

Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart: History & Heritage





ARCHDIOCESE
of NEWARK

Table of Contents

A Fitting Monument to the Faith	4
Selecting the Site	4 - 5
Initial Design	5 - 6
Construction Begins	6
Conflicts Halt Construction	7
Construction Resumes	8
Design Changes	8
Completion of the Exterior	9
Construction of the Interior	9 - 10
Cathedral Opens for Worship	10 - 11
Drive to Complete the Cathedral	11 - 12
Dedication	12 - 13
Opening its Doors to the World	13 - 14
State, National, and Global Recognition	14 - 15

A Fitting Monument to the Faith

On June 11, 1899 at the laying of the cornerstone for the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart Bishop Bernard McQuaid spoke of Newark's great Cathedral as "a fitting monument to the faith". It is this key thought which permeates all aspects of the Cathedral project, from its inception in 1859 by the Most Rev. James Roosevelt Bayley, Newark's first bishop, to its dedication in 1954 by Archbishop Thomas A. Boland. For a Cathedral is more than stone and mortar...much more than multi-colored glass and delicate woodcarving. In the words of the late Pope Paul VI: "The secret of a Cathedral is an expression of the unity of believers." In its totality, a Cathedral is a symphony of praise to Almighty God!

Selecting the Site

The idea of a new Cathedral church in the city of Newark was first proposed by Bishop Bayley in 1859, only six years after he had been appointed bishop of the new diocese by Pope Pius IX. Bishop Bayley, a convert from the Anglican Communion and nephew of Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton, took the first formal steps in making his dream a reality when he purchased a plot of land on the corner of High and Kinney Streets on January 17, 1859. This site and an alternate site at South Park and Broad Streets were rejected by the bishop in favor of the present plot of land, measuring two hundred feet by eight hundred feet, and bounded by Park and Sixth Avenues, Clifton Avenue and Ridge Street. Bishop Bayley decided to make the purchase after the Park Avenue lot was recommended by Jeremiah O'Rourke, architect and trustee of Saint Patrick's Cathedral on Washington Street and Reverend Monsignor George Hobart Doane, pastor of Saint Patrick's and himself the son of New Jersey's Episcopal Bishop, the Right Reverend G.W. Doane. Father Doane favored the new site because it "commands a view of the Orange Mountains on the west and Newark Valley, the hills of Staten Island, and New York on the east."

The actual transaction, for the sum of sixty thousand dollars, was executed on January 2, 1871, when Bishop Bayley acquired a deed from owners Peter T. Doremus and Hiram M. Rhodes. Prior to this, in

April, 1870, Father Doane and Mr. O'Rourke, who would ultimately be selected as the Cathedral's first architect, traveled to Germany, France and England at Bishop Bayley's request, to gather ideas for Newark's proposed Diocesan Church. After studying several cathedrals in England and on the continent, Mr. O'Rourke met in London with George Goldie, one of the leading proponents of the neo-gothic revival. Several meetings between the two men resulted in the sketching of plans for a church much smaller than the present Cathedral. No know record of the original O'Rourke/Goldie proposal exists, but we do know that O'Rourke ultimately abandoned them in favor of a much more comprehensive plan adopted in 1897.

Following Bishop Bayley's elevation to the See of Baltimore in 1872, the Cathedral project was passed on to his successor Michael Augustine Corrigan, who authorized excavation of the site under Mr. O'Rourke's direction in 1875 and 1876.

But it was not until the arrival of Newark's third bishop, Winand Michael Wigger, selected in 1881, that the project actually got off the ground. Bishop Wigger, who was elevated to the episcopacy after Bishop Corrigan had been chosen Archbishop of New York, rejected all suggestions to sell the property, including an offer from the City in 1896, which had hoped to obtain the Cathedral site for the new Barringer High School. Instead, Bishop Wigger moved ahead, selected the Cathedral's patronal designation, "Sacred Heart", and erected a parish to serve the immediate area under the same title on February 15, 1889. Construction of a small church and school soon followed.

