

June 1-9, 2026 Prayer Pilgrimage Historical Sites Background Information

Saint Theodora Guérin; Foundress, Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Anne Thérèse Guérin [SP](#), designated by the [Vatican](#) as Saint Theodora, was a French-American saint and the foundress of the [Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods](#), a congregation of [Catholic sisters](#) at [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana](#). [Pope John Paul II](#) [beatified](#) Guérin on 25 October 1998, and [Pope Benedict XVI](#) [canonized](#) her a [saint](#) of the [Catholic Church](#) on 15 October 2006. Mother Guérin's [feast day](#) is 3 October, although some calendars list it in the [Roman Martyrology](#) as 14 May, her day of death.

Guérin immigrated to [Indiana](#) from France in 1840, and became known for her advancement of education, especially in Indiana and in eastern [Illinois](#); founding numerous schools including [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College](#) at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana; and for her care of the orphaned, the sick, and the poor of the [Diocese of Vincennes, Indiana](#).

Anne-Thérèse Guérin was born on 2 October 1798, in the village of [Étables-sur-Mer](#) in [Brittany](#), France, to Laurent Guérin, an officer in the [French Navy](#) under [Napoleon Bonaparte](#), and Isabelle (Lefèvre) Guérin. Anne-Thérèse was born near the end of the [French Revolution](#), which led to the [Reign of Terror](#) and the establishment of the [French First Republic](#). This period of significant change also caused a crisis within French [Catholicism](#), when schools and churches were closed, and many Catholic priests chose exile over death from the [guillotine](#).

Laurent and Isabelle Guérin had four children, two sons (Jean-Laurent and Laurent-Marie) and two daughters; however, only Anne-Thérèse and her younger sister, Marie-Jeanne, survived to adulthood. The Guérin sisters were mostly educated at home by their mother and later by a relative who lived with the family.

Anne-Thérèse knew from an early age that she would devote her life to serving God. At the age of ten, when she was allowed to take her [First Communion](#) two years earlier than the custom of the time, she confided to the priest in Etables that she wished to enter a religious community when she was older.

When Guérin was fifteen, tragedy struck the family. Bandits robbed and killed her father as he was traveling home to visit his family. The grief proved to be too much for Isabelle Guérin, who already had lost two children, and she fell into a deep [depression](#). The teenaged Anne-Thérèse accepted the responsibility of caring for her mother and sister, as well as the family's home and garden. When her sister became old enough to take on household tasks, Anne-Thérèse took sewing jobs and work in a factory to help support the family. Around the age of twenty, Guérin asked for her mother's blessing to join a religious order, but Isabelle was still unable to cope with her loss and refused. Five years later, Isabelle recognized the depth of Anne-Thérèse's devotion to God and permitted her to leave home to join a convent.

On 18 August 1823, Guérin entered the [Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir](#) congregation and was given the [religious name](#) of Sister Saint Théodore. She professed [first vows](#) 8 September 1825, and perpetual vows, which at the time were optional, on 5 September 1831.

Sister Saint Théodore spent her early career as an educator, beginning as a teacher at [PreUILly-sur-Claise](#) in central France. In 1826, she began serving as a teacher and superior at the Saint Aubin parish school in [Rennes](#) before her transfer to a school at Soulaines in the [Diocese of Angers](#). She began to study medicine and remedies under a local doctor. She ministered to the needs of the area's sick and poor and received a medal for her teaching from the inspector for the Academy of Angers. While working in France, Sister Saint Théodore became seriously ill, most likely with [smallpox](#). Although she recovered, the illness damaged her digestive system. As a result, Sister Saint Théodore could only eat a simple, bland diet for the rest of her life.

In 1839, the Most Reverend [Simon William Gabriel Bruté](#), the first [bishop](#) of the vast [Diocese of Vincennes](#) in Indiana, sent Vicar General [Célestine Guynemer de la Hailandière](#) as a representative to their native France. Bishop Bruté searched for a religious congregation to come to the diocese to teach, provide spiritual instruction, and assist the sick. With only a few priests and a significant influx of Catholic immigrants of French, Irish, and German descent, the diocese needed additional help with its expanding ministry. Bishop Bruté knew the great assistance that a religious order could provide, having worked with Mother [Elizabeth Ann Seton](#) and her [Sisters of Charity](#) during the founding and early years of [Mount Saint Mary's University](#) in [Emmitsburg, Maryland](#).

In June 1839, while Hailandière was in France, Bishop Bruté died at [Vincennes, Indiana](#); Hailandière, his successor, was consecrated a bishop of the diocese on 18 August 1839. One of Bishop Hailandière's first acts was to ask the Sisters of Providence of Ruillé-sur-Loir to send a group of sisters to establish a ministry in Vincennes. Mother Mary, the [superior general](#) of the congregation, suggested Sister Saint Théodore for the task. Although Guérin was unsure of her ability to complete such a mission initially, she agreed after considerable [discernment](#). Guérin later remarked that a sentence from the Rule of the congregation convinced her to answer the call to immigrate to the United States: "The Congregation being obliged to work with zeal for the [sanctification](#) of souls, the sisters will be disposed to go to whatsoever part of the world obedience calls them."

On 15 July 1840, Sister Saint Théodore and five companions (Sister Olympiade Boyer, Sister Saint Vincent Ferrer Gagé, Sister Basilide Sénéchal, Sister Mary Xavier Lerée, and Sister Mary Liguori Tiercin) departed from France to sail to the United States.

After a nearly two-month-long journey across the [Atlantic Ocean](#), the six women traveled by steamboat and stagecoach to reach the dense forest of [Indiana](#).

On 22 October 1840, Guérin and her companions arrived at [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana](#), a small, remote village in the wilderness in [Vigo County](#), a few miles northwest of [Terre Haute](#). For several months the sisters lived in a small frontier farmhouse with the Thralls family, along with a few [postulants](#) who had been waiting for them when they arrived. Only later did she learn that her French superiors had already decided the sisters in the United States should form a new religious congregation under her leadership. Guérin became known as Mother Théodore.

In July 1841, less than a year after they arrived in Indiana, and despite their meager resources, Mother Théodore and the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods opened Saint Mary's Academy for young women. The academy was the forerunner of [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College](#). Guérin had doubts that the new institution would succeed. As she reflected in her journals, "It is astonishing that this remote solitude has been chosen for a novitiate and especially for an academy".

From the time of her arrival at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in July 1840 to January 1849, Mother Théodore worked with Catholic parishes to establish parish schools at several sites within the Diocese of Vincennes. In 1843, Guérin traveled to France on a fundraising trip. Bishop Hailandière established two schools in Indiana while Guérin was traveling in France and assigned them to the Sisters of Providence to operate: St. Peter-Montgomery (1843) and Saint Mary Female School-Vincennes (1843).

Guérin personally directed the establishment of Saint Joseph School (1842) in [Jasper](#); Saint Anne's Academy (1844) in [Madison](#); Saint Augustine's (1846) in [Fort Wayne](#); and Saint Vincent's Academy (1849) in Terre Haute, Indiana; as well as a school in Saint Francisville, Illinois. After her return to the United States from a fundraising trip to France, Guérin and the Sisters of Providence established six other schools in Indiana: two in [Evansville](#), Saint Joseph's Academy (1853) and Assumption (1853); Saint Patrick's (1853) in North [Madison](#); Saint Mary's (1853) at Fort Wayne; Saint Mary's (1854) at [Lanesville](#); and Saint Bartholomew (1855) at [Columbus](#).

In addition to establishing schools, Mother Théodore and the Sisters of Providence cooperated with Bishop [John Stephen Bazin](#), Hailandière's successor, and [Bishop Jacques-Maurice de Saint-Palais](#), Bazin's successor, in the establishment of two orphanages in [Vincennes](#) and free pharmacies at Vincennes and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

Guérin proved to be a skilled businesswoman and leader and a beloved general superior and spiritual leader of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. She arranged to purchase a local farmhouse belonging to the Thralls family to serve as the congregation's first convent at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. She oversaw the construction of a new Providence convent, which was formally dedicated on 7 August 1854. During the final years, Guerin was planning to build a new chapel at the convent in honor of the Blessed Virgin; however, she did not live to see it completed. The [Church of the Immaculate Conception \(Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana\)](#), her last major project, was completed in 1886.

Despite numerous challenges and hardships during the congregation's early years, which included rebuilding after destructive fires and crop failures, prudent use of limited finances, and negotiating disagreements with Catholic leaders, Guérin remained devoted to her work and the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods endured. By the time of her death in May 1856, the Sisters of Providence congregation in Indiana had grown from its original six sisters and four postulants to sixty-seven professed members, nine novices, and seven postulants.

Guérin suffered from poor health for most of her adult life; however, her final illness began in March 1856. Guérin died on 14 May 1856 at the motherhouse at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, at fifty-seven.

The *Catholic Telegraph and Advocate* of [Cincinnati, Ohio](#), published the following notice about Mother Théodore's death:

Died - At Saint Mary's-of-the-Woods (*sic*), in the 58th year of her age, Wednesday, 14th inst., Sister St. Théodore, Superior General of the Sisters of Providence in Indiana.

This woman, distinguished by her eminent virtues, governed the community of which she was the superior from its commencement to the time of her death, a period of nearly sixteen years. Being a perfect religious herself and endowed with mental qualities of a high order, she was peculiarly fitted to fill the duties which Providence assigned her.

Not only her Sisters are bereaved by her death, but all those who knew her excellence and the amount of good she did, join in lamenting that she should have been removed from the sphere of her usefulness. To judge from the celestial expression of her countenance as she lay in death, there is every reason to believe that she has already taken her abode among the Saints in Heaven, enjoying the munificence of God, who rewards His servants 'according to their works.

Guérin's remains were buried on 15 May 1856 in the Sisters of Providence Cemetery at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. Her grave is marked with a [Celtic cross](#) that bears an inscription in [Latin](#), translated as: "I sleep, but my heart watches over this house which I built." In 1907, Guérin's remains were moved to the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, although some of her remains are still buried at the original gravesite.

In 1907, Guérin's remains were exhumed from the convent cemetery and moved to the crypt at the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary of the Woods. At that time, Bishop [Francis Silas Chatard](#), the first bishop of the [Diocese of Indianapolis](#) and a medical doctor before becoming a priest, examined the remains of Mother Théodore. When Bishop Chatard found the brain had not fully decomposed after fifty-one years in the grave, he asked three other physicians to examine his findings. This phenomenon was the first physical sign to consider Guérin's life and service to the people of the area worthy of further investigation. In 1909, after reviewing the medical reports on Guérin's remains, Chatard introduced the Cause for Canonization, the first step in the extensive process of declaring saints in the [Roman Catholic Church](#). During the early phase of the process, twenty-four individuals provided personal accounts of their experiences with Guérin. Theologians approved her spiritual writings on 28 July 1926 and 28 February 1940.

On 25 October 1998, after the first miracle attributed to Guérin was accepted, [Pope John Paul II](#) [beatified](#) and bestowed the title of "Blessed" on Mother Théodore. In his comments, the Pope recognized her as a "holy woman of God" and "a woman for our time" who "lived a life of extraordinary love." On 1 July 2006, [Pope Benedict XVI](#) gave his final approval for her [canonization](#) as a saint after agreeing with the consensus view that a second miracle had occurred due to Guérin's intercession. The canonization ceremony was held on 15 October 2006, in [Saint Peter's Square](#), [Vatican City](#). Mother Théodore was given the official name of Saint Theodora Guérin.

The first miracle attributed to Guérin is said to have occurred in 1908. Before going to bed on 30 October, Sister of Providence [Mary Theodosia Mug](#) prayed at Guérin's crypt in the [Church of the Immaculate Conception](#) on the motherhouse grounds at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods for another sister who was ill. However, Mug herself suffered from damaged nerves in both arms and her right hand, [breast cancer](#), and an abdominal tumor. When she awoke the next day, Sister Mary Theodosia was able to move her arms without pain, and the lump in her abdomen had disappeared. The cancer never returned. Sister Mary Theodosia died of old age in 1943 at the age of eighty-two.

The second of the miracles attributed to Guérin involves Phil McCord of [Terre Haute, Indiana](#), and occurred in January 2001. McCord, who had worked in facilities management for the [Sisters of Providence](#), stopped by the Church of the Immaculate Conception and was drawn in by music from the [pipe organ](#). After entering the church, McCord felt compelled to pray to Guérin, asking for strength to undergo surgery, a cornea transplant for his right eye to improve his failing eyesight (Previous eye surgeries did not fully restore his eyesight, which had deteriorated to a legally-blind status of 20–800 in one eye and 20–1000 in the other.) McCord returned to his home, and when he awoke the next morning, his vision, although still blurry, had improved. A follow-up visit with his eye doctor confirmed that McCord no longer needed the cornea transplant. With subsequent laser treatment, McCord's eyesight returned perfect, 20-20 vision. [Ophthalmologists](#) and others investigating the case could find no medical explanation for the change in his condition. In 2006 the Catholic cardinals at the Vatican reviewed and approved the findings in the case and declared the event a miracle, paving the way for the final step in Guérin's canonization process.

Guérin rose above numerous personal and professional challenges, such as ideological differences and financial disagreements with other Catholic leaders, frail health, and primitive living conditions in the Indiana wilderness, as well as religious, gender, and cultural prejudice. Guérin also broke barriers for women's education when she and the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods opened an academy for young women in Indiana in 1841. The academy is the forerunner to the present-day Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College, the oldest Catholic women's liberal arts college in the United States. In addition to being a capable businesswoman and school administrator, Guérin was a prolific writer whose journals provide details of her life and work. Still, her greatest legacy is the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, the congregation she founded in 1840, and its ongoing ministries.

More than 5,200 women have entered the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods congregation since its founding in 1840. As of 2010, there are nearly 400 sisters in the order. Roughly 300 of them live and minister from the motherhouse grounds at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana.

Guérin was working on plans for constructing a new chapel for the Sisters of Providence at the end of her life, but she did not live to see the completion of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. The Sisters of Providence maintain various relics of Guérin's life in their congregation archives at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, as well as in a Heritage Museum in Providence Center on the motherhouse grounds and the Shrine of Saint Mother Théodore Guérin, which is accessed through the Providence Center.

In October 2006, shortly before her canonization, Saint Theodora Guérin's remains were moved from the crypt to the sanctuary of the [Church of the Immaculate Conception](#) on the motherhouse grounds at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. The Shrine of Saint Mother Theodora Guérin is located beneath the [Blessed Sacrament Chapel](#) near the Church of the Immaculate Conception. The shrine was dedicated in October 2014 under the administration of general superior [Sister Denise Wilkinson](#). It includes a small, simple chapel where Guérin's remains rest in a coffin made of walnut wood from the Sisters of Providence grounds. There are also several rooms in the shrine that contain historical artifacts, [relics](#), photos, and information about Guérin's life and the early days of the Sisters of Providence.

The Shrine & Burial Site of Saint Mother Theodore Guerin; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

[Saint Mother Theodore Guerin](#) was a woman of courage, determination and compassion. Her trust in Providence – the protective care of God – helped her accomplish many things.

Here at her shrine, follow her journey from France to the back woods of Indiana where she founded the Sisters of Providence and Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College in 1840. As you travel along in this museum-like setting you'll find original artifacts, including Saint Mother Theodore's writing desk, chaplet, prayer book, shoes and more.

In the small chapel room located in the back of the shrine you can take a moment for prayer and reflection as you view Saint Mother Theodore's final resting place.

Church of the Immaculate Conception; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

The Church of the Immaculate Conception on the motherhouse grounds of the [Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods](#) is a large Italian [Renaissance Revival](#)-style church constructed of [Indiana limestone](#) at [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana](#). The cathedral-like structure, which is the fourth church/chapel of the Sisters of Providence since their arrival at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods in 1840. Construction for the church began in 1886; its exterior was completed in 1891 and the interior was completed in 1907. The church was consecrated on October 23, 1907, and continues to serve as a place of daily worship services that are open to the public. The church also houses the shrine and tomb of [Saint Mother Théodore Guérin](#), foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel (1905) was erected in the [crypt](#) beneath the church.

The church's interior was renovated in 1986, but the sanctuary retains much of its early decoration, including Georgian marble columns, [Numidian](#) marble walls, a semi-dome ceiling, [Stations of the Cross](#), [stained glass windows](#), religious paintings by [Tadeusz Żukotyński](#), a sculpture by Harry Breen, and other works of art. Its [Casavant Frères](#) pipe organ dates from 1953. [Carrara](#) marble from the [reredos](#) (high altar) was used to create an [altar](#), [lectern](#), and a presider's chair in 1986.

When the [Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods](#) arrived in [Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana](#) in 1840, there was no church on the site, and a log cabin served as its first [chapel](#). [Saint Mother Théodore Guérin](#), the foundress of the order, described the primitive chapel to friends in France, "The Church! Yes, dear friends, that is the dwelling of the God of the Universe, in comparison with which the stables wherein you shelter your cattle are palaces!" The log chapel was dismantled in 1853. The second chapel, a room in the new Providence motherhouse (1853), served the Sisters of Providence until 1863, when a simple frame chapel designed by Indianapolis architect [Diedrich A. Bohlen](#) was completed. Although Bohlen's frame chapel was large, capable of seating 300 people, it was only intended to be a temporary structure until a more substantial church could be erected at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

From the time of her arrival at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Saint Mother Guérin hoped to establish a new church to honor the [Immaculate Conception](#). Prior to her death in 1856, she began to gather materials to use in its construction, but the church was not built during her lifetime. The Italian [Renaissance Revival](#)-style structure is the fourth church/chapel of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods since 1840. It serves as the focal point for daily worship and devotion at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods. Other nearby places for prayer include the [Saint Anne Shell Chapel](#) (1876), the [Blessed Sacrament Chapel](#) (1924), and Our Lady of Providence Shrine (1990) in Providence Center, among others.

