



Sacred Heart Cathedral

Our Pilgrimage Churches

Holy Year 1983-84

By Father Robert F. McNamara

Pilgrims to Rome during this Holy Year of Redemption will make a point of visiting and praying at the basilica of St. John Lateran. This (and not St. Peter's, as many think) is the cathedral church of the pope as bishop of Rome. Because it is thus the principal cathedral in the whole Christian world it is appropriately called "Mother and Chief of all Churches in the City and the Wide World."

Dioceses also have their mother churches, the cathedrals. A cathedral gets its name from the fact that in its sanctuary there is a fixed chair (Latin, cathedra) for the diocesan bishop. It is the bishop's official church. Sometimes you hear the expression, the See of Rochester, of New York, of Rome. This word, too, comes from the chair in the bishop's cathedral, for the word "see" derives from the latin word sedes, that is, a seat.

Since Vatican II, each of our churches has had a presidential chair (rather than, as of old, a bench) from which the celebrant of the Mass presides. This chair, though less ornate and not fixed, is intended to remind us of the bishop's chair in the cathedral. Whenever a priest presides at Mass in any church in a diocese, he is doing so as a representative of the diocesan bishop, and by his authority.

Therefore of all the pilgrimage churches selected for this Holy Year of Redemption, the Rochester Cathedral of the Sacred Heart is the supreme pilgrimage church. You might like to know something about this "Mother Church" of our diocese.

Sacred Heart Cathedral has been the official "chair-church" of the bishop of Rochester barely 30 years, although it served as temporary cathedral from 1937 until Pope Pius XII bestowed its official cathedral status on June 21, 1952. Originally, Sacred Heart was a parish church designed by the Chicago architects, Egan and Prindeville, during the pastorate of Msgr. George V. Burns, who had founded the parish in 1911. It was dedicated on June 26, 1927. Only several years after this church became a cathedral was it formally consecrated, on Oct. 25, 1961.

What was used, then, as a cathedral church in Rochester before 1937? Our first diocesan cathedral was St. Patrick's. It was built in 1868 when Bishop Bernard J. McQuaid was installed as the first bishop of Rochester. St. Patrick's stood on the corner of Platt Street and Plymouth Avenue North. Designed by the well-known Brooklyn

architect, Patrick C. Keely, it served the diocese well for nearly 70 years, and was the site of three episcopal consecrations. It was, of course, the principal diocesan pilgrimage church in other holy years like that of 1900-1901, 1925-1926, and 1933-34. By 1937, however, the neighborhood of this, Rochester's first parish, was becoming so commercialized that the diocese sold the cathedral and most of its associated buildings to Eastman Kodak for office construction. All that remains to remind us of St. Patrick's Cathedral is a bronze tablet affixed to the Kodak office building at the old street corner.

Sacred Heart Cathedral has meanwhile achieved its own note, whether as pro-cathedral or as official cathedral.

Here James E. Kearney, Rochester's beloved fifth bishop was enthroned in 1937 (and it was also here that his funeral Mass was celebrated in 1977). Here on May 5, 1953, Cardinal Francis Spellman consecrated Msgr. Lawrence B. Casey, who served as auxiliary bishop of Rochester (1954-66) and bishop of Patterson, New Jersey (1966-77). Archbishop Luigi Raimondi, apostolic delegate to the United States, ordained in this church three other local priests: on March 14, 1968, auxiliary bishops Dennis W. Hickey and the late John E. McCafferty; and on Nov. 27, 1969, Joseph L. Hogan, seventh bishop of Rochester. Bishop Hogan succeeded Fulton J. Sheen, who had been installed in this church on Nov. 26, 1966, but had resigned on Oct. 15, 1969.

Rochester's eighth bishop, Most Rev. Matthew H. Clark, was installed in the World War Memorial Auditorium in 1979, because it was more spacious. But since becoming head of the diocese he has favored using the cathedral church more for official diocesan celebrations.

Diocesan pilgrims in this extraordinary Holy Year of Redemption have many pilgrim destinations to choose from. They can go to Rome, the center of the Church. They can visit a designated pilgrimage church in their own diocesan region or in any other part of the diocese. It is to be hoped, however, that many individuals, and groups will wend their way to the principal diocesan pilgrimage church, Sacred Heart Cathedral.

The Cathedral is located at 296 Flower City Park, between Lake and Dewey Avenues, just south of Ridge Road West (Route 104). Please call the Cathedral rectory to make arrangements: 716/254-3221.

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