Initial Design

In July 1897, following the establishment of a Cathedral Committee and the initiation of a massive fund raising drive, Bishop Wigger invited several prominent architects to submit proposals for the new Cathedral, including the New York based firms of O'Connor and Metcalf. Ansley Brothers, Schickel and Ditmars, along with Jeremiah O'Rourke and Sons of Newark. On November 11 of that same year, the Committee, after carefully reviewing all four plans, awarded the contract to O'Rourke. The O'Rourke church was conceived of in the English-Irish Gothic style, which would be modified later by O'Rourke's successor. Physical dimensions, however, remained constant over the long years

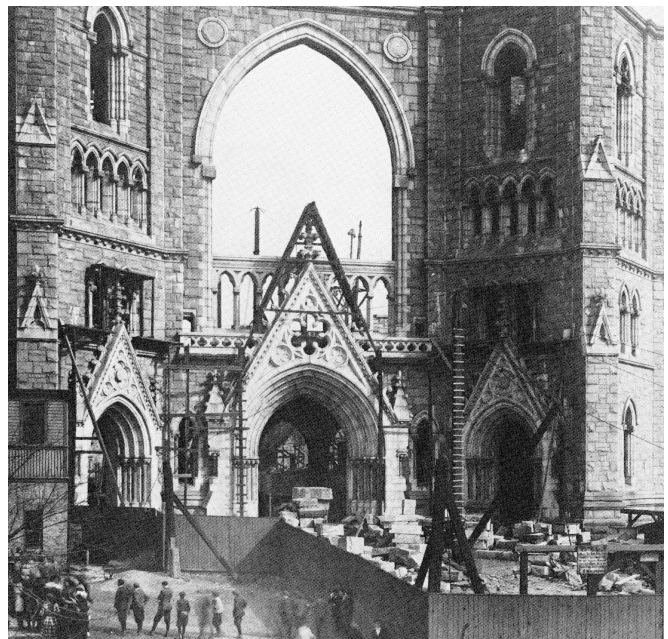
of construction. Hence, the building as it is measured today -- length, three hundred sixty-five feet; nave width (center of column to center of column), fifty feet -- is the same as O'Rourke envisioned it at the turn of the century.

In accepting the commission, O'Rourke pledged to Bishop Wigger that the work would be "a labor of love and not of fees and profits."

Construction Begins

The monumental task was launched in January, 1898, with Bishop Wigger turning the first spadeful of soil. Construction of the foundations, piers and basement walls soon began, and work progressed so rapidly that Bishop Wigger set June 11, 1899, as the date for the laying of the cornerstone. More than fifty thousand people lined the streets to observe the parade to the Cathedral site, where an excess of one hundred thousand had gathered to watch the cornerstone laying ceremony.

O'Rourke immediately directed his attention to the erection of the walls and towers, selecting Vermont Rockport granite as the exterior stone. Joining O'Rourke in the fall of 1899 was the Newark firm of E.M Waldron and Company, which would handle the responsibilities of general contractor. By April 1902, the walls stood fifty feet at the nave and ambulatory locations, with the first four tiers of the front towers under construction.



Construction of the facade

Bishop Wigger did not live to see this stage completed, however, having died on January 5, 1901. His successor, Bishop John O'Connor, instructed O'Rourke to continue on but to cut cost wherever possible so as not to exceed the estimated price tag of one million dollars.

Conflicts Halt Construction

Next on the agenda would be the erection of the twenty-four nave and ambulatory columns, upon which the weight of the clerestory and vaulting would rest. During the same period, the Waldron company was authorized to extend the front towers from fifty to one hundred eighty feet.

But this period, beginning in 1902, was marked by a series of feuds between O'Rourke and Waldon, which led eventually to O'Rourke's removal as chief architect in 1910. Charges and countercharges relative to alleged contract violations were leveled by both sides and this necessitated several reconciliation sessions with high-ranking diocesan officials. By the end of 1908, the O'Rourke-Waldron feud had grown to such magnitude that work came to a grinding halt.