Diedrich A. Bohlen, founder of the architectural firm of [D.A. Bohlen and Son](#) of [Indianapolis, Indiana](#), designed the [Indiana limestone](#) church. Construction began in 1886, under the leadership of general superior [Mother Euphrasie Hinkle](#). Its cornerstone was laid the same year. Although a fire destroyed the Providence motherhouse in 1889, the church, which was already under construction, was damaged but not destroyed. Noted architect Oscar D. Bohlen continued work on the project after his father, Diedrich, died in 1890. The church's exterior was completed in 1891; however, it took sixteen additional years before the interior was fully furnished. By June 1892 the plasterwork was completed and installation of temporary wooden flooring, seats, and altars permitted the [sisters](#) to worship in the unfinished church. An [organ](#) from [William Schuelke Church Organ Builder](#) of [Milwaukee, Wisconsin](#), was purchased in 1902; it was later replaced.

"By 1902, the General Council, under the leadership of [General Superior Mother Mary Cleophas Foley](#), focused its attention on the interior decoration of the church." Mother Mary Cleophas and General Councilor [Sister Mary Alma Ryan](#), who traveled to Europe to visit numerous churches and gather ideas, were inspired by the [Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo](#) in [Ravenna, Italy](#), and the [Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity, Paris](#), among others. Soon after the two sisters returned to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, [artisans](#) and [craftsmen](#) were employed to decorate the church's interior. The completed church was consecrated on October 23, 1907, in a celebration attended by religious dignitaries, including [Francis Silas Chatard](#), Bishop of the [Diocese of Indianapolis](#).

Under the leadership of General Superiors [Sister Anne Doherty](#) and [Sister Nancy Nolan](#), the church's interior was renovated in 1986 to conform with liturgical changes that were adopted after the [Second Vatican Council](#) and to strengthen the church's floor joists. Melvin B. G. Meyer, principal architect at Bohlen, Meyer, Gibson and Associates, served as the project architect.

The Church of the Immaculate Conception is constructed of [Indiana limestone](#) and designed in the Italian [Renaissance Revival](#) style.

Following the general trends of [Cathedral architecture of Western Europe](#), the church at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods has a basic [cruciform architectural plan](#) with a [nave](#) intersecting its [transept](#). Although the church slightly varying from absolute coordinates, it is generally oriented along an east/west [axis](#). A tall bell tower provide vertical emphasis on the west side of the church's front façade. Architect Oscar D. Bohlen explained that the church was designed in an "Italian Renaissance style with a French sentiment." Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel was erected in 1905 in the [crypt](#) beneath the church.

The church's interior includes a high-ceiling [nave](#) flanked by two [aisles](#) with lower ceilings. Original pink Georgian marble columns in the [composite order](#) flank the [nave](#). The [sanctuary](#) also includes red [Numidian](#) marble walls and a semi-dome ceiling. The varied types of [marble](#) that decorate the church come from [Italy](#), [Africa](#), [Skyros](#), [Greece](#) and the [United States](#).

The original flooring was Venetian marble; it was replaced with a speckled maroon and black terrazzo floor as part of the renovations made in 1986; the church's walls and ceiling were painted mauve, pink, and alabaster. The original [reredos](#) (high altar) has been removed, but the sanctuary still contains religious artifacts, paintings, sculptures, stained glass windows, and other works of art.

The Bavarian Art Institute of [Munich](#), [Germany](#) created the church's [stained glass windows](#). They depict events from the life of [Christ](#), [Mary \(mother of Jesus\)](#), and [Old Testament](#) figures. Windows in the upper balcony display scenes of [angels](#).

The [Stations of the Cross](#) underneath the gallery and around the back of the church are made of [alabaster](#). They were created by the Mayer and Company of [Munich](#) and [London](#) at a cost of \$1,800 and installed around 1891.

[Tadeusz Żukotyński](#) (Thaddeus von Zukotynski) of [Munich](#) and [Chicago](#) painted three murals in addition to the sanctuary's semi-dome [fresco](#). The east and west transepts and the arcade beneath the dome include Żukotyński's of the [Four Evangelists](#), the "Return from Calvary," and the "Flight into Egypt." The semi-dome [fresco](#) took Żukotyński three months to complete. It represents the [Immaculate Conception](#) of the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#). She stands on a globe supported by clouds with [Saint Michael](#) and [Saint Gabriel](#) on either side. "The Ascension" painting in the ceiling coffer at the intersection of the nave and transept depicts Christ ascending into heaven In 1906, while Żukotyński painted the religious figures, the Sisters of Providence hired George Hepfinger of Chicago to do the decorating and painting in the remainder of the church.

The church renovation in 1986 included removal of a [reredos](#) (high altar) made by the Deprato Studio of Chicago. It had been installed in the [sanctuary](#) in 1906. The [Carrara marble](#) from the reredos was used to create a new [altar](#), a [lectern](#), and a presider's chair as part of the renovations made in 1986.

Removal of the reredos opened a space in the center wall of the sanctuary for a sculpture by Harry Breen of [Champaign, Illinois](#). It depicts a [Christ figure](#) ascending from the [Crucifix](#).

A Carrara marble statue in one of the church's alcoves depicts the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#). It is placed in front of a shrine that contains the tomb of Saint Mother Théodore Guérin, foundress of the Sisters of Providence of Saint-Mary-of-the-Woods. Another alcove contains a statue of [Saint Joseph](#) and a tablet that marks the relics of Saint Theodore, Saint Urbin, and other holy men and women.

Bas relief sculptures on either side of the sanctuary depict religious scenes. On the right, the Blessed Virgin gives a rosary to [Saint Dominic](#), while the [infant Jesus](#) presents a [chaplet](#) to Saint [Catherine of Siena](#). The bas relief scene on the left depicts [Saint Anne](#) and Saint [Joachim](#) with the little [Mary](#).

In the upper balcony at the west front of the church is a rare pipe organ made by the [Casavant Frères](#) Company of [Canada](#) and installed in 1953. With approximately 1,700 pipes, it is the third organ that has been used in the church. For its dedication on December 8, 1953, the Sisters of Providence held a brief organ recital featuring Sister of Providence organist and composer [Sister Cecilia Clare Bocard](#), who played her musical composition, "Te Deum Laudamus". The organ was renovated in 1999.

In the [bell tower](#) at the west front is a set of [chimes](#). Made by the [McShane Bell Foundry](#) of [Maryland](#), the eleven bells placed in the tower in 1910 have a combined weight of 13,150 pounds (5,960 kg). Originally, the bells were rung by hand to wake the Sisters of Providence, to call them to prayer, and to let them known when to retire. In addition, [hymns](#) were played on the set on Sundays, holidays, and [feast days](#). The bells still are rung each hour and toll for deceased Sisters of Providence. The Sisters also ring the bells each time someone is executed by [capital punishment](#) in the United States. In November 2004, Schulmerich Carillons installed a Generation 4 Novabell DSP cast bell controller which activates the bells. The bells, chimes and tolls are either programmed into the system or they may be controlled manually.

National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

The National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence is located in the vestibule of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods.

The Our Lady of Providence ministry of the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods exists to promote the humanness of Mary and her family of Joseph and Jesus. Through it the Sisters of Providence offer spiritual support and guidance for the real needs of families today.

Dedication to Mary under the title Our Lady of Providence began with the first shrine dedicated to her in Italy in 1664. In May 1925, the Sisters of Providence of Saint Mary-of-the-Woods established the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence in the United States.

In April 2014, the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence was rededicated in a new location, the vestibule of the Church of the Immaculate Conception.

Sisters of Providence and others gather at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence to pray for the many intentions sent to the shrine. Special prayers are offered for the needs of all families, asking for the protection and intercession of Our Lady of Providence as Queen of the Home.

History of Devotion to Our Lady of Providence; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

For more than 75 years, Sisters of Providence and lay people from throughout the world have prayed at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence, which is located today in the vestibule of the [Church of the Immaculate Conception](#). Countless other intentions have been sent to the shrine via letters and e-mail, seeking the assistance and intercession of Mary in various trials of life.

Devotion to Our Lady of Providence began long before this in Europe. The original work “Mater Divinae Providentiae,” was painted by Scipione Pulzone around 1580. In 1664, the painting became the possession of the Barnabite Fathers who placed the art piece in a corridor of the church of San Carlo ai Catinari in Rome where it drew many faithful visitors.

Sister Gertrude Smith, RIP, made the following observation in a 1978 account of the modest beginnings of the shrine: “Soon not only the parishioners but other Romans from the surrounding country flocked to the shrine. Many graces and even miracles were attributed to the prayers said there, and ‘ex-voto’ offerings soon adorned the walls near the picture. The Barnabites recorded also that a great improvement could be seen in the morals of their parishioners.”

In 1774, Pope Benedict XIV authorized the Confraternity of Our Lady of Providence. Pope Gregory XVI elevated it to an Archconfraternity in 1839.

Devotion to Our Lady of Providence came to the United States after an SP chaplain, Monsignor A.J. Rawlinson, saw a reproduction of “Mater Divinae Providentiae,” at Catholic University of America. During a trip to Rome in 1925, Monsignor Rawlinson gathered historical information on the devotion to Our Lady of Providence and then brought back prints of the painting to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.

On May 1, 1925, the National Shrine of Our Lady of Providence was canonically erected at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind., with the purpose of encouraging families to make Mary the queen of their homes. A Confraternity of Our Lady of Providence was erected, and later a certificate of affiliation of the American Confraternity was established with the Archconfraternity in Rome.

At the request of [Mother Mary Cleophas Foley](#), a copy of “Mater Divinae Providentiae” was painted by Pompei Coccia. Following in Mother Mary Cleophas’ footsteps, [Mother Mary Raphael Slattery](#) encouraged all SPs to further the devotion of Our Lady of Providence in students’ homes. “[The Bugle Call](#),” the newsletter for Sisters of Providence students, urged young people in its April-May 1926 issue to give their mothers a copy of the Madonna that appeared on the newsletter’s frontispiece instead of a Mother’s Day card.

Thus, the veneration of Our Lady of Providence came to the United States. Although the Shrine has been moved several times until its present location now located in the vestibule of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, it has always stirred deep emotions in those who have sought the help and comfort of Mary.

Blessed Sacrament Chapel; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

Of all the buildings that [Mother Mary Cleophas Foley](#) erected during her time as general superior (1890-1926), it was the Blessed Sacrament Chapel that was “most reflective of her interior spirit,” wrote Sister Mary Roger Madden in the third volume of the Sisters of Providence history, “[The Path Marked Out](#).” Ground was broken for this Chapel of Perpetual Adoration April 9, 1920. The chapel was consecrated May 19, 1924, by Bishop Joseph Chartrand, who called it the Chapel of Divine Love.

In the Catholic Church, perpetual adoration of the Eucharist is the adoration or worship of Jesus Christ present in the Holy Eucharist. Some churches have a special holder or monstrance where the Eucharist is displayed. Perpetual adoration refers to 24-hour worship or prayer before the Holy Eucharist or body of Christ. At one point, the Sisters of Providence practiced perpetual adoration of the Eucharist, starting first in the crypt of the Church of the Immaculate Conception and then in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel.

D.A. Bohlen and Son of Indianapolis, architects of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, also served as the architects for this Italian Renaissance chapel. Sister Mary Roger described the chapel in this way:

“Nothing was spared in the decorating of this chapel. The families and friends of the sisters contributed substantially to the marble, gold and silver as well as to the stained glass. ... The baldachin [or canopy over the] altar, the work of the Deprato Company in their

studios in Pietrasanta, Italy, was carved entirely from one block of flawless white Carrara marble from base to cross, and weighed 8,000 pounds.

“Although the chapel was a small one, it was uniquely suited to its purpose: that of private prayer before the Blessed Sacrament exposed upon the altar. The body of the chapel was simple and harmonious so as to avoid distracting the worshiper’s attention.”

Saint Mother Theodore Guerin had a great devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. She wrote, “How consoling is this mystery of the Eucharist! If we knew how to appreciate it, it would suffice to fortify and sustain us. Is there anything sweeter than to have a friend to whom we may at any hour confide our difficulties and our pain?”

Saint Anne Shell Chapel; Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana

In November 1843, [Saint Mother Theodore Guerin](#) and [Sister Mary Cecilia Bailly](#) were returning from France with three French postulants after a fundraising trip.

The five were sailing on the *Nashville* when it crossed paths with a violent storm. The sisters prayed to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to Saint Anne for safety.

After returning safely to Saint Mary-of-the-Woods, [Saint Mother Theodore](#) had a small log chapel built in honor of Saint Anne on a small knoll in the forest near the Motherhouse. The [chapel](#) was completed in 1844.

After many years, the log structure began to give way. General Superior [Mother Mary Ephrem Glenn](#) commissioned a stone chapel be built on the same site with the same dimensions. The new chapel was to be called the Shrine of Saint Anne, but is known as the [Saint Anne Shell Chapel](#). It was consecrated on July 25, 1876.

As the chapel was being built, Sister Mary Joseph Le Fer de la Motte came up with the idea to line the inner walls with iridescent river shells from the Wabash River. Shells were collected from a sandbar at Durkee’s Ferry in the river and were settled in soft plaster on the walls.

Many mosaic designs, initially drawn by Saint Mother Theodore and preserved by Sister Mary Joseph, highlight the decorations on the inner walls. The designs include a depiction of the Nashville, a map of Indiana showing the mission established up to 1876, and an illustration of the all-seeing Eye of God. A built-in altar, also covered in shells, rests near the east inner wall and displays a statue of Saint Anne Mother Theodore brought from France.

There are also two stained glass windows on the north and south walls, including designs of shell and coral. The floor is tiled with sea green and coral-colored floral patterns and a painted nautilus border trims the top of the walls.

Since 1844, on July 25, the Sisters of Providence gather for a solemn procession, walking from the Motherhouse to the chapel in honor of Saint Anne.

Although the stone exterior had withstood elements well, after 149 years it was starting to show signs of wear. Some of the sandstone exterior had begun to crumble and a cracking had appeared in an interior corner.

[A Sacred Places Indiana Grant](#) (administered by Indiana Landmarks and supported by funding from Lilly Endowment) allowed the sisters to hire an engineering firm to design and draft the work that needed to be done to restore the chapel.

Loving donors then came to the rescue to fund all the work needed to restore the chapel, both inside and out. Contractors replaced deteriorating stone in the walls and tuck-pointed what remained. They dug about 36 inches down around three sides of the building to install a pipe system that will remove ground water. They installed new guttering to provide sufficient drainage. They also reinforced the underground rock foundation. Broken slate roof tiles were replaced and all wooden exterior frames were scraped and painted.

With the exterior complete, we are ready to move onto phase II, the interior. Unfortunately, this portion is currently on hold as we research sources to replace missing shells that have disappeared over the years. In 1991 it became illegal to hunt and possess mollusk shells from the Wabash River, so we cannot source these as the sisters did originally. We are exploring creating replicas of concrete, among other options.

Other work that will happen in phase II will include replacing the door and sandblasting and power coating the iron gate to match the hand rails. We will also clean and restore the interior molding and artwork. We will clean the steps and surrounding stone flooring as well as the exterior benches and concrete light posts.

Gateway Arch; St. Louis, Missouri

The Gateway Arch is a 630-foot-tall (192 m) monument in [St. Louis, Missouri](#), United States. Clad in [stainless steel](#) and built in the form of a [weighted catenary arch](#), it is the world's tallest [arch](#), [Missouri's tallest accessible structure](#), and no building can be taller than the arch in the [St. Louis](#) area. Some sources consider it the tallest human-made monument in the [Western Hemisphere](#). Built as a monument to the [westward expansion of the United States](#) and officially dedicated to "the American people", the Arch, commonly referred to as "The Gateway to the West", is a [National Historic Landmark](#) in [Gateway Arch National Park](#) and has become a popular tourist destination, as well as an internationally recognized symbol of St. Louis.

The Arch was designed by the [Finnish-American](#) architect [Eero Saarinen](#) in 1947. Construction began on February 12, 1963, and was completed on October 28, 1965, at an overall cost of \$13 million (equivalent to \$98.4 million in 2024). The monument opened to the public on June 10, 1967. It is located at the 1764 site of the founding of St. Louis on the west bank of the [Mississippi River](#).

Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France; St. Louis, Missouri

The Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France, formerly the Cathedral of Saint Louis, and colloquially the Old Cathedral, is a [Catholic](#) church in [St. Louis, Missouri](#). It was the first [cathedral](#) west of the [Mississippi River](#) and until 1844 the only [parish church](#) in St. Louis. It is one of two Catholic [basilicas](#) in St. Louis (with [the current cathedral](#)) and both are named for King [Louis IX of France](#) (the namesake of the city).

The current structure (built 1831–1834) is located near the historic riverfront of St. Louis. It is surrounded by [Gateway Arch National Park](#). However, the church is not part of the park. Because of the historical significance of the church, it was left intact while all neighboring buildings were demolished to make way for the [Gateway Arch](#) and related park. Rev. Nicholas Smith serves as Rector.

The basilica serves as a personal parish church rather than a territorial parish church. It ranks 177th of 196 churches in number of Catholics per church in the [Archdiocese of St. Louis](#). However, because of its historical significance (and its location along the [Mississippi River](#) near the iconic Arch), the basilica remains a popular church for marriage ceremonies in the archdiocese (ranking second of 196 churches) and a popular tourist destination.

When [Pierre Laclède](#) and [Auguste Chouteau](#) [established the city of St. Louis](#), they dedicated a plot of land west of Laclède's home for the purposes of the Catholic Church. The earliest Catholic records suggest that a tent was used by an itinerant priest in 1766, but by 1770 a small log house was built on the site. This building, consecrated by the Reverend Pierre Gibault, an itinerant priest, on June 24, 1770, was expanded in 1776 to include a log church. In spite of a more substantial structure, no priest permanently resided in the village of St. Louis until 1811.

These buildings began to be replaced in 1818 with a brick structure, on the orders of the Bishop [Louis William Valentine Dubourg](#). The brick structure was designed by Gabriel Paul. During Dubourg's tenure as bishop, many artifacts, paintings, and an organ were donated to the church. While the brick church was under construction, a cemetery was established near the building, in which many of the founders of St. Louis were interred. The current church was built on the ground of the original cemetery. Those buried in the original cemetery were either moved to "Second Catholic cemetery" or reinterred under the current church. There were no burials at the original cemetery after 1828. Those moved to Second Catholic Cemetery and those buried after that were ordered removed in the mid-1850s; they were moved to Calvary Cemetery after 1854. The current church was completed and dedicated in 1834. (Forgotten but not Gone, Tour of St. Louis' Earliest Cemetery and Where it Went - Landmarks Assn of St. Louis, Inc.)

Additionally, Dubourg was influential in the establishment of St. Louis Academy (which later developed as [Saint Louis University](#)) in a two-story brick building adjacent to the new church in 1818. Construction of the brick church was not complete until 1821.

In 1826, population growth prompted the establishment of the [Diocese of St. Louis](#). The first bishop of the St. Louis diocese, [Joseph Rosati](#), began construction of a new cathedral, now the Basilica of St. Louis, King of France, to mark this growth. The cornerstone of the church was laid by Rosati during a ceremony on August 1, 1831.

The church was designed and built by the architectural firm of Laveille and Morton, among the first architectural firms west of the Mississippi River north of [New Orleans](#). Construction was complete by late 1834. On Sunday, October 26, 1834, the cathedral was consecrated at a ceremony featuring the local militia and parishioners.

After the elevation of the Diocese of St. Louis to archdiocese status in 1847, the cathedral became home to an early chapter of the [Society of Saint Vincent de Paul](#), a Catholic charity for the indigent. Both Archbishop [Peter Richard Kenrick](#) and St. Louis Mayor [Bryan Mullanphy](#) were counted among the founders of the chapter, initially dedicated to assisting immigrants at a time of waves of immigration from Ireland and Germany, but later expanding to all St. Louis residents.

The tradition of care for the poor and needy was carried on in the early 20th century after the appointment of the Reverend John Tannrath to head the church on September 5, 1915. Tannrath not only refurbished the rectory and church, but also reestablished a parish school for local immigrant children. He arranged care for disabled children and adults.

Again due to the growth of the city, a larger church was consecrated in 1914 farther west of the current church, in the city's [Central West End](#) neighborhood. This larger church, the [Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis](#), continues to serve as the seat of the [archbishop of St. Louis](#). To recognize the original cathedral's significance, on January 27, 1961, [Pope John XXIII](#) designated it a [basilica](#), giving it the present name, the **Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France**. Shortly after, in 1963, the church was renovated by the prominent St. Louis architectural firm Murphy and Mackey.

In 2015, the Basilica underwent a restoration, including: main altar in marble with copy of Diego Velazquez's *The Crucifixion*; repaired exterior limestone and sandstone; replaced the mullioned windows with energy efficient yet historically accurate glass in the original Gothic design; repaired the steeple, roofs, and gutters; restored the front doors; upgraded the parking lot, entrance pavers, and landscaping; renovated the interior vestibule; removed all carpet, leaving and repairing the wood floors; restored decorative millwork and statuary.

The current parish serves the needs of local parishioners, described as "few in number but strong in loyalty", along with working people and tourists. However, because of its location along the Mississippi River and near the Gateway Arch (which provide backdrops for wedding photos) the church is often used for weddings, only ranking behind [St. Francis Xavier College Church](#) at [Saint Louis University](#) in the number of Catholic marriages in the archdiocese.

Built in [Greek Revival](#) style, the church is noted for its marble altars, a painting of *Saint Louis venerating the Crown of Thorns* given by [Louis XVIII, King of France](#) and [Navarre](#), and an accurate copy of the painting of the *Crucifixion* by [Diego Velázquez](#) installed in the church in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Engraved in gold over the entrance to the church are the words *In honorem s. Ludovici. Deo uni et trino dicatum. A. MDCCCXXXIV*, which translates as "In honor of St. Louis. Dedicated to the one and triune God. A.D. 1834". Hebrew letters, intended to spell out the [Tetragrammaton](#), are also inscribed in [Hebrew](#) above the engraving on the main entrance. An [urban legend](#) of unknown origin claims that "the letter [Heth](#) was substituted for the letter [He](#), so the inscription merely reads *yachuch*, which has no meaning in Hebrew"; however, the letters in the inscription appear to indeed be [He](#).

The church basement has a number of artifacts associated with the history of the [Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Saint Louis](#), including a bell given to the church by the governor of the territory of Louisiana during the early 19th century. Bishop [Joseph Rosati](#), who ordered the construction of the church, is interred in a vault underneath the sanctuary.

Shrine of St. Joseph; St. Louis, Missouri

It is called the church of miracles. As many would say about the Shrine of St. Joseph, though, the biggest miracle of all is that it still stands. That it does is a tribute to a frail, brave priest, five farsighted laymen and an ever-growing number of volunteers and donors who are "Friends of St. Joseph's."

The church's cornerstone was laid in 1844, and the building initially had its main door facing west onto 11th Street. The church wasn't truly completed until 1866 after the Civil War when the main entrance was changed to face south.

It was a church established for the German population by Bishop Peter Kenrick. Germans came to St. Louis in large numbers throughout the middle part of the 19th century. It is said that only Germans could satisfy their Sunday Mass and other religious obligations here. Other ethnic groups had their own parishes.

From its early days, St. Joseph's was the home of a sacred relic—a bone chip from the body of St. Peter Claver, who was known for his service to slaves.

The only miracle in St. Louis to be authenticated by the Vatican happened in this church. Ignatius Strecker was a German immigrant with nine children who worked in a local soap factory. In 1861 Strecker hit his chest against a piece of iron. The injury didn't seem serious, but a tumor-like inflammation began to grow over the following months. A doctor opened the wound and found that the breastbone and ribs on the left side were decomposing and there were also signs of tuberculosis. Mr. Strecker found it difficult to breathe or to eat and eventually had to give up his job. One of the most noted physicians of the time, Dr. William Schoenemann, examined Strecker and told the family the man had just two weeks to live. But Strecker hung on, although he prepared for death.

A Jesuit missionary, Father Francis Xavier Weninger, came to St. Joseph's and gave a sermon on Blessed Peter Claver (he had not yet been canonized a saint). He blessed the assembled with the relic. Mrs. Strecker was among them and went home to urge her husband to invoke Claver's help. Strecker was carried into the church where he was blessed by Father Weninger and allowed to kiss the relic. Strecker related later that immediately his wounds started to heal. The tuberculosis vanished. The day after the blessing Strecker returned to work and he lived until 1880. The miracle was one of the two that led to Claver's canonization in 1888.

The city of St. Louis, like many others, was hit with major cholera epidemics throughout the 1800s. The worst was in 1866 when St. Joseph's would be the site of 10-25 funerals a day. Pastor Joseph Weber talked with his parishioners one Sunday morning and asked them to make a vow to God. If St. Joseph would intercede on their behalf and spare the parish from more cholera deaths, they would build a monument in thanksgiving.

An initial pledge of \$4,000 was made by the families and, amazingly, St. Joseph's parish experienced no further deaths. The vow was kept, and the magnificent Altar of Answered Prayers was built to become the focal point of St. Joseph's. It cost \$6,100 in 1867. Today it is priceless.

St. Joseph's expanded again in 1881 when the twin towers that became the signature of the church's imposing façade were added. A new pulpit was installed in 1894 that features the figures of Saints Augustine, Jerome, Leo and Ambrose, doctors of the church.

The pulpit, the main and side altars and the many statues that are the church's hallmark are all made from wood. It is remarkable work, perhaps made even more so because they are created from such a simple material.

As time passed, the neighborhood around St. Joseph's began to change. Italians moved in in the early 1900s, but they had their own parish close by. By the 1960s, the area had become more industrial. People moved out, truck terminals moved in. The beautiful church of St. Joseph's deteriorated along with its surroundings. Attendance at Sunday Mass dropped to the point where it was said that there were more pigeons there than people. The wooden statues had dried and cracked. The organ was in pitiful shape. St. Joseph's was dying.

However, six men would see to it that that didn't happen. Perhaps the most important of the six was a priest, Father Edward Filipiak. He was in his late-70s and frail, living in one small room in St. Joseph's rectory. Connected to the church behind the altar, the rectory had become unfit for animals to inhabit, much less a priest. But Father Filipiak loved his church. He saw the beauty that still was there and said "I ain't movin'." He knew that if he left, St. Joseph's would be torn down.

In the late 1970s, Father Filipiak brought five visionaries together. Bob Arteaga (the man who photographed the building of the Gateway Arch), Eugene Boll, Charles Finninger, Charlie Heisler and Bob Voss had not known each other before, but each saw something in St. Joseph's that made them want to save it. They established a not-for-profit corporation in 1978, leasing the church from the St. Louis Archdiocese for \$1 a year.

Raising the money to restore the church would be difficult. The catalyst that would make this happen came about in the most tragic way imaginable. On September 29, 1979, three teenagers from the neighborhood broke into the rectory and brutally murdered Father Filipiak. The attention focused on Father's murder and the church he loved helped to inspire a city to make his final wish a reality.

Maintaining the Shrine of St. Joseph is still a struggle—nearly \$5 million has been raised and spent on the church's rebirth in the past 25 years. The resources have come from many places, some of them unexpected. Contractors have given in-kind services. A Jewish man who grew up in the tenements nearby donated \$100,000 as a way of giving back to the neighborhood.

The work was almost unimaginable. Over 100,000 pounds of bird droppings were removed from the bell tower. Many of the wooden statues were in desperate shape and had to be painstakingly restored. Restoration of the pipe organ, made by Johann Pheffer and Sons of south St. Louis and installed in 1890, took 18 months and cost \$197,000. Church organist Ralph Ellerbrock was pleased to have the organ back in working order. He has been serving St. Joseph as organist, choir director and tour guide for 60 years.

For all who have been involved in this restoration work it has truly been a labor of love. There is something about St. Joseph's that seems to "get under people's skin," as Ralph Kannady put it. He and his wife went to Mass there one Sunday about 22 years ago and have been back almost every Sunday since. Both are active volunteers in the church.

Kathie Schmid and her daughter were searching for the right place for the daughter's wedding about four years ago.

"When we walked into St. Joseph's we all had goosebumps and knew this was the place," the mother explains. For the last three years Kathie, too, has been a volunteer here. Fittingly, she helps with wedding planning.

The statues are certainly a prominent part of the Shrine, and they are there in greater numbers than in most churches. The members of the Holy Family, evangelists, Jesuit saints and other prominent figures in Catholic history can be found throughout the Shrine. A wooden replica of the Pieta is featured in the rear of the church.

It is a beautiful place that inspires people to return again and again. It is where miracles can come true if one believes strongly enough. The men and women who rebuilt the Shrine of St. Joseph believed, and the proof is in this St. Louis treasure.

St. Francis Xavier College Church; St. Louis, Missouri

St. Francis Xavier College Church is a [Catholic](#) church in the [Midtown](#) neighborhood of [St. Louis, Missouri](#), United States. The church was built by the [Society of Jesus](#) in 1836; the current building dates from 1884. It serves as a parish church in the [Archdiocese of St. Louis](#) and for the [Saint Louis University](#) community. It is a [contributing property](#) in the [Midtown Historic District](#) on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) and it is listed as a [City Landmark](#) in St. Louis.

The parish was established in 1836 when St. Louis Bishop [Joseph Rosati, C.M.](#) permitted the Jesuits to establish a parish at their college. It was St. Louis' first English-speaking parish. The congregation initially met in the college's student chapel, which was dedicated to St. [Aloysius Gonzaga](#). The chapel was located on Washington Avenue between Ninth and Tenth Streets. As the parish grew, plans for its own building were begun. The [cornerstone](#) for the first church was laid on April 12, 1840, by Bishop Rosati. It was located at the intersection of Ninth Street and Christy (Lucas) Avenue. While from its beginning the church was dedicated to St. [Francis Xavier](#) it has always been popularly called the College Church.

Saint Louis University moved to its present location on Grand Boulevard in 1867. Archbishop [Peter Richard Kenrick](#) gave permission in 1879 for the College Church to move to the new campus. Plans for the current church were drawn up by St. Louis architect Thomas Walsh. He had previously designed DuBourg Hall, which served as the only university building for several years. Excavation for the new church began on June 8, 1884, and the cornerstone was laid by Coadjutor Archbishop [Patrick J. Ryan](#). He was assisted by Bishops [William H. Gross, C.Ss.R.](#) of [Savannah](#) and [Joseph Dwenger, C.Pp.S.](#) of [Fort Wayne](#). By the end of the year, the lower church was completed and a roof built over it. It served the parish as its church until the upper church was completed.

The upper church was built as finances allowed. The original architect, Walsh, died before it could be built. Henry C. Bronsgeest, S.J., the parish pastor, hired [Chicago](#) architect Henry Switzer to complete the church. Bronsgeest had the upper church modeled after [St. Colman's Cathedral](#) in [Cobh, Ireland](#). The church was completed in 1898, with the exception of the [spire](#) on top of the tower. It was completed in 1914 and bells were placed in the tower at the same time. The windows were created by Emil Frei Jr., and they were installed from 1929 to 1938. George and Anna Backer provided the funding for the windows.

St. Francis Xavier bears all the elements of American Gothic Revival. It mixes French and English influences in a city where the German is often so omnipresent. The most striking features of the interior are the solid pink Missouri granite columns that seem to effortlessly hold up the weight of the walls of the nave, the central worship space of the church. Above the soaring Gothic pointed arches, the triforium, or balcony, anchors circular quatrefoil, "four-leafed" stained glass windows. There are no flying buttresses in this church, so the windows of the clerestory are small, like those of most St. Louis churches.

The weightlessness of the walls is aided by the soaring groin vaulting, which is one of the most elegant examples in St. Louis. As in most churches here, the vaulting is wood, not stone, so the load on the walls is lighter, looking like hull of a huge ship from the top side. But the fan vaulting, done in a style known as *tiercerons*, inserts more ribs between the expanses of stone or wood, thereby making the structure stronger. Gilding on the ribs emphasizes the way the building functions structurally, a favorite trick of Gothic architects.

Filling those large windows, particularly the giant lancet windows behind the *reredos* in the apse behind the high altar, are more of the beautiful creations of Emil Frei and Associates. Inspired by the rich colors, particularly the blues, of Chartres Cathedral's windows, the stained glass is among the most beautiful anywhere in the United States.

Likewise, most impressive are the two relief sculptures by the German American sculptor Joseph Sibbel. Training in Cincinnati under the Italian American sculptor Louis Rebisso, Sibbel absorbed the influences of the Renaissance and Baroque, which he then applied to his work in St. Francis Xavier and other Roman Catholic churches around America. The relief sculptures anchor the ends of the aisles flanking the *reredos* of the high altar, the left entitled *Our Lady, Comforter of the Afflicted (The Virgin Mary)*, and the right *The Death of St. Joseph*, both believed to be carved out of Carrara marble from Italy. Sibbel's handling of the marble is impressive, showing an understanding of Bernini, the Jesuits' sculptor friend from the 17th century, but also a sensitivity that dampens any Baroque flamboyance. The Virgin's shroud is sculpted delicately enough to be translucent, with light shining through ever so slightly.

The church underwent a necessary renovation in 1990 though done with historical sensitivity and skill. Currently, more Wedding Masses are annually celebrated here than any other church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. Two recent principal historical dates include the visit here of St. John Paul II in 1999 and the tremendous prayer outpouring here on September 11, 2001: hours after the Twin Center bombings with fourteen hundred of the faithful attending the Noon Mass that day.

Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis; St. Louis, Missouri

The Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis, also known as the Saint Louis Cathedral or the New Cathedral, is a [Catholic cathedral](#) in the [Central West End](#) neighborhood of [St. Louis, Missouri](#). Completed in 1914, it is the mother church of the [Archdiocese of St. Louis](#) and the seat of Archbishop [Mitchell T. Rozanski](#). The cathedral is named for [Saint Louis](#) and was designated a [basilica](#) by [Pope John Paul II](#) in 1997.

The cathedral was built as a replacement for the previous cathedral, the [Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France](#), located along the [Mississippi River](#). Although workers began clearing ground for the building on May 1, 1907, dedication of the cathedral and its first Mass did not take place until October 18, 1914, when the superstructure was complete. Consecration of the church took place more than a decade later on June 29, 1926. The church is known for its large [mosaic](#) installation (which is one of the largest in the Western Hemisphere), and for its burial crypts.

Planning for the cathedral began under the authority of Archbishop [Peter Richard Kenrick](#) in the 1870s and 1880s, and a fund was created for the construction of the building by Archbishop [John Joseph Kain](#). A formal organization promoting the new cathedral was

created on April 28, 1871, and among the members of the St. Louis Cathedral Building Association were Archbishop Kenrick, Bishop [Patrick John Ryan](#), and a variety of local businessmen. Initial site selection indicated that the new cathedral would be built on a city block bounded by 22nd and 23rd streets, and by Pine and Chestnut streets, at a location east of the actual construction site.

However, the initiative for construction was only begun after the elevation of Archbishop [John J. Glennon](#). The architecture firm of [Barnett, Haynes & Barnett](#) was selected, and [Thomas P. Barnett](#) led the design team for the project. A ceremony was conducted on May 1, 1907, for the groundbreaking of the site, and a formal laying of the building's cornerstone took place on October 18, 1908. By 1914, enough of the building was complete for a dedication ceremony, yet full consecration did not take place until June 29, 1926. Even after consecration, completion of the cathedral's mosaics was not accomplished until 1988.

On December 20, 1943, a [Solemn Pontifical Mass](#) of [Requiem](#) was offered for [Butch O'Hare](#), US Navy fighter pilot and [Medal of Honor](#) winner.

The grounds of the cathedral also contain the distinctive circular Chancery Building, c. 1965, designed by the Peruvian-American modernist architect [Wenceslaus Sarmiento](#).

In 1912, installation of mosaics in the interior began. Completed in 1988, the mosaics collectively contain 41.5 million glass [tesserae](#) pieces in more than 7,000 colors. Covering 83,000 square feet, it is the largest mosaic collection in the world.

While the mosaics in the side chapels and sanctuary walls were designed and installed by [Tiffany Studios](#), the mosaics in the main cathedral areas were designed by August Oetken. Installation of the mosaics was completed by dozens of artisans, including [Hildreth Meiere](#), Ravenna Mosaic, Inc., and especially the father and son team, Paul and Arno Heuduck, who worked on the mosaic for nearly their entire working lives, and [Emil Frei, Inc.](#), of St. Louis. The [narthex](#) of the church depicts the life of King [Louis IX of France](#), namesake of the city and church, the rear dome includes mosaics of significant archdiocesan events, while the main dome by [Jan Henryk de Rosen](#) depicts [Biblical](#) scenes from both the [Old Testament](#) and [New Testament](#).

