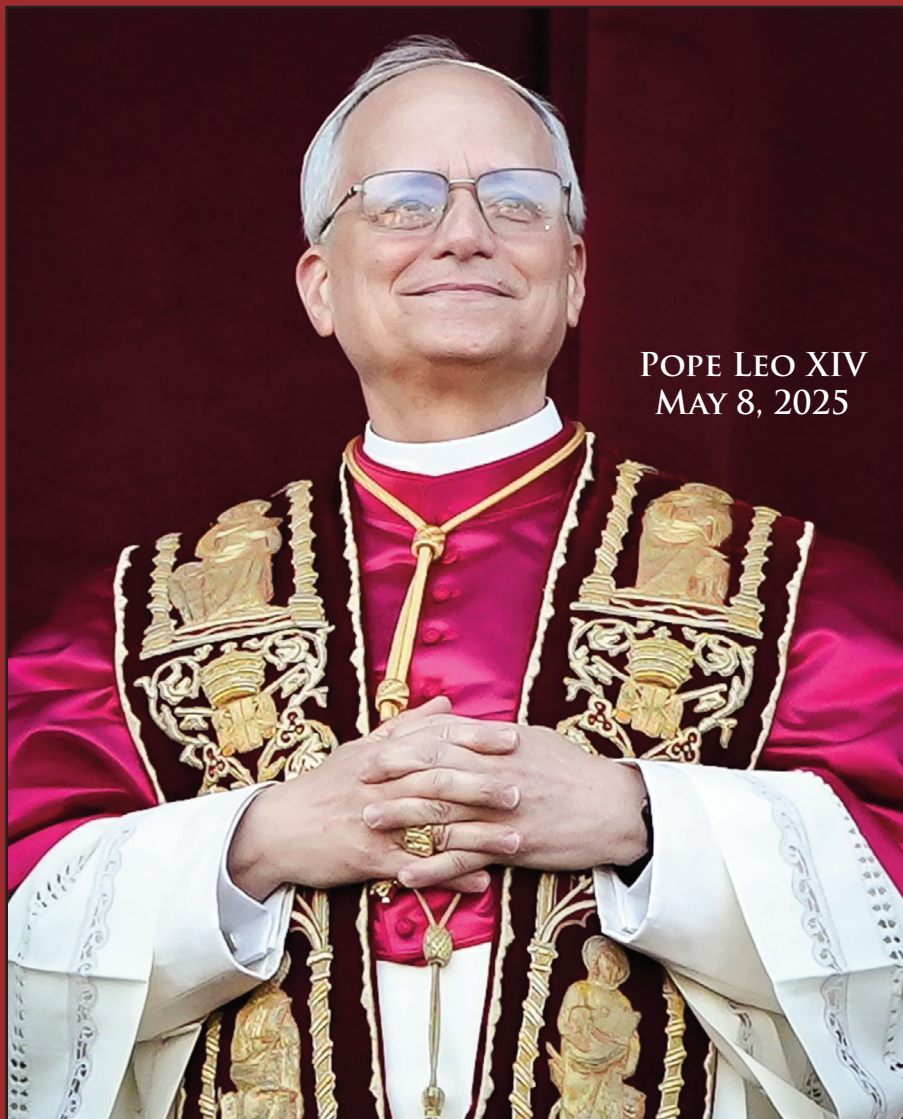




# CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON



POPE LEO XIV  
MAY 8, 2025

# 2026 DIRECTORY

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**ON THE COVER:**

Pope Leo XIV, formerly Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, smiles as he appears at the central loggia of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican following his election as pope May 8, 2025. The new pope was born in Chicago. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)