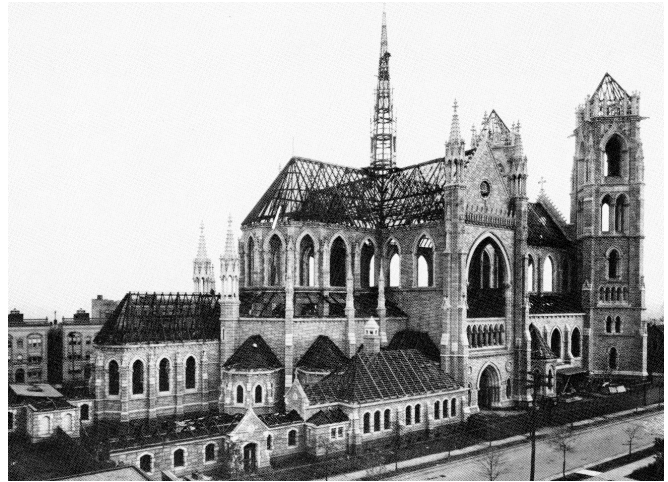


Boss stones awaiting placement in vaulting

The principal element in the cessation of activities centered on a charge leveled by Waldron at O'Rourke relative to the stability of the nave and ambulatory columns. As the erection of the interior columns was taking place, Waldron observed a dangerous shift in position as the weight of stone resting upon the granite shafts increased. Waldron reported his observations to Bishop O'Connor, which led the Diocese to enlist the services of Isaac E. Ditmars, O'Rourke's ultimate successor, and Fred Metcalf to study the problem. - O'Rourke angrily denounced the findings and twice refused to resign when asked to do so by the Vicar General, Monsignor John Sheppard. The situation went from bad to worse when O'Rourke refused to work with Ditmars, who had been retained by Monsignor Sheppard as advisory architect. Attempts to resolve differences were for naught, and Bishop O'Connor was forced to dismiss O'Rourke on February 24, 1910, following publication of an article in the Newark Evening News defending O'Rourke and his workmanship and attaching the findings of the Ditmars-Metcalf report.

Construction Resumes

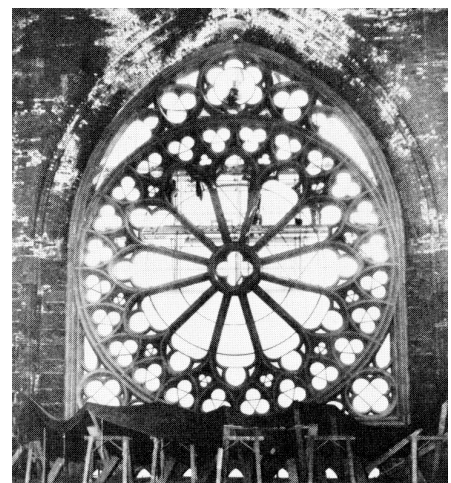
Mr. Ditmars immediately assumed control of the project and ordered the removal of all twenty-four pillars. Ditmars' fears concerning the stability of the columns were confirmed when excavations proved that little attention had been paid to sub-surface preparation. Ditmars directed that the rock bed be leveled and the column foundations reconstructed, whereupon twenty-two of the original pillars were reset. Ditmars' decision to drop the two remaining pillars allowed him to eliminate the clerestory wall connecting the nave and the chancel, thus opening the transept the full one hundred sixty-five feet. As the arches and clerestory began to rise in the latter half of 1910, extra reinforcement was provided in the form of steel girders at the clerestory level down either side of the nave and around the ambulatory.



Erection of steel supported slate roof

Design Changes

It was Mr. Ditmars' wish to de-emphasize the English-Irish Gothic in favor of the French Gothic, as best exemplified by such Cathedrals as Chartres, Laon and Rheims. His revised plans were accepted in June, 1913, with work beginning in August that same year. Among the changes was a reduction in the size of the front towers from the projected three hundred thirty-two feet to the present two hundred and thirty-two feet. The O'Rourke church was characterized by pointed spires, which Ditmars deleted after expressing concern over the strength of the tower foundations, and whether the foundation as constructed could support the



Tracery of transept rose window readied stained glass

added burden of a decorative cap. Other modifications included the elimination of the exterior nave buttresses and pinnacles; the substitution of three "wheel pattern" rose windows instead of the concentric circle design submitted by O'Rourke; and the increased use of sculpture at all entrances.

Completion of Exterior

Construction moved along steadily, and by 1918, the greater part of the project had been completed so as to allow erection of the steel supported slate roof and the one hundred thirty-one foot copper "fleche" that tops the intersection of the nave and transept. This part of the work was completed in November, 1919.

With the exterior nearing completion, Ditmars directed that the granite tympanum canopies and medallions be erected. The actual carving of the medallions' scriptural scenes and bishops' portraits took place on the Cathedral property between April, 1922 and November, 1924 under the direction of Rochette and Parzini of New York. Inside, work commenced on the insulation and sealing of the terra-cotta window tracery.



