

SPECIAL EDITION

Faith IN WV
DWC



JULY 12, 2026

175

A Journey of Faith, Courage, and Hope Across the Mountain State

Our history in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is of courageous bishops, pioneering priests, resilient religious sisters and brothers, devoted families, Catholic education, sacred spaces, and countless ordinary Catholics whose extraordinary witness continues to build up our Church today.

The *FaithInWV* e-bulletin presented 16 stories throughout the last 12 months to highlight the history of the diocese's 175 years. In all of them one thing is clear the Church in the Mountain State and her people are a reflection of God's endless graces.

The Gospel and love of Christ was brought to our mountains and valleys on horseback and on foot by priests often traveling alone through difficult terrain determined to evangelize, sharing their faith, bringing the Eucharist to scattered Catholic families, baptizing, hearing confessions, and comforting the sick and dying.

Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan, the diocese's first bishop faced strong anti-Catholic sentiment, but stood tall for the Church and the faithful. Through public hostility and organized opposition, Bishop Whelan did not back down.

He loved these hills, built churches, taught the faith, and saw the best in people. He like Pope Pius IX, who established the Diocese of Wheeling on July 19, 1850, trusted in God's plan.

Bishop Whelan's courage and character set the tone.

Each parish, mission, and chapel in our diocese has a proud foundation story. Great examples are Monroe County's Sweet Springs Chapel and Harpers Ferry's St. Peter Church.

Sweet Springs Chapel is a reminder that even the smallest communities can leave an enduring legacy of faith.

Saint John the Evangelist Chapel in Sweet Springs was completed in the 1850s under the guidance of Fr. John Walters thanks to



a generous gift from William Lewis and his wife Letitia Preston (Floyd) Lewis, daughter of Virginia's Governor John Floyd (brother to VA's 31st Governor John B. Floyd from 1849-1852). Many Virginians thought of Letitia Lewis as the black sheep of the Floyd family for converting to Catholicism, a faith despised because of British Protestant Reformation and an assumed threat to political order.

If the walls of St. Peter Church could talk, the history of America is obviously woven into her dialogue. Stories handed down from generation to generation place the first Catholics in Harpers Ferry around the year 1765. The parish was the only church that didn't suffer significant damage or attacks during the Civil War. It is said that the pastor at the time, Father Michael Costello (who served from 1857-1867) flew the British Union Jack flag over the predominately Irish parish, which designated neutrality. After the war it was decided to tear down, expand, and rebuild the church on the original foundation in 1896 to what it looks like today.

Together, these communities remind us that the Church has always grown because people gathered not just in a building, but around Jesus Christ.

The fundamental Catholic teaching that anchors our 175-year legacy in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is Mark 12:31: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these."

As faithful Catholics following the example of Christ and the holy souls who have walked this land before us, we opened more than church doors and schools, we founded hospitals, orphanages, food pantries, nursing homes, and parish outreach programs many still thriving all these generations later.

This is our faith... in action.

Our sacred spaces inspire reverence, contemplation, and spiritual growth. Two to note are Mount Calvary Cemetery's Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum, which quietly proclaims eternal life is Christ's promise; and the Cathedral of St. Joseph, which celebrated its centennial this year.

The cathedral was the second built on the site the original one suffered a fire, leaving it damaged beyond repair. Our fourth Bishop of Wheeling, John J. Swint, oversaw the construction of the "church... a real church... (with) a character, a certain spirit or soul." His vision for the cathedral was inspired by his predecessors and pilgrimages to Europe. He entrusted a young Catholic but proven architect from Pittsburgh, Edward J. Weber, to take on the project. (Weber designed Immaculate Conception Church in Clarksburg and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Bluefield).

"There are Cathedrals in the country larger and more expensive, but St. Joseph's Cathedral in Wheeling, according to expert judgement,



is the most beautifully proportioned and most artistically executed of all,” stated the souvenir guide of Saint Joseph Cathedral, from the consecration celebrations on April 21, 1926.

The cathedral is a “sermon in stone,” every inch is purposeful and very detail to assure the Presence of God.

Our history is preserved not only in archives, but it also lives on in our traditions – Eucharistic processions, vacation bible schools, Christmas crèches, and Rosary rallies – lasting memories.

Our greatest lesson from those before us can be summed in a quote from Archabbot Boniface Wimmer, the founder of the St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, PA, “Forward. Always Forward. Everywhere, forward!”

Let us be...

Unstoppable like our first bishop, Bishop Richard Whelan on a journey to walk with all people as a light of Christ like our tenth bishop, Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala.

Resilient like our pioneering priests to our healing bishop, Bishop Emeritus Mark Brennan – strong Catholic men who transcended hardships of tumultuous times, choosing to use those as a catalyst for growth and opportunity.

Limitless when we too step up to serve Christ by serving and bringing hope others.

To read more go to: DWC.ORG/175TH, where you will find all 16 stories and their featured photos.

