

1530



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BALTIMORE  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND

**THE  
BALTIMORE CO-CATHEDRAL**

*Minor Basilica of  
The Assumption of the  
Blessed Virgin Mary*

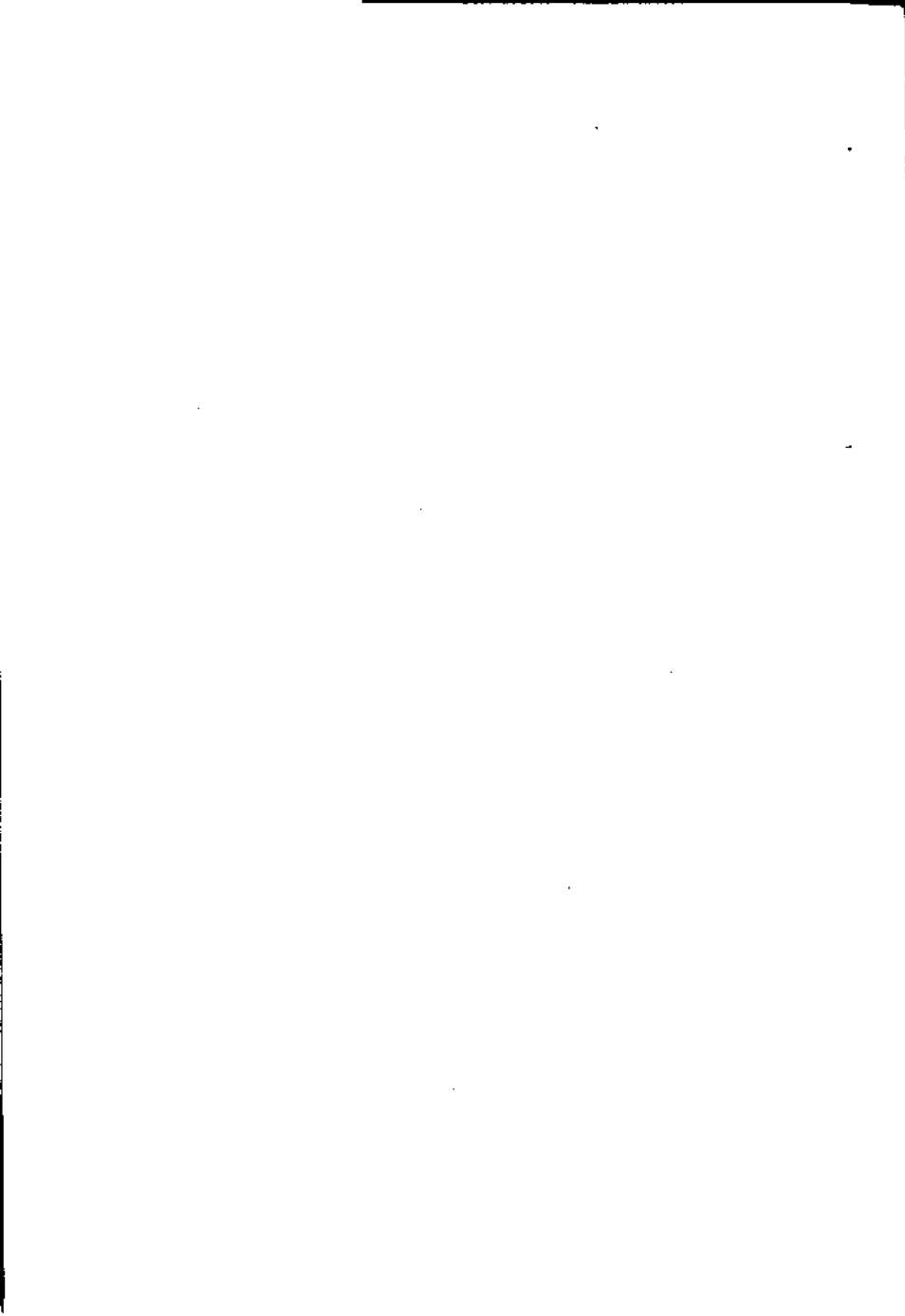
Its History and Description

by

The Rev. Cornelius M. Cuyler, S.S.

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THE

BALTIMORE CO-CATHEDRAL

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The Baltimore Co-Cathedral  
Baltimore, Md.

The Baltimore Co-Cathedral

Baltimore, Md.



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BALTIMORE CO-CATHEDRAL**

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Baltimore

1951



## FOREWORD

**T**HIS BRIEF account of the Basilica is a digest of the more detailed work prepared by the Rev. Cornelius M. Cuyler, S.S., of the faculty of St. Charles College, Catonsville. It is our regret that the limitations of the pamphlet form would not permit the printing of Father Cuyler's sketch without abridgement. His manuscript is preserved in the Basilica archives for scholarly consultation. This digest has sought, as far as possible, to preserve both the spirit and the completeness of the original.

The original manuscript was submitted to the following persons, to whom we in turn add our measure of thanks: The Most Rev. John M. McNamara, D.D., Auxiliary to the Archbishop of Washington; the Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph M. Nelligan, former rector of the Cathedral and chancellor of the Archdiocese of Baltimore; the Rev. John Tracy Ellis, of the faculty of the Catholic University of America; the Rev. William J. O'Shea, S.S., of the faculty of St. Mary's Seminary, Baltimore; the Rev. John W. Bowen, of the faculty of St. Charles College, Catonsville; Mr. R. Howard Gilmour, of the Cogswell Construction Company; Dr. Thomas H. Locraft, of the firm of Murphy and Locraft, Architects, and member of the faculty of the Catholic University; Mr. Charles Connor, sexton of the Basilica. Their suggestions and corrections have been incorporated into the present version.

It is the earnest wish of all those who have contributed to this booklet that its contents may assist the appreciation of the historical importance of Baltimore's monumental co-cathedral and the understanding of the architectural and liturgical beauties it enfolds. If, in any measure, we have made more enjoyable and memorable your visit to this Mother of American churches, our purpose shall have been accomplished and our efforts amply repaid.





## ST. PETER'S PRO-CATHEDRAL

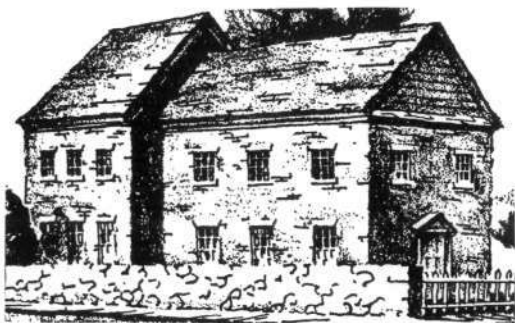
**B**ETWEEN the time of the erection of the Diocese of Baltimore and the completion of its historic Cathedral, the place of a cathedral was supplied by old St. Peter's Church, then the only Catholic church in the See City. Bishop Carroll and his successor, Archbishop Leonard Neale, did not live to see the completion of what they began and furthered.

Acadian French, settling here in the winter of 1756-57, formed the body of Baltimore's first Catholic congregation. Located in an abandoned building on the site of the present City Court House, they were served by Jesuit Fathers from nearby Maryland and Pennsylvania missions. Increasing to almost 600 members, they undertook to build a church on a site acquired for £6 sterling in 1764 from Charles Carroll of Annapolis, father of the Signer, Charles Carroll of Carrollton. Located on the hillside at the corner of the present Saratoga and Little Sharp Sts., a stone's throw below the Basilica, it marked the northwestern limits of Baltimore Town.