Workers on rose window

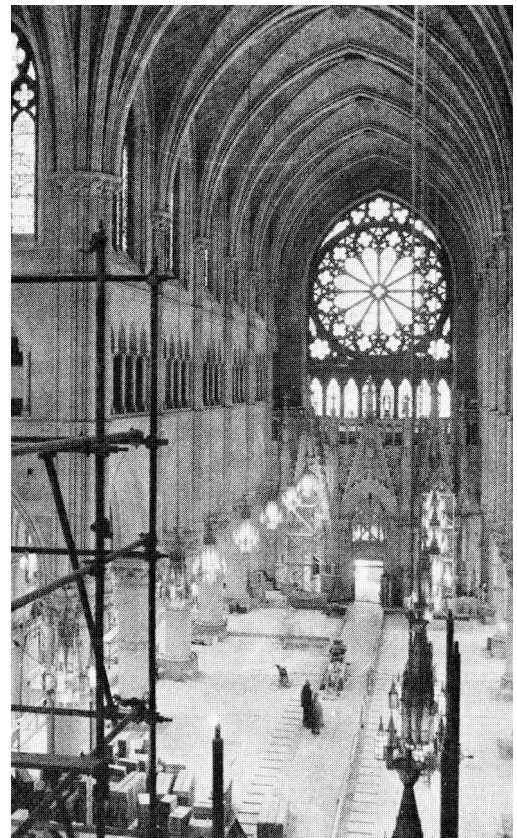
By July of 1924, plate glass had been installed in all the windows, thus for the first time insulating the Cathedral from the weather.

Completion of Interior

In subsequent years, Ditmars supervised the construction of the basement heating tunnels, the crypt and the initial aspects of the interior limestone walls and gustavino vaulted ceilings. In 1925, diocesan officials felt it might be possible to complete the grand edifice in time for Bishop

O'Connor's fiftieth anniversary of ordination in December of 1926, but the proposed October 31, 1926 dedication had to be postponed because of several incidents: the first occasioned by a dispute over the type of limestone to be used; the others, simply the inevitable delays of the construction process. The stone agreed upon ultimately was Indiana limestone, and was installed by the Waldron firm in the sanctuary and ambulatory.

In spite of the postponement, the limestone installation continued, as did work on the vaulting and sanctuary floor and sacristies, but Bishop O'Connor's death on May 20, 1927, limited Ditmars' responsibilities to those contracts which had already been drawn. Meanwhile, the Waldron Company was instructed to finish the crypt where Bishop O'Connor had been laid to rest. Work commenced in August, 1927 and ended some months later with the installation of a botticino marble altar purchased from Benziger Brothers of New York. The completion of all existing contracts marked Mr. Ditmars' last association with the project. (He passed away in 1935 without seeing the Cathedral completed.)

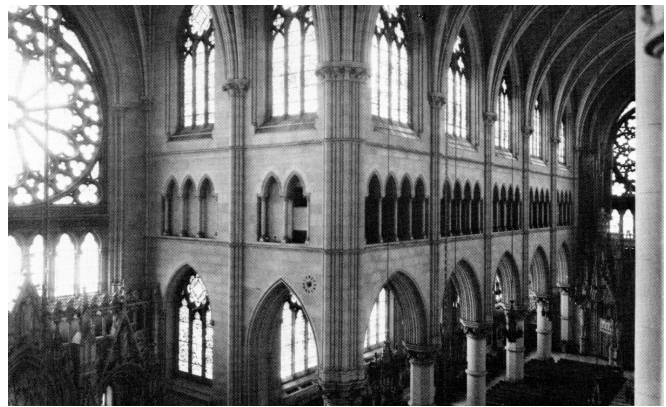


Construction of nave interior

Cathedral Opens for Worship

The arrival of Bishop O'Connor's successor signaled the dawning of a new era for the finished Cathedral. While it was not until 1950 that work resumed, the new Bishop, Thomas Joseph Walsh (designated Ordinary on March 2, 1928), felt the time was right to use the building, even though unfinished, for public worship. And so plans were announced for his installation in the Cathedral on May 1, 1928.

