



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

HISTORY

- Site of the first Mass in English-speaking North America (March 25, 1634)
 - Religious Act of 1649: first legislation a representative body ever enacted for religious freedom. Yet, from 1690-1776, Catholics suffered under penal laws
 - Home to John Carroll, who in 1789 was appointed the first U.S. bishop
 - Originally part of Baltimore, was established in 1939, with five Maryland counties added in 1948
 - Today: 580,000 Catholics, 140 parishes and more than 100 schools as well as a diverse and extensive network of social services throughout the region
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Early Years

Catholicism was brought to Maryland in 1634 when Jesuit Father Andrew White celebrated the first Mass held in the original 13 colonies, on the shores of St. Clement's Island. From that humble beginning in St. Mary's County to the thriving, diverse Catholic community which exists today, the story of the Archdiocese of Washington is one of struggle, hope and faith.

Founded as a haven for Catholics and a place of religious toleration, Maryland was the site of the Religious Act of 1649-the first legislation a representative body ever enacted for religious freedom. Sadly, this freedom did not last. Between 1690 and 1776, Catholics in Maryland suffered under oppressive penal laws. They persevered, however, and many became patriots for the cause of American independence.

Despite these early obstacles, the Catholic faith flourished. Historic parishes abound today, including St. Francis Xavier, Newtowne, which dates to 1640; St. Patrick, the first Catholic church in the original Federal City; and St. Augustine, founded by freed slaves in 1865. Archbishop John Carroll, appointed the first bishop of the United States in 1789, was born in Upper Marlboro. Georgetown University, the nation's first Catholic college, was founded here in 1789. The Archdiocese also is home to The Catholic University of America, the nation's only pontifical university.

A New Archdiocese is Established

Originally part of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the City of Washington was named a separate archdiocese by Pope Pius XII in 1939, under the direction of Baltimore's Archbishop Michael J. Curley. Eight years later, Archbishop Patrick A. O'Boyle was named the first resident archbishop, and Calvert, Charles, Montgomery, Prince George's and St. Mary's Counties joined Washington as part of the new archdiocese. Archbishop O'Boyle immediately began his pioneering work to desegregate Catholic schools and parishes, build new churches and establish new social service ministries. He was elevated to Cardinal in 1967 and retired in 1973.

Meeting the Needs of a Diverse and Growing Community

Archbishop William Baum succeeded Cardinal O'Boyle. Elevated to cardinal in 1976, he was transferred to the Roman Curia four years later, where he served until 2002. While Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Baum was joined by the faithful of the Archdiocese in welcoming our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, on his first papal visit to the United States.

In 1980, James A. Hickey was appointed Archbishop of Washington. He was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 1988 and retired in 2000. Under Cardinal Hickey's leadership, the Archdiocese of Washington built and renovated churches and schools and established programs such as Victory Housing, Birthing and Care and the Archdiocesan Health Care and Legal Networks.

The Archdiocese also began to grow in diversity. Today Mass is celebrated in over 20 languages, including Chinese, French, Korean, Polish, Portuguese and Vietnamese. Spanish-language Masses are celebrated at 39 locations to meet the needs of the nearly 200,000 Catholics of Hispanic ancestry living in our community. The Archdiocese also is enriched by the gifts of the 100,000 Catholics of African and Caribbean descent who call it home.

In January 2001, Theodore E. McCarrick, then-Archbishop of Newark, was installed as archbishop. Six weeks later, he was elevated to the College of Cardinals. Cardinal McCarrick put his mark on the Archdiocese, emphasizing vocations and ministry to the diverse cultures within the Archdiocese, particularly the Hispanic community. He opened a new seminary for missionary priests of the Archdiocese and undertook a \$135-million capital campaign to support service and educational ministries into the future.

Pope Benedict XVI appointed then-Pittsburgh Bishop Donald W. Wuerl as the new Archbishop of Washington in 2006. Archbishop Wuerl is known nationally for his catechetical and teaching ministry in the electronic and print media. He is the author of numerous books and articles including the best-selling catechisms, *The Teaching of Christ* and *The Catholic Way*, and is recognized for his commitment to finding new and innovative ways to keep Catholic education accessible and affordable. He has also made renewing sacramental life a priority, introducing a successful initiative on the Sacrament of Reconciliation in 2007. The Archbishop is active in community and interfaith activities, joining with civic and business leaders to promote education, service to the poor, pastoral assistance to refugees and immigrants and interfaith understanding.

The Archdiocese Today

Today, the Archdiocese of Washington includes 580,000 Catholics. Its schools educate nearly 31,000 children while its service agencies, including Catholic Charities, have made the Archdiocese the largest private social service provider in the region. Increasingly, adult Catholics are finding new educational and spiritual resources to fill their hunger to know Christ and their faith more deeply than ever. Although diverse in nationality, Catholics of the Archdiocese of Washington share a common faith and a commitment to reflect Christ in the world through prayer, education and service.