The church [basement](#) contains a [museum](#) dedicated to the mosaics in the church as well as to some of the other [artifacts](#) found within the cathedral. Also in the church undercroft is a [chapel](#) dedicated to the souls of former leaders of the Archdiocese. Currently, [Cardinals John J. Glennon](#), [Joseph Ritter](#), and [John Carberry](#), as well as [Archbishop John L. May](#), are buried in the cathedral's [crypt](#).

In 1999, a 14-foot high, welded stainless steel sculpture by [Wiktor Szostalo](#) was installed on the side lawn of the church. The sculpture was a gift from Adelaide Schlafly in memory of her late husband, Daniel Schlafly, a Catholic layman who was dedicated to the cause of racial justice and peace. It features a winged angel with African-American features, standing behind three children with Hispanic, Asian and European features, playing a song of peace on their instruments. The statue's base is of granite and is inscribed with quotations from the New Testament, Pope John Paul II, and [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) The sculpture emphasizes a theme of harmony, peace, and racial justice, according to Auxiliary Bishop [Edward Braxton](#), who suggested the project to Archbishop [Justin Rigali](#).

The statue was vandalized and destroyed by a 35-year-old man, who tampered with construction equipment being used for renovations on the cathedral on September 17, 2024. The man was arrested and being held without bond for first degree tampering, first degree property damage, unlawful use of a weapon, as he was suspected of firing into an unoccupied vehicle, and resisting arrest.

The cathedral has a large organ that was originally built by Geo. Kilgen and Son, Inc., in 1915. Originally, the organ had two four-manual (keyboard) [organ consoles](#), one in the gallery with the organ, and another console behind the sanctuary. In 1946, Kilgen put a new organ into the cathedral. The 1946 organ had 77 ranks of pipes, 14 of which came from the older organ. In 1948, an Echo Organ from Carnegie Hall, New York City was installed in the cathedral. In 1984, the [M. P. Moller](#) organ company refurbished the organ.

In 1997 the [Wicks Organ Company](#) of nearby [Highland, Illinois](#), began a restoration project. They added more ranks of pipes, which brought the organ to 96 ranks of pipes. The company also added some digital stops to the organ. A new four-manual organ console replaced the old Kilgen console behind the sanctuary, and the second gallery console was refurbished. Wicks also updated the organ's electronics.

In the winter of 2002 the gallery organ was expanded, and a new dome division of pipes was added to the organ. The final step in the project, the replacement of the original gallery console (and a smaller, two-manual console that took its place) with a five-manual console was completed in 2010. The Ragen Organ Console, named for its donor, Professor Brian Abel Ragen, was taken from St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City and completely restored. It is now possible to control every part of the organ from either the gallery console or the moveable sanctuary console.

The original Kilgen console was moved into the basement museum, and can be viewed by visitors. The gallery organ is featured on many of Saint Louis's cultural tours.

Saint Louis Art Museum; St. Louis, Missouri

The Saint Louis Art Museum (SLAM) is an [art museum](#) located in [St. Louis](#), Missouri, United States. With [paintings](#), [sculptures](#), cultural objects, and ancient masterpieces from around the world, its three-story building stands in [Forest Park](#) in [St. Louis](#), Missouri, where it is visited by up to a half million people every year. Admission is free through a subsidy from the cultural tax district for St. Louis City and County.

In addition to the featured exhibitions, the museum offers rotating exhibitions and installations. These include the *Currents* series, which features contemporary artists, as well as regular exhibitions of new media art and works on paper.

The museum's origins date to 1879, when the Saint Louis School and Museum of Fine Arts was founded as part of [Washington University](#). The nascent museum was housed in a building [Wayman Crow](#) commissioned of Boston architects [Peabody and Stearns](#) as a memorial to his son, Wayman Crow Jr. The structure was located at 19th and Lucas Place (now Locust Street). The school, led by director [Halsey Ives](#), offered studio and art history instruction supported by a museum collection.

When the 1904 [Louisiana Purchase Exposition](#) closed, the museum and school moved from the Peabody-Stearns structure to [Cass Gilbert](#)'s Palace of Fine Arts building. After the museum's move, the Peabody-Stearns building rapidly fell into disrepair and was eventually demolished in 1919.

During the 1950s, the museum added an extension to include an [auditorium](#) for films, concerts, and lectures. Director [Charles Guggenheim](#)'s *An American Museum (1959)* debuted in the new auditorium space as a 50th anniversary event.

In 1971, efforts to secure the museum's financial future led voters in St. Louis City and County to approve the creation of the [Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District](#) (ZMD). This expanded the tax base for the 1908 tax to include St. Louis County. In 1972, the museum was again renamed, to the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Today, the museum is supported financially by the tax, donations from individuals and public associations, sales in the Museum Shop, and foundation support.

Plans to expand the museum, which existed in the 1995 [Forest Park](#) Master Plan and the museum's 2000 Strategic Plan, began in earnest in 2005, when the museum board selected the British architect Sir [David Chipperfield](#) to design the expansion; Michel Desvigne was selected as [landscape architect](#). The St. Louis-based firm, [Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum](#) (HOK) was the architect of record to work with the construction team.

On November 5, 2007, museum officials released the design plans to the public and hosted public conversations about those plans. A model of the new building was displayed in the museum's Sculpture Hall throughout the construction project. In 2008, citing the declining state of the economy, the museum announced that it would delay the start of the expansion, whose cost was then estimated at \$125 million.

Construction began in 2009; the museum remained open. The expansion added more than 224,000 square feet (20,800 m²) of gallery space, including an underground garage, within the lease lines of the property. Money for the project was raised through private gifts to the capital campaign from individuals, foundations and corporations, and from proceeds from the sale of tax-exempt bonds. The fundraising campaign covered the \$130-million cost of construction and a \$31.2 million increase to the museum's endowment to support incremental costs of operating the larger facility. The expanded facility opened in the summer of 2013.

The collection of the Saint Louis Art Museum contains more than 34,000 objects dating from antiquity to the present. The collection is divided into nine areas: [American](#); [Ancient](#) and [Egyptian](#); [Africa](#), [Oceania](#), [Americas](#); [Asian](#); [Decorative Arts](#) and Design; [European](#) to 1800; [Islamic](#); [Modern](#) and [Contemporary](#); [Prints](#), [Drawings](#), and [Photographs](#).

The modern art collection includes works by the European masters [Matisse](#), [Gauguin](#), [Monet](#), [Picasso](#), [Corrado Giaquinto](#), [Giambattista Pittoni](#) and [Van Gogh](#). The museum's particularly strong collection of 20th-century German paintings includes the world's largest [Max Beckmann](#) collection, which includes *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery*. In recent years, the museum has been actively acquiring post-war German art to complement its Beckmanns, such as works by [Joseph Beuys](#), [Gerhard Richter](#), [Martin Kippenberger](#), [Sigmar Polke](#), and [Anselm Kiefer](#). The collection also includes [Chuck Close](#)'s *Keith* (1970).

The collections of [Oceanic](#) and [Mesoamerican](#) works, as well as handwoven [Turkish rugs](#), are among the finest in the world. The museum holds the [Egyptian mummy](#) *Amen-Nestawy-Nakht*, and two mummies on loan from Washington University, Padi-menekh and [Henut-wedjebu](#). Its collection of American artists includes the largest U.S.-museum collection of paintings by [George Caleb Bingham](#).

The collection contains at least six pieces that Nazis confiscated from their own museums as degenerate. These include [Max Beckmann](#)'s "Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery" which came to the museum through a New York art dealer, [Curt Valentin](#), who

specialized in [Nazi confiscations](#), and Matisse's "Bathers with a Turtle" which [Joseph Pulitzer](#) purchased at the [Galerie Fischer auction](#) held in the Grand Hôtel National, Lucerne, Switzerland, June 30, 1939.

In the context of the museum's 2013 expansion, British artist [Andy Goldsworthy](#) created *Stone Sea*, a site-specific work for a narrow space between the old and new buildings. Twenty-five tightly packed, ten-foot-high arches made of native limestone rise in a sunken courtyard. The artist was inspired by the fact that the sedimentary rock was formed when the region was a shallow sea in Prehistoric times.

In 2021, the museum received a promised gift of 22 paintings and sculptures from the collection of the American curator and philanthropist Emily Rauh Pulitzer, the widow of the media heir [Joseph Pulitzer Jr.](#) The donation includes works by 17 European and American artists, including [Pablo Picasso](#), [Georges Braque](#), [Constantin Brâncuși](#), [Joan Miró](#), [Philip Guston](#), [Ellsworth Kelly](#) and others.

Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles; Ava, Missouri

The Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles, are a [Benedictine](#) order of nuns founded by Sr. [Mary Wilhelmina Lancaster](#), OSB, in [Gower, Missouri](#). The nuns are also choral singers, and their first two albums of recorded chants and hymns reached number one on the classical traditional [Billboard charts](#). They were thereafter named *Billboard's* Classical Traditional artists of the year in 2013, the first community of nuns to win an award in the history of [Billboard](#).

Their album sales have been used to improve the monastery and pay off the abbey's debt. The community also attends [Mass](#) in the [traditional form](#) and prays the 1962 [Monastic Breviary](#).

The community was established in 1995 as a small order of [Benedictine nuns](#) under the auspices of the [Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter](#), who are based in [Scranton, Pennsylvania](#). They were founded by Sr. [Mary Wilhelmina Lancaster](#) OSB, an African-American nun formerly part of the [Oblate Sisters of Providence](#) (founded by Mother [Mary Lange](#) in 1829 as the first-ever black religious order in America).

Wilhelmina had found her traditional tastes incompatible with the Oblates' changing ethos, and decided to start her own community. Her new group of sisters were originally called the [Oblates](#) of [Mary](#), Queen of Apostles, and began following a monastic horarium defined in the [Rule of Saint Benedict](#), and [chanting](#) the [Divine Office](#) in Latin according to the 1962 *Breviarium Monasticum*. Wilhelmina's body was found to be [incorruptible](#) in 2023, and have since been moved to a glass box in the church where a steady stream of pilgrims have continued to visit.

Upon his arrival in the [Diocese of Kansas City-Saint Joseph](#) in 2005, Bishop [Robert Finn](#) said that [vocations](#) to the priesthood and [religious](#) life would be seen as a "super-priority" for his diocese. In March 2006, Finn invited the order to his diocese. The nuns relocated to [Gower, Missouri](#) and were established as a public [association of the faithful](#) with the new name "Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles". In September 2018, its priory was raised to an [abbey](#) and their new abbey church was consecrated by Bishop Robert Finn. Mother Cecilia was the first abbess to receive the abbatial blessing according to the traditional [Pontificale](#) in the United States.

In 2019, the order has expanded with eight nuns coming to [Ava, Missouri](#). In 2021 the Benedictines bought a land to build a new monastery of St. Joseph with a Fathers Shrine. The nuns moved into the priory in 2024. In the same year, the Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles expanded outside of the US after one of the sisters was refused a green card and was sent to stay in Europe with two other nuns. [Archbishop Longley](#), having been informed of the situation, proposed that the Benedictines settle in his diocese permanently. Answering the bishop's offer, they acquired the closed Benedictine [Colwich Abbey](#), the monastery founded by [Thomas More's](#) great-great-granddaughter. In 2024 they were also invited by [Bishop Siegel](#) into their third location in the United States, that is [Evansville, Indiana](#), the monastery of St. Anne that was previously used by Poor Clares.

The nuns sing together daily, typically for five hours per day, as part of their daily life of prayer. The group have released a number of recordings of their songs. Their debut recording *Advent At Ephesus*, released at the end of 2012, reached number 2 on Billboard's Classical Traditional Music Chart and number 14 on the Classical Music Overall Chart. They were named Billboard's Classical Traditional Artist 2012 and 2013, the first order of nuns to win an award in the history of Billboard magazine.

Both their first two albums of their recorded chants and hymns reached number 1 on the classical traditional [Billboard charts](#) in 2013. As of 9 August 2013, the group's second album *Angels and Saints at Ephesus* reached the number 1 position on the Billboard traditional classical albums chart for 13 weeks, a record duration on that chart since 2006. As of July 2013, the album also reached number 3 on Billboard's Bestselling Internet Album Chart, number 7 on its Contemporary Christian and Christian Gospel charts, and number 127 on the "[Billboard 200](#)" weekly ranking of the 200 highest-selling music albums and EPs in the United States. The album has sold 49,000 copies in the United States as of February 2015.

Album sales have been used to improve the monastery and pay off the abbey's debt. The music was [arranged](#) by the abbess Mother Cecilia as of 2014.

Sister Mary Wilhelmina Lancaster, OSB; Ava, Missouri (Burial Site Incorrupt Body)

Mary Wilhelmina Lancaster, OSB (born Mary Elizabeth Lancaster; April 13, 1924 – May 29, 2019), [in religion](#) Mary Wilhelmina of the Most Holy Rosary, was an [African-American Catholic](#) nun who founded the [Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles](#). Her remains were examined and determined to be [incorrupt](#), following an exhumation in May 2023. She was previously a member of the [Oblate Sisters of Providence](#).

Mary Wilhelmina was born Mary Elizabeth Lancaster on April 13, 1924 in [St. Louis, Missouri](#). She was a descendent of enslaved African-Americans from [Ste. Genevieve, Missouri](#). She joined the [Oblate Sisters of Providence](#), a congregation of black [religious sisters](#) in [Baltimore, Maryland](#), when she was 17 years old and adopted the name Wilhelmina. After joining the congregation, Lancaster was a schoolteacher in the eastern United States for over 50 years.

In 1995, at the age of 71, disturbed by what she saw as the [modernistic](#) loosening of standards and lax observance of the Rule of the Oblate Sisters of Providence, she left and founded the [Benedictines of Mary, Queen of Apostles](#) in [Scranton, Pennsylvania](#). In 2005, the sisters' community, which attends the [Tridentine Mass](#) and prays using the 1962 edition of the [Roman Breviary](#), moved to [Gower, Missouri](#). They are well known for their [Billboard chart](#)-topping albums of [Gregorian chant](#).

Four years after her death, the Benedictine Sisters exhumed Lancaster's body on the [feast](#) of [Louis de Montfort](#) (who greatly influenced [Mariology](#)), so her remains could be re-interred in their church. The sisters expected to find bones, but after a few days of digging, they lifted up the simple wooden coffin and quickly noticed a massive crack down the middle of the lid. On opening the coffin, [prioress](#) of the order, Mother Cecilia, discovered their foundress' remains and [religious habit](#) were almost perfectly intact. Jack Klein, owner of Hixson-Klein Funeral Home in Gower and issuer of her [death certificate](#) in 2019, confirmed Lancaster was not embalmed and that the wood coffin was not placed into any outer burial container. As such, she was regarded by many as [incorrupt](#), traditionally a sign of sainthood.

Since Lancaster's body was enshrined in glass within the abbey church in 2023, a steady stream of pilgrims has visited her remains by the thousands. In 2024, the [Diocese of Kansas City–Saint Joseph](#) published the results of an investigation of her body, finding an atypical lack of [decomposition](#). Nevertheless, the bishop declined at the time to open a cause for sainthood.

Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey; Hulbert, Oklahoma

In the 1970s, at the University of Kansas, three professors inaugurated a Great Books program (Pearson Integrated Humanities Program, or PIHP) with a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Through their study of Western Civilization, a number of these students became interested in monastic life and found their way to Notre-Dame de Fontgombault Abbey in France. Some entered the novitiate, hoping to be part of a new monastic foundation in America some day.

When the American university students arrived at the French abbey, they found it flourishing with many vocations, despite the crisis of vocations going on almost everywhere else. There were so many vocations that Fontgombault had to found new monasteries. As the American novices needed to get a solid formation, the project to found in America was put off for many years, but not forgotten.

Beginning in 1991, Dom Antoine Forgeot, abbot of Notre-Dame de Fontgombault Abbey, began to make exploratory trips to the United States, accompanied by Dom Francis Bethel. After visiting many sites in several states and after many hesitations, a property was found in 1998, in the diocese of Tulsa, Oklahoma, that struck the abbot and many others as very well suited for the American foundation. It was a ranch located along Clear Creek. The idea was approved by the Chapter of the French abbey and on the feast of the Assumption of that same year 1998, a charter was signed between the abbot of Fontgombault and the bishop of Tulsa formally recognizing the existence of the new foundation.

On September 15, 1999, the main group of founders arrived in Oklahoma by plane from France. A pilot group had preceded them to get things set up to receive the main body of founders. On the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, February 11, 2000, the little Priory of Our Lady of Clear Creek was officially inaugurated in the presence of Bishop Edward J. Slattery of Tulsa, of Bishop Basil Meeking of Christchurch, New Zealand, of Abbot Antoine Forgeot, and of a host of priests and friends of the new community.

The first monastery was established, partially, in a large log cabin and, partially, in a barn and stable, where the previous owners had kept their saddle horses. The horse stalls became monastic cells, and the barn became the first chapel. Small wooden tool sheds were added as additional cells for new postulants as they arrived. Larger accommodations had to be provided for. A professor of Notre Dame University, Thomas Gordon Smith, was selected to be the new monastery's architect, and plans were drawn up for a spacious monastery of Romanesque inspiration to be built of stone and brick on a hill above Clear Creek.

By the morning of January 2, 2008, much had been accomplished. In 2003 a stone bridge had been erected over Little Clear Creek; the foundations for the church and a residence building had been poured; the first stone had been blessed by the bishop of Tulsa. Then, in 2007, the crypt of the church and the first residential building had been completed. It was time to move into the permanent monastery. Despite the cold temperature that morning (12 degrees F.), an army of monks, neighbors, and friends, driving every imaginable type of vehicle, was on the move, under the guidance of a monk with a walkie-talkie. Teams in trucks and tractors took load after load up to the community's new site. By the end of the day the monks were entirely exhausted, but the monastery was installed in its new and definitive home (at least this side of Heaven). On May 12th of the same year, Bishop Slattery and a great number of friends were on hand for the blessing of the new monastery.