The Pontifical Mass that followed was celebrated by the Most Reverend Joseph H. Conroy of Ogdensburg, New York. A crowd of nearly four thousand filled the Cathedral, splendidly decorated despite its unfinished condition.



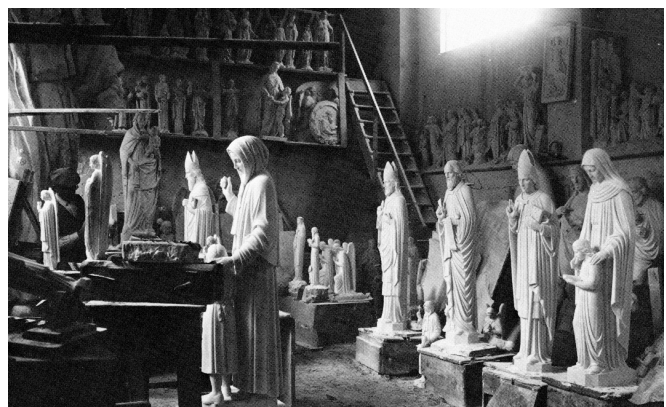
Similar crowds jammed the great nave on nine other occasions during the next twenty-four years.

Nave, Clinton Avenue side

Three of those events were in honor of Newark's Ordinary; on the occasion of his elevation to the rank of Archbishop on April 27, 1938; his silver jubilee as a Bishop on July 29, 1943; and his fiftieth anniversary of priestly ordination on May 1, 1950. During that same twenty-four year period, Archbishop Walsh consecrated six bishops. Of this group, two played a crucial role in the Cathedral's completion. The most Reverend Thomas A. Boland, consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Newark on July 25, 1940, succeeded Archbishop Walsh in 1953 and saw the effort through to completion. The Most Reverend James A. McNulty, consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Newark on October 7, 1947, functioned as a liaison between the architect and Archbishop Walsh and who, at the Archbishop's death in 1952, directed that work on the Cathedral continue.

Drive to Complete the Cathedral

In 1950, Archbishop Walsh used the occasion of his fiftieth anniversary of ordination to announce a massive drive to complete the Cathedral in time for the Diocesan centenary in 1953. A Cathedral Builders' Association was formed to raise five million dollars to finance the project. The architectural firm of Paul C. Reilly of New York was engaged, with heavy construction to be

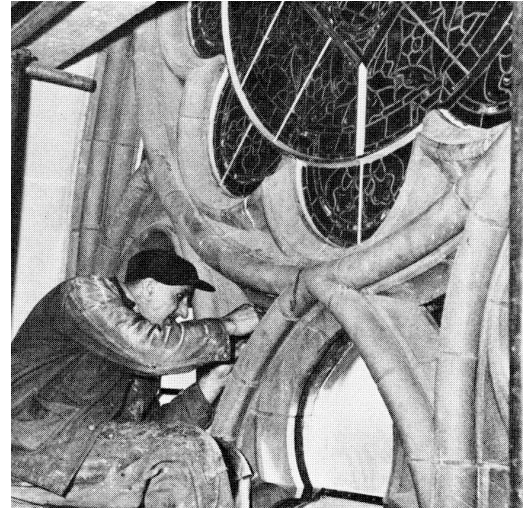


Statuary for the chapels in the Raggi Studio, Rome

handled by the George A. Fuller Company, and interior ornamentation by Professor Gonippo Raggi and Sons of Orange. For Mr. Reilly, the 1950 appointment marked a return to the Cathedral, where

he had worked as a partner with Ditmars during the earlier stages of construction. For Professor Raggi the Cathedral commission was the culmination of a career totally devoted to ecclesiastical art -- a career that found its expression in several church buildings in the metropolitan area. His association with the Cathedral project found him not only at the building site, but also in Rome, where he maintained a shop and supervised several craftsmen working on his designs for the marble altars and statuary.

Work on the Cathedral's interior was quite advanced when Archbishop Walsh passed away on June 6, 1952. With the nave and transept obstructed with scaffolding, it became necessary to hold the Archbishop's funeral at St. Patrick's Cathedral on Washington Street. Following the Mass, his body was moved to the Cathedral crypt and laid to rest next to Bishop O'Connor.



