



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

A series of historical highlights from the first 200 years of St. Peter – Libertytown.

New Altar Dedicated in Second Church



Figure 1 Auxiliary Bishop Murphy and Fr. Iaia heading up the Church steps to dedication Mass for the new altar, February 20, 1983

Long sought post-Vatican II renovations to the second (1870-2004) St. Peter's Church building in Libertytown culminated in the dedication of a new altar at a special Mass forty years ago on February 20, 1983. Auxiliary Bishop P. Francis Murphy, Western Vicar at the time, was the celebrant of the dedication Mass that Sunday afternoon. According to the Catholic Review edition that week, Bishop Murphy was "extremely impressed by the beauty of the newly renovated church" that "clearly reflects the vision of the Church and of the liturgy promoted by the spirit of the Second Vatican Council." The Bishop also noted that "at the same time, there is a creative integration and utilization of a number of the more traditional features of the former sanctuary and church."

Former pastor Fr. Paul Iaia was pleased to mark his tenth anniversary at St. Peter's by seeing the work completed, saying that since his appointment a decade earlier renovating the church had been a priority for him. He noted that financial considerations had postponed the work. During that decade our parish grew from 125 families to more than 300.

The \$110,000 project included the erection of a new altar for the sacrifice of the Mass allowing the celebrant to face the congregation. A new altar of repose for the Blessed Sacrament was also erected after the old marble altar was dismantled. The whole sanctuary was raised by two step levels and chairs for Mass celebrants were placed in the rear of the sanctuary where the old altar had been. Furthermore, the original altar rail was disassembled and its materials used to construct a pulpit and a kneeling rail in front of the tabernacle. The church nave was completely repainted as well.

The Feb. 25, 1983 Catholic Review described how "all of the woodwork in the sanctuary was marbled to good effect with paint to match the original marble altar. Sanctuary wall paintings of St. Peter and St. Paul were complemented with bas-relief sculptures of the Holy Family over the Baptismal font and Eucharistic symbols over the tabernacle of repose."

The large painting of the crucifixion that was framed by a Jesuit-style broken arch was kept. As many parishioners know, that painting survived the 2004 fire that destroyed our second church and today the painting hangs above the altar in the Daily Mass Chapel.

Parishioners also appreciated that the renovation included new kneelers in addition to a new air conditioning and heating system which, thanks to parishioner Reese Warner and his R.W. Warner Co., was installed at great savings to the parish. In addition to Bishop Murphy and Fr. Iaia, eight other priests were on hand for the dedication Mass.



Figure 2 Mass of Dedication for the New Altar, February 20, 1983