Fact Sheet: St. Patrick's Cathedral

St. Patrick's Cathedral is one of the largest gothic-style Catholic Cathedral in the United States. It is the seat of the Archbishop of New York, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, and is therefore considered the symbolic center of Catholic life in New York City.

- It is one of, if not the most visited churches in the country; five million people visit every year and there are between 15 and 18 masses each day.
- The story behind the cathedral is similar to the building of New York City itself, both being created in order to assert religious freedom.
- “St. Patrick's Cathedral -- constructed largely from the donations of ordinary Catholics in the mid-nineteenth-century -- represents in stone the arrival of Catholicism as a major force in New York culture,” explains J. Patrick Hornbeck II, Associate Professor and Chair of the Theology Department at Fordham University. “An imposing structure modeled on the great cathedrals of Europe, it has received five popes since 1965, and it is entirely appropriate that Pope Francis would lead a prayer service there as well.”
- Its creation, stretching over centuries, is a symbol of “the maxim that no generation builds a cathedral”.
- The building plan is designed in the shape of a cross, reaching from Fiftieth street on one side, to Fifty-first on the other.

In the 1700s:
- There were only 200 Catholics and 1 priest in New York City according to the New York Times.

In the 1800s:
- The number of Catholics (specifically the Irish) was beginning to grow in New York City so the Catholic Church and its followers decided to build a church to honor the Irish patron St. Patrick. In order to raise money for the project,
the Church held a fair from October 22 to November 30, 1878.

- Archbishop Hughes explained of the plan to “to erect a Cathedral in the City of New York that may be worthy of our increasing numbers, intelligence and wealth as a religious community, and at all events, worthy, as a public architectural monument, of the present and prospective crowns of this metropolis of the American continent.”
- The architect was James Renwick, and the cost to build (without the furnishings, altars, organs or furniture) was about $850,000 which is about $160 million in today’s dollars. The money was raised from donations.
- The original St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Mulberry Street burnt down in October, 1866 and was later rebuilt. The new St. Patrick’s Cathedral on Fifth Avenue and 50th street opened formally on May 25, 1879.

In the 1900s:
- The first Mass was offered in the Chapel on Christmas 1906. Construction was completed in 1908.
- On October 11, 1936, Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, who later became Pope Pius XII, presided at the 26th anniversary of the consecration of the Cathedral.
- Under Terence Cardinal Cooke, the entire interior of the Cathedral was restored from 1972-1979. Restoration of the exterior was completed for the Cathedral’s 100th anniversary.

In the 2000s:
- On September 16, 2001 Edward Cardinal Egan performed a memorial mass for the victims of the September 11 attacks, also praised the public servants of New York who selflessly rushed to the scene.
- On April 19, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI became the first Pope to celebrate Mass at the cathedral.

Recent Renovations:
- On March 17, 2012, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan unveiled plans to restore St. Patrick's Cathedral, saying it is "America's parish church and the soul of the capital of the world."
- The restoration was projected to cost about $175 million and to be finished in December 2015. They are on track with the completion and have finished most of the visible work already according to the cathedral's website.
The restoration includes the interior and exterior of the Cathedral from 5th Avenue to the high altar, the gallery organ, the Cathedral's pews, stained glass windows, exterior stonework, altar niches and ceiling plasterwork.

The church has are efforts in progress to attain additional funding for the remainder of the project including the high altar and Lady Chapel, a new heating and cooling system, and the Cathedral garden.

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September 21, 2015