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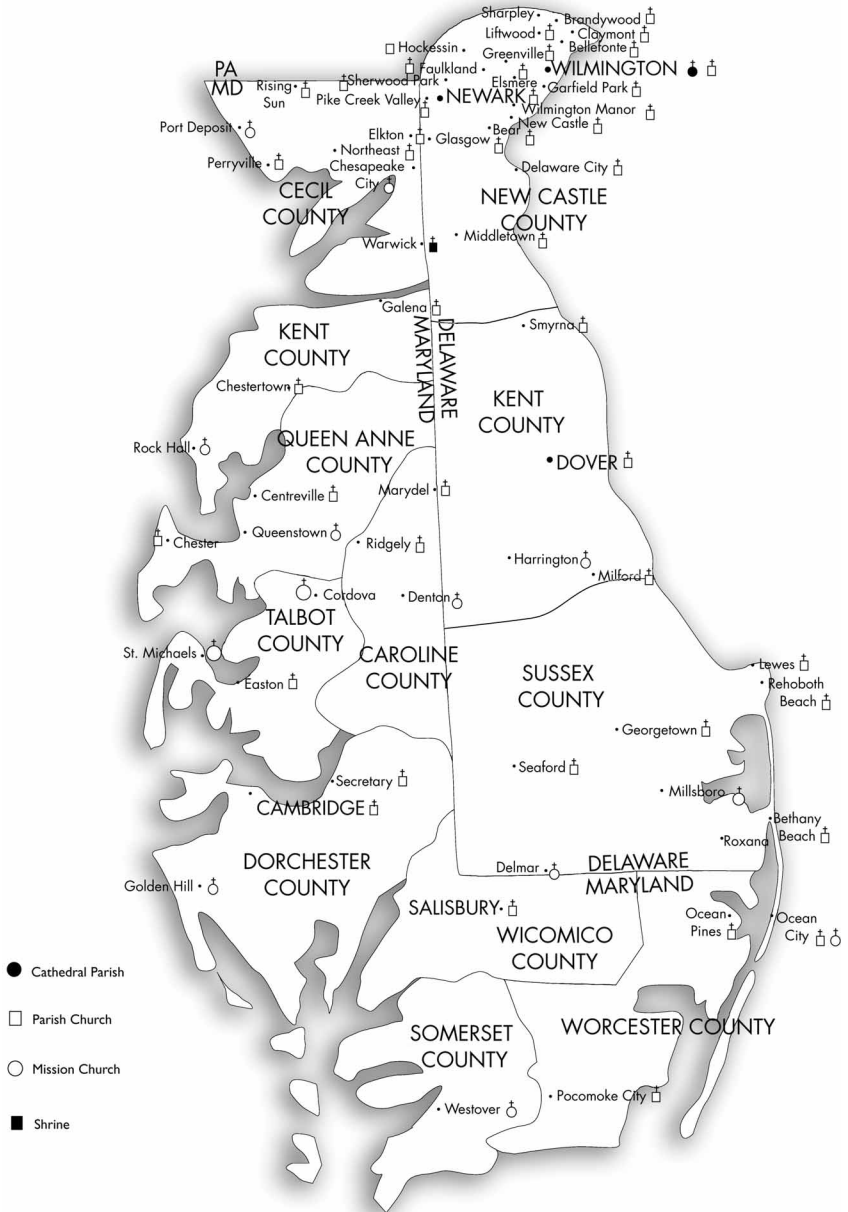
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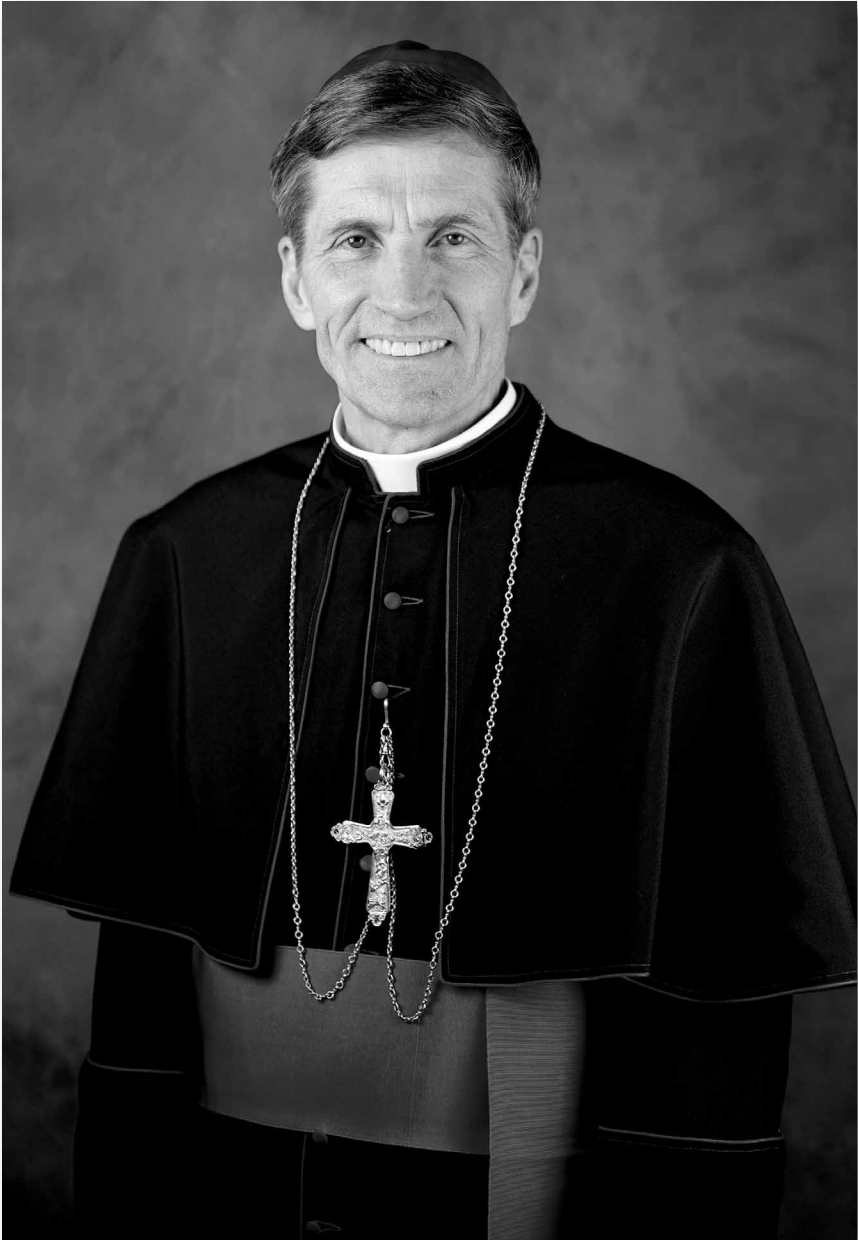
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# DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON





**Most Reverend William E. Koenig, D.D.**  
**Bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington**

# DIOCESE OF WILMINGTON

(Diocesis Vilmingtoniensis)

**DIOCESE ESTABLISHED MARCH 3, 1868**

Comprises all the City of Wilmington and the Counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex in the State of Delaware and the Counties of Caroline, Cecil, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne, Somerset, Talbot, Wicomico and Worcester in the State of Maryland  
Square Miles — Delaware 1,932; Maryland 3,375; Total: 5,307 sq. miles

**TOTAL POPULATION: 1,446,943**

**CATHOLIC POPULATION: 247,025**

**PATRON OF THE DIOCESE: St. Francis de Sales**



## **HIS EXCELLENCY MOST REVEREND WILLIAM E. KOENIG, D.D. BISHOP OF WILMINGTON**

Ordained May 14, 1983; Appointed Bishop of Wilmington, April 30, 2021;  
Episcopal Ordination July 13, 2021; Installed July 13, 2021.