Once installed in its definitive location, the community continued to grow. On February 10, 2010, having gathered the community in the Chapter Room, Dom Antoine Forgeot, abbot of Notre-Dame de Fontgombault, announced to the monks the canonical elevation of the simple Priory of Our Lady of Clear Creek to the status of abbey sui juris. The next day, feast of Our Lady of Lourdes, Father Philip Anderson was named the first abbot of Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey. The blessing of the new abbot took place on the following April 10th.

Thanks to a large gift received in 2009, construction on the church was able to move forward in 2011. The west façade, the nave, and the transept were raised to half their intended height. A roof was put over this new structure, allowing it to be used already as a church. In 2013 the schematic architectural plans for the remaining buildings were completed. A contract for the construction of the church's eastern portion, or chevet, was signed on March 10, 2016. A year later, on March 20, 2017, we began using the upper church for Mass and Offices when the temperature allows.

On May 17, 2021, work began on the Eastern Residence building. This new wing of the Abbey contains the Sacristy, Chapter House, Infirmary, and many cells for the monks. This much-needed building will enable the community to grow and care for their elderly members. For the last few months of construction, the monks have been assisting the contractors in the painting of interior walls and tiling of the floors. The Bishop of Tulsa blessed the new residence in January 2023, and we soon thereafter moved in.

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception; Memphis, Tennessee

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is a [Catholic cathedral](#) in [Memphis, Tennessee](#), in the United States. It is the seat of the [Diocese of Memphis](#).

The predecessor to the cathedral, Immaculate Conception Parish, was founded in 1921. A church and school building was built at that time. It was replaced by a larger church building in 1938. When the Diocese of Memphis was erected in 1971, Immaculate Conception Church became Immaculate Conception Cathedral. The cathedral underwent a major renovation in 2001.

Immaculate Conception parish was established by Bishop [Thomas Sebastian Byrne](#) of the [Diocese of Nashville](#) in 1921. It was the ninth parish in Memphis. Monsignor Dennis J. Murphy was appointed as the parish's first pastor. He built a three-story brick building that served as a combination church and school. It continues to serve the parish today as its school building. The [Sisters of Mercy](#) provided the school's first faculty.

Construction of the present church building was begun in 1927. Richard J. Regan of Regan and Weller Architects was chosen to design the church. The lower crypt was initially built and used as the church for ten years before the upper church was built. The church was dedicated on July 31, 1938. The parish's second pastor, Monsignor Francis D. Grady, completed the decorative design work on the church's interior. Monsignor Merlin F. Kearney built the high school buildings east of the church during the 1950s and 1960s. [Immaculate Conception High School](#) for girls was also begun at this time.

[Pope Paul VI](#) established the Diocese of Memphis on January 6, 1971. Immaculate Conception was named as the new diocese's cathedral. The parish buildings are [contributing properties](#) in the [Central Gardens Historic District](#), which was listed on the [National Register of Historic Places](#) in 1982. A major renovation of the cathedral was completed in 2001; the cathedral was rededicated by Bishop [J. Terry Steib](#) on December 8th of that year. In 2011, there were 800 families belonging to the parish and 430 students enrolled in the school.

The cathedral is a [Spanish Colonial Revival](#) style structure. It is cruciform in shape, and measures 173 by 106 feet (53 by 32 m). The steel structure is covered with buff brick trimmed with [Indiana limestone](#). The main [facade](#) features three round arch entrance portals, a [rose window](#), and a stone cross on the central [pediment](#). Two towers flank the main facade. They are capped with copper covered domes surmounted with a cross; the domes reach a height of 115 feet (35 m). There are two other rose windows, one in each [transept](#).

St. Peter Church; Memphis, Tennessee

St. Peter Catholic Church, located on the corner of B.B. King Boulevard and Adams Avenue in downtown Memphis, Tennessee, traces its origins to the fall of 1840 when Bishop Richard Miles, O.P., the first Bishop of Nashville, appointed Father Michael McAleer as the first pastor of St. Peter. Just one year after the first Catholic Mass was celebrated in the parlor of the adjacent Magevny House, the parish opened its doors. The oldest Roman Catholic parish in the region, the present structure is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Memphis.

On October 29, 1841, John S. Claybrook, trustee of Judge John Overton's estate, conveyed block 409 of the original plan of Memphis to Bishop Miles. As a partial donation, the price was made a nominal \$500, which was generously subscribed by a number of Protestant Memphians as a gift to the Catholic community. In the summer of 1842, a brick church, 30 by 70 feet, was begun. It was completed the following year, reportedly at a cost of \$5000. Rev. Joseph Sadoc Alemany, O.P. was named the new pastor in 1846. He later became the first Bishop of Monterey, California, and, finally, was appointed as the first archbishop of San Francisco. The Dominican Order has served continuously at St. Peter since 1846.

Construction of the present church began in 1852 around the intact older original sanctuary and was completed in 1855. Once built, parts of the original church were dismantled and carried out the doors, piece by piece. The new church was dedicated by Bishop Miles in 1858.

With its vaulted ceilings, Gothic characteristics and upward thrusting arches, St. Peter Church is a historical masterpiece and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Designed by Patrick Charles Keely, an eminent architect, the church's beautiful, stained-glass windows narrate the events in the life of Christ and several saints. The beauty of the church is magnified by the Casavant Organ located in the choir loft.

The church has had multiple expansions throughout its many years, beginning with the construction of the present rectory in 1873, followed by the addition of the Crystal Room and former chapel in 1891. In 2001, a new 3-story building added six classrooms, parish hall with kitchen, choir room and other meeting facilities, all handicapped accessible.

A new chapel houses the national [Shrine of St. Martin de Porres](#), a sixteenth-century Dominican and the patron saint of social justice. The Shrine is open daily for prayer and also sponsors various events throughout the year.

St. Mary's Church; Memphis, Tennessee

St. Mary's Catholic Church, founded in 1852, is the second oldest Catholic church in Memphis. Originally established to serve German-speaking immigrants who felt out of place at the Irish-oriented St. Peter's, it remains a landmark of the historic [Pinch District](#).

Construction of the current building at 155 Market St began during the Civil War. The cornerstone was laid on September 30, 1864, with a salute fired by Union soldiers. The church was officially dedicated on October 30, 1870.

Yellow Fever Heroism: During the devastating epidemics of 1873, 1878, and 1879, the church and its monastery served as a hospital. Five Franciscan friars gave their lives while nursing the sick during this time.

It was added to the [National Register of Historic Places](#) on August 7, 1974.

Designed by Memphis architect James B. Cook in the Gothic Revival style, the building features:

Hand-Carved Details: The pews and choir loft were hand-carved by itinerant Franciscan monks, and the wood for the altar was shipped directly from Germany.

Grotto of Lourdes: Built in 1875, this is a replica of the famous shrine in France and is the only Catholic grotto in Tennessee.

Mysterious Art: A pencil sketch of the face of Jesus, drawn by a Franciscan nun many years ago, remains on an upstairs wall.

The parish has a long legacy of social service: Oldest Soup Kitchen: The church operates what is considered the oldest soup kitchen in the United States, dating back to the 1860s or 70s, currently serving about 300 meals daily to those in need.

Educational Firsts: It established the first parochial high school in Tennessee.

St. Patrick Church; Memphis, Tennessee

Established in 1866, St. Patrick Catholic Church is the third-oldest Catholic parish in Memphis. Originally founded to serve the city's growing Irish immigrant population, the parish is now recognized for its "radical mission" and progressive outreach in the heart of downtown.

Key Historical Milestones

- **Foundation (1866):** Father Matthew Riordan founded the parish to support Irish settlers. Uniquely, he established a parish school before the church building was even finished.
- **Early Resilience:** The community survived three yellow fever epidemics in the 1870s, the Great Depression, and two world wars.
- **The Current Building (1904–1907):** Construction on the present Romanesque-style church began in 1904. It was dedicated in 1907 as a combined church and school building, with the school on the first floor and the sanctuary on the second.
- **Civil Rights Movement (1968):** During the Memphis Sanitation Strike, the church became a "nerve center" for justice. It served as a support site and food hall for workers and victims of racial violence.
- **Decision to Stay:** In the 1970s, while many downtown congregations migrated to the suburbs, St. Patrick's Paulist Fathers and parishioners made a defining choice to remain and serve the poor and marginalized in the inner city.
- **Modern Mission and Community Outreach:** Today, the church is known for its extensive social responsibility programs:
Affordable Housing: The St. Patrick Community Development Corporation builds and remodels homes for low-income residents.
Education: After closing for nearly a century, the parish school reopened in 2002 as a Diocesan Jubilee School.

Fathers of Mercy Religious Order; Auburn, Alabama (Location Headquarters)

The Fathers of Mercy is a Marian Congregation of Priests of Pontifical Rite. It was founded in 1808, originally under the title of the “Missionaries of France.” The community’s purpose was the re-evangelization of the French people after the Catholic Faith had been subjected to years of attacks and persecution during the French Revolution.

Pope Gregory XVI placed the Fathers of Mercy under the patronage of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary when he approved this religious community. As a Marian Congregation, each of its members pray the Rosary daily, end all spiritual exercises with the ancient prayer, the “Sub Tuum”, and consecrate themselves each year to the Blessed Virgin Mary. The community holds firmly to the devotion of the Immaculate Conception and believes that the special favors, of which they are unworthy, are due to this special devotion.

The members profess the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. They are committed to the propagation of the Faith and the salvation of souls through the primary Apostolate of preaching parish missions, as well as ministering to those in rural or neglected areas, as they endeavor to manifest the image of the Merciful Father to God’s prodigal children. A parish mission is a five-night spiritual renewal for a church, which includes Eucharistic adoration, the preaching of repentance and catechesis, and the hearing of confessions. As Fr. Rauzan, our founder, observed, “The missions seem to be one of the most efficacious means to bring people back to the principles of religion and wisdom, rare things these days.” Pope John Paul II adds that “the traditional parish mission apparently abandoned too readily is without a substitute for the periodic and vigorous renewal of the Christian life and must be restored and innovated.” The community also staffs multiple religious locations that are in great need of sacramental care.

The community is now headquartered only in America, where the Motherhouse is located a few miles outside of Bowling Green, Kentucky.

Chapel of Divine Mercy; Auburn, Alabama (Motherhouse)

Solemnly dedicated in 2008, this Romanesque style Chapel was built as the primary oratory of the Fathers of Mercy. With the mixture of murals and colors, the Chapel of Divine Mercy expresses the Mercy of God through its many features which also accentuate the charism and apostolate of the Fathers of Mercy.

Mother Angelica; Foundress of Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN), Irondale, Alabama (Headquarters)

Mary Angelica of the Annunciation, [PCPA](#) (born Rita Antoinette Rizzo; April 20, 1923–March 27, 2016), commonly referred to as "Mother Angelica," was an [American Catholic](#) nun of the [Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration](#).

She was known for founding the Eternal Word Television Network ([EWTN](#)), an international [Catholic](#) cable television network, on which she hosted the program *Mother Angelica Live*. She also established [WEWN](#), a radio network used by members of the Catholic Church to disseminate its religious teachings.

In 1981, Mother Angelica began broadcasting religious programming from a converted garage in [Birmingham, Alabama](#). Over the following two decades, she expanded the operation into a global media network that included television, radio, internet platforms, and print publications. She continued to host shows on EWTN until 2001, when she had a [stroke](#). She remained in the [cloistered](#) monastery in [Hanceville](#), Alabama, until she died in 2016.

Mother Angelica was born Rita Antoinette Rizzo on April 20, 1923, in [Canton, Ohio](#). Canton's southeast area, where her family lived, was then known as the city's [red-light district](#). This neighborhood was largely inhabited by both [Black](#) residents and Italian immigrants employed in the Canton mills. Italian immigrants in the area experienced challenges related to social mobility, including high rates of illiteracy, and extortion by the [Black Hand](#). The neighborhood was also associated with corruption and mob-related violence. Catholic priests at St. Anthony's Church sought to improve the lives of the local population.

Rita was of [Italian-American](#) descent and the only child of John Rizzo, a [tailor](#), and Mae Helen Rizzo (*née* Gianfrancesco). She was born at 1029 Liberty Street, the residence of her maternal grandparents, Mary and Anthony Gianfresco. Anthony had emigrated from [Naples](#), Italy, first settling in [Colorado](#) before moving to Ohio and marrying Mary Votolato. Anthony assisted new Italian immigrants with clothing and employment, while Mary provided food to them. Their daughter Mae married John at the age of 22, against the advice of her parents, who disapproved of him. According to later accounts, John had expressed anger on learning that Mae was pregnant. When Rita was baptized at five months of age, her mother brought her to the side altar of Our Lady of Sorrows and handed her over in a symbolic gesture. The family of John and Mae initially lived in a rented house described as infested with [cockroaches](#).

After repeated arguments, Mae began staying at her parents' home, and this became a recurring pattern. Tensions escalated when Mae invited John's mother, Catherine Rizzo, to live with them. Catherine reportedly criticized Mae frequently. By November 1929, John had left the family, relocated to California, and ceased contact with Mae and Rita. Mae and Rita, then age five, returned to the Gianfresco household. On March 10, 1931, Mae was granted full custody of Rita. Although John was ordered to pay five dollars per week in child support, payments were reported to be intermittent. Mae retained custody but struggled with chronic depression and poverty, difficulties that were exacerbated by the societal stigma surrounding divorce and limited economic opportunities for women during the [Great Depression](#).

Between 1933 and 1937, Mae and Rita relocated multiple times to small one-bedroom apartments. These residences typically had a business space at the front and sleeping quarters at the back. Occasionally, when disputes arose between Mae and her mother, Rita stayed with family friends. Due to ongoing financial difficulties, Mae and Rita eventually returned to the Gianfresco household. During their absence, Anthony had suffered a stroke that left him [hemiparetic](#) and reliant on a cane.

Reflecting on this period, Mother Angelica later described the circumstances of her mother and her as similar to those of refugees. She recalled, "We were poor, hungry, and barely surviving on odd jobs until Mother joined the dry-cleaning business as an apprentice to a Jewish tailor in our area. Even then, we pinched pennies simply to keep food on the table."

Rita attended St. Anthony's School, where she later reported a strong dislike for the nuns, describing them as "the meanest people on earth." She attributed their harsh discipline to her status as the child of divorced parents. Mae Rizzo initially withdrew her daughter from the school temporarily, and the withdrawal later became permanent.

At age fourteen, Rita enrolled at [McKinley High School](#) in Canton, where she became one of the school's first drum [majorettes](#). She later stated in an interview that she struggled academically, saying, "I did very poorly in school. I wasn't interested in the capital of Ohio. I was interested in whether my mother had committed suicide that day." Rita did not form close friendships during high school, a circumstance she attributed to her concern that doing so might distress her mother, who viewed competing demands for attention as threatening. Nor did Rita engage in dating, later recalling: "I never had a date, never wanted one. I just didn't have any desire. I suppose having experienced the worst of married life, it was not at all attractive to me."

By the time she began high school, financial constraints necessitated a return to the Gianfresco household, where her two uncles and grandparents also resided. Her grandfather Anthony had experienced a stroke, which intensified his previously volatile temperament. Despite these circumstances, the family had stable housing and consistent meals, and Rita attempted to maintain her academic performance with varying success.

In 1939, Rita began leaving McKinley High School in the afternoons, feeling overwhelmed by the noise and activity of the school environment. She was prescribed calcium and nerve medication to address what was diagnosed as a nervous condition. During this

period, her mother's mental health appeared to deteriorate, and arrangements were made for Mae to stay with a relative in Philadelphia. Rita, however, remained in Canton and experienced feelings of guilt about her mother's absence. She attempted to maintain a routine and earned money by performing baton-twirling. She expressed a persistent fear that her circumstances would not improve and that her mother would not recover.

Rizzo also gave baton lessons and worked in a factory that produced liturgical candles, sending part of her earnings to her mother in Philadelphia. During this time, she missed nearly two months of school near the end of her junior year and failed three subjects. She enrolled in summer school without informing her mother. As a consequence, she had to relinquish her position as drum majorette, a role she had found personally affirming and which had helped her become comfortable in front of crowds.

When her mother returned from Philadelphia, her condition had improved. Rita arranged for her to take the civil service examination, which she passed, and in 1941, Mae secured employment as a bookkeeper, providing her with financial stability and emotional balance. Rita graduated from McKinley High School that same year.

In December 1940, Rizzo experienced an episode of abdominal pain and [diarrhea](#). Her condition persisted, and by early 1941, she was experiencing spasms approximately three times per week. As her gastrointestinal symptoms worsened, her grandparents arranged for her to be examined by their physician, Dr. James Pagano. Suspecting complications, he initiated treatment for potential ulcers or gall bladder issues. The prescribed treatment did not alleviate her symptoms, however, and by November she had lost 20 pounds. X-rays subsequently identified a diagnosis of [gastropstosis](#). Use of a medical support belt led to an improvement in her symptoms and allowed her to manage daily life more comfortably.

Following the [attack on Pearl Harbor](#) in December of 1941, Rizzo obtained a position early the next year in the advertising department of the [Timken Roller Bearing Company](#), a major manufacturer of [gun barrels](#). Serving as secretary to the vice president of advertising, she was considered successful in her role. In April 1942, her abdominal pain intensified and could no longer be managed with her existing medical belt. Dr. Wiley Scott prescribed a larger belt or corset, which alleviated the pain and allowed her to return to work. However, by November 1942, she experienced worsening symptoms, including inability to sleep or eat, and the surgical corset caused skin blisters.

In response to her declining condition, her mother brought her to [Rhoda Wise](#), a local figure described as a mystic and stigmatic who claimed to receive visions of Saint [Thérèse of Lisieux](#). Wise instructed Rizzo to pray a [novena](#) and asked her to promise that, if cured, she would promote devotion to St. Thérèse.

On January 17, 1943, the final day of the novena, Rizzo reported experiencing the "sharpest pains" she had ever felt and a sensation that "something was pulling [her] stomach out." Although she considered putting on her corset before getting up, she stated that a voice commanded her to rise without it. She interpreted this moment as healing and later observed that the abdominal lump and discoloration had resolved. Rizzo believed this event to be a [miracle](#) and identified it as the turning point in her life that led to her religious commitment. She later stated, "I knew that God knew me and loved me and was interested in me. All I wanted to do after my healing was give myself to Jesus."