Begun in 1770 in the form of a two story brick residence with high-gabled roof, measuring 25 by 30 feet inside, this was what was known as a "mass House," the only kind of church permitted Catholics under Maryland law from the Puritan seizure of the colony until after the Revolution. After many delays and difficulties, including the builder's bankruptcy and his suit against the Pope for the balance due him, it was opened for regular services under the title of St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, in 1775. Father Charles Sewall became its first resident pastor in 1782. Enlarged in 1784 and again in 1790, it became the temporary cathedral and residence of Bishop Carroll after his consecration in England in the latter year.

There in 1791, Bishop Carroll held the first synod with twenty of his clergy. There he laid hands upon the first priests to be ordained in our Country, Stephen Badin in 1793 and Prince Demetrius Gallitzin in 1795. There, too, were consecrated Bishop-coadjutor, later Archbishop, Leonard Neale of Baltimore; Bishop Michael Egan, first occupant of the See of Philadelphia; Bishop John Cheverus, first bishop of Boston and later Cardinal Archbishop of Bordeaux in France; and finally Baltimore's third Archbishop, Ambrose Maréchal, S.S.

Old St. Peter's continued in use until 1841 when it was closed to make room for the new Cathedral school for boys, known as Calvert Hall and conducted from 1845 to the present by the Brothers of the Christian Schools.



*ST. PETER'S CHURCH, with first addition. The next addition was a long wing to the right. A residence was provided in a detached building at some distance to the left. This was the "paltry" pro-cathedral until the completion of the present structure.*

## PLANS AND PREPARATIONS

**F**IVE YEARS after Bishop Carroll's coming to the first see of the United States in 1790, it had become clear that tiny St. Peter's was no longer adequate as Baltimore's sole parish church, much less as the Nation's Cathedral. The Bishop realized that the time had come to begin the task of construction commissioned by the Holy See. Trustees of the "Roman Catholic Church in Baltimore Town" were incorporated by the Maryland Assembly in the fall of 1795 and, at their first meeting, decided to open subscriptions for adding to the proposed site and for building thereon a new Cathedral. Initial gifts enabled them to pay the debt on the property and enclose it with a fence.

The site chosen was a "square" bounded by the present Pratt, Gough, Stiles and Exeter Streets, then called Queen, Wolfe, Prince and Exeter. It occupied the heart of what was then Baltimore's more fashionable district and was described by Bishop Carroll in a pastoral of early 1796 as suited for a new and conveniently located church and for a "free school for the gratuitous education of poor Catholic children."

Local subscriptions were continued and the Bishop made appeals for funds both at home and abroad. In 1803 the trustees obtained legislative approval for a public lottery to raise an added \$30,000. Tickets sold for \$10 each. In June of that year, the Bishop made another appeal, asking each Catholic family of the nation-wide diocese to contribute \$1 a year for four years. In August, he even wrote to Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of France, for help in erecting for Baltimore Catholics "a public monument to their piety" and "a temple where they can assemble with becoming decency." The request was not furthered by Bishop Carroll's officiating, however reluctantly, on December 3 at the mar-

riage of the Consul's younger brother Jerome to Baltimore's Betsy Patterson.

It was fortunate that funds remained insufficient to begin the building, despite the sale of a part of the original site. For by 1805 the expansion of the city north and west left the "square" in Old Town no longer a desirable location. On June 22 of that year, the Trustees decided to change the site and to use for this purpose the receipts from its sale and monies contributed for purchase of a new piece of ground.

The newly selected plot which became the site of the present Basilica, was admirably suited for the purpose. It lay just outside the city limits at the top of the hill north of old St. Peter's, overlooking surrounding ground, one of the few spots in the City from which water flows in all directions.

Rich in local and national history, the property had been part of the 200 acres leased in 1672 by the Lord Proprietor of Maryland to Edward Lunn at an annual rental of 8 shillings. Sold in 1688 for 5,000 lbs. tobacco to George Eager, Jr., "Lunn's Lot" was inherited by a grandson, Gen. John E. Howard of Revolutionary fame.

It was on this part of Howard's Park or Forrest that Mass was celebrated for the French troops who camped there on their way north from the surrender of Yorktown. Here, too, was sung by Rochambeau's Irish chaplain the solemn Mass of Thanksgiving ordered by the King of France, an event of great pomp attended by a large throng of Baltimore civilians. An ancient elm has remained standing from those days and is marked by a descriptive tablet at the corner of Charles and Mulberry Streets. The inscription reads in part:

THIS ELM HAS WATCHED THE GROWTH OF "BALTIMORE TOWNE" FOR OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS, ON FORMER ESTATE OF JOHN EAGER HOWARD, REVOLUTIONARY AND 1812 OFFICER AND FIFTH GOVERNOR OF MARYLAND. HERE IN "HOWARDS WOODS," COUNT ROCHAMBEAU'S TROOPS CAMPED, 1782, ERECTING AN ALTAR FOR MASS.

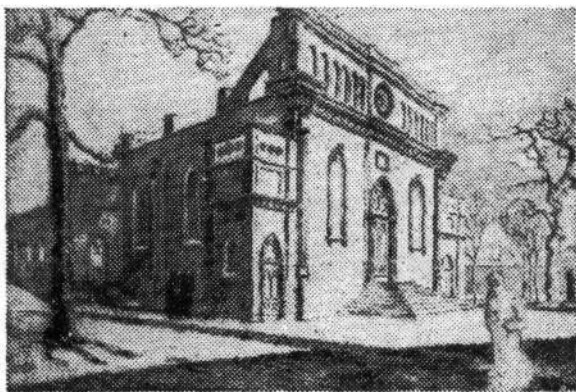
A further difficulty threatened to thwart this newest choice of sites. The price of \$25,000 was considered beyond the means of the Trustees without depleting their funds for actual construction. Reluctantly they decided to build on the burial ground adjoining old St. Peter's, part of which, on the present corner of Charles and Saratoga Streets, had been purchased by Bishop Carroll in 1805 from his cousin of Carrollton.

The removal of bodies from the plot brought an immediate protest. In a memorial presented to the Bishop by the Catholics of the city, it was pointed out that the site chosen was unfit for what they had hoped would be a "splendid and magnificent building in comparison to any other in the United States"; that they had generously subscribed to the lottery of 1803; and that they had expected the purchase of the Howard lot "on the summit of the hill" because of its superior location. They urged the purchase of their preference on the grounds of ultimate economy and they objected to the disturbance of their dead.

The Bishop did not yield without a fight. He pointed out the absence of any irreverence in the removal of the bodies for "the enlargement and foundation of the House of God", when they would again be decently interred, and the folly of undertaking a project that neither money in hand nor promised subscriptions could justify.

At this juncture, the Sulpician Fathers of St. Mary's Seminary cast their weight of influence in favor of the Howard site. Always regarded as the "standing clergy" of his cathedral by a Bishop grateful for their many outstanding and indispensable services, the seminary priests encouraged him to obtain the site so eminently suited for a "monument intended to last for ages." As for the completion of the building, they suggested that succeeding generations would be willing to finish what had been "nobly begun". To convince the Bishop, there was needed only the persuasive personality and enterprising zeal of Father Louis William Valentine DuBourg, a member of the Seminary faculty, afterwards second

Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas, Bishop of Montauban and Archbishop of Beconsan in France. With characteristic energy he answered all the Bishop's objections and undertook to raise funds for the purchase. Within a few days he collected a large amount of the money from merchants of the city and reported the richer classes only waiting for a word from the Bishop to make up the difference. Bishop Carroll's appeal on the next day brought \$13,000. General Howard, in view of the religious purpose, graciously reduced the price by \$5,000. On March 11, 1806, the Trustees approved the purchase of the present site, at the cost of \$20,571.60, with a first payment of one fifth to be made January 1; appointed a commission to consult on the annexing of the ground to the City (a project not achieved till 1816); and authorized the sale of the old lots on the original plot in southeast Baltimore.



ST. MARY'S SEMINARY CHAPEL

*Still standing on the grounds of old St. Mary's, Paca Street near Franklin, it served as one of Baltimore's three churches until the completion of the present basilica. The spire that topped its pediment was removed as a safety measure.*

## ARCHITECTS AND ALTERATIONS

**P**LANS FOR the proposed Cathedral had been in the making. Preliminary sketches were submitted in 1804 by Dr. William Thornton. A West Indian reared in England and with an M. D. degree from Edinburgh, Dr. Thornton had travelled widely in Europe before coming to America about 1790. A scholar and a gentleman, he was rather a gifted amateur than a trained architect. His elaborate and many-columned plan for the Cathedral, like that for the Capitol at Washington of which he was also the first designer, was judged structurally unsound.

Benjamin Henry Latrobe, whom Bishop Carroll consulted on the Thornton sketches and who had succeeded Thornton as architect of the Nation's Capitol, was invited to submit a plan of his own. Latrobe, then busy with the construction of the Chesapeake and Ohio canal, was a pupil of Samuel Pepys Cockerell of London and a thoroughly trained architect who had distinguished himself there before coming to America after the death of his young wife. His first important commission here, the Bank of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia (1798), had attracted national attention. Fortunately for the Baltimore Cathedral, his Washington experience had made him familiar with the engineering deficiencies of the gifted Thornton.

Offering his services without charge, Latrobe submitted in 1805 two designs, one Gothic, the other Roman. As both were beyond reach of available funds, a third much reduced plan was offered and, when this was considered inadequate, a fourth, again in the Roman style, which was unanimously accepted before the end of the year. This last sketch included Bishop Carroll's suggestion for "a circular form at the end of the choir." At the Trustees' request, the side aisles were widened by ten feet and the overall length increased by Latrobe to preserve proper proportions. Working drawings were completed by March of 1806.



With the exception of the one initial Gothic plan, all the sketches by Latrobe embodied the basic design of a cruciform church in classic style with a single dome at the junction of nave and transepts and a combination of segmental groined and barrel vaulting above nave, side aisles and sanctuary, all carried on masonry piers with pilasters in the Roman Doric mode. The apse columns were given capitols in modified Corinthian, similar to those in the Tower of the Winds at Athens.

These early designs were almost certainly inspired by Latrobe's admiration for Sufflot's Pantheon in Paris, though, since he was never a mere copyist, he doubtless drew worth-while ideas from other sources. A comparison of the early sketches with pictures of Lulworth Castle chapel where Carroll was consecrated makes it seem possible that the latter's fondness for this English church may have influenced his suggestions to the architect. In 1880, Archbishop Gibbons called the interior of the Lulworth chapel "a facsimile of the Baltimore Cathedral." The most notable difference lies in the portico of the Basilica, included in Latrobe's early designs but not erected until 1863.



*LULWORTH CASTLE CHAPEL*

*Dorchester, England*

*Seat of the Weld Family and place of Bishop Carroll's consecration*

## THE BUILDING BEGINS

**W**ITH THE final selection of the site in March, 1806, excavation began. And so rapidly did the work proceed that by July the foundations were ready for the blessing of the cornerstone. On July 7 at 8:30 in the morning, twenty seminarians and a number of priests preceded the Bishop, vested in cope and mitre and carrying the crozier of his pastoral authority, from the residence of old St. Peter's to the site of the rising Cathedral where Bishop Carroll performed with full ceremony the blessing of the stone and its placing in the foundations, before a brief address to the large assembly of Catholics and their friends. A copper plate embedded in the stone reads:

"THE FIRST STONE OF THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH, TO BE ERECTED FOR THE HONOR OF ALMIGHTY GOD, UNDER THE TITLE OF JESUS AND MARY, WAS PUT IN PLACE THIS SEVENTH DAY OF JULY, 1806, BY THE RIGHT REVEREND JOHN, BISHOP OF BALTIMORE."

For the next three years, progress on the building was slow, punctuated by difficulties among the superintendent, John Rohrback; the chairman of the building committee, John Hillen, III; and the architect. Hammered stone of gray granite was chosen for the walls and hauled 11 miles by ox cart from Ellicott City quarries. By March, 1807, error in the foundation construction, resulting from Rohrback's misreading of the plans, required further alteration in the building proportions on the part of the architect. Latrobe was never satisfied with the result. "But notwithstanding," he wrote, "let the alteration be made. I will devote the necessary time to a new design and hope it shall succeed. I do not see how at present, but the resources of art are infinite."

A sixth design embodied the necessary adjustments. But the required study produced some significant changes. Latrobe eliminated the four piers at the crossing of nave and transepts, sprung diagonal arches across the corners and expanded the dome to embrace the side aisles. This characteristic of St. Paul's in London achieved the open, spacious effect of the interior that has delighted visitors ever since. At the same time, he decided to cover the central part of the nave with a small saucer dome in place of the intended groined vault. These changes were made in a seventh design which became the basis for continued construction.

When Latrobe submitted these alterations in March, 1807, the building still had two feet to go before reaching the floor level; and only in the spring of 1809 was the builder authorized to procure the workmen for "commencing the building of the Cathedral." During the next year and half, work moved so rapidly that, by July, 1810, the walls were up to the entablature with a height of 24 feet all around. Before winter halted construction, the side aisles and transepts were probably vaulted while the nave and choir were covered with a roof of boards.

With the fall of 1810, progress on the great Cathedral came to a halt. Latrobe's letter of April 17, 1811, makes it clear that nothing had been done since the preceding autumn. This may have been due to lack of funds. Then came the War of 1812, making further operations impossible. In October, 1815, we find one of the Trustees, John Walsh, instructed to have the unfinished building "secured in the best possible way to preserve it from injury during the winter."