Therese M. Rubini - Secretary to the Bishop  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2030, Wilmington, DE 19899  
Telephone: (302) 573-3146  
E-mail: [bishop@cdow.org](mailto:bishop@cdow.org)  
Office: 1925 Delaware Avenue, Wilmington, DE

# Former Diocesan Bishops

## **Rt. Rev. Thomas A. Becker, D.D.**

Consecrated August 16, 1868; transferred to Savannah 1886; died July 29, 1899

## **Rt. Rev. Alfred A. Curtis, D.D.**

Consecrated November 14, 1886; resigned 1896; named Titular Bishop of Echinus; died July 11, 1908

## **Most Rev. John J. Monaghan, D.D.**

Consecrated May 9, 1897; resigned and named Titular Bishop of Lydda, July 10, 1925; died January 7, 1935

## **Most Rev. Edmond J. FitzMaurice, D.D.**

Ordained May 28, 1904; consecrated November 30, 1925; resigned and named Titular Archbishop of Tomi, March 2, 1960; died July 25, 1962

## **Most Rev. Michael W. Hyle, D.D.**

Ordained March 12, 1927; appointed Titular Bishop of Christopolis and Coadjutor of Wilmington with right to succession July 9, 1958; consecrated September 24, 1958; succeeded to See, March 2, 1960; died December 26, 1967

## **Most Rev. Thomas J. Mardaga, D.D.**

Ordained May 14, 1940; appointed Titular Bishop of Mutugenna and Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, December 9, 1966; consecrated January 25, 1967; appointed Bishop of Wilmington, March 13, 1968; installed April 6, 1968; died May 28, 1984

## Former Coadjutor Bishop

### **Most Rev. Hubert J. Cartwright, J.C.L., D.D.**

Born August 22, 1900; ordained June 11, 1927; appointed Titular Bishop of Neve, August 22, 1956; appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Wilmington and consecrated October 24, 1956; died March 6, 1958

## **Most Rev. Robert E. Mulvee, D.D.**

Ordained June 30, 1957; appointed Titular Bishop of Summa and Auxiliary Bishop of Manchester, February 15, 1977; consecrated April 14, 1977; appointed Bishop of Wilmington, February 19, 1985; installed April 11, 1985; appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Providence with right to succession February 7, 1995; installed March 27, 1995. Succeeded to See, June 11, 1997; retired March 31, 2005; died December 28, 2018

## **Most Rev. Michael A. Saltarelli, D.D.**

Ordained May 28, 1960; appointed Titular Bishop of Mesarfelta and Auxiliary Bishop of Newark, June 12, 1990; Episcopal ordination July 30, 1990; appointed Eighth Bishop of Wilmington November 21, 1995; installed January 23, 1996; retired July 7, 2008; died October 8, 2009

## **Most Rev. W. Francis Malooly, D.D.**

### **Bishop Emeritus**

Ordained May 9, 1970; appointed Titular Bishop of Flumenzer and Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore, December 12, 2000; Episcopal Ordination March 1, 2001; appointed Bishop of Wilmington, July 7, 2008; installed September 8, 2008; retired April 30, 2021

## Former Bishop In Residence

### **Most Rev. James C. Burke, O.P.**

Born November 30, 1926; ordained June 18, 1956; served the diocese as Vicar for Urban Affairs, Pastor of St. Paul's Church, Wilmington; Pastor of Christ Our King, and Director of the Society of the Propagation of the Faith and Holy Childhood Association; died May 28, 1994

# Apostolic Nunciature and Neighboring Dioceses

## The Apostolic Nunciature

**Christophe Cardinal Pierre**

**Apostolic Nuncio**

3339 Massachusetts Ave., N.W.  
Washington, DC 20008-3610  
(202) 333-7121 Fax: (202) 337-4036  
nuntiususa@nuntiususa.org

## Diocese of Arlington

**Most Rev. Michael F. Burbidge, Ed.D., D.D.**

**Bishop of Arlington**

The Chancery:  
200 North Glebe Road, Suite 914  
Arlington, VA 22203  
(703) 841-2511 Fax: (703) 524-5028  
**Chancellor:** Rev. Robert J. Rippy, J.C.L.

## Archdiocese of Baltimore

**Most Rev. William E. Lori, S.T.D.**

**Archbishop of Baltimore**

The Chancery:  
320 Cathedral St.  
Baltimore, MD 21201  
(410) 547-5446 Fax: (410) 727-8234  
**Chancellor:** Diane L. Barr, J.D., J.C.D., Ph.D.

## Diocese of Camden

**Most. Rev. Joseph A. Williams, D.D.**

**Bishop of Camden**

Camden Diocesan Center:  
631 Market St.  
Camden, NJ 08102  
(856) 756-7900 Fax: (856) 963-2655  
**Chancellor:** Rev. Jason T. Rocks, S.T.L., J.C.L.

## Archdiocese of Philadelphia

**Most Rev. Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.**

**Archbishop of Philadelphia**

The Chancery:  
222 N. Seventeenth St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19103  
215-587-0506  
**Chancellor:** Rev. Sean P. Bransfield, J.C.L.

