



# Key Moments in St. Peter's History

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

## Stations of the Cross and Other Items Salvaged from the 2004 Fire

With the season of Lent fast approaching, many parishioners are making plans to attend weekly Stations of the Cross services. As we turn to face each of the fourteen plaques along the side walls of the nave of the church that depict the stages of Christ's passion, we are reminded how fortunate our parish is that they were able to be salvaged after the devastating fire that destroyed our second St. Peter's church in 2004. The Stations were damaged, some quite badly, but it was determined that they could be repaired and saved for installation into our current church once it was built. The parish contracted with the firm Sacred Spaces, then based in Alexandria, VA, and all involved were pleased with the quality of their restoration work. Lighting was installed allowing the Stations to be illuminated at night.



*Fig. 1 This view in the front right corner of our present church's nave shows some of the items salvaged after the 2004 fire that destroyed our second church:*

- A) A small stained-glass window assembled from salvaged pieces of various shattered windows*
- B) One of the Consecration crosses from the second church*
- C) The Fourteenth Station of the restored Stations of the Cross*

*The other two stained-glass windows, including the image of St. Peter receiving the keys to the Kingdom, were acquired from St Pius V in Baltimore when their Schroeder St. church was closed in 2005.*

There are a few other surviving elements that were saved after the fire and incorporated into our present church. One that was a source of amazement and comfort in the immediate aftermath of the blaze is the oil painting of the Crucifixion that hung behind the altar. It received some damage but parishioner Nancy Pollak, an art conservator, took immediate steps to protect the painting from further damage and restore it to its former beauty. Dating to the 1871 construction of the second church, it was painted by Carl Kaiser and Paul Deschwanden. Today the painting hangs above the altar in our Daily Mass Chapel.

The brick exterior walls of the Daily Mass Chapel allowed us to incorporate part of the old church into our present larger church. The windows in the foyer of the Chapel survived and were retained. Elsewhere, pieces of the old shattered stained-glass windows were salvaged and incorporated into our new church. The mosaic window around the tabernacle in the main church sanctuary is one example. The windows by the statues in the front of the nave, near the baptismal font and the choir area, and in the Adoration Chapel were pieced together from glass recovered from various shattered windows after the fire. A surviving portion of one of the old windows was installed behind the votive candles in the back of the nave. The other stained-glass windows in our present church came from a church that closed in Baltimore.

Only two wooden pews from the second church largely survived and were shortened and repaired. They sit inside the old church foyer. The sanctuary lamp that hangs in our main church today is also from our second church in its earlier days. It was not in the church at the time of the fire as it had been replaced years earlier.



*Fig 2 Consecration  
Cross from 2<sup>nd</sup> church*

Also surviving the fire and reused in the new church are a few of the twelve consecration crosses that hung in the old church. These crosses, which hold a candle sconce, marked the places where the church walls were anointed when the second church was consecrated in 1903. (Churches were not consecrated back then until debt was satisfied.) Two can be seen today at each of the front corners of the nave, and two flank the doors leading from the center aisle out to the Narthex.

Even the newly constructed elements of our present church feature ties to the past. The blue coffered ceiling in the Daily Mass Chapel invokes that of the previous church. The stenciling on its walls was reproduced from a recovered piece of stenciling from the burned church. The exterior brickwork and window openings were inspired by those of the old church. Our two steeples are based on those of each of the previous two churches.

Other Key Moment articles will address the new elements of our church, but it is extremely noteworthy that our new main altar contains the altar stone from our previous church, and it contains a relic of St. Francis Xavier placed by Archbishop O'Brien when the church was dedicated on Sept. 7, 2008. Our church is also blessed to retain an altar from the first church building that predated the one that burned. Today this is used as a side altar in our Daily Mass Chapel.