



The Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul celebrates centuries of fellowship and service to the Roman Catholic communities of Rhode Island and beyond.

# The Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul



Almost 200 Years of Service and Celebration!



The Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul traces its history back to 1832. At that time, Rev. John Corry was the priest in charge of the missionary territory incorporating the city of Providence, RI. Acting through Mr. Francis Hye as his intermediary, Father Corry purchased a plot of land in the city on a slope of land that was then called, "Christian Hill." When Father Corry first saw the site that Mr. Hye had purchased for him, he remarked that "in a few years which was consecrated as a Cathedral in 1847. Bishop Tyler died in 1849 and was buried in the crypt of the Cathedral.



Bishop Tyler was succeeded in 1850 by Right Rev. Bernard O'Reilly, the second Bishop of Hartford. Bishop O'Reilly soon traveled to Europe and while in Dublin, ordained Rev. Thomas F. Hendricken a priest, and invited him to come to America. Bishop O'Reilly was lost at sea in 1856 when returning from a second trip to Europe. In 1858 Right Rev. Francis Patrick McFarland was consecrated the third bishop of Hartford. As his predecessors has done, Bishop McFarland continued to reside in Providence. However, in 1872 the Diocese of Providence was created with the consecration of Right Rev. Thomas F. Hendricken as the First Bishop of Providence.

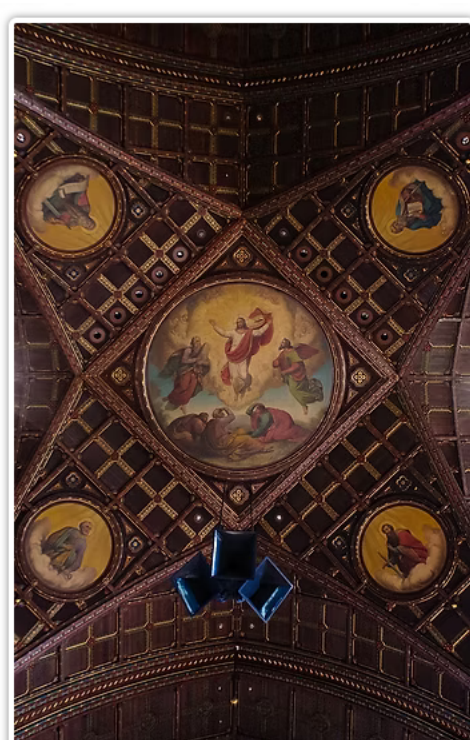


Bishop McFarland then moved to Hartford, where he continued as Bishop until his death in 1874. Three months after taking office, Bishop Hendricken began collecting money for the construction of a new Cathedral. The old Cathedral, only forty years old, was in a state of bad repair. In fact, during the Holy Thursday Service of 1878, pieces of the ceiling of the old Cathedral fell upon the congregation. Once Bishop Hendricken had raised \$30,000 he opened a temporary building, a pro-Cathedral on Broad Street in the garden of the Sisters of Mercy, that could accommodate two thousand people when it was completed in 1876. At that time the demolition of the old Cathedral commenced with the construction of the present structure.



On Thanksgiving Day, 1878 a large block of Kilkenny marble was laid as the cornerstone of the present Cathedral. From that day on Bishop Hendricken would only permit work to proceed if he had the money to pay for it. He refused to go into debt in the building of the Cathedral. When he died in 1886 the Cathedral, while yet unfinished, was opened for his funeral.

The second bishop of Providence, Most Rev. Matthew Harkins was consecrated in the Cathedral in 1887. Regular services in the Cathedral had begun in November of that year. When the work on the building was finally completed, the Cathedral was consecrated on Sunday, June 30, 1889.

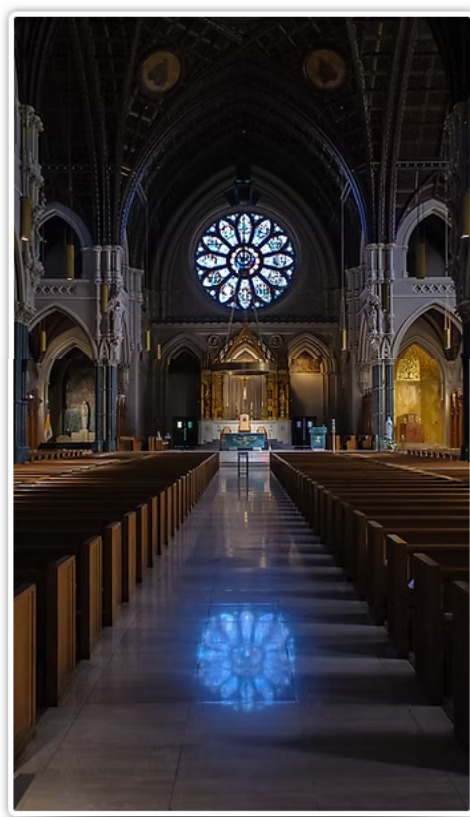


Prior to 1968, the Cathedral had never undergone a major renovation. Normal maintenance had kept it intact, and the building survived several hurricanes over the years. Yet its only major face-lifting was painting in 1921. But in 1968, the late Bishop Russell J. McVinney, in anticipation of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the diocese, initiated a massive renovation program under the direction of Rev. Msgr. William J. Carey, then the Cathedral rector. The renovation process took more than three years to complete.