Dr. Wiley Scott did not support the claim of a miraculous healing and described Rizzo as "a neurotic female with a mentality which is very open to any suggestive influence." Nonetheless, for Rizzo, the experience marked a significant transformation and a new direction in life.

Rizzo turned to Wise for guidance, and she became her model of sanctity. Every Sunday, Rizzo joined the crowds at Wise's house and would sit close to the mystic. She learned to deal with overanxious crowds who, at times, mistook God's assistant for God Himself. Rizzo adopted devotional practices including fasting on Saturdays, reading spiritual literature, and performing the Way of the Cross at St. Anthony's Church, developing a devotion to the Passion. On a fall afternoon in 1943, when Rizzo prayed before the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, she was overcome by a "deep awareness" that she had a vocation and must "go wherever the Lord would send her." She sought out Wise's spiritual director, Monsignor Habig, who affirmed the vocation. Wise gave her lists of communities to contact but most would not accept her due to her poor grades.

Her first visit was to the [Sisters of St. Joseph](#) in [Buffalo, New York](#). Msgr. Habig then suggested she visit Saint Paul's Shrine of Perpetual Adoration, a facility operated by an order of [cloistered](#) contemplative Franciscan nuns in [Cleveland](#), Ohio. While visiting this order, she felt as if she were at home. The order accepted her as a [postulant](#), inviting her to enter on August 15, 1944, at the age of 21. On November 8, 1945, Rizzo was vested as a [Poor Clare](#) nun. She received a new religious name, Angelica, which her mother was given the honor of choosing by the superior of the monastery, Mother Agnes. Her mother chose this name because Rizzo had been an "angelic and obedient daughter." Her full spiritual name was "Sister Mary Angelica of the Annunciation".

Soon afterward, the Cleveland monastery established a new monastery in her home town of Canton and she moved there. After nearly three years in the monastery, Sister Angelica made her first profession of vows on January 2, 1947. In 1953, she made her solemn profession of vows at Sancta Clara Monastery in Canton.

In 1953, Sister Angelica had an accident with an industrial [floor-scrubbing machine](#) that knocked her over and injured her spine, causing her ongoing pain and later requiring her to wear leg braces for much of her life. The ache radiated from the small of her back

to the middle of the left leg. In June 1955, she sought medical review of her back pain and was given a brace to relieve the pain caused by the fall. The doctors believed the fall in 1953 had aggravated an existing spinal defect. She was fitted for a body cast to relieve her compressed spine and given oversized crutches. This treatment failed, however; a leg and neck traction were attempted, in which she was suspended from a hospital-bed contraption for six weeks. She spent a total of four months in the hospital with no improvement and she returned to the monastery with a back brace.

To alleviate pain and restore posture, her doctors decided on a spinal fusion operation, for which she was admitted to the hospital in July 1956. The surgeon, Dr. Charles Houck, informed Sister Angelica that there was a "fifty-fifty chance you'll never walk again." Angelica struck a bargain with God: "Lord, if you let me walk again, I'll build you a monastery in the South." For three years, she had been discussing a southern monastery dedicated to African Americans. This was the year the Supreme Court banned segregation in public schools and Dr. [Martin Luther King Jr.](#) made headlines by organizing protests throughout the South. During the operation, Dr. Houck found an extra vertebra crowding its neighbors, and that the resulting "kissing vertebrae" were the main cause of her pain. He apparently thought the surgery had gone wrong and gave up. Angelica could move her legs but not walk, so she recovered in the hospital for two months.

Back at Sancta Clara, she was confined to the infirmary. As a result of suffering, she learned to rely on God in all things. Eventually, she graduated from a wheelchair to a back brace, leg brace, and crutch, and felt she could think about the new monastery. The new abbess of Sancta Clara, Mother Veronica, initially refused the idea but became fully convinced over time. In January 1957, Mother Veronica wrote to Archbishop Thomas Toolen of [Mobile](#), stating her community's desire to be in "the midst of the colored people to intercede for them." Archbishop Toolen warmly invited the nuns to the diocese and encouraged them to start the community in Birmingham, then home to a quarter of a million Black people.

However, Bishop Emmet Walsh of [Youngstown](#), Ohio, delayed the foundation as he felt the departure of six nuns required by Canon Law could not be sustained by the community in Canton. With some other Poor Clare nuns, Sister Angelica worked to raise the necessary funds, partially from a small business venture making and selling [fishing lures](#). In February 1961, funding had been secured and Rome granted permission to proceed with the new foundation.

In 1961, the nuns bought 15 mountainside acres in [Ironton](#), Alabama, as well as an adjacent small house, for \$13 thousand, the exact amount earned by the nuns' fishing lure business. On the night of February 21, 1962, five bullets were fired at the house where the nuns were staying, and a further incident with five bullets occurred nearly two weeks later.¹ On May 20, 1962, the community was officially established and named Our Lady of the Angels Monastery. Later, it was relocated to the grounds of the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In August 1995, Sister Angelica began to search for land to build a new monastery because she was convinced that the sisters needed "protection" during a coming chastisement, and concerned that the [noise pollution](#) around the existing monastery was unsuitable for contemplative life.

In October 1995, she viewed a 200-acre plot in [Hanceville](#), an hour north of Birmingham. "I felt the Lord's presence so strongly," she said. The architect of the monastery, Walter Anderton, was a [Baptist](#). Mother Angelica's only instructions to him were that the monastery resemble the [Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi](#) and have a 13th-century character.

In 1996, Mother Angelica visited [South America](#) to publicize her new Spanish-language channel. While in [Bogotá, Colombia](#), she visited a small shrine of the [Divino Niño](#) (Divine Child), where she later revealed that she had a vision in which the statue of the [Child Jesus](#) turned to her and said in a child's audible voice, "Build Me a temple and I will help those who help you." Mother Angelica interpreted this vision as the Christ Child's desire for an elaborate shrine. Private donors contributed \$48.6 million toward it and she opened the [Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament](#) in Hanceville in 1999.

In 1962, Mother Angelica began a series of community meetings on matters relevant to Catholicism and also began recording her talks for sale. When Bishop [Joseph Vath](#), the first bishop of Birmingham, noticed her talent for communicating with the lay public, he encouraged her to continue. She began taping a radio show for Sunday-morning broadcast and published her first book in 1972. In the late 1970s, she began videotaping her talks for television, which were broadcast on the satellite [Christian Broadcasting Network](#). In 1981, after visiting a [Chicago](#) television studio and being impressed by its capability, she formed a [nonprofit](#) civil corporation to be called the Eternal Word Television Network ([EWTN](#)), initially recording her shows in a converted garage on the monastery's property.

On February 16, 1981, the [Sacred Congregation for Religious](#) informed Bishop Vath that because Mother Angelica was a cloistered nun, she could not travel except to her studio although she had been giving talks outside for years with the bishop's blessing. The [apostolic nuncio](#) suggested [exclaustration](#)—the suspension of a religious from his or her community and vows for three years—an idea that shocked Mother Angelica. Cardinal [Silvio Oddi](#), head of the [Sacred Congregation for the Clergy](#), rescued the situation after visiting Mother Angelica and securing exemptions under Church law that enabled her to leave the monastery on business.

EWTN became a voice for American conservatism and [traditionalist Catholicism](#), with its position on religious and social issues often mirroring that of [Pope John Paul II](#). Mother Angelica's emphasis on tradition led to feuds with some members of the Church hierarchy, the most famous being over a pastoral letter by Cardinal [Roger Mahony](#) of the [Archdiocese of Los Angeles](#) concerning teachings about the [Eucharist](#) and the [liturgy](#).

As the largest Catholic television network in the world, EWTN estimates the network's channels reach 264 million households globally.

On December 28, 1992, Mother Angelica launched a radio network, [WEWN](#), which is carried by 215 stations and on shortwave.

On November 12, 1997, Angelica, on her *Mother Angelica Live* show, called on the faithful under Cardinal [Roger Mahony](#) to disobey the cardinal's *Guide for Sunday Mass*, saying, "I'm afraid my obedience in that diocese would be absolutely zero, and I hope everybody else's in that diocese is zero." On November 18, Angelica apologized.

On January 28, 1998, Paula Albertini, an Italian woman, prayed the rosary with Mother Angelica in her office. Sister Mary Clare saw a bright glow surrounding the painting of Saint Francis reaching up to the crucified Christ. Mother Angelica was urged to "defend the Holy Eucharist even with your own life". Mother Angelica felt God wished to heal her; Albertini asked her to remove the braces, and Mother Angelica was cured as her unsteadiness vanished, no longer needing crutches. She later told *Life on the Rock* host Jeff Cavins that the purpose of the healing was to increase the faith of viewers and employees.

Mother Angelica founded a Catholic community of [lay brothers](#), the Knights of the Holy Eucharist, as part of her broader efforts to promote Eucharistic reverence and traditional Catholic spirituality. The Knights were established on July 25, 1998, at the [Feast of St. James the Greater](#) in [Hanceville, Alabama](#), where they initially served at the [Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament](#). In 2016, the Knights moved to the [Diocese of Lincoln, Nebraska](#), at the invitation of Bishop [James D. Conley](#). They took residence at the Our Lady of Good Counsel Retreat House near Waverly.

Since the first establishment of her monastery in 1962, the priest celebrating the conventual Mass had always faced the enclosed nuns with his back to the rest of the congregation, a stance called *ad orientem*. Subsequently to the [Second Vatican Council](#), most priests began facing the congregation (*versus populum*), but *ad orientem* remained favored in conciliar documents, and the monastery followed this. On October 18, 1999, Bishop [David Foley](#) of Birmingham promulgated a law in his diocese forbidding *ad orientem*, so Mother Angelica wrote to the Vatican. The [Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments](#) sent a [fax](#) to Bishop Foley condemning his decree, stating that individual diocesan bishops could not forbid *ad orientem*. However, Mother Angelica was unaware of this, and Bishop Foley was able to continue his battle by stating that he was representing the [NCCB](#).

On December 4, Cardinal Somalo wrote to Mother Angelica, stating that an [apostolic visitation](#) had been appointed and there would be a probe into the monastery. On December 9, Bishop Foley consecrated the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and celebrated Mass facing the people. He then rescinded his October 18, 1999, decree, instead forbidding the broadcast of *ad orientem* Masses. EWTN moved its Masses to Birmingham to comply with this, as Mother Angelica and the Vice Presidents of EWTN worried that the Congregation or Bishop Foley could compel Mother Angelica to make changes at EWTN or, in a worst-case scenario, appoint a progressive successor with veto powers. Angelica resigned as CEO of EWTN on March 17, 2000, ceding control to a board of laity. She settled into community life and enjoyed her time away from the network.

On July 3, 2000, Mother Angelica collapsed, turned blue, and became unconscious. All tests were normal and she recovered rapidly.

On September 5, 2001, Mother Angelica suffered [facial paralysis](#), with an [MRI](#) showing she'd had bilateral recurrent [strokes](#). She returned to taping her show twice weekly on September 25. On December 11, she fell and fractured her arm, requiring surgery.

On [Christmas Eve](#), Angelica collapsed in the monastery chapel and was found unresponsive, with a [CT scan](#) revealing a [cerebral hemorrhage](#). She was transferred to Birmingham and underwent a [craniotomy](#) to remove the blood clot from around her brain. Despite this, there had already been damage to the part of the brain controlling speech and understanding. However, within one week, she could move both legs, and the paralysis affecting her left hand and mouth for three months had gone.

On January 25, 2002, she returned to her monastery, and since then needed assistance. She also suffered from [seizures](#), which sapped her energy. She began speech therapy and stopped hosting television programs. As her health declined, fellow sisters at the Hanceville monastery began providing her constant care. Mother Angelica attributed her need for purification as the reason for her stroke.

Mother Angelica was restless for one more miracle and felt she could be useful in helping the faithful to cope with the [clerical sex-abuse scandal](#), which broke in early 2002. In October 2003, she travelled to [Lourdes](#) for a six-day pilgrimage. Mother Angelica and the pilgrims there reached out to one another. She did not receive physical healing, but discovered she was still needed and could do much good, even in silence.

In December 2004, Mother Angelica visited the Japanese island of [Kyushu](#). They explored the possibility of a monastery in [Nagasaki](#), and went north to visit the shrine of [Our Lady of Akita](#). She was in considerable pain, and a doctor felt Angelica had fractured her [tail bone](#) while in Akita. Mother Angelica was much less mobile and more frail following this.

Before her major stroke, Mother Angelica had been considering the founding of new monasteries. Following her 2001 stroke, overseeing this seemed beyond reach. There were forty-two nuns at the Hanceville monastery, but not all of the older nuns agreed to founding new monasteries, as theirs was only five years old. Five nuns, led by Sister Mary Fidelis - founded a monastery in [Phoenix, Arizona](#) in 2005.

In July 2008, Sister Grace Marie, a former [Anglican](#) convert, and four other nuns started a new foundation with Mother Angelica's blessing in [San Antonio, Texas](#). The nuns who left for San Antonio had been "bridging the gap" between two factions of nuns who would soon have a major dispute.

Mother Angelica remained abbess during this time, but her incapacity left the effective exercise of leadership to the elected vicar, Sister Catherine. Most of the young nuns and many older nuns looked up to Catherine, but a few of the older ones felt marginalized. Sister Catherine began spreading the "Divine Will" devotion rooted in the writings of alleged Italian [mystic Luisa Piccarreta](#), which some older nuns disapproved of.

In May 2009, the community elections saw Sister Margaret Mary chosen as vicar. She quickly called chapter meetings to reconsider the vocations of younger nuns, especially practitioners of the controversial Divine Will devotion. This divided the community as Mother Angelica's health deteriorated. A group of nuns wrote a letter of complaint to Rome, and the Holy See authorized an [apostolic visitation](#) formally to investigate the community. The visitation resulted in the appointment of a new superior from outside the community in November 2009, with Mother Angelica stepping down as abbess, and both Sister Margaret Mary and Sister Catherine being made to leave immediately on [sabbatical](#).

On October 4, 2009, Mother Angelica and Deacon [Bill Steltemeier](#), then-chairman of EWTN's board of governors, received the Papal Medal (*Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice*) from [Pope Benedict XVI](#) for their distinguished service to the Catholic Church. Due to her ill health, Mother Angelica received the award in her room. [Robert James Baker](#), the [Bishop of Birmingham](#), said: "Mother Angelica's effort has been at the vanguard of the [new evangelization](#) and has had a great impact on our world." On October 15, Mother Angelica received another major honor from the Holy See when she was appointed the community's *Abbess Emerita* for life.

In early December 2015, Mother Angelica was placed on a [feeding tube](#). A representative of the order explained, "It's not that she's completely unable to eat. It's assisting her to get the nutrients she needs." He added that she had experienced "some up and downs the last few months. She's a fighter." Although Mother Angelica was bedridden, a representative said she was "able to communicate with a squeeze of a hand, make gestures with her eyes. She acknowledges people when they're there. The nuns say she does sleep a lot." The use of a feeding tube was in accord with the wishes she made before her stroke in 2001 – a reporter recalled her saying: "We don't understand the awesomeness of living even one more day... I told my sisters the other day, 'When I get really bad give me all the medicine I can take, all the tubes you can stuff down me. ... I want to live. ... Because I will have suffered one more day for the love of God... I will exercise you in virtue. But most of all I will know God better. You cannot measure the value of one new thought about God in your own life.'"

In early February 2016, [Pope Francis](#), while en route to [Cuba](#) for an apostolic visit, recorded a message for Mother Angelica: "To Mother Angelica, with my blessing and I ask you to pray for me; I need it. God bless you, Mother Angelica." Near the end of that month, her fellow nuns at Our Lady of Angels Monastery called for prayers on her behalf, saying in a statement: "Mother's condition remains delicate and she receives devoted care day and night by her sisters and nurses. In God's [Providence](#), she was able to receive the special [Jubilee](#) grace of passing through the [Holy Door](#) shortly after its opening. Although she is most often sleeping, from time to time Mother will give a radiant smile. ... Please continue to keep her in your prayers; each day is a gift!"

Mother Angelica remained at the monastery until her death on March 27, 2016, [Easter Sunday](#), at the age of 92, from complications due to the stroke she had 14 years prior. At the time of her death, she "also suffered from [Bell's palsy](#), heart disease and asthma."

Mother Angelica held the Catholic belief in [redemptive suffering](#), wherein human suffering can become meritorious if offered to [Jesus Christ](#) and mystically united with his suffering. For this, in her period of declining health, Mother Angelica "instructed her nuns to do everything to keep her alive, no matter how much she suffered, because every day she suffered, she suffered for God." EWTN chaplain Joseph Mary Wolfe told reporters that Mother Angelica's desire to unite with Jesus in suffering was fulfilled when she "went into her death throes on [Good Friday](#)".

Wolfe recalled that "Mother began to cry out early in the morning from the pain that she was having. She had a fracture in her bones because of the length of time she had been bedridden. They said you could hear it down the hallways, that she was crying out on Good Friday from what she was going through. These two people [a caregiver and one of the sisters of her order] said to me she has excruciating pain." Wolfe said that "After the 3 o'clock hour arrived on Good Friday she was more calm, she was more peaceful." By 5:30 a.m. on Easter Sunday, Wolfe was contacted by Mother Delores, who told him Mother Angelica "was really struggling, she wasn't doing very well." Wolfe went to her bedside to administer the [last rites](#), with the sisters of her order then praying the [Divine Office](#) around her. As it was Easter Sunday, the usual prayers had additional [Alleluias](#), which are otherwise not recited in the [Office for the Dead](#), something Wolfe felt to be significant. Around 10:30 a.m., Father Paschal said [Mass](#) in her room and she received Viaticum (final [Communion](#)). She died shortly before 5:00 p.m.

Sean O. Sheridan, the former president of the [Franciscan University of Steubenville](#) where Mother Angelica received an [honorary doctorate](#) of sacred theology, described her as "a true media giant. She proved that the Church belonged in the popular media alongside the news, sports, and talk shows". Mark Evans of *Deadline* wrote, "Though her stances were decidedly old-school – she was critical of religious and political progressives – her lectures were lightened with an often self-deprecating humor. She famously said the nuns she remembered from her youth were 'the meanest people on God's earth.'"

On March 30, 2016, [Easter Wednesday](#), at Pope Francis' [general audience](#) in [Saint Peter's Square](#), [Vatican City](#), an employee of EWTN held up a portrait of Mother Angelica. The Supreme Pontiff responded to the display by saying, "She's in Heaven."

In a ceremony on March 29, 2016, Mother Angelica's body was brought to Our Lady of the Angels Monastery for private visitation by Poor Clare nuns. Public visitation was at the upper church of the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament from March 30 to 31. The [Mass of Christian Burial](#) was held at the upper church on April 1, with the [Archbishop of Philadelphia](#) and EWTN board member [Charles J. Chaput](#) serving as principal celebrant, and the EWTN chaplain Joseph Mary Wolfe as [homilist](#). [Robert J. Baker](#) and [David E. Foley](#), the then-current and emeritus [Bishops of Birmingham](#) (where both EWTN and Our Lady of the Angels Monastery are located), respectively, [concelebrated](#) the [Mass](#), along with Archbishop [Thomas J. Rodi](#) of [Mobile](#), whose [ecclesiastical province](#) includes the Diocese of Birmingham. Bishop [Thomas Olmsted](#) of [Phoenix](#), Bishop [Richard Stika](#) of [Knoxville](#), and Archbishop [Carlo Maria Viganò](#), the [Apostolic Nuncio to the United States](#), who delivered a message from Pope Francis, also [concelebrated](#) the Mass. In addition, many priests, deacons, religious, and seminarians were in attendance. This was followed by the [rite of committal](#) at the shrine's crypt chapel. All of her funeral rites were broadcast by EWTN.

After Mother Angelica's death, there were calls for her to be [beatified](#). [Canon law](#) dictates that an individual's cause cannot begin until five years after their death.

Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN); Irondale, Alabama

The Eternal Word Television Network (EWTN) is an American basic cable [television network](#) which presents around-the-clock and commercial-free [Catholic](#) programming. It is the largest Christian [Catholic television](#) network in the United States, and is purported to be "the world's largest religious media network" (and according to the network itself) reaching 425 million people in 160 countries, with 11 networks.

The network was originally founded by [Mother Angelica PCPA](#), in 1980 and began broadcasting on 15 August 1981 from a garage [studio](#) at the Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in [Irondale, Alabama](#), which Mother Angelica founded in 1962. She hosted her own show, *Mother Angelica Live*, until health issues led to her retirement in September 2001. As of 2017, Michael P. Warsaw, who is a consultant to the Vatican's [Dicastery for Communications](#), leads EWTN.

In addition to its television network, EWTN owns the [National Catholic Register](#) newspaper, which it acquired in January 2011, and [Catholic News Agency](#). The network maintains an online presence through its primary site, EWTN.com, and it has a dedicated commercial site, EWTNReligiousCatalogue.com. EWTN also has a 24-hour [radio network](#), offering Catholic talk and worship programming to about 350 radio stations around the U.S. as well as [SiriusXM Satellite Radio](#) and [shortwave radio](#). Some of the schedule is the audio from EWTN television shows and some is original programming for radio listeners.

Regular network programs include a daily [Catholic Mass](#) and sometimes in the [Tridentine Mass](#) format, the traditionalist [Stations of the Cross](#), a taped daily recitation of the [Rosary](#), and daily and weekly news, discussion, and [Catechetical](#) programs for both adults and children. [Christmas](#) and [Easter](#) programming; the installation Masses of [bishops](#) and [cardinals](#); coverage of [World Youth Days](#); and [Papal](#) visits, deaths, funerals, [conclaves](#), and [elections](#) are also presented. [Spanish language](#) broadcasts are available on all platforms. On December 8, 2009, EWTN began broadcasting [high-definition television](#).

The network is overseen by a non-profit [board of trustees](#), with the network's funding provided solely by viewer support and purchases from the network's [online store](#), known as the *EWTN Religious Catalogue*; the network has no financing from either [the Vatican](#), nor the [United States Conference of Catholic Bishops](#), or provider [retransmission consent](#).

Mother Angelica made her profession of [vows](#) in 1953. In 1962 she established Our Lady of the Angels monastery. During the 1970s, she was an in-demand lecturer and produced pamphlets and audio and video tapes. She had been a guest on local stations and on shows on the [Christian Broadcasting Network](#) and the [Trinity Broadcasting Network](#). After she gave an interview on then-Christian station [WCFC](#) (Channel 38) in [Chicago](#), she decided she wanted her own network. "I walked in, and it was just a little studio, and I remember standing in the doorway and thinking, 'It doesn't take much to reach the masses'. I just stood there and said to the Lord, 'Lord, I've got to have one of these'".

Mother Angelica purchased satellite space and EWTN began broadcasting on August 15, 1981, with four hours of daily programming, which included her own show, *Mother Angelica Live* (aired bi-weekly), a Sunday Mass, and reruns of older Catholic programs such as Archbishop [Fulton J. Sheen](#)'s *Life Is Worth Living*. The remainder of the time was filled with shows produced by dioceses across the country, shows from [Protestant](#) sources which Mother Angelica determined were in concert with [Catholic teachings](#), and children's shows such as *Joy Junction* and *The Sunshine Factory*. About one-third of programming time consisted of secular content. EWTN eventually increased its broadcast schedule to six hours per day and then to eight hours per day by 1986. Secular content was gradually reduced from 1986 to 1988, and [satellite distribution](#) was expanded late in 1987, after which EWTN acquired a far more desirable satellite channel and began broadcasting around the clock. At this point, EWTN began broadcasting the praying of the rosary on a daily basis and added a number of educational shows. In-house production of original programming gradually increased. The Mass became televised daily in 1991 from a chapel on the monastery grounds. Most shows from non-Catholic sources were eliminated and a more theological image gradually developed.

From 1982 to 1994, the network had competition from another Catholic broadcaster, the [Catholic Telecommunications Network of America](#). The network was sponsored by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops which poured \$30 million into the venture before it failed.

In 2000, "in the midst of an [apostolic visitation](#) by San Juan Archbishop [Roberto González Nieves](#)" to investigate Mother Angelica's authority over the station and monastery, Mother Angelica gave control of EWTN to a board of lay people.

As of 2011, the network's chairman of the board and chief executive officer is Michael P. Warsaw.

As of 2019, EWTN programming was available through "more than 6,000 TV affiliates as well as on Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire and YouTube". In addition to its Irondale campus, the network maintains a [Washington, D.C.](#), facility for its news division, along with a [West Coast](#) broadcast facility on the campus of the [Christ Cathedral](#) in [Garden Grove, California](#).

In 1992, EWTN established the largest privately owned shortwave radio station, WEWN. The station broadcasts from [Vandiver, Alabama](#), in the vicinity of greater [Birmingham](#).

In 1996, Mother Angelica announced that EWTN would make its radio signal available via satellite to AM and FM stations throughout the [United States](#) at no cost.

In 1999, programs included *Mother Angelica Live* and "Life Is Worth Living" with Fulton J. Sheen. [WGSN](#) in [North Myrtle Beach, South Carolina](#), was an affiliate. Current radio programs include *Open Line* in which callers can have their questions regarding the [Catholic Faith](#) answered.

In 2004, EWTN announced an agreement with [Sirius Satellite Radio](#), which thereafter merged with [XM Satellite Radio](#) to become [Sirius XM Satellite Radio](#). EWTN broadcasts on Channel 130 on Sirius XM.

As of August 2020, EWTN Radio is affiliated with 384 stations in the [United States](#) and more than 500 stations globally.

In January 2011, EWTN acquired the [National Catholic Register](#), a newspaper founded in [Denver, Colorado](#), in 1924 as a periodical for local Catholics, and which became a national publication three years later. EWTN officially assumed total control on February 1, 2011.

EWTN also owns Catholic News Agency which is a Catholic news service with bureaus across America, Latin America and Europe.

The EWTN news department produces a daily news service for television and radio, featuring news sources including [Vatican Radio](#). A reflection of its size and influence is that it has 30 staff members covering the Vatican alone, "far outnumbering other English-language media outlets".

While the network has trustees, it does not have shareholders or owners. A majority of the network's funding is from viewer donations about which it advertises *100% viewer supported*, which keeps it from advertising secular or non-Catholic programming. Its traditional plea for donations is "Keep us between your [gas and electric bill](#)". [Mother Angelica](#) developed the fund-raising slogan for viewers.

EWTN was founded by [Mother Angelica](#), [PCPA](#), in 1980 and began broadcasting on August 15, 1981, from a garage [studio](#) at the Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in [Irondale, Alabama](#), which Mother Angelica founded in 1962.

Mother Angelica hosted her own show, *Mother Angelica Live*, until suffering a major [stroke](#) and other health issues in September 2001. Repeats now air as either the *Best of Mother Angelica Live* or *Mother Angelica Live Classics*. From then until her death on Easter Sunday of 2016, she led a [cloistered](#) life at the [Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament](#) in [Hanceville, Alabama](#).

In its early history, EWTN broadcast Catholic programming from a great variety of Catholic sources, which ranged from Catholic charismatic programming, such as that of [Fr. Michael Manning](#), to programs focusing on [social reform](#) and [social justice](#), such as [Christopher Closeup](#), to [doctrinal](#) programs hosted by clergy. The network began broadcasting daily rosary broadcasts in 1987 and daily Mass in 1991.

In the early 1990s, EWTN began producing more of its own programs. This effort marked a conspicuously conservative shift in its overall orientation, with programs on topics of social reform and justice gradually eliminated and replaced by programs on doctrine and programs of dialogue. The shift was apparent in the daily televised Masses, which, in 1992, began incorporating [Latin](#) into the liturgy and gradually eliminated contemporary music. Some untelevised Masses are totally in [English](#) and some include more contemporary music. On [Christmas Eve](#) of 1993, Mother Angelica and the nuns of her order reverted to traditional [habits](#). From 1992 on, the [Latin](#) portions of the Mass included the Gloria, introduction of the Gospel readings, the Sanctus, and the remainder of the Mass after the Great Amen, beginning with the Lord's Prayer.

Among its notable weekly programs are *The Journey Home* and *Life on the Rock*. *The Journey Home*, hosted by Marcus Grodi, presents [converts](#) to the Catholic Faith. Grodi is a former [Presbyterian minister](#) who converted to the Catholic Faith in 1992. Although most guests are former [Protestants](#), former members of non-[Christian](#) faiths (such as [Judaism](#)) and former [atheists](#) occasionally appear. *Life on the Rock* is hosted by Rev. Mark Mary, [MFVA](#).

In October 2011, EWTN became available through the [Roku](#) streaming player. The player provides six live channels of EWTN at no cost, including [English](#), [Spanish](#), and [German](#) languages, thus permitting users to view the channel on their televisions. In addition, select EWTN programs can be viewed through the [video on demand](#) option, and a live feed of [EWTN Radio](#) is available.

Often, EWTN airs special programming – holiday-specific programs; coverage of the deaths of [Supreme Pontiffs](#); [Papal conclaves](#), Papal elections, [inaugurations](#), and visits; [Christmas Eve](#), [Christmas](#) Day, and [Easter](#) Masses; installations of [bishops](#), [archbishops](#), and cardinals; and World Youth Days.

EWTN's top news program, *EWTN News Nightly*, is hosted by Veronica Dudo and features correspondents Erik Rosales, Owen T. Jensen, Mark Irons and Colm Flynn. It was previously anchored by Lauren Ashburn, who in turn succeeded founding anchor and journalist Colleen Carroll Campbell, and Tracy Sabol.

EWTN is the largest religious media network in the world, and it says it has a reach of a quarter-billion people in 140 countries. It draws additional viewers on its website, where visitors can stream content for free - roughly 174,000 average monthly unique viewers in 2024 - and reaches another 3.4 million subscribers and followers through its social media platforms". EWTN is also available on demand on streaming services Roku, Kindle, and Apple TV. EWTN's website is viewed three to four million times monthly, according to SimilarWeb An EWTN spokesperson said online streaming in English and Spanish combined had generated 30 million YouTube views since Pope Francis' death. EWTN had an annual revenue of \$64,946,744 in 2019, and has received an 84.3 (out of 100) overall score and rating from [Charity Navigator](#).

Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Our Lady of the Angels Monastery; Hanceville, Alabama

Informally known as OLAM Shrine, is a prominent [Catholic](#) shrine located in [Hanceville, Alabama, United States](#), in the [Diocese of Birmingham](#). Adjacent is the cloistered Monastery of the Poor Clare Nuns of Perpetual Adoration, situated on a 400-acre (160 ha) site and a religious center affiliated with the [Eternal Word Television Network](#).

The shrine is notable for its gilt interior, solemn atmosphere, and 7.5-foot (2.3 m) [monstrance](#). The shrine is named in honor of the [Blessed Sacrament](#), while the building surroundings are dedicated to the [Divino Niño](#), a title of the [Child Jesus](#) found prominently displayed all over the area. Its foundress, [Mother Mary Angelica of the Annunciation](#), resided at the [cloistered](#) monastery with her [nuns](#) until her death in 2016 and her burial site is in the lower (crypt) church of the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

In 1995, while travelling to [Colombia](#) to seek assistance for [EWTN](#)'s Spanish-language programs, Mother Angelica attended Mass at the Sanctuary of the Divine Child Jesus in [Bogotá](#) and was inspired to build a shrine honoring the [real presence of Christ in the Eucharist](#). Five anonymous benefactors contributed to the purchase of a 400-acre (160 ha) former [soybean](#) farm located in Hanceville, Alabama, and to construction costs and materials totaling \$48.6 million dollars. The monastery was consecrated in December 1999.

The exterior is characteristic [Romanesque](#), but incorporates pointed arches and other Gothic elements. Mother Angelica sought to model the Shrine on 13th century Italian architecture, with its *piazza* or plaza square, [colonnade](#), [esplanade](#), and various cosmatesque designs. She also wanted the building to reflect materials from all over the world. The ceramic tile came from South America. The bronze doors depicting the [Seven Joys](#) and [Seven Sorrows](#) of Mary were designed and crafted in Spain. The floors, columns, and pillars are made of marble. The rare red Jasper marble is from Turkey. The wood for the pews, doors, and confessionals is cedar imported from Paraguay. Spanish workers came to build the doors. The stained-glass windows were imported from Munich, Germany. The Stations of the Cross inside are hand-carved.

The Romanesque-Gothic architecture of both the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament and Our Lady of the Angels Monastery was inspired by the great Franciscan Churches and Monasteries of the 13th Century, especially those of Assisi and the region of Umbria in Italy. The Monastery was built for durability and simple monastic living. The Shrine was designed to be as beautiful as possible, befitting the infinite dignity of God Whose House it is.

Inside the Main Church, the Sanctuary floor and Altar are made of Bianco Sivec marble from Macedonia. Behind the Altar, at the east side of the Sanctuary, is a hand-carved Reredos of rare cedar from Paraguay, 55 feet high, and ornamented with 24-carat gold leaf. This Reredos holds the gold Tabernacle and forms the Throne for the almost eight-foot Monstrance where Our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament is worshiped in Perpetual Adoration and Solemn Exposition. The Monstrance, Tabernacle, Reredos, Altar Rail, Crucifix, Vestry, Sacristy, Lecterns, Ambos, Confessionals, Vestibule, statues of El Divino Niño and Our Lady of Grace at the side Altars, and bronze Great Doors were all designed, constructed, and finished by Talleres de Arte Granda ("TAG") in Madrid, Spain. The Marble for the Temple floor was selected from the Carrara, Brescia, Aosta (Italian Alps), Verona, Lucca, Sicilia, and Pietrasanta regions of Italy, as well as from Macedonia (formerly Yugoslavia), Valencia in Spain, Brazil, South Africa, and Finland. Red jasper from Turkey was used for the inlaid crosses. The stained-glass windows were made by the studios of Gustav van Treeck in Munich,

Germany, where they were custom-drawn, painted, and fired with the traditional Munich-style methods used for centuries by the finest Bavarian glassmakers.

The exterior walls of the Shrine and Monastery are bricked with limestone composite bricks manufactured in Canada, a reminder of the limestone walls of the Cave of Bethlehem. The clay roof tiles of the Shrine and Monastery were molded and fired in Colombia.

The statue of the Divine Child Jesus in the Piazza was sculpted with statuary white marble from Carrara, Italy. His Heart is carved from red jasper. El Divino Niño holds His Heart in His Hand, extending an invitation to accept His Infinite Love and Mercy. The English-Tudor style pavers of the border of the Piazza, Colonnade, and Esplanade, and the central herringbone pattern of the Piazza, were painstakingly laid under the direction of Masonry Arts by American and Brazilian craftsmen.

The shrine also contains, within its campus, a cloistered monastery, a near-life-sized nativity scene, Lourdes grotto, the Castle San Miguel that houses the El Niño gift shop and conference rooms, and the John Paul II Eucharistic Center. Stations of the Cross are also displayed on the right side of the plaza square, and at the end of the stations is a prominent [crucifix](#) with graphic details of the [Passion of Jesus](#).

The Temple and Monastery were completed in 1999 and dedicated on December 19 of that year. For the past 25 years the Shrine of the Most Blessed Sacrament has expanded to include the John Paul II Eucharistic Center, the Gift Shop of El Niño, conference rooms and the Retreat House for priests, deacons, seminarians, and religious brothers.

During construction, a storm struck the area, causing the church's cross to be damaged. Initially, Mother Angelica wanted to repair it. Later on, Mother Angelica associated the cross with the [Tau cross](#). The damaged remains of the top part of the cross are on display in the St. Joseph Courtyard.

Upkeep of the Shrine, Monastery and 400-acres of grounds are funded entirely by donations. It is only through the generous support of benefactors and pilgrims that we are able to continue to provide a prayerful and peaceful place where people of all faiths can come and experience the Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the Altar. Please consider supporting this great work of God.

Cathedral of St. Paul; Birmingham, Alabama

The Cathedral of Saint Paul — informally known as Saint Paul's Cathedral — is the mother church of the Catholic Diocese of Birmingham in Alabama in Birmingham, Alabama. Designed by Chicago architect Adolphus Druiding, the Victorian Gothic-style brick building was completed as a parish church in 1893. The parish it serves was established in 1872 and the cornerstone bears both dates. It was elevated to cathedral status with the creation of the Diocese of Birmingham in 1969.

