

Welcome to St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church

We are very happy to have you with us! Please come in, look around, and sit for a moment of rest and prayer with the Lord. St. Paul's Parish is also home to the world-famous St. Paul's Choir School and the Harvard Catholic Center, both located in the building next door. The church underwent a significant renovation to repair structural damage and a much-needed aesthetic upgrade, begun in 2018 and completed in 2020.

St. Paul's Parish was established in 1875, but the church in which you stand was begun in 1915. Construction was delayed because of World War I, and the church was opened on Easter Sunday, 1923.

St. Paul's is Romanesque in style, modelled on the Church of San Zeno outside of Verona, Italy. The large image of the Ascension above the main altar (which also might double as an image of the Resurrection and the Glorious Second Coming of Christ!) is unique. A scene of the Crucifixion was first planned for this space, as is traditional in Catholic churches. However, given the devastation of the Great War, a final decision was made to introduce this image with the intention of stirring a new breath of hope in the hearts of the faithful. The twelve columns beneath the Ascension scene represent the Twelve Apostles, and images of the Christian faith are embedded in the marble screen above them.

To the left of the altar is a stirring statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On the right is a statue of the prophet Isaiah, rare in a Catholic Church. Isaiah is often called the "fifth" Gospel writer, as so many of his prophecies are fulfilled in the life of Jesus, and his writings make up a substantial portion of readings at Mass, especially during Advent and Lent.

You will find a series of columns throughout the nave (central section) of the church. At the top of them, observe the symbols of the four Gospel writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There is a panorama of large panels above the columns. Going from back to front, on the left, one follows scenes from the life of Mary, Mother of Jesus, continuing through to the wedding feast of Cana. On the right, the public ministry of Jesus illustrates His preaching and several miracles, with the Last Supper concluding the cycle. Appropriately, the Last Supper image finds its true completion at the altar in the center of the sanctuary, where the Eucharist, first given to us by Jesus at the Last Supper, is celebrated here daily at St. Paul's.

The magnificent fourteen Stations of the Cross, depicting the Passion and Death of Jesus, surround the walls of the church. There is also a statue of St. Peter on the left, first among the Apostles, and on the right, a statue of St. Paul, patron of this church. Both were martyred in Rome, and they are frequently paired together and called the "Princes of the Apostles."

The stained-glass windows represent many of the Doctors of the Church, so honored for the value of their writings and teaching. The windows are of high artistic value; before they were installed in our church, they were exhibited in a museum.

One finds several murals of the life of Mary, Mother of God, in the left front section of the church. There is also a beautiful figure of St. Joseph, her spouse, and a magnificent