Bishop McVinney died in August, 1971 before renovations were completed. Ironically, Bishop McVinney, like Bishop Hendricken, did not live to see his dream fulfilled. Renovations were nearly completed on January 26, 1972 when The Most Rev. Louis E. Gelineau was ordained in the Cathedral as the sixth Bishop of Providence. In that same year the Apostolic Delegate to the United States, The Most Reverend Luigi Raimondi, officiated at the dedication ceremonies for the renovated Cathedral.

Bishop Gelineau remained as the sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Providence until his retirement in 1997. Bishop Robert E. Mulvee was installed as the seventh Bishop of Providence in June, 1997 until his retirement in 2005. On March 31, 2005 the Holy Father, Saint John Paul II, appointed the then Bishop of Youngstown, The Most Reverend Thomas J. Tobin, as the eighth Bishop of Providence. It was one of the last appointments of John Paul II's saintly pontificate before his death on April 2, 2005.



Bishop Tobin was installed on May 31, 2005, and he has been instrumental in the most recent renovations of the Cathedral leading up to the celebrations in 2014 of the 125th Anniversary, followed by Bishop Henning in 2023. The tenth and current Bishop of Providence was appointed by Pope Francis on April 8, 2025, the Most Reverend Bruce A. Lewandowski. Welcome to the Cathedral of SS. Peter and Paul, the Mother Church of the Diocese of Providence, Rhode Island.



ROMAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL OF SAINTS PETER & PAUL  
CONSECRATED 1889

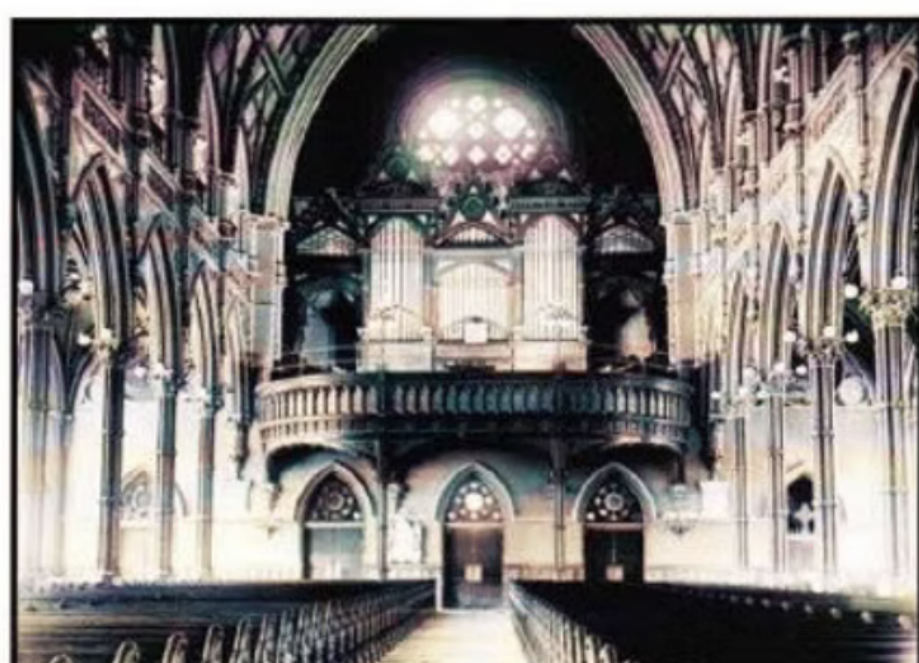


PHOTO: Courtesy of Diocesan Archives  
GRAND SPACE: The ornate interior of the newly built Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul following its completion in 1889, topped by a painting of the Transfiguration.



PHOTO: Courtesy of Diocesan Archives  
GOOD SHEPHERDS: The first priests of the cathedral in 1889. From left, Very Rev. Thomas F. Doran, L.L.D.; Rev. William Stang, D.D.; Rev. D.M. Lownev, chancellor

## Rectors of The Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul



2026 to Present: Rev. Msgr. Raymond B. Bastia

- |                                       |                                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2004 - Rev. Msgr. Anthony Mancini     | 1881 - Rev. Joseph McDonough      |
| 1982 - Rev. Francis J. Giudice        | 1878 - Rev. Farrell O'Reilly      |
| 1973 - Rev. Joseph P. Heaney          | 1873 - Rev. Robert Sullivan       |
| 1954 - Rev. Msgr. William J. Carey    | 1869 - Rev. Michael Tierney       |
| 1952 - Rev. Msgr. Arthur T. Geoghegan | 1865 - Rev. Patrick J. O'Dwyer    |
| 1950 - Rev. Bernard Lennon            | 1859 - Rev. James H. O'Neil       |
| 1934 - Rev. Thomas McKitchen          | 1857 - Rev. William O'Reilly      |
| 1922 - Rev. Peter A. Foley            | 1856 - Rev. James Hughes          |
| 1920 - Rt. Rev. William Hickey        | 1852 - Most Rev. Bernard O'Reilly |
| 1912 - Rev. Peter E. Blessing         | 1844 - Most Rev. William Tyler    |
| 1906 - Rev. Austin Dowling            | 1844 - Rev. James Fitton          |
| 1901 - Rev. Denis M. Downey           | 1839 - Rev. Michael R. Mills      |
| 1899 - Very Rev. Thomas Doran         | 1838 - Rev. Constantine Lee       |
| 1888 - Rev. William Stang             | 1837 - Rev. John Corry            |
| 1884 - Rev. Michael Fitzgerald        |                                   |