During its days as a parish, its most famous pastor was Father James Coyle. There is the aspiration of relocating his remains from Elmwood Cemetery to the cathedral as the cause for his beatification as a martyr advances.

The contractor that had to be talked into moving to Birmingham to build the project was Lawrence Scully. Just prior to its completion, Lawrence Scully was killed when his horse-drawn carriage was spooked by a passing motor vehicle that honked its horn. The horse reared and flipped the carriage over, killing Lawrence Scully. Lawrence Scully also built one of Birmingham's first public schools, the Powell School.

Two buildings, the church and associated school, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places as St. Paul's Catholic Church in 1982.

The stained-glass windows in the cathedral's aisles are the work of G. C. Riordan & Company of Cincinnati. They were in place when the church was first used. The large window of St. Paul over the entrance was installed in 1972, replacing an older window that had been damaged in a storm. The interior of the cathedral's sanctuary was featured in a climactic scene in the 2011 movie, "October Baby."

In 2022, the cathedral dedicated a new pipe organ in the choir gallery in front of the St. Paul window. While the previous organ completely obscured the window, the top of the window is visible over the new organ, the Anna Catharine Grace Memorial Pipe Organ, Noack Organ Company, opus 164.

St. Louis Bertrand Church; Louisville, Kentucky

St. Louis Bertrand Catholic Church, established in 1866, boasts a stunning English Gothic architecture and was dedicated in 1873. The interior is adorned with intricate paintings, carvings, and stained-glass windows that create a breathtaking atmosphere. The parish offers traditional liturgy and is known for its solid adherence to Church doctrine. With beautiful traditional music and frequent confessional hours, it provides a welcoming and family-oriented environment.

St. Boniface Church; Louisville, Kentucky

St. Boniface Church was established in 1836 and is named for the 8th-century bishop known as the Apostle of Germany. ([Learn more about the life of St. Boniface.](#)) It is the oldest Catholic parish in the city of Louisville with its original title and the first church built for German Catholics. Father Joseph Stahlschmidt was the first pastor. Diocesan clergy staffed the parish until 1849 when Bishop Martin John Spalding asked the German-speaking Franciscan priests of Cincinnati, Ohio, to take responsibility for the parish because of the high influx of German Catholic immigrants. After 148 years, the Archdiocese of Louisville resumed responsibility for the parish in 1998.

The original church stood on the current site of the parking lot and school. The school opened in 1844 and in 1967 became Pope Paul VI School. This school closed in 1969. The present church building, built in the Gothic style, was dedicated in 1900. It replaced the Romanesque style church, which proved inadequate to meet the needs of the growing parish membership. As the neighborhood changed over the years, with the building of Clarksdale, the medical complex, and Liberty Green, the focus and mission of St. Boniface have changed. The parish is still grounded, however, in its urban mission to the poor and homeless, characterized by service and advocacy.

One of the ministries of the parish is [Nativity Academy at St. Boniface](#), which replaced a former after-school program for neighborhood children. This school, founded by Father Timothy Hogan, is modeled after the National Nativity model, which seeks to educate urban youth. It is co-sponsored by the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville and the Xaverian Brothers.

The approximately 300 parishioners of St. Boniface Catholic Church welcome those who wish to worship with the community and be of service to others.

From January to June 2010, Saint Boniface undertook a major renovation project. The project included removing and replacing deteriorated plaster from the walls and ceiling of the church, painting, applying gold leaf to the capitals, removing and replacing some light fixtures, and cleaning the statues.

During the course of the renovation, while scraping off white plaster in preparation for painting, workers for BJB Restoration discovered a number of oil paintings that had been painted over in 1969. These "hidden canvases" date from the parish's 75th anniversary in 1912. They consisted of twenty angel heads which were located at the top of the interior arches, larger angels on the wall behind the high altar, two large paintings of the Last Supper and Pentecost on the side walls of the sanctuary, and the four evangelists on the ceiling. While many of these paintings were damaged beyond repair, several of them have been restored and preserved thanks to generous benefactors. These pieces of our parish history are now framed and displayed inside the church.

St. Martin of Tours Church; Louisville, Kentucky

St. Martin of Tours Catholic Church is a [Roman Catholic parish church](#) in [Louisville, Kentucky](#). It is the fourth parish in the city and one of the oldest in the [Archdiocese of Louisville](#). Founded as a church for German immigrants on the east side of Louisville in 1853, the church building was completed and dedicated on August 20, 1854. Expanded in the 1860s and renovated in the 1890s, the church building remains one of the oldest large structures and one of the few remaining [antebellum](#) public buildings in Louisville.

[St. Martin of Tours](#) Church is notable for its role in bringing several religious orders to the Louisville area. Its first priests were German [Franciscans](#), who had already established foundations in [Cincinnati](#) and at the first German parish in the city, [St. Boniface](#). The first pastor, Fr. Leander Streber, OFM, was responsible for introducing the [Ursuline](#) sisters to the city, and it has been suggested that these sisters were the first to establish a foundation of that order within the borders of the United States (other older foundations currently in the country were not under the American government at the time of their founding). These sisters established the first parish school at St. Martin of Tours in 1858 and shortly thereafter founded the Ursuline Academy for girls one block away. In 1863 the [Xaverian Brothers](#) began a school for boys at St. Martin of Tours, their first establishment in the city. In 1888, the [Brothers of Mary](#) took over the instruction of the boys in a new building that now serves as the rectory and parish offices. These brothers continued teaching at the parish until 1917, when the Ursuline sisters took over all instruction at the parish school.

The political turmoil of mid-nineteenth-century America played an important part in the early history of the parish, and that of the greater immigrant Catholic population of Louisville. On August 6, 1855, the members of the [Know-Nothing party](#), whipped into hysteria by the flame-fanning of the editor of the [Louisville Journal](#), aimed their revolt at the [Cathedral of the Assumption](#) on 5th Street and at St. Martin of Tours Church. Suspecting the German Catholics at St. Martin's of armed, anti-government organizing, the Know-Nothings intended to burn both churches to the ground. Through the intervention of the bishop, [Martin John Spalding](#), who

invited the Know-Nothing mayor of Louisville to inspect the premises of both buildings, the Catholic congregations were exonerated. All the same, at least 20 people died in what came to be known as the [Bloody Monday Riots](#).

The church building underwent significant changes in the 1890s, including a new vaulted ceiling, new stained-glass windows from the [Royal Bavarian Art Glass Institute](#), and a new stone façade complete with a bronze statue of St. Martin. Among the church's artistic treasures from this period is also its [pipe organ](#), which was built by the Farrand & Votey firm of Detroit. The short-lived pipe organ shop at that company was populated by the craftsman from the recently defunct [Roosevelt](#) organ company. Among the contributions these organ builders made to organ design was the first electric action patents in the country. When these craftsmen were brought over to Farrand & Votey, they brought their patents with them. In 1894, St. Martin of Tours contracted for a new 3-manual and pedal pipe organ with Farrand & Votey and that instrument has remained largely unchanged since its installation. It remains one of the few and largest remaining electric-action organs from that seminal era in the world.

Still, the parish was in need of more relics. In June 1901, the Right Reverend Monsignor Mezzolinski, secretary to Cardinal [Mieczysław Halka Ledóchowski](#), wrote to the pastor of St. Martin of Tours, Monsignor Francis Zabler: "At last I can fulfill your wish. The venerable [Cistercian](#) Nuns of *Agnani*, Italy, must give up their sanctuary and relinquish their monastery and seek another house. In their sad plight, Pope Leo XIII has given them permission to donate the relics of certain martyrs under certain conditions. I myself have been at *Agnani* to investigate the authenticity of these relics. Without a doubt they are genuine." The remains must have been kept by the Cistercian Sisters of Charity of SS. Cosmas and Damian in [Anagni](#), who collected many relics and antiquities. On December 31, 1901, the skeletal remains of St. Magnus (supposedly [Magnus of Trani](#), the [Apulian](#) bishop and martyr) and [St. Bonosa](#), a Roman virgin and martyr, arrived at the Louisville customs office. They were placed in glass reliquaries beneath the north and south transept altars, where they have been venerated ever since. In 2012, these reliquaries were restored after authentication of the remains proven the saints' stories as inconclusive, and their altars were renovated. On September 9 of that year, St. Magnus and St. Bonosa were solemnly re-interred in a [Solemn High Mass](#). Since Magnus is depicted as a centurion and not as a bishop, he could theoretically be another saint than Magnus of Trani.

St. Martin of Tours supports two institutions that serve the poor in downtown Louisville. The Schuhmann Center is named for Mons. George W. Schuhmann (1865–1931) and opened in 1982 to aid homeless persons and others in need with clothing, emergency food, and social service referrals. The Golden Arrow Center for mothers and children was opened in 1997 and provides maternity clothes, children's clothing, diapers, baby food, formula and an emergency pantry. The Golden Arrow Center serves people from throughout the greater-Louisville metro area and is one of the only children's clothing charities in Louisville. The Schumann Center and Golden Arrow Center serve tens of thousands of people each year.

On May 18, 2023, Archbishop Shelton Fabre designated the church a diocesan shrine.

Cathedral of the Assumption; Louisville, Kentucky

The Cathedral of the Assumption is a [Catholic](#) cathedral in [Louisville, Kentucky](#), in the United States. It is the [mother church](#) of the [Archdiocese of Louisville](#). As of 2025, it is the seat of Archbishop [Shelton J. Fabre](#), and the Very Reverend Frederick W. Klotter serves as [rector](#).

The first Catholics arrived in present-day Kentucky in the 1770s from the [Province of Maryland](#). They set up communities around [Bardstown](#) and its surrounding counties. Reverend [Stephen Badin](#), the first priest ordained in the United States, periodically visited these communities while traveling west of the [Alleghany Mountains](#).

[Pope Pius VII](#) in 1808 erected the [Diocese of Bardstown](#), the only diocese in the interior of the United States. At that time, the diocese included most of Kentucky along with the future states of [Tennessee](#), Missouri, [Illinois](#), Indiana, [Ohio](#) and Michigan. The pope named Reverend [Benedict Joseph Flaget](#) as the first bishop of Bardstown.

In 1811, a small group of Catholics in Louisville formed Saint Louis Parish at 10th and Main Streets. The parish received its first resident pastor, Reverend Philip Hosten, in 1821. Hosten died one year later during an outbreak of [yellow fever](#). By 1830, the parish had constructed a larger Saint Louis Church south of the [Ohio River](#) on Fifth Street. Over the coming decade, as the population grew in the [American Midwest](#), the Vatican started subdividing the Diocese of Bardstown into other dioceses.

By 1841, Louisville had become much larger than Bardstown and it made sense to move the [episcopal seat](#) there. On February 13, 1841, [Pope Gregory XVI](#) suppressed the Diocese of Bardstown and erected the Diocese of Louisville in its place, with Flaget as bishop. Flaget designated St. Louis Church as St. Louis Cathedral. In 1849, Flaget decided that the current cathedral building was inadequate. His plan was to build a new, larger cathedral around the old cathedral, then dismantle it piece by piece and carry them out the front door.

The cornerstone for the new cathedral was laid in 1849. Flaget died in February 1850, leaving it to his successor, Bishop [Martin John Spalding](#), to complete the project. On October 3, 1852, the new cathedral was dedicated to the [Blessed Virgin Mary](#) under the title of the Cathedral of the Assumption.

The Cathedral of the Assumption was nearly destroyed during [Bloody Monday](#), a major anti-Catholic riot in August 1855. Members of the nativist [Know Nothing Party](#) attacked Irish and German immigrants, mainly Catholics, throughout Louisville, killing 22 of them. The rioters threatened to burn the cathedral, believing that it was hiding firearms in its basement. However, Louisville Mayor [John Barbee](#), himself a Know-Nothing member, inspected the cathedral and said there were no weapons.

The archdiocese in 1858 replaced the cathedral spire, which had been damaged by fire. During the [American Civil War](#) of the early 1860s, the cathedral held memorial services for soldiers from the [Confederate States Army](#) as well as the [Union Army](#). In 1912, the archdiocese installed 16 [stained glass](#) windows in the nave to replace the existing ones.

Louisville in December 1937 was ravaged by the [Ohio River flood of 1937](#); during this disaster, the cathedral was opened as a shelter for those who had been displaced. [Pope Pius XI](#) in December 1937 elevated the Diocese of Louisville to the Archdiocese of Louisville. After the American entry into [World War II](#) in 1941, the cathedral parish donated its iron fence to a [scrap metal](#) drive to aid the war effort.

In 1985, the Cathedral Heritage Foundation was founded to raise funding for a major renovation of the cathedral. Renovation began in 1988 with the removal of sections of the cathedral spire, along with the [finial](#) and cross. In June 1991, after 100 years of disuse, the restored cathedral [undercroft](#) was reopened. In February 1993, renovation on the main cathedral space began, lasting for nearly two years. The cathedral was rededicated in May 1994, with a completely renovated cathedral space. That same month, Archbishop Kelly moved into the cathedral [rectory](#), making him the first bishop to live in Downtown Louisville in 120 years.

In June 1998, the cathedral spire and bell tower were completely renovated. In November 2000, the Cathedral of the Assumption and [St. Louis of France Cathedral Parish](#) in [Jérémie, Haiti](#), formed a sister parish relationship. In May 2005, renovations began on the cathedral school building, which now houses the cathedral parish office.

The cathedral complex houses the main cathedral building, with an Eucharistic chapel in the rear, as well as the cathedral undercroft and St. Louis Hall, the Sandefur Dining Room for the homeless, the Patterson Education Center, the cathedral school building (housing the parish offices), and the rectory.

The [altar](#) incorporates a base of gray marble and a red granite table like the granite of the Baptismal pool. The gray marble was taken from the original high altar, which was removed from the back of the sanctuary in the renovation following [Vatican II](#).

The [baptistry](#) is composed of pink granite and bronze metal; materials recycled from the original [communion rail](#) were used in the wall surrounding the baptism pool. The baptistry is located near the cathedral entrance to remind worshippers entering the building of their own baptisms.

The bell tower for cathedral is 287 feet (87 m) high; when constructed in 1858, it was the tallest steeple in North America. It contains two small bells and one large bell. The large bell was a gift from Archbishop [Pelagio Antonio de Labastida y Dávalos](#) of the [Archdiocese of Mexico City](#).

The [cathedra](#) is located behind the altar, is the official chair of the archbishop. It is an ancient symbol of the tradition and authority of the bishop in the life of the Church. The cathedra represents his three main offices of teaching, sanctifying and governing. The cathedra is upholstered in red suede, with the archdiocesan coat of arms on its back. The symbols on the coat of arms include: the [fleur de lis](#), representing Louisville's French heritage; a [crozier](#); a [Star of David](#), an early symbol of the Virgin Mary; a stockade and water flowing downward, representing Fort Nelson and the [Ohio River](#); arrowheads representing the native peoples in this area; the Ambo, or [pulpit](#), incorporates gray marble and red granite.

The *Coronation Window* in the sanctuary was designed and installed by the Blum Art Company of Louisville in 1883. It depicts the crowning of the [Virgin Mary](#) as [Queen of Heaven](#). It is considered one of the oldest and largest stained-glass windows to be fabricated in the United States.

The window was removed from the sanctuary in 1912 and installed in the bell tower., had been moved to the front of the tower, with a new Assumption window replacing it. In 1994, the archdiocese removed the window and hired the [Conrad Schmitt Studios](#) in [New Berlin, Wisconsin](#), to restore it. The Coronation Window was then reinstalled in its former location in the sanctuary.

The ceiling [fresco](#) depicts [cherubs](#) surrounding the Virgin Mary at the time of her assumption into heaven. When plaster from the fresco started falling on the floor of the nave in 1964, contractors patched it and then painted it over. It was rediscovered during renovations in 1994. The archdiocese removed the paint from the fresco and restored it.

The blue ceiling contains 8,000 [gold leaf](#) pointed stars. The ceiling ribs are gray and ivory, outlined in gold leaf. Two wooden engravings, or bosses, are located on the ceiling: one boss has the letters *IHS*, a Greek abbreviation for Jesus Christ; the second boss reads *Virgo Maria*, Virgin Mary in Latin.

The [nave](#), the body of the church, accommodates 966 people worshippers, utilizing individual chairs with [kneelers](#). Usually arranged in straight rows facing the altar and allowing for a center aisle and two side aisles, the chairs may also be placed in rows the length of

the church, facing each other across the center aisle. The nave walls are [faux finished](#) to resemble [limestone](#) blocks. The floor is [white oak](#) tongue-in-groove planking.

During the 1994 renovation, engineers discovered that the building was cracked down the middle and in danger of collapse. To resolve this, they mounted steel strand beams from wall to wall in the nave to provide a counter push and pull action.

The [pipe organ](#) was built by Steiner-Reck, Inc., of Louisville in 1983. The organ features [three manuals and forty-three ranks](#). Fanfare trumpets were added in 1994, along with both 32-foot ranks, full [MIDI](#) capability, and a [Gothic](#) casework of hand-carved mahogany.

The center section of the loft railing is original, featuring small pointed arches with a reproduction of the design on the side sections. The gallery was originally divided into two sections, one for children, the other for [enslaved people](#).

The cathedral choir has 45 volunteer voices and four employee section leaders. Their repertoire includes early chant through the [Renaissance](#), Baroque, [Classical](#), Romantic, and [20th-century periods](#) music. They have performed with the [Louisville Orchestra](#) and toured in Italy, Ireland, England, France, Germany and Austria.

The Cathedral Schola is an ensemble group that is either a [quartet](#) or an octet. This group performs unison chant, early chant [polyphony](#), or Renaissance and Baroque compositions.

The cathedral choirs have made three European tours, most recently in 2004 touring England and Ireland, singing at [Killarney Cathedral](#), [Gloucester Cathedral](#), and [St. Martin-in-the-Fields](#) under the direction of Dr. Phillip Brisson, director of music for the cathedral. The choirs have recorded two compact disks, and a third disk of their most recent international tour repertoire is in the planning stage. The cathedral choirs have also performed many times with the [Louisville Orchestra](#).