fathers of the new republic were three Catholics. One of them, Daniel Carroll (1730-96), was one of the largest landholders in the area and a member of the First House of Representatives of Maryland. Daniel was also a signer of both the Articles of Confederation, (ratified 1781), and the Constitution (ratified 1789). In addition, he joined his brother, John Carroll, S.J., their cousin Charles, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and two other Catholic businessmen, in signing a congratulatory message to George Washington on his election as the first elected president of the republic.

During their dinner-meeting, Daniel Carroll donated 1,400 acres to the federal government. Hence, Carroll and the other four land-donors became known as the "Original Proprietors" of Washington, D.C. Two days later, George Washington wrote to Thomas Jefferson, *"The terms agreed on between me, on the part of the United States, with the Landholders of George town and Carrollsburg… the whole containing from three to five thousand acres, is ceded to the public"* (31 March 1791).

Decades later, a descendant of Carroll wrote: "No other single figure or person from this period held a larger role or a more consequential involvement … than Daniel Carroll" (*Creating Capitol Hill: Place, Proprietors, and People*, 2018).

Part of the land donated by Carroll became Capitol Hill. Pierre Charles L'Enfant, the planner of the Federal City, described this location as "a pedestal waiting for a monument." L'Enfant had been an early supporter of the American cause. A French Catholic, he arrived in the colonies in 1777, received a commission in the Continental Army, and served at Valley Forge on the staff of General Washington. After being wounded in battle, he continued to serve and to fight, marching with the aid of a crutch. In 1789, he

was made an honorary U.S. citizen in gratitude for his design of "Federal Hall" in New York City, the site of Washington's first inauguration.

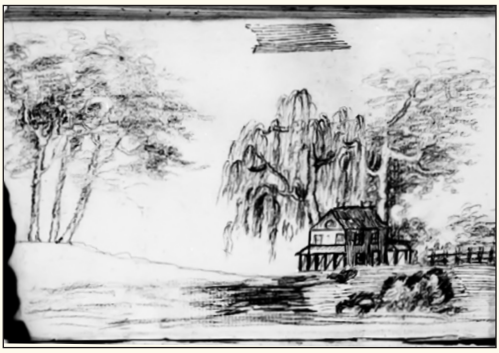
Geraldine M. Rohling Photo

US Capitol White House

Capitol Hill and the future U.S. Capitol building were the hub of L'Enfant's "radial plan," in which all roads lead to the Capitol, the nucleus of the new republic. L'Enfant stated that this was more than symbolism; it was the physical expression of the supremacy of the citizens, the heart of this new democracy. L'Enfant also prepared a design for "the President's House." The design committee, headed by George Washington, deemed it too extravagant; too palatial. Washington envisioned a simple, yet sophisticated and elegant design. A dwelling that would epitomize the equality and egalitarianism of the new republic. An advertisement of March 1792 asked for the submission of new drawings that reflected this ideal. In July, the "neo-classical design" of James Hoban, a post-Revolutionary War Irish Catholic emigrant (1785) and naturalized American citizen (1791), was awarded "the premium for the best plan." In addition, Hoban became the supervising architect for the completion of the north wing of the U.S. Capitol and its interior design. These two landmark buildings are depicted in the "nine patroness windows," of the east and west transept galleries of the Great Upper Church. The crown atop each symbol indicates the protection and care of the Blessed Mother.

Northeast Frontier

On a trajectory ca. 3.5 miles northeast from the U.S. Capitol stands the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. Various period maps refer to this quadrant as "the northeast frontier." This quadrant, the third highest elevation in the District, is situated on the rim of a topographic bowl. The U.S. Capitol and the White House are seated within its well. At that time, from where the National Shrine now stands, there was an unconstrained, commanding view of "downtown." Margaret Bayard Smith, an avid letter writer, consummate diarist, and the wife of the famed founding editor of *The National Intelligencer* and the president of the Bank of Washington, wrote of their country retreat: "I am delighted with it. A good house on the top of a high hill … embower'd in woods, thro' an opening of which the Potomack [sic], its shores and Mason's Island are distinctly seen" (1803). (For further details, see Rohling, "Gift of the Land," *Mary's Shrine*, 2018, No.2).



Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Margaret Bayard Smith Papers

Sketch of Smith Estate

The neighboring country estate of George Washington Riggs, co-founder of Riggs National Bank (Presidents Lincoln to Nixon banked here), was purchased in 1859 by the government as a home for disabled and retired soldiers. The estate, with its cool bucolic breezes, was an idyllic and welcoming escape from the heat, mosquitoes, smells, and noise of downtown. The "cottage" was the "summer White House" for Presidents Buchanan, Lincoln, Hayes, and Arthur. Mrs. Lincoln later recalled, "How dearly I loved the Soldiers' Home."

A Church of Magnificent Dimensions

The *National Intelligencer*, the first newspaper of the capital, which also published official notices, government proclamations, and government advertising, reported on 27 January 1846, that "the Catholics of [Washington, D.C.] have it in contemplation to erect in this metropolis a church edifice of magnificent dimensions, something after the manner of the most extensive cathedrals of Europe, and to be, in the catholic sense of the term, a national church." An appeal would be made to every Catholic congregation for the building

of "a noble structure." This announcement was reported seven months prior to the sixth provincial council in Baltimore (May 1846), where the American bishops designated Mary, the Immaculate Conception, as the patroness of the new nation. This story was carried by several newspapers, some enthusiastically and others bemoaning that this was "how Catholicism [Popery or Papism] spreads." This wave of Anti-Catholicism reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century, ca. 1847, with the heavy influx of Catholic immigrants from Germany and Ireland, including the religious communities and priests who attended to the spiritual and educational needs of their people. This began the monumentally successful parochial school system. Despite this public announcement, it would take sixty years before any organization or person would champion this cause.

The first person to give serious thought to this "contemplation" was Professor Shahan, who published his first consideration in 1903, as quoted in the opening paragraph of this essay. He shouldered the challenge with passion, even though at times it would seem impossible.

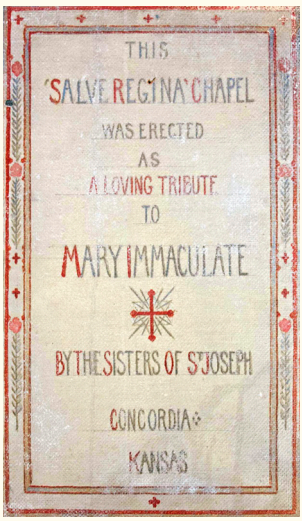
The Gift of Giving

Need and sacrifice were ever present. They went together like a hand in a glove. For most, the practice of sacrificing for family or loved ones was customary, even a holy exercise. *The Gift of the Magi* (O. Henry, 1905), a Christmas tale of the period, told of such a story, of a husband and wife who secretly "sacrificed for each other the greatest treasures of their house." The husband sold his gold heirloom pocket watch to buy decorative hair combs for his wife, and she sold her beautiful cascading tresses to buy him a platinum watch fob and chain. The tender lesson therein was not the material gifts but that true sacrifice costs something, an act of solitary, singular self-giving. The story became and still is quite popular. Several years later, an actual act of self-giving became one of the untold stories of the National Shrine, a page in its history.

Shahan, realizing that his dream of a National Shrine was still in the distance, thought it wiser to focus on an immediate goal: "a smaller shrine." The 1918 Sears Roebuck and Company catalog indexed "Ready Made Churches," along with church organs, bells, heaters, clocks, music books, and pew varnish. Shahan purchased a "simplex ready-made building" that became the Salve Regina Chapel where Masses, rosaries, and Marian devotions would be celebrated for the success of the National Shrine and its benefactors. In neighboring Brookland, there are homes made from these Sears Roebuck kits that are still standing and still active.

BNSIC Archive

Salve Regina Chapel



BNSIC Archive

Salve Regina Chapel Tablet

Sister M. Louise Cuff, a founding member of the Concordia Sisters of Saint Joseph, was a colleague and good friend of Shahan. Her sister, Mother Antoinette Cuff, Superior General, was trying to raise money to build a chapel and college in Kansas. In a leap of faith and as an offering-petition for their own project, it was decided to donate the entire cost of the Salve Regina Chapel from their own funds. On 24 May 1918, Bishop Shahan blessed the chapel and offered the first Mass. The hand-embroidered dedication tablet, once at the entrance, is now preserved in the National Shrine archives. Immediately following the sacrifice-gift, the sisters received a check for five times the amount for their own project, which they were able to build.

Many acts of self-giving and personal sacrifice for this National Shrine and for our country are preserved in the archives, the prayer tablets of Memorial Hall, and in works of art. They are not sentimental tales but stories of faith, conviction, and love. Stories that continue to congregate in this Marian house of worship and inspire pilgrims and visitors. These humble offerings have kept and continue to keep this National Shrine a vital Monument Visible.

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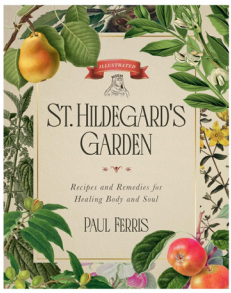

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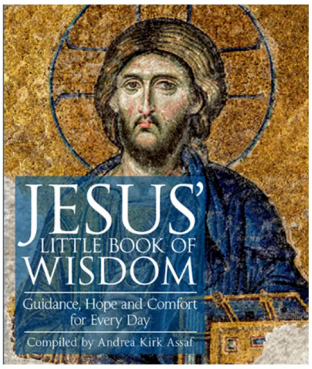

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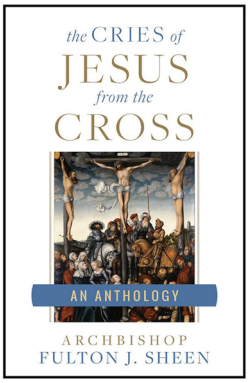
by Archbishop Fulton Sheen



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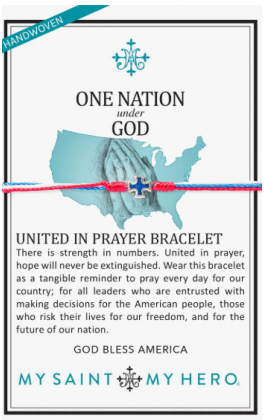

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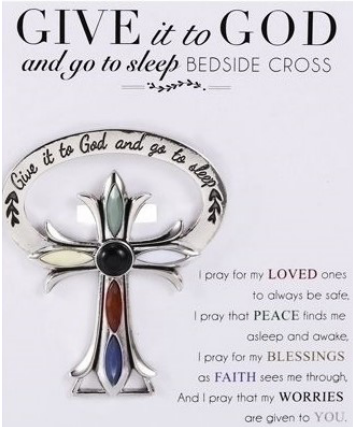

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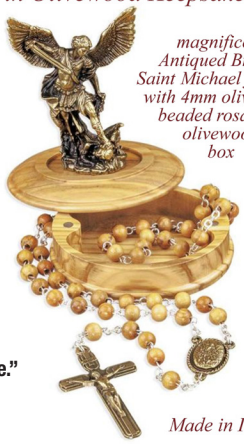

magnificent Antiqued Bronze Saint Michael figurine with 4mm olivewood beaded rosary in olivewood box

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Writing your will is like writing a legal letter of love which gives you the freedom to pass on what is important to you to the people and places that matter most.

When the time is right for you to write your will, please consider including the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. We rely entirely on the generosity of benefactors who love Mary's Shrine to provide for its financial needs.

Remembering the National Shrine in your will can help sustain our mission and ministry for future generations of Catholics from across the United States and around the world.

Every gift is meaningful and makes a difference.

To remember the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in your will, you may contact your attorney or financial planner for assistance in making a bequest.

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MARY'S SHRINE

A publication of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

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Rector

Reverend Monsignor Vito A. Buonanno
Director of Pilgrimages

Reverend Ismael N. Ayala
Director of Liturgy

Reverend Andrew Knop, OMI
Spiritual Director

Jacquelyn Hayes
Director of Communications

Location
400 Michigan Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20017
Tel: 202-526-8300
info@nationalshrine.org
www.nationalshrine.org

Shrine Hours
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Sunday Masses
4:30 pm (Saturday Vigil)
7:30 am, 9 am, 10:30 am
*12 noon (Solemn Mass with Choir)
*2:30 pm (Spanish)
4:30 pm

Sunday Confessions
10 am - 12 noon
1:15 pm - 2:15 pm (Spanish)
2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

*Livestreamed at www.nationalshrine.org/mass

Monday-Friday Masses
7 am, 8 am, 12:10 pm, 5:15 pm

Saturday Masses
7 am, 8 am, 12:10 pm, 4:30 pm (Vigil)

Monday-Saturday Confessions
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