## PERIOD OF PROGRESS

**m**EANWHILE, Baltimore had been raised in 1808 to an archdiocese, with Philadelphia, New York, Boston and Bardstown (later Louisville, Ky.) as suffragan dioceses of the Province, and Archbishop Carroll continued to use St. Peter's as his metropolitan church until his death, December 3, 1815. His co-adjutor, Bishop Neale, who succeeded him in the See, lacked the health to do much about building; but in October of 1816 the Trustees decided to resume construction the following spring. By New Year's, final payment for the property had been made to General Howard and contracts for more granite from Ellicott City were renewed. New superintendents were appointed, new artisans and artists put to work; and, before the end of the year, despite the death of Archbishop Neale on June 18, nearly \$20,000 worth of work had been done and paid for. More than sufficient money had been realized from the sale of part of the Cathedral property along Franklin Street and a portion of old St. Peter's cemetery. Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal was consecrated in old St. Peter's on December 4, 1817, and immediately took up the task of completing the Cathedral. The raising of funds was not easy, with the diocese already reduced and likely to be further limited by the creation of new Sees. But with Catholics in Baltimore increased to 10,000, with only St. Peter's, St. Patrick's and St. Mary's Seminary chapel to serve them, the third Archbishop of Baltimore saw the immediate need for completing the Cathedral church even at the cost of less grandeur than the original builders had purposed. So rapid was the progress that, by October, 1818, the Trustees resolved to carry the towers of the structure "up to the square or cornice this season, that the temporary roofs may be put on them." Almost \$70,000 was paid for work done in 1818.

The following January, the State Legislature renewed permission for a second lottery granted eight years before but never used. The amount was for \$50,000 for the benefit of the Basilica and 12,500 tickets were for sale at \$4 each by May. Archbishop Maréchal, aided by the zealous Father Enoch Fenwick, S.J., third pastor of St. Peter's, continued his appeals for funds both at home and abroad. On November 13, 1820, public auction of the Cathedral pews realized \$40,000. In March, 1821, the main altar and its candelabra, gifts of Marseilles priests who had been the Archbishop's pupils in the Seminary of Aix-en-Provence, arrived. Personal notes of the Trustees raised an added \$28,000. On May 10, 1821, Archbishop Maréchal had the joy of announcing the dedication of his new Cathedral for the last day of that month.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of the Bishops of Boston and Philadelphia, nearly forty priests, the St. Mary's seminarians and thousands of Baltimoreans—the city had grown to over 80,000—who filled the church and its environs. During all the ceremonies, the Archbishop carried the crozier of Archbishop Carroll whose zeal had begun the work and whose hand had blessed its cornerstone fifteen years before.



*DIVISION OF THE DIOCESE OF BALTIMORE, 1808*

## UNFINISHED BUSINESS

**D**ESPITE ITS dedication, the building was far from complete. The road in front was narrow and unpaved, with hitching posts and rails in place of a curb. The towers were unfinished and there was no sign of a portico. Interior walls were bare, pews unpainted, the wooden sanctuary floor without a rug. There was still a debt of some \$40,000 with interest at the rate of 6% payable quarterly.

Yet Baltimore's new Cathedral was easily the finest structure of its kind in the United States. A hundred and fifty-six feet long, its transepts added 20 feet each to the width of 75 feet. Its great central dome, 72 feet in diameter, rose 95 feet above the surrounding walkway.

The interior was no less imposing. To the 52 feet above the nave, the coffered dome and its supports added almost 65 more. The sanctuary, like the leaves of a great shamrock, consisted of a central apse, 35 feet wide by 28 deep, flanked by two semi-circular side apses, each 12 feet wide and 16 in depth. Six Ionic pillars behind the main altar supported a half saucer dome. In the side apses stood altars with surmounting carved wood statues, that of the Good Shepherd on the north and that of Our Lady on the south.

The building was without heat; but light came not only thru the six great windows of the nave but, by an ingenious device, thru the large opening in the ceiling of the inner dome. The cool gray of the undecorated walls lent a sense of dignity, spaciousness and lightness to the otherwise solemn majesty of the architectural design.

The rest of the story of the Basilica building is one of addition, decoration and enlargement. Soon surrounding walks were laid, the pews painted, the sanctuary floor covered with rugs, suitable draperies hung. In 1824 came nine large oil paintings from Rome, the gift of Napoleon's uncle, Cardinal Fesch, whom Arch-

bishop Maréchal had known as Archbishop of Lyons; and two huge canvasses followed as a gift of the Bourbon Kings of France. The same year saw constructed, under the north pillar of the sanctuary, a crypt for the deceased archbishops to which Archbishop Carroll's remains, hitherto resting in St. Mary's Seminary chapel, were fittingly transferred.\*

### THE TOWERS

The unusual Basilica towers are largely due to the fourth Archbishop of Baltimore, the Most Reverend James Whitfield, who succeeded Archbishop Maréchal upon the latter's death in 1828. They did not conform to the earliest plans of Latrobe, who contemplated small domes in their place. But they were built in keeping with his later designs, the idea deriving allegedly from the bell-shaped tower of the Church of the Assumption in Moscow or from similar ones then atop the Roman Pantheon.

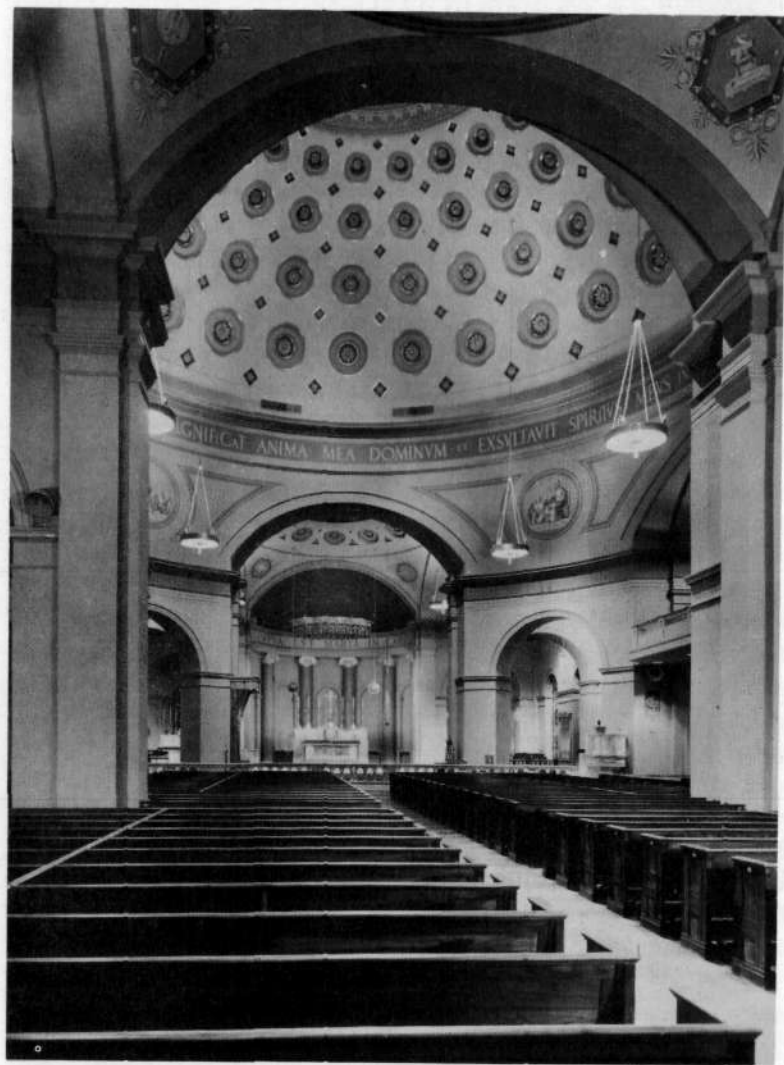
Bells, cast in France and installed in the south tower July 27, 1831, were a tribute to Archbishop Maréchal by a former pupil.