Milestones of Our Journey

1850

Diocese of Wheeling established by Pope Pius IX

Late 1800s

Missionary priests expand Catholic life throughout West Virginia

Early 1900s

Catholic schools, hospitals, and charitable ministries flourish

1926

Cathedral of St. Joseph dedicated

1950s

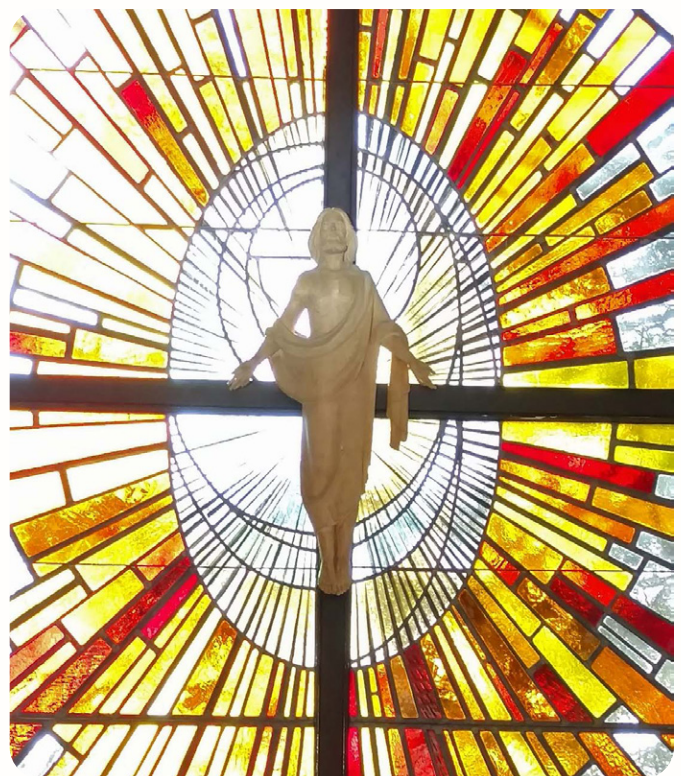
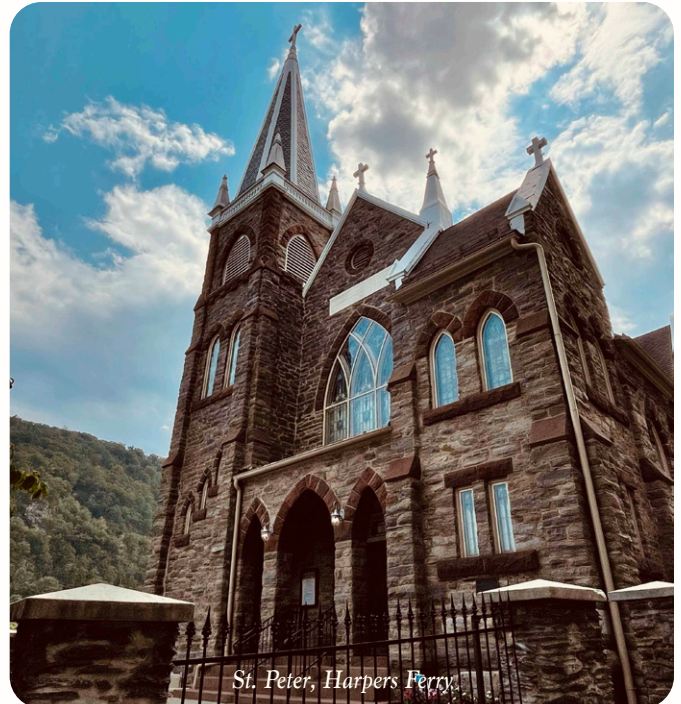
Rosary rallies unite Catholics across the state


1974

Diocese renamed Wheeling-Charleston

2026

Diocese celebrates 175 years of faith





“
Together let us continue
being a church
that resembles
the heart of Jesus.”

”
Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala

 DIOCESE OF
WHEELING-CHARLESTON

The Story Continues

Looking back with gratitude. Living forward in faith.

A reflection by Joyce Bibey, diocesan manager of writing and social media

May we never forget: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

Our 175-year history may be highlighted in art, photographs, legends, and cornerstones, but what matters most is our trust in God and the hope given to us through Christ.

While it has been a privilege to bring forgotten stories to life, highlight unfamiliar landmarks, and deepen our respect for our literal founding fathers this past year, the true purpose of looking back is to find our footing for the future. The most important history is the chapter we write next.

Our story isn't just about buildings, titles, or institutions. It is about evangelization, accountability, and being the light of Christ.

Our history is impressive, but so are the stories we will never read about – the ones we take for granted, but without them we wouldn't exist.

Our faith is our story, and it is visible in our pews, our classrooms, our food pantries, our processions, and our reflection of Christ to others.

As we look back to honor our history, cherish our present – our parents and grandparents who teach their children the Sign of the Cross, the Our Father, the Hail Mary, and the Rosary; our families who make Sunday Mass a priority; our volunteers who are behind the scenes cleaning altar linens, replacing candles, arranging flowers, and visiting shut-ins; and our prayer warriors dedicated

to praying for increased vocations.