## Diocese of Richmond

**Most Rev. Barry C. Knestout, D.D.**

**Bishop of Richmond**

Pastoral Center:  
7800 Carousel Ln.  
Richmond, VA 23294  
(804) 359-5661 Fax: (804) 358-9159  
**Chancellor:** Vy. Rev. Brian W. Capuano, J.C.L., J.V.

## Archdiocese of Washington

**Robert Cardinal McElroy, S.T.D.**

**Archbishop of Washington**

Archdiocesan Pastoral Center:  
5001 Eastern Avenue  
Hyattsville, MD 20782  
Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 29260  
Washington, DC 20017  
(301) 853-4500 Fax: (301) 853-5300  
**Chancellor:** Terence J. Farrell

## Diocese of Wheeling–Charleston

**Most Rev. Mark E. Brennan**

**Bishop of Wheeling–Charleston**

The Chancery:  
1311 Byron St.  
P.O. Box 230  
Wheeling, WV 26003  
(304) 233-0880  
**Chancellor:** Chad R. Carter, M.B.A., B.A.

## Archeparchy of Philadelphia — Ukrainian

**Most Rev. Boris Gudziak**

**Metropolitan Archbishop**

The Chancery:  
810 N. Franklin St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19123-2097  
(215) 627-0143 Fax: (215) 627-0377  
**Chancellor:** Rev. Msgr. Peter Waslo, M.A., J.C.L.

# Wilmington Diocesan Officials

## Vicar General

### Moderator of the Curia

**Rev. Msgr. Steven P. Hurley, V.G., S.T.L.**

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## Chief Financial Officer

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[jcorsini@cdow.org](mailto:jcorsini@cdow.org)

## Delegate for Religious

**Sr. Ann David Strohming, O.S.F.**

1626 N. Union Street  
Wilmington, DE 19806  
**(302) 573-3124** Fax: (302) 573-6944  
[religious@cdow.org](mailto:religious@cdow.org)

## Judicial Vicar ad interim

**Rev. Michael C. Connolly, J.C.L., J.V.**

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Office: 1925 Delaware Ave.  
Wilmington, DE 19806  
**(302) 573-3107** Fax: (302) 573-6947  
[tribunal@cdow.org](mailto:tribunal@cdow.org)

## Vicar for Clergy

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Wilmington, DE 19899  
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Wilmington, DE 19806  
**(302) 573-3100**  
[gevers@cdow.org](mailto:gevers@cdow.org)

## Vicar for Retired Priests

**Vy. Rev. Norman P. Carroll**

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2030  
Wilmington, DE 19899  
Office: 345 Bear-Christiana Rd.  
Bear, DE 19701  
**(302) 322-6430**  
[ncarroll@cdow.org](mailto:ncarroll@cdow.org)

# Diocese of Wilmington by Deaneries

## Brandywine Hundred

**Vy. Rev. Michael J. Carrier, V.F., K.H.S.**

Church of the Holy Child

2500 Naamans Road

Wilmington, DE 19810

**(302) 475-6486 x111 Fax: (302) 475-3458**

Church of the Holy Child, Holy Rosary, Immaculate Heart of Mary, St. Helena, St. Joseph on the Brandywine, St. Mary Magdalen

## Central New Castle

**Vy. Rev. Joseph J. Piekarski, V.F.**

St. Mary of the Assumption Church

7200 Lancaster Pike

Hockessin, DE 19707

**(302) 239-7100 Fax: (302) 239-8219**

Corpus Christi, Holy Spirit, Our Lady of Fatima,

St. Catherine of Siena, St. John the Beloved,

St. Mary of the Assumption, St. Matthew, St. Paul

(Delaware City), St. Peter the Apostle

## City (Wilmington)

**Vy. Rev. Roger F. DiBuo, V.F.**

St. Elizabeth Church

809 S. Broom Street

Wilmington, DE 19805

**(302) 652-3626 Fax: (302) 656-7513**

Cathedral of St. Peter, St. Ann, St. Anthony of

Padua, St. Elizabeth, St. Hedwig, St. Joseph

(French Street), St. Paul (Wilmington), St. Thomas

the Apostle

## Eastern Shore

**Vy. Rev. Christopher LaBarge, V.F.**

St. Francis de Sales Church

514 Camden Avenue

Salisbury, MD 21801

**(410) 742-6443 Fax: (410) 742-9410**

Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Mother of

Sorrows, Sacred Heart, St. Benedict, St. Chris-

topher, St. Francis de Sales, St. Mary Refuge of

Sinners, SS. Peter and Paul

## Iron Hill

**Rev. Edward F. Ogden, OSFS, V.F.**

St. Margaret of Scotland Church

2431 Frazer Rd.

Newark, DE 19702

**(302) 834-0225**

Good Shepherd, Holy Family, Immaculate Conception (Elkton), Resurrection, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, St. John/Holy Angels, St. Joseph (Middle-town), St. Margaret of Scotland, St. Thomas More Oratory

## Ocean

**Vy. Rev. Brian S. Lewis, V.F.**

St. Jude the Apostle Church

152 Tulip Drive

Lewes, DE 19958

**(302) 644-7300 Fax: (302) 644-7415**

Holy Name of Jesus, Our Lady of Lourdes,

St. Ann (Bethany Beach), St. Edmond, St. John

Neumann, St. Jude the Apostle, St. Luke/St. An-

drew, St. Mary Star of the Sea, St. Michael the

Archangel

## Silver Lake

**Vy. Rev. James S. Lentini, V.F.**

Holy Cross Church, Dover, and

Immaculate Conception Church, Marydel

631 S. State Street

Dover, DE 19901

**(302) 674-5787 Fax: (302) 674-5783**

Holy Cross, Immaculate Conception (Marydel),

St. Dennis, St. John the Apostle, St. Polycarp

# Statistical Summary

## GEOGRAPHICAL

States	2
Counties	12
Deaneries	7
Parishes	54
Missions	20
Shrines	2
Square Miles	5,307

## PERSONNEL

Bishops	2
Priests (Diocesan)	82
Priests (Religious)	46
Priests (Extern)	27
Brothers	4
Permanent Deacons	116
Transitional Deacons	-
Sisters	130

## SCHOOLS

Inter Parochial Elementary	2
Parochial Elementary	13
Private Elementary	6
High Schools Diocesan	1
High Schools Parochial	3
High Schools Private	4
Total Students in Catholic Schools	8,889
Parish Religious Education Students	8,085

## VITAL STATISTICS

Catholic Population	247,025
Population	1,446,943

*Dialog file photo*

St. Francis Xavier Church in Old Bohemia, Maryland, considered the "Mother Church" of the Diocese.

## The History of the Diocese of Wilmington

The Diocese of Wilmington, a suffragan see in the Province of Baltimore, was established March 3, 1868, by Pope Pius IX. It comprised all of the state of Delaware, and the nine Maryland and two Virginia counties east of the Chesapeake Bay — Cecil, Kent, Queen Anne, Talbot, Caroline, Dorchester, Wicomico, Somerset and Worcester in Maryland, Accomack and Northampton in Virginia. The latter two counties were returned to the Diocese of Richmond on June 17, 1974, after construction of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel provided for the first time a connection to mainland Virginia.

### A new diocese

Concerned over how to provide for ever-increasing numbers of newly arriving Catholic immigrants, the bishops of the United States gathered in Baltimore in October 1866 for the Second Plenary Council of all the bishops of the country. Among other actions, they petitioned the Holy See to create a new diocese for the geographical area known as the Delmarva Peninsula, where completion of a railroad for its whole length gave new and convenient access by land to the entire area. Its Catholic population had been estimated at 5,000 — 3,000 in four parishes in or near Wilmington, the other 2,000 scattered in small communities along Maryland's Eastern Shore, where there were only two parishes, each serving a number of distant missions, staffed by Jesuit priests whose predecessors had ministered in the area since shortly after Maryland's founding in 1634. There were few Catholics elsewhere on the peninsula.

Mass was first celebrated within the present diocese on Kent Island in the Chesapeake Bay as early as 1639. A mid-17th-century Jesuit foundation at Wyetown in Talbot County did not survive Maryland's vigorous repression of Catholicism after 1689, but later Jesuit churches are still in use to this day— St. Francis Xavier (Old Bohemia), founded in 1704 near present Warwick, Cecil County; St. Joseph (Tuckahoe), at present Cordova, Talbot County, and St. Peter, near Queenstown, Queen Anne's County, both founded in 1765, and St. Mary Star of the Sea (Tubman Chapel, Meekin's Neck), near present Golden Hill, Dorchester County, 1767.

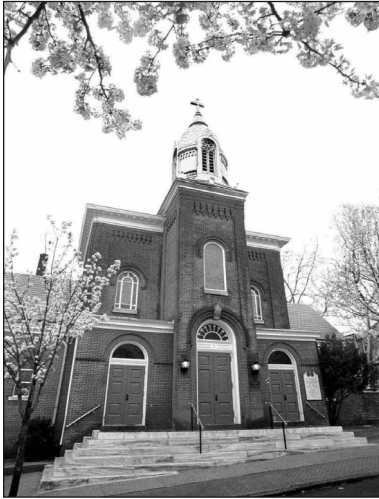
St. Mary of the Assumption (Coffee Run) was founded in 1772 near present Hockessin, Delaware, and from it a succession of pastors served both the Wilmington area and nearby Chester and Delaware counties in Pennsylvania. Among them was the legendary Rev. Patrick Kenny, a diocesan priest who was pastor from

**Continued, next page**

## From previous page

1804 to 1840. Besides Jesuits, other religious communities, both male and female, also labored within what became the Diocese of Wilmington — Capuchin Franciscans, Augustinians, Sulpicians, Redemptorists, and from 1830 to the present, the Daughters of Charity, founded by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton at Emmitsburg, Md.

From early in the 19th century the Catholic population was concentrated in the Wilmington area, as successive waves of Catholic immigrants arrived — Irish, French, Caribbean, German, Polish, Italian, and more recently Latin American, Filipino, Korean and Vietnamese. In 1816 Father Kenny laid the cornerstone for the first Catholic church in Wilmington; its foundation and walls are now part of the transept of the Cathedral of St. Peter at Sixth and West streets.



*Dialog file photo*

The Cathedral of St. Peter in Wilmington, founded in 1796 and built in 1816, the central church of the Diocese.

Thomas Andrew Becker of Richmond, Va., consecrated first Bishop of Wilmington on August 16, 1868, started with limited diocesan resources: eight priests; 18 small churches; an orphanage, academy for girls and parochial school, all operated by the Daughters of Charity at St. Peter, Wilmington; and parish schools at St. Mary, Wilmington, and St. Joseph, Brandywine Banks, conducted by the Sisters of St. Joseph, who were immediately recalled to Philadelphia by Bishop James Wood when the new diocese was established.

During the 18 years Bishop Becker led the diocese, the number of priests increased three-fold, and he doubled the number of churches, concentrating on rural areas. He obtained the services of the Visitation, Glen Riddle Franciscan, and Dominican sisters. He also brought to the diocese German-speaking Benedictine priests and sisters to minister to the increasing number of German immigrants.

As the Catholic population rose to 18,000, Bishop Becker founded an orphanage and academy for boys, another academy for girls, and two more parochial schools. His writings, upholding the morality of the early labor movement

and urging the establishment of a national Catholic University, were nationally influential. Locally he was forced more than once to use both pen and pulpit in defense of the church and its teachings. On March 26, 1886, he was transferred to Savannah, Ga.

## Period of growth

His successor was Alfred Allen Curtis of Baltimore, a native of the diocese's Maryland Eastern Shore, who was consecrated second Bishop of Wilmington on November 14, 1886. He set out immediately to liquidate all church indebtedness, especially of the country parishes. To do this he secured legislation in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia allowing all parishes to incorporate and hold property in their own names, rather than in the name of the bishop. In 1890 he asked the Benedictines to start St. Hedwig Parish for the Poles who had begun arriving in large numbers, and in 1896 invited the Felician Franciscans to staff its parish school. He brought the Josephite fathers to the diocese to minister to African-Americans, opening St. Joseph Church, a boys' orphanage, and a parochial school in Wilmington. Later, with assistance from St. Katharine Drexel, the Josephites also opened an industrial school for older youths at Clayton, Delaware.

Under Bishop Curtis, the Benedictine sisters located their motherhouse at Ridgely, Md., and opened a school there, later replaced by their ministry to exceptional children. In 1893 the Ursulines took over the girls' academy that the Visitation sisters had conducted. The Visitandines, with the bishop's encouragement, established a cloistered monastery, returning to their original purpose and rule, and remained for over a century until relocating in 1993 to Massachusetts. Bishop Curtis resigned for health reasons on June 10, 1896, leaving a well-established diocese: 30 priests, 22 churches and 18 missions serving 25,000 Catholics, 12 seminarians, eight religious communities, three academies, nine parochial schools, three orphanages and a cloistered convent.

Bishop Curtis remained as apostolic administrator of the diocese until the arrival of his successor, John J. Monaghan of Charleston, S.C., who was consecrated third Bishop of Wilmington on May 9, 1897. Over the next 28 years Bishop Monaghan established seven new parishes, seven missions and eight new schools. In 1903 the Little Sisters of the Poor opened a home for the aged and the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales opened the Salesianum School in Wilmington, for many years the only secondary school for boys in the diocese.

**Continued, next page**

## From previous page

cese. In 1924 Bishop Monaghan asked the Oblates to establish a parish and build St. Anthony Church for the growing Italian population of Wilmington.

Bishop Monaghan welcomed the establishment by Bishop Stephen Soter Ortynski, Byzantine Exarch of Philadelphia, of a parish at Wilmington and a parish and orphanage at Chesapeake City, Md., for the Ukrainian Catholics within the diocese. Bishop Monaghan also founded St. Francis Hospital, operated by the Sisters of St. Francis of Glen Riddle. Bishop Monaghan resigned for health reasons on July 10, 1925.

He was succeeded by Edmond John FitzMaurice of Philadelphia, who was consecrated fourth Bishop of Wilmington on Nov. 30, 1925. During his 35-year episcopate the Catholic population grew from 34,000 to 85,000. All but one of the 17 new parishes and eight missions he founded were outside the City of Wilmington. He started 19 elementary and nine secondary parish schools, of which four for the first time were outside New Castle County, at Dover, Salisbury, Easton and Rehoboth Beach. Two private high schools were also opened — Archmere, for boys, by the Norbertine canons, and Padua, for girls, by St. Anthony Parish under the Franciscan sisters — and an elementary academy — St. Edmond's, for boys, by the Brothers of the Holy Cross.

Bishop FitzMaurice encouraged active participation by the laity in the work of the church, anticipating the reforms of Vatican Council II. Among the many activities he encouraged were such conventional structures as Catholic Charities (founded as the Catholic Welfare Guild), Catholic Youth Organization, Society for the Propagation of the Faith, St. Vincent de Paul Society, and Knights of Columbus, as well as innovative ones like the Catholic Interracial Council, Catholic Forum of the Air, Catholic Television Guild, Diocesan Book Forum, Catholic Education Guild, and Young Christian Workers.

On Oct. 24, 1956, Hubert J. Cartwright of Philadelphia was consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Wilmington, with right of succession to Bishop FitzMaurice, and quickly endeared himself to the people of the diocese, visiting each parish. Sadly, Bishop Cartwright died less than 18 months after his arrival in Wilmington. Michael William Hyle of Baltimore replaced him, and was consecrated Coadjutor Bishop of Wilmington with right of succession on March 6, 1958.

Bishop FitzMaurice retired on March 2, 1960, and Bishop Hyle became fifth Bishop of Wilmington. Most of his short episcopate was devoted to the Second Vatican Council. He attended all of its sessions and immediately began implementing its early reforms. He directed formation of councils in each parish, established *The Dialog* as a quality diocesan newspaper that quickly achieved national prominence, and was in the forefront of the ecumenical movement. He commissioned special ministries to the prisons and mental hospitals in the diocese, reorganized the Newman Apostolate in all colleges and universities, and opened a Catholic Information Center in downtown Wilmington. To cope with the urban problems common to cities throughout the country, Bishop Hyle established an Office of Inner City Ministry.

After surveying the needs of the diocese, he launched a Diocesan Development Program with a goal of \$7,000,000, to which \$9,000,000 was pledged, providing for the first diocesan-operated high school, St. Mark's, a Newman Center at the University of Delaware, and an upgrading of parochial schools. Bishop Hyle's work was cut short after only seven years by his death on Dec. 26, 1967.

## Vatican II influence

On March 13, 1968, Bishop Thomas Joseph Mardaga, auxiliary bishop of Baltimore, was appointed sixth Bishop of Wilmington, as the diocese was about to mark its 100th anniversary. He was installed on April 6, 1968, a week before the violent urban outbreaks that followed the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King.

Immediately addressing both the reforms required by the Vatican Council and the special needs of his own diocese, Bishop Mardaga established a Council of the Laity to be a liaison between the bishop and the 53 parishes of the diocese. He continued the ecumenical work of his predecessor, joining with other Christian denominations to form the Delmarva Ecumenical Agency and engaging in regular interfaith consultations with



*Dialog file photo*

Christ the Teacher School opened in 2002, to respond to regional educational needs. The school serves families from four parishes.

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religious leaders of all faiths.

Within the diocesan structure he established a Public Relations Office, appointed a Director for Radio and Television, created a diocesan Department of Finance, doubled the staff of the Tribunal which judges annulment petitions, and established a Ministry for Migrant Workers. As in other dioceses, several primary and secondary schools had closed due to increasing costs and decreasing vocations to the religious sisterhoods that had staffed them. He addressed these problems by urging parishes to employ full-time professional Directors of Religious Education to coordinate the work of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine in providing religious education programs for students not attending Catholic schools.

Bishop Mardaga died May 28, 1984, after a four-year struggle with prostate cancer that he bore with exemplary fortitude, continuing to fulfill his responsibilities despite repeated hospitalizations, surgeries and radiation treatments.

During his 15-year episcopate, Bishop Mardaga opened nine new parishes to serve a Catholic population that had grown to 122,000, even with the return of the two southern-most counties to the Diocese of Richmond in 1974.

In 1978 Bishop Mardaga invited into the diocese Bishop James C. Burke, O.P., retired missionary bishop of Chimbote, Peru. Bishop Burke served as vicar for urban affairs and diocesan director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, and assisted his host bishops in their pastoral responsibilities through parish visitations and administering confirmation until shortly before his death on May 24, 1994.

Robert E. Mulvee, auxiliary bishop of Manchester, N.H., was appointed seventh Bishop of Wilmington to succeed Bishop Mardaga on Feb. 19, 1985. He was installed in Wilmington on April 11, 1985, and began a diocesan administration emphasizing collegiality. He led a five-year planning process culminating in the report "A Church Called to Serve: Pastoral Directions for the '90s." Answering the call to ecumenism of the Vatican Council, he helped restructure the Delmarva Ecumenical Agency into the Christian Council of Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore, as a more responsive vehicle for Christian interaction. As the Catholic population increased to 165,000, of a total



*Dialog file photo*

Bishop Malooly leads the prayer at the Our Lady Queen of Peace Statue at Holy Spirit Church, New Castle, during the annual Diocesan Marian Pilgrimage Oct. 10, 2015.

1,050,000 people in the area, he founded two new missions in the southern part of the diocese and raised a third to parish status. On Feb. 7, 1995, he was appointed Coadjutor Bishop of Providence, R.I., and became the seventh Bishop of Providence on June 11, 1997.

## New century, new goals

Bishop Michael A. Saltarelli of Newark, N.J., was appointed eighth Bishop of Wilmington on Nov. 21, 1995, and was installed on Jan. 23, 1996. Soon after his arrival, he announced seven priorities: to promote vocations; to develop a comprehensive pastoral ministry to Hispanic people; to assure efficient and effective diocesan departments and ministries; to establish new parishes and schools; to explore the roles of clergy and laity in various models of parish ministry; to evangelize the unchurched and alienated in the African American community; and to develop a comprehensive ministry on college campuses.

Successfully addressing his highest priority, during a period of declining religious vocations, Bishop Saltarelli ordained 24 new priests for the diocese and revitalized the permanent diaconate program, ordaining 48 permanent deacons to augment the 45 serving when he arrived.

The diocese strengthened its ministry to the growing Hispanic population and established two new parishes — St. Margaret of Scotland, Glasgow, in 1998, and St. Jude the Apostle, Lewes (previously a mission of St. Edmond, Rehoboth Beach,) in 2002 — and the new mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Frankford (Roxana), in the care of St. Ann, Bethany Beach, in 2006.

In 2001, Bishop Saltarelli launched a five-year, \$50-million campaign "Bringing the Vision to Life," for capital funds to enable parishes and the diocese to meet other challenges of the 21st century. Among its early projects was the diocese's first new elementary school in 40 years, Christ the Teacher, which opened at Glasgow in 2002, serving the children of four parishes in that area. A second interparochial elementary

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school, Most Blessed Sacrament, followed in 2003 in Ocean Pines, Md., serving children from seven parishes in that area.

Changing demographics and declining enrollments led to closing of four long-established parochial schools — Christ Our King, St. Hedwig and St. Thomas in Wilmington, and Holy Spirit, New Castle. Two others — Holy Rosary, Claymont, and St. Helena, Bellefonte — were replaced in 2008 by a new interparochial school, named Pope John Paul II, serving both parishes at the Bellefonte location. By that year, 19 of the 58 parishes in the diocese operated their own elementary schools, while 13 other parishes were served by diocesan interparochial schools. The diocese also assumed responsibility for St. Thomas More Preparatory School, Magnolia, originally a private Catholic high school, which became the second diocesan secondary school. Other results of the capital campaign were new churches in areas of rapid new residential development, including St. Joseph, Middletown, Ss. Peter and Paul, Easton, and St. Christopher, Kent Island.

When the scandal of clergy sex abuse came to light in 2002, the diocese faced it squarely, and after thorough investigation, acknowledged that over a period of 60 years there had been credible or confirmed allegations of child sex abuse against 18 Wilmington diocesan priests and three of other dioceses who had worked in this diocese, 11 of whom were still living but no longer in ministry. Bishop Saltarelli continued the policy of zero tolerance for offenders adopted by Bishop Mulvey in 1985, removing from ministry any priest against whom a credible complaint had been made, and extending concerned assistance to the survivors. To eliminate opportunities for future abuse, he established "For the Sake of God's Children," a continuing program that assures a safe environment for children during all church-related activities, to include criminal background checks for all diocesan personnel, and parish employees and volunteers, clergy or lay, conducting children's activities.

Bishop Saltarelli, having reached the mandatory retirement age, submitted his resignation, which was accepted on July 7, 2008, when Pope Benedict XVI appointed as his successor Bishop W. Francis Malooly, an auxiliary bishop of Baltimore. Bishop Malooly was installed as ninth Bishop of Wilmington, spiritual leader of 58 parishes and 233,000 people, on Sept. 8, 2008.

After serving as bishop emeritus of the diocese for just over a year, Bishop Saltarelli died Oct. 8, 2009, after being treated for cancer and heart disease since his retirement.

## New challenge, direction

In 2007 the Delaware General Assembly responded to the scandal of clergy sex abuse by suspending the state's statute of limitations for such cases during a two-year period. Normally that statute required that legal actions for damages be brought within seven years of the damaging activity. By the time the window closed in 2009, over 150 civil actions for abuse from as far back as 50 years in the past were brought against individual former priests, the parishes where they worked, and the diocese for negligence in not preventing the harmful conduct. Jury verdicts for victims in the first cases that came to trial exceeded a million dollars for each victim. Faced with the possibility that verdicts in the cases tried earlier could exhaust the assets of the diocese and involved parishes before later cases came to trial, leaving nothing to compensate those victims, the diocese filed for bankruptcy in 2009, so that all those with a claim on diocesan assets could be compensated fairly in proportion to the injuries they suffered. The diocese emerged from bankruptcy in 2011, after reaching a settlement with abuse survivors that included non-monetary undertakings, as well as \$77.4 million in damages, to be met from sale of diocesan assets, insurance coverage, staff reductions, and contributions from unrestricted funds of Catholic Cemeteries and the Catholic Diocese Foundation, uninvolved charitable corporations of the diocese.

Population and demographic changes continued to affect parish and school organization, with St. Stanislaus Parish in Wilmington closing in 2009 when only a few of its Polish families remained. Christ Our King parish closed its doors in 2016. Pope John Paul II interparochial school in the north Wilmington suburbs



*Dialog file photo*

A woman holds flowers and a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe at a celebration of the feast in 2008. Hispanic Ministry has become an important priority in the Diocese.



*Dialog file photo*

Bishop William Koenig, new Bishop of the Diocese of Wilmington, is cheered by fellow clergy after his Ordination Mass at St. Elizabeth Church, Tuesday, July 13, 2021.

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closed in 2011 after only three years of operation.

However, a diocesan-wide study in 2012 showed a high level of willingness to contribute to the ongoing capital needs of the church, and in 2013 the diocese undertook "Sustaining Hope for the Future," a three-year campaign to raise \$28 million in capital funds for the diocese and its 57 parishes.

In 2017, Bishop Malooly announced plans to celebrate the Diocese of Wilmington's 150th anniversary. The year-long celebration, "Rejoicing in the Lord since 1868," began with a Mass at the Cathedral of St. Peter on March 3, 2018, commemorating the establishment of the diocese in Delaware and the Eastern Shore of Maryland by Pope Pius IX in 1868.

The sesquicentennial includes pilgrimages, a convocation and a commemorative book.

In April 2018, the bishop led a diocesan pilgrimage to Anney, France, the home of St. Francis de Sales, the patron saint of the diocese, and to Rome.

"Every deanery, parish, church, and Catholic in Delaware and Maryland's Eastern Shore will have an opportunity to participate in 150th anniversary activities," Bishop Malooly said. "It will be a time of joyful thanks to God for our countless blessings and prayer for the future of the Diocese of Wilmington."

The coronavirus pandemic brought challenges globally in 2020, and also within the Diocese of Wilmington. Diocesan and parish schools, offices and churches were closed for the safety of the public in the spring, with schools and churches offering education and celebration of the Mass in a virtual format online. During the summer churches were allowed to reopen with limited seating and following safety protocols to prevent further virus spread. In the fall, schools offered a combination of online and in-person learning. As 2020 closes, the pandemic continues to affect all aspects of worship and work. Vaccines on the horizon bring hope to restore some normalcy to life, including the work of the Catholic Church.

On April 20, 2021, Pope Francis accepted the request for retirement of Bishop Malooly, and appointed Msgr. William E. Koenig of the Diocese of Rockville Center as the tenth bishop of Wilmington. Bishop Koenig's episcopal ordination and installation as Bishop of Wilmington took place on July 13, 2021, at St. Elizabeth's Church in Wilmington.

In May of 2023, Bishop Koenig issued the Pastoral Letter "United in Christ" to the faithful of the diocese initiating a time of pastoral planning.

In July 2024 a delegation of the Diocese attended the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. On October 5, 2024, the Diocese of Wilmington held a Eucharistic Congress in Ocean City, Maryland, attended by over 2000 of the faithful of the Diocese.