A worker adds finishing touches to the rose window

Archbishop Boland came on the scene in 1953 and continued giving an Archbishop's enthusiastic support to the Cathedral effort. Hence, Reilly and Raggi continued on, working together to create the Cathedral's renowned interior. During this same period, Reilly also erected the Episcopal residence on Ridge Street. It was at this time that the sanctuary floor, previously on two levels, was changed to a single level stage-like surface. Marble floors were laid throughout the church and heating and ventilating systems were installed for the first time. The interior was beautifully appointed with Munich stained glass, hand carved white oak screens, massive carved limestone screens, and furnishings of Italian marble.

Dedication

On October 19, 1954, the dream that had been envisioned by Bishop Bayley became a reality. Archbishop Boland dedicated Newark's mighty Cathedral in a ceremony in which he also received the pallium -- the symbol of archepiscopal dignity -- from Archbishop Amleto Cicognani, Apostolic

Delegate to the United States. Monsignor Joseph A. Doyle, who spent his entire priestly life in the Cathedral parish, was appointed first rector.

Over the long years of Archbishop Boland's episcopate, the Cathedral emerged as the center of faith and devotion for the people of the Archdiocese. During his tenure, six bishops were raised to the episcopal rank, countless numbers of priests ordained at his hands, and thousands of laity, both young and old, cited for their contributions to their Church and society.

On December 2 and 8, 1972, thousands came to the Cathedral to celebrate the archbishop's golden jubilee. On his retirement in 1974, they returned on June 28 of that year to hear him introduce his successor, the Most Reverend Peter L. Gerety, who had been transferred from the See of Portland, Maine, to the Archdiocese of Newark.



Priests bless altar stones in the Cathedral



Consecration of bells by Archbishop Boland

Opening its Doors to the World

On coming to Newark as the diocese's seventh Bishop and third archbishop, Archbishop Gerety became the first Ordinary to live in the Episcopal residence attached to the Cathedral. Under his leadership, the Cathedral has, as Bishop McQuaid predicted, opened its doors to the world. This statement can best be exemplified in a precedent-shattering ceremony in which John Shelby Spong was consecrated in the Cathedral sanctuary Coadjutor Bishop for the Episcopal Diocese of Newark. This historic event took place, at Archbishop Gerety's invitation, on June 12, 1976. The Cathedral was filled to capacity, and thunderous applause echoed through the great nave as Archbishop Gerety

embraced the consecrating prelate, the Right Reverend John Maury Allin, Presiding Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in America.

Later that same month, on June 25, Archbishop Gerety ordained two men to the episcopacy in a magnificent ceremony which was televised live throughout the state. Prior to the ordination rite at the Archbishop's direction, steps were taken to adapt the high altar for the modern liturgy, allowing Mass to be said facing the people, from the altar which, from its location in the sanctuary, commands the attention of those even in the farthest reaches of the Cathedral.



Archbishop Peter Gerety hosts Episcopal Bishops George Rath and Jon Spong

State, National, and Global Recognition

State and national recognition has also been accorded Newark's majestic Cathedral Church, which was designated an historic landmark by the New Jersey Historical Society in December, 1974. Two years later, on December 22, 1976, national recognition was given the Cathedral through its designation as a National Historic Site.

In 1979, the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart celebrated its Silver Jubilee. A sad, double irony touched the Cathedral in the deaths of Archbishop Boland and Monsignor Doyle. Twenty-five years after dedicating the Cathedral the remains of Archbishop Boland came to rest permanently in the crypt chapel. In 1989, the remains of Bishop Wigger were taken from Holy Sepulchre Cemetery and placed in the crypt chapel.

Still, the Jubilee was a cause for joy and pride. The Cathedral was able to review a quarter century of religious witness and cultural enrichment to the people of the Newark area and to all the men and women of goodwill who entered its doors and were part of its programs and inspiration.

On Wednesday, October 4, 1995, Pope John Paul II visited the United States. President William Clinton welcomed him at Newark Liberty International Airport. The two leaders then traveled to the Cathedral, where they talked



Pope John Paul II in the aisle of the Cathedral

privately in the Archbishop's residence. Pope John Paul II then celebrated Holy Mass in the Cathedral in front of more than 1,600 people. President Clinton and the First Lady were seated in the first row of the nave. During the visit, Pope John Paul II conferred the title of *Minor Basilica* to Sacred Heart Cathedral, giving it its current name, Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart.