



Key Moments in St. Peter's History

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

St. Peter's Bicentennial

The most recent key moment in St. Peter's history is the commemoration of the parish's bicentennial. 2021 marked 200 years since the establishment of the parish and the beginning of construction of our first church building, a stone chapel, on land donated by the Coale family. In September 1823, the newly completed first church was consecrated by Archbishop Ambrose Maréchal of Baltimore. To commemorate this milestone, a Bicentennial Committee consisting of 20 parishioners planned a number of activities beginning in September 2022 and culminating in Fall 2023.



Figure 1 Scenes from the 2022 Bicentennial Kickoff Picnic and the Bicentennial Bash on September 10, 2023.

In order to carry out these plans without impacting the parish's normal operating budget, Bicentennial fundraising efforts were undertaken. Early on, a logo was developed showcasing the current church with the extant portion of the second church prominently featured. This logo was used in the development of a Bicentennial ornament, which has been sold over the past year. A ticketed Bicentennial Ball dinner dance is planned for October 7th at Dutch's Daughter restaurant in Frederick. Since capacity is limited for that event, the Committee held a Bicentennial Bash for the entire parish on Sunday September 10th, funded by the proceeds of 5 Bicentennial raffles, which were sold throughout the past year. The Bash featured many of the activities from the annual parish picnic; with pulled pork, pit beef, and ice cream added to the menu and line dancing and pony rides to entertain.



Figure 2 Bicentennial Plaza showing the commemorative plaque & bench -September 2023.

A granite bench, also funded with raffle proceeds, was installed in the newly named Bicentennial Plaza at the entrance to Sappington Hall (which became the parish's second parish center - a building built with stones repurposed from the original stone chapel after it was dismantled in 1905). A plaque was placed on the column alongside the bench, commemorating the Bicentennial. A time capsule to be filled with items marking this point in the parish's history was procured and the display case in the Narthex will display the capsule's contents during October.

The year's keynote event was the Bicentennial Mass celebrated by Archbishop William Lori with more than

500 people in attendance. This was held last Sunday, September 24, 2023, marking 200 years since the first church's Consecration Mass on the last Sunday of September 1823. All of St. Peter's music ministries were represented: the Hand Bell Choir, Worship Band, Adult Choir, and Childrens Choir. Fr. Chuck composed the musical Mass Setting in honor of our Bicentennial. Following the Mass in church, a reception was held immediately following in Sullivan Hall at the Parish Center.

For 57 weeks, from September 4, 2022 through October 1, 2023, the Bicentennial Historical Committee published a weekly blogpost article, each focusing on one of the "key moments in St. Peter's history," often featuring something that happened during that particular week of the year in the parish's past.



Figure 3 Bicentennial Mass with Archbishop William Lori presiding, and Fr. Chuck Wible, Fr. Gene Nickol, Fr. Jason Worley and Fr. Collin Poston concelebrating on September 24, 2023.

Through extensive research in the parish's own archives, plus those of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the Jesuits, seminaries and other repositories, the Historical Committee tracked down original sources to ensure that these articles were accurate. Fully annotated versions have been saved for the benefit of future parishioners researching the parish's history. The discovery of correspondence from Fr. Kavanagh, our pastor of a century ago, lamenting the scarcity of records of the first 100 years of St. Peter's history reinforced the importance of this effort. The graphic for the article series featured the image of St. Peter the Apostle receiving the Keys to the Kingdom from Jesus, as depicted on a stained-glass window near the baptismal font in the front of the Nave in our church.

Throughout the past year, parishioners have been able to view a great many items from our parish archives as they were rotated through a display case in the Narthex of the church. Acquiring that case was among the first actions by the Bicentennial Committee.



Figure 4 The Bicentennial Display case in the Narthex and the adjacent easel rotated through many items from the Parish Archives throughout the year.

Oral histories were recorded for posterity with our living pastors, from Fr. Gene Nickol to Fr. Chuck Wible, as well as members of the pastoral councils that oversaw the construction of the current Parish Center and the current Church. Sebastian Grabenstein was interviewed in the fall of 2021 as the oldest living member of the parish. He passed away during the bicentennial year in April 2023.

Much of the history gathered for the blog articles has been consolidated into a 120-page soft cover book, *St. Peter the Apostle Catholic Church, 1823-2023*.

The first 200 years have been wonderful and we entrust the future 200 years to our children and their children's children.



Figure 5 St. Peter's Bicentennial Committee.