Shortly after, Archbishop Whitfield called on the clergy to complete the Basilica by erecting the north tower and the portico which was part of the original plan. The former was built in 1837 under Whitfield's successor, Archbishop Samuel Eccleston, who had been consecrated coadjutor only a month before the latter's death in October, 1834.

Also under Archbishop Eccleston, the front choir gallery was enlarged and confessionals installed in 1834; Olmstead stoves provided in 1838; additional pews introduced and the iron railing erected around the grounds in 1841. This fine fencing replaced the line of hitching posts that had stood before the Basilica since its dedication 20 years before. It was the design of Robert Carey Long, who did the railings around the Washington Monument in Mt. Vernon Square. A large part of the remaining debt was paid and, in renovation made necessary by leaks in the roof and towers,

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\*Near the turn of the nineteenth century the present crypt was built beneath the main altar. This crypt is the final resting place for the mortal remains of most of the Archbishops of Baltimore. In it one will find the tomb of Archbishop John Carroll, the first American bishop, and that of James Cardinal Gibbons, the pride of Baltimore.







the sanctuary and main altar were elevated and the entire interior redecorated.

### THE PORTICO

The portico which forms the west and main entrance to the Basilica was built in 1863. Somewhat larger than that of Latrobe's design, it had to await construction until more necessary parts of the structure were completed. In 1841, J. H. B. Latrobe, son of the original architect, submitted plans for the portico foundation which were adopted and carried out by the Trustees at a cost of \$3,000. Nothing further was done until May, 1860, when orders were issued that the "erection be now proceeded with." Francis P. Kenrick, former Bishop of Philadelphia, was now the sixth Archbishop of Baltimore, in succession to Archbishop Eccleston.

Eben Faxon was chosen as architect and furnished with the original drawings which he enlarged and modified. The *Catholic Mirror* of June 7, 1862, reports his plan for a large porch, 61 feet across by 25 deep, of drab colored stone from Nova Scotia with 10 fluted columns, 35½ feet high, crowned by highly ornamental capitals "admirably carved with the chisel." The estimated cost, to be raised by public subscription, was \$17,000.

More than three years passed before its completion. Delivery of the stone was delayed and the War between the States both halted construction and made subscriptions impossible of fulfilment. At last, in June, 1863, the *Mirror* reported that "the columns of the Cathedral Portica, ten in number, are now raised" and that everything was "ready for the iron panelled ceiling which is to overlay the columns."

Before the work was finished, the Trustees were in for a surprise. Urged by a Baltimorean residing in Paris, one Nicolai, an artist who had himself lived in Baltimore, submitted photographic sketches of an elaborate group of 25 allegorical figures intended to adorn the pediment of the new portico. The difficulty lay in the price: \$11,000. The work was finished in plainer fashion at a total cost of about \$20,000.

## POST-WAR CHANGES

**A**RCHBISHOP MARTIN JOHN SPALDING, former Bishop of Louisville, Ky., who succeeded Archbishop Kenrick almost a year after the latter's sudden death in 1863, made extensive changes to the Basilica in 1865. The old panellings and inscriptions above the entrances were removed; windows were cut in the gallery above the west door; a half-circle window of stained glass replaced the half saucer dome above the main altar; the old pulpit on the south sanctuary pillar was removed; the sanctuary columns were finished with scagliola in imitation of red Siena marble; and six tablets of black marble, attached to the pillar where the pulpit had been, commemorated the deceased Archbishops of Baltimore.

Most striking and most criticized for lack of harmony with the architecture was the elaborate decorations on the interior walls and domes. The cool gray of yesterday was submerged in a riot of color. Paintings right and left of the altar depicted the sacrifices of the Old and New Testaments, symbols of the four Evangelists filled circles below the great rotunda, and an inscription in gold lettering on the frieze of the dome proclaimed that this was

“THE HOUSE OF GOD, WHICH IS THE CHURCH  
OF GOD, THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH.  
ONE LORD, ONE FAITH, ONE BAPTISM.”

Less than a year later, the Basilica's clock, made in Paris, was installed in the south tower.

The Basilica was threatened by fire in 1873, under Archbishop James Roosevelt Bayley who had succeeded to the Archdiocese the previous year. Only heroic efforts saved it from conflagration and this led to the collection of funds for remedying

defects in the roof and repairing the wooden floor in the sanctuary and the body of the church.

Three years later, on the Feast of the Ascension, 1876, the National Centennial year, Archbishop Bayley solemnly consecrated the Basilica. Nine bishops, 75 priests, 70 seminarians and thousands of people attended the six-and-a-half hour ceremony. Relics of the martyr saints, Lawrence and Victor, were sealed in the altar. Bishop James Gibbons of Richmond, later Archbishop of Baltimore and Cardinal, preached the sermon at the pontifical Mass concluding the ceremonies.

It was Archbishop Gibbons, succeeding Archbishop Bayley a year and a half later, who made the most extensive improvements to the Basilica. In the summer of 1879, the present sacristy north of the sanctuary replaced the original ones behind the side altars. Marble tiling was laid on the sanctuary floor. The side altars exchanged positions and were made to face each other across the sanctuary in place of their former oblique positions. The entire interior was repainted.

Eleven years later, in 1890, the sanctuary was more than doubled by extending the east wall 33 feet at the apse and 40 feet at the sides; the saucer dome of the sanctuary was matched with that over the nave; the main altar was moved back to the original wall line; and two additional side altars, dedicated in honor of their donors to St. Michael and St. James, were set against the extended sides. The necessary redecoration was done by Castagini who had aided Brunini in fresco work in the rotunda of the national Capital. Five years later, electricity was installed for lighting and the old pews were replaced by new ones.



## CENTENNIAL PERIOD

**T**HE CENTENARY of the Basilica in 1906 brought the decorations that are best remembered by present-day Baltimoreans. The great Baltimore fire of February, 1904, threatened but did not damage the historic edifice. Later that year, the exterior dome was covered with gold leaf. The interior decoration of 1906, like all the work since 1865, was Italian Renaissance in style, tho, save for the gold mosaic of the rotunda frieze, both design and execution were original. The cream colored walls, darkened with the passage of years, were broken only by the oil painted Stations of the Cross, donated in 1878 by Captain William Marshall Boone of the Board of Trustees, and by the large canvasses given Archbishop Maréchal by the kings of France. Columns and arches were done in scagliola imitation of Siena marble, surrounded by leaf moldings. Circular paintings of the Evangelists adorned the walls above the rotunda columns, linked by gold mosaic work in the manner of St. Peter's at Rome, bearing, in place of the Papal emblems, the arms of the Archbishops from Carroll to Gibbons. The rotunda retained the inscription erected by Archbishop Spalding. Rosettes in the domes and vaulted arches were in gold on a small field of blue. Each dome contained a mural; the Assumption over the nave, the Annunciation above the altar, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove above the sanctuary. Six columns of imitation marble supported the half dome behind the main altar with its mural Transfiguration. A rich altar rail of tawny Grecian marble replaced the mahogany one of 1821.

## HISTORIC EVENTS

**W**ITHIN THE Basilica have been held, between 1849 and 1869, ten Provincial Councils of Baltimore and, under Archbishops Kenrick, Spalding and Gibbons, three Plenary Councils of the United States. Six archbishops and twenty-four bishops attended the first full Council of 1852; President Andrew Johnson attended the opening of that of 1856, with seven archbishops and 38 bishops present; and the third, in 1884, prepared in Rome and attended by 12 archbishops and 59 bishops, was the largest council assembly held outside the Eternal City since the Council of Trent in the Sixteenth Century.

The centennial of the establishment of the American hierarchy on November 10, 1889, brought two cardinals, an apostolic delegate, 18 archbishops, and 75 bishops. Eight Archbishops of Baltimore, from Whitfield to Francis Patrick Keough, have here received the pallium of metropolitan jurisdiction; and here have been consecrated more than 30 bishops of dioceses from Boston to St. Augustine and as far west as Los Angeles. Three Cardinals received their red birettas in the Cathedral: Baltimore's own Gibbons in 1886, and the Apostolic Delegates Francesco Satolli in 1896 and Sebastian Martinelli in 1901. Finally, more than 2,000 priests have been ordained in this sanctuary. The nave and transepts afford seating for over 1,000, which is greatly increased by the galleries over the transept ends and the west door. For special occasions, the Basilica can accommodate close to 2,500 people.

Bishop Carroll hoped the Basilica might be a source of grace to many in years to come. His dream has been more than fulfilled. Because of its signal position in the history of American Catholicism, Pope Pius XI on September 1, 1937, raised the Cathedral to the rank of a minor basilica with all the rights and privileges of the basilicas in Rome itself.

## PRESENT CONDITION

**m**UCH OF the present appearance of the Basilica dates from the redecorations and changes effected during the closing years of Archbishop Michael Joseph Curley, tenth Archbishop and successor in 1921 to his late Eminence, Cardinal Gibbons. The work was done between the autumn of 1943 and 1947.

The Basilica is situated at the northeast corner of Cathedral and Mulberry Streets, so elevated that its spires and dome may be seen from considerable distances. The landscaping of the grounds is the gift of the late Van Lear Black, a Protestant gentleman of wide civic interests. Dear to elderly Baltimoreans and awaited as the first harbingers of spring are "The Cardinal's crocuses" that still bloom on the lawn of the rectory behind the great Basilica.

Total outside length of the building, including the 34 foot portico and the 12 foot eastern apse, is 213 feet, 10 inches. The height from walkways to the top of the dome cross is 106 feet and to the top of the towers 132. The width of the nave, 75 feet, 10 inches, is extended by the transepts to a total of almost 116 feet.

Foundations of solid stone support the walls of brick faced with granite. There is an inner and an outer dome, the former of brick and the latter, like the tower domes, of laminated wood covered with copper. After twenty years, the gold leaf of 1904 was worn away on the main dome and was replaced with copper. This outer dome, 72 feet in diameter, was originally pierced by 24 skylight windows. In the 1943 renovation, the deteriorated frames and heavy glass were removed, the openings closed, and a ventilating lantern of classic design mounted to provide better ventilation and a higher base for the cross. The porch was repaved and a huge

Georgian lantern of wrought iron and polished brass, of Nineteenth century design, suspended above the west door. The west wall was pierced to afford a pair of much-needed side entrances from the portico.

### THE BELLS AND CLOCK

The bells in the south tower are those hung there in 1831. The larger, of 3,500 lbs., is 4 feet high and 14 feet around its mouth. It is ornamented by six bands of tracery and two medallions, one of the Crucifixion and one of the Madonna and Child. A circling inscription in Latin and French says that it was named for the Most Holy Virgin; that Ambrose Maréchal, third Archbishop of Baltimore, obtained it; that the Popes under whom he ruled as Archbishop were Pius VII, Leo XII and Pius VIII; and that Joseph Frerejean made it in Lyons in 1830. The smaller bell, also made in France and installed at the same time, is only 20 inches high and 78 around. It carries three bands of tracery with medallions of the Good Shepherd and of the Mother and Divine Infant.

Both bells are now operated by the clock, an elaborate mechanism in nine cases, made in France by the renowned French Government clockmaker, M. Collin, and installed under Archbishop Spalding upon its arrival in the spring of 1866. Baltimoreans long familiar with its chimes are unacquainted with the intricate system by which, thru times when watches were costly and rare, the Basilica clock marked the hour and halves, repeating after the fractions the number of the hour that preceded them. The clock also sounds the Angelus at 6 A. M., Noon and 6 P. M.

### INTERIOR VIEW

Entering the Basilica from the narrow vestibule that separates it from the portico, the impression received is that of vastness and strength, an effect of its studied symmetry. The barrel vaults that carry the line of the aisles to the rear of the sanctuary produce the



impression of long vistas ending in the side altars at the east end. At the west end, the baptistry of the northwest corner is balanced by an equal opening on the southwest.

The rotunda—actually a circle within an octagon within a square—offers an interesting architectural study in design and measurement. Its four great supporting piers rest upon an inverted arch in the crypt thru which the weight on the foundations is equalized.

As it should always be, the main altar is the center of visual attraction. Formerly occupying positions nearer the front of the sanctuary, it now stands upon a five step predella in the spot apparently intended for it by the renovation of 1890. At that time it was retarded only to the line of the old walls and reconsecrated by Cardinal Gibbons. Moved to its present place in 1946, it was consecrated for the third time by Bishop John M. McNamara, Auxiliary to Archbishop Curley of Baltimore and Washington.

The altar itself remains unchanged. But the renovation of 1947 has corrected liturgical defects by a retable of bluish gray marble to support the candelabra and cross, and by a new tabernacle of sculptured bronze with a finial resting on a cut block of rock crystal.

Above the altar, suspended by gilded chains, is a tester or canopy of carved wood, polychromed in soft red and blue with brilliant gold trim and tassels. The gold fleur-de-lis which adorns each panel is an ancient symbol of the Mother of God, patroness of the Basilica, and a graceful historical allusion to the French origin of much that is in the building. Golden rays, surrounding the Dove of the Holy Spirit, carved on the lower side of the tester, are confined by an outer band that enumerates the Seven Gifts of the Holy Ghost.

In the sanctuary floor, native green Cardiff marble has replaced the marble tiles that supplanted the original wood flooring in 1879. The sanctuary itself, measuring 70 feet in width by 50 in depth, affords ample space for the splendor of pontifical ceremonies. Two

steps above the body of the church, stands the altar rail erected in memory of William Boggs in 1906.

The present pulpit installed in 1947 is the fourth to serve the Basilica. The earliest, nicknamed the "Tomb of Eloquence" because few speakers could be heard from it, stood against the south pillar in the sanctuary. It gave way in 1865 to a movable one of wood with a shell sounding-board canopy which could be pushed along tracks to the head of the center aisle from its place by the south wall. A third, theoretically movable but heavy and cumbersome, proved equally unserviceable. The present one of matching marble is fixed in the altar rail at the south side with amplifiers to insure its effectiveness.

The throne, too, has had its predecessors and its itinerary. The green draperies are official for the rank of archbishop. The arms of the Archbishop of Baltimore hang in colored bas relief carved in wood on the dorsal curtain above the throne.

The original side altars are those near the rail. That of the Good Shepherd, known from its inscription as the *Miserere* altar, became that of the Sacred Heart until the present statue of St. Joseph was erected in 1891. The statue of Our Lady installed at the same time was carved in Italy. The other side altars, installed under Cardinal Gibbons in 1890, are dedicated to St. Michael and St. James, the gifts of Mrs. Michael Jenkins and James Sloan.

Suspended from the arch above Our Lady's altar hangs the red hat bestowed upon Cardinal Gibbons by Pope Leo XIII in Rome, March 17, 1887. Custom demands that it hang there until it crumbles to dust.

A marble plaque on the south wall of the sanctuary bears the names of the archbishops and bishops who assisted at the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore in 1884.

More unusual and a source of much questioning are the brightly colored umbrella and the elaborately cast bell on its long shaft, set at either side of the sanctuary. These are insignia of a basilica. The bell customarily sounded the approach of a papal

procession and the umbrella was held to protect the Pope from the heat and to symbolize his royal prerogatives. Its colors were the imperial ones prior to Napoleon's time.

New pews and confessionals of walnut in Georgian design were a part of the renovation under Archbishop Curley, whose arms in mosaic are set in the west end floor of the center aisle.\*

The organ, located in the north gallery has been equipped with electric action and a detached console. Otherwise it is the work of Hilbourne L. Roosevelt of New York, built in 1884 at a cost of \$11,000. Of three manuals and 37 stops, it retains the old case and some of the pipes built for the first organ in 1819.

On the walls are a number of interesting memorials to Baltimore's Archbishops. A bronze tablet in the south transept commemorates the visit to the Basilica, October 21, 1936, of Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, then Secretary of State to His Holiness, Pope Pius XI, later to become his successor in the Chair of St. Peter, Pope Pius XII.

Shrines surrounded by marble prayer rails flank the west doorways. The Crucifix that once stood in the apse behind the main altar, now stands before the great canvas of Baron Charles de Steuben, painted for Louis XVIII on a theme suggested by Archbishop Marechal and presented to the Basilica by that King. It pictures Louis XI, Saint and King of France, accompanied by his armor bearer, his Franciscan chaplain and one faithful retainer, burying one of his pestilence-stricken officers before the African city of Tunis, in 1270. On the south side, a statue of Christ the Man, the gift of Edward R. Tormey, stands before the painting of Baron Pierre Narcisse Guerin, commissioned by Louis XVIII and

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\* Prior to 1963 delicate murals and pastel shades adorned the rotunda representing the mysteries of Our Lady's part in the scheme of redemption: The Annunciation, Nativity, Assumption and Coronation. On the frieze below stood the Pauline inscription of Archbishop Spalding: "The House of God, Which Is the Church of the Living God, The Pillar and Ground of Truth. One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism."

given the Basilica by his successor, Charles X. It depicts the Blessed Mother, holding the broken body of her Divine Son, which, Joseph of Arimethea, Nicodemus and their helpers have just taken from the cross.

The Baptismal Font and the large holy water fonts beside the main door are of matching marble with the altar; but persistent research has failed to discover whether or not they came to the Basilica at the same time.

The fourteen Stations of the Cross, whose donors' names are carried on a bronze plaque at the west wall, are of wood carved by a single artist. The twelve crosses set about the walls and the two carved in the stone near the doorway are the requisite markings of a consecrated church. Candles are lit before them on the anniversary of consecration and are carried in sconces that fit into the slots below, which visitors often refer to curiously as "keyholes."

## THE WINDOWS

Prior to the alterations of 1943-1947, there was little or no ornamentation in the Basilica windows. The panes were generally of plain or frosted glass, set much in the Georgian or Colonial manner, though somewhat larger in size and with resultantly fewer and larger mullions. The window frames retain their original classic form, rising from a rather low sill to a round-arched top.

The nine newly installed windows of stained glass, three in the sanctuary and six in the nave, were designed and executed by Conrad Schmidt Studios. Each carries its chapters of the three themes depicted by the series: The Life of Christ in the central medallions and flanking figure; the Old Testament figures and prototypes above; the history of American Catholicism, especially in Baltimore and Maryland, in the lower views.

In historical and ideological order, the windows begin at the Gospel side of the sanctuary and carry their stories counter-clockwise down the aisle and then up the Epistle aisle, ending with the

second window in that side of the sanctuary. They are described here in that order.

1. IMMACULATE CONCEPTION WINDOW. North Sanctuary wall.

Under this title, the Church in our country is dedicated to Our Lady. St. Matthew, who quoted the prophecy of Isaiah of the virgin birth of the Messiah, and St. Paul, the great messenger of salvation to the Gentiles, flank the central medallion.

Old Testament: The expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise (Gen., III, 24), when God promised the woman who should crush the head of Satan. Adam's son Seth, the "appointed," and Enoch, the "dedicated," are pictured at the sides.

2. NATIVITY WINDOW. North wall of the nave, right.

The Birth at Bethlehem of the "Savior . . . Christ the Lord." (St. Luke II, 11). Side figures: St. Peter and St. James the Greater.

Old Testament: Moses, savior of Israel, found by the daughter of Pharaoh. Cainan, Adam's great grandson, and his son Mahalaleel, are the side figures.

Historical: The Landing of Columbus that opened a new world to the message of salvation announced by the angels at Bethlehem. At the sides, John Carroll and Leonard Neale, first and second Archbishops of Baltimore.

3. CANA Window. North wall, center.

Our Lord changing water to wine in His first miracle. (St. John, II, 1). St. Jerome and St. Ambrose, great contemporary churchmen of the IV Century, are the marginal figures.

Old Testament: Moses strikes water from the rock for the thirsty Israelites (Exodus, XVII, 6). Beside stand Isaac, bearing the wood for his sacrifice, a type of the Redeemer, and Jacob, father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel.

Historical: Father (Archbishop) Carroll's Mission to Canada, with Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll of

Carrollton, as a colonial delegation to secure Canadian help and neutrality in the war for American independence (1776). Archbishops Maréchal and Whitfield, third and fourth of Baltimore, at the sides.

4. THE GOSPEL WINDOW. North wall of the nave, left.

The Sermon on the Mount (St. Matthew, V, 1). St. Dominic, Thirteenth Century founder of the Order of Preachers, and St. Thomas Aquinas, its most distinguished son, appear in the borders.

Old Testament: Moses preaching the Law of Sinai to the Israelites (Exodus, XIII, 19). Thare and his son Abraham, father of the Chosen People, are the marginal figures.

Historical: First Mass in Maryland, offered by Father Andrew White, S.J., on St. Clement's (now Blakistone) Island, March 25, 1634, Feast of the Annunciation. At the sides, the fifth and sixth Archbishops of Baltimore, Samuel Eccleston and Francis P. Kenrick.

5. THE CHURCH WINDOW. South wall of nave, near door.

Christ giving St. Peter the keys of power as supreme pastor of the Church. Pope St. Gregory and St. Augustine of Hippo are the offset figures.

Old Testament: Samuel anointing David King of Israel (I Kings, XVI, 13). At the sides, Moses the Lawgiver and Levi, father of the priestly tribe.

Historical: Maryland Jesuit Fathers White and Fisher, sent to England in chains for their Faith during "Ingle's Rebellion" of 1645-1646. Beside, Archbishops Martin John Spalding and James Roosevelt Bayley, seventh and eighth of the See.

6. LAST SUPPER WINDOW. South wall of nave, center.

The Last Supper at which Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist and the Priesthood (Holy Orders) which was to perpetuate it. Side panels show St. John, beloved disciple and evangelist, and St. Thomas who proclaimed his final faith in "My Lord and my God."

Old Testament: Melchisedech's sacrifice of bread and wine,

foreshadowing the Eucharist (Gen., XIV, 18). Gideon and Barac, victorious leaders of the Chosen People, occupy the margins .

Historical: Consecration of Carroll, first Bishop (and later Archbishop) of Baltimore, Lulworth Castle, England, August 15, 1790; in the panels, James Cardinal Gibbons and Michael Joseph Curley, ninth and tenth Archbishops of Baltimore.

7. RESURRECTION WINDOW. South wall, third from door. Christ's Resurrection from the dead. (St. Mark, XVI, 1). Mary Magdalen and Salome come at the sides to annoint His Body.

Old Testament: Elijah's miraculous ascent into heaven (IV Kings, II, 11). Eliseus, Elijah's disciple, and Jonah, prefiguring Our Lord's three days in the tomb, are the side figures.

Historical: Bishop Carroll blessing the Basilica cornerstone, 1806. Beside, St. Sulpice, in tribute to the priests of that Society, and Blessed Elizabeth Ann Seton, foundress of the Sisters of Charity in Baltimore, 1808.

8. PENTECOST WINDOW. South sanctuary wall, near rail.

The Descent of the Holy Ghost in tongues of fire upon the Apostles with Mary the Mother of Jesus (Acts, II, 3). In the panels, the Apostles St. James the Less and St. Bartholomew.

Old Testament: God giving Moses the Tablets of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Exodus, XX, 18). Jair and Samson, characterizing light and strength, stand in the side panels.

Historical: Cardinal Gibbons receives from Pope Leo XIII the red hat of a prince of the Church. Flanking figures are Saint Martin de Porres, Negro Dominican friar of South America, and Pius XII, who visited the Cathedral as Cardinal Pacelli in 1936.

9. ASSUMPTION WINDOW. South sanctuary wall, corner. Our Lady's body taken up into heaven after her death. Under this title Our Lady is patron of the Cathedral and the Archdiocese. Side figures are St. Simon the Zealot and St. Jude Thaddeus, Apostles.

Old Testament: The Ark of the Covenant (a title of Our Lady) being carried into the Holy City. Heli the High Priest and Samuel his successor, appear in the panels.

Historical: The Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, 1884. Side panels show Kateri Tekawitha, the Venerable "Lily of the Mohawks" (d. 1680), and St. Rose of Lima, Dominican "Patroness of America" (d. 1617), the first canonized American.





## CONCLUSION

**T**HIS IS THE Co-Cathedral of Baltimore, venerable in its antiquity and beloved both for its beauty and for the story it tells. It is new, perhaps, in comparison with European cathedrals. Yet it is the oldest in the United States and the silent historian of almost 150 years of progress. At the time of its construction, it was certainly revolutionary in design. It is, almost certainly, the first domical church in the eastern United States. Its freedom from traditional precedent and the avoidance of adventitious charm in favor of strong, simple geometric masses aroused wide enthusiasm at the time of its building, echoes of which persist to this day. Writing in 1928, Fiske Kimball said that it was the first church to show the classic design and that it was characterized by "a new richness in composition of interior space, a new majesty. Even today, a century after its building, the Basilica remains the finest classical church in the country." If today the memory of many years and the shadowy figures of the past gather about it; if, indeed, it is a record of what has been and a link with an earlier day, it remains as beautiful as ever. Its mood is quiet; its manner is impressive. Shadowy and vast, it is eloquent with a warm beauty. There is solemn and cool dignity in its walls and a quiet majesty about its far-vistaed altar. None can enter it, none can leave it, without the echoes of Jacob's wondering words: "This is the House of God."

## APPENDIX

On May 31, 1955 the Most Reverend Francis P. Keough, the eleventh archbishop of Baltimore, presided at the laying of the cornerstone for a new cathedral, the gift of Mr. Thomas O'Neill. Four and a half years later the Most Reverend Jerome D. Sebastian, Baltimore's Auxiliary Bishop, dedicated the new edifice to Mary Our Queen. With the opening of the new cathedral on November 15, 1959, the old Basilica did not cease to be a cathedral church. Pope John XXIII, while raising the new church to the dignity of a cathedral, decreed the Basilica to be co-cathedral. As such the Basilica shares with the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen the privileges and prerogatives of the first church in the archdiocese. It is unique that the archdiocese of Baltimore has two cathedral churches in the same city.

### REDECORATION OF THE BASILICA

In the latter part of 1961 Rt. Rev. Msgr. George L. Hopkins, rector of the Basilica, and chancellor of the archdiocese, arranged to have the Basilica air conditioned. The following year under the Most Reverend Lawrence J. Shehan, twelfth archbishop of Baltimore, the interior of the church was redecorated by Rambusch of New York and the exterior restored. The coat of arms of the Archbishop was inserted into the Basilica's marble floor at the head of the main aisle to indicate that this latest renovation to the church was during his episcopate.

### A COMMENTARY UPON THE REDECORATION OF THE BASILICA

Professor Talbot Hamblin—the late authority on classic architecture in America—has termed Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Architect of the Basilica, as being “the greatest of the early nineteenth century architects.” (He was also largely responsible for

the redesign of the Capitol interior after the burning of 1814, when Washington was seized by the British).

Prof. Hamblin says of the Basilica—"it is, I believe, the first domical church in the eastern United States and represents the first attempt to break completely with the Wren-Gibbs tradition. The edifice achieves great distinction through the majestic composition of strong, simple geometric masses, rhythmic planes and splendid proportion.

The task of the decorator then is to preserve the serenity, that contemplative quality so precious to the sacred usage, and yet also to gently reveal the architectural features of the Basilica.

A mellow grey tone is used throughout for all wall surfaces, that of the higher areas being somewhat lighter than the lower.

In deference to Our Lady, blue is the keynote of the decorative treatment and occurs in very disciplined degree in all areas from the entrance doors and through the nave to the Sanctuary, where—as the blue of the firmament enriched with golden stars—it distinguishes the vaulted ceiling above the high altar.

Gilded rosettes and a thin outline of gold articulate the circular coffers of the handsome rotunda dome. The eye is carried upward to the oculus where a dove—as the Holy Spirit—hovers in radiance amid turbulent clouds.

An appropriate Latin inscription from the "Magnificat"—(Canticle of the Blessed Virgin Mary—Luke I, 46-48)—graces the wide frieze above the circular paintings of the four Evangelists.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

Two fine mural paintings, executed in the rich technique of the Renaissance, glorify the shallow domes of the Sanctuary and nave rear; that of the former is a masterful expression of the Assumption, while an equally beautiful rendering of the Nativity greets all who enter the nave from the front vestibule.

Eight symbols from the "Litany of Loreto" appear upon the pendentives which support the Assumption and Nativity murals.

Contributing most importantly to the success of the decorative treatment, and essential to the gracious functioning of sacred rites, is the very flexible lighting scheme of which the handsome hand-wrought bronze chandeliers and lanterns are the most obvious feature. In conjunction with engineered recessed units, the installation provides for every illumination requirement, from that of simple prayer to the most splendid ceremonies of the Catholic calendar.

The restoration and preservation of the Basilica—as the primary Roman Catholic Cathedral in America—is a potent factor in our greatest of privileges—the right of worship.