Our ancestors were immigrants from faraway places like Ireland, Germany, Italy, England, Hungary, Poland, and Greece. They were courageous enough to leave all they knew to find a new life and new opportunities here in the land of mound builders like the Adena and Hopewell people, the migratory Shawnee and Mingo tribes and the agrarian Cherokee and Delaware tribes.

They set the example of courageous faith. They protected our right to worship God without fear. They taught us to serve others and expect nothing in return, because it was the right thing to do in Christ's sight.

Faith-filled souls in our diocese carried us through wars, economic hardships, natural disasters, scandal, and pandemics.

Let us be strong enough to carry our crosses for generations to come.

Let us live in such a way that we inspire faith over fear, because we know without a doubt that Christ never abandons His people.

Let us be grateful, especially for what He continues to do, for He is the same God who guided our pioneering priests, inspired religious sisters to open schools and hospitals, and strengthened the faithful to serve so others discover Christ.

By His grace our story continues.

DIOCESE INVITES ALL TO CLOSING ANNIVERSARY MASS

After a year of celebrating the people, places, and moments that shaped the Catholic Church in West Virginia, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston invites all the faithful to gather for the 175th Anniversary Closing Mass at 10:30 am, Sunday, July 19, at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

The Mass marks the conclusion of a yearlong jubilee commemorating the Diocese's founding on July 19, 1850, by Pope Pius IX.

The special Mass is an opportunity to give thanks for those who came before us while renewing our commitment to continue Christ's mission throughout the Mountain State.

JOIN US

as we close out the
175th year of our diocese
with a Mass and reception.

July 19 | 10:30am

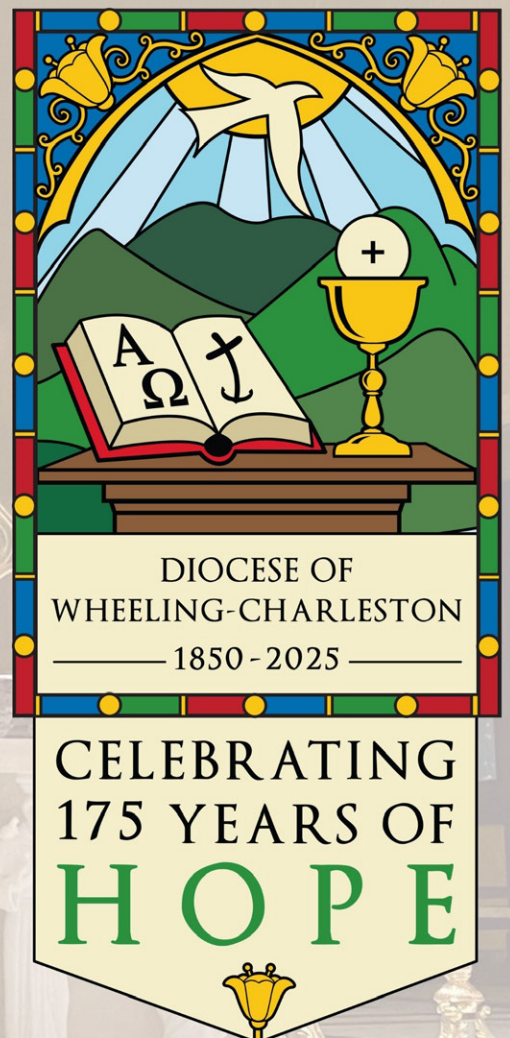
**BASILICA OF THE CO-CATHEDRAL
OF THE SACRED HEART**

Charleston, WV

Bishop Evelio Menjivar
Celebrant



Learn about our diocese by scanning
the QR code or visit dwc.org/175th



FIFTEENTH SUNDAY
IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11

God's will is for us to live and live eternally.

Responsorial: Psalm 65

"The seed that falls on good ground will yield a fruitful harvest."

Second Reading: Romans 8:18-23

All creation eagerly awaits the glory of God.

Gospel: Matthew 13:1-23

The seed of faith grows within us as if fertile ground and yields a great harvest.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT](#)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, that we honor our forefathers as we spread the Good News - God's infinite love and mercy, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Like Bishop Patrick Donahue, the immigrants' bishop, may our government leaders and employers secure safe working conditions and just pay, especially migrant laborers, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all who labor to put the food on our plates, and may we never tire of giving thanks to God for providing us with such bounty, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For those who have dedicated their lives to the Church, especially those who sow it on rocky ground or among persecution, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer



WV CATHOLIC RADIO
BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOU

Berkeley Springs - Hancock, MD	FM	96.3
Berkeley Springs	FM	107.9
Clarksburg-Bridgeport	FM	97.5
Dunbar - Charleston	AM	1450
Grafton - Clarksburg	AM	1190
Keyser - coming soon	FM	98.9
Montgomery - Beckley	FM	89.7
St. Marys - Parkersburg	FM	105.3
Star City -Morgantown	FM	89.7
Summersville	FM	91.3
Wheeling - Martins Ferry, OH	FM	90.7
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Liturgy of the Hours

LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour!

EBREVIARY.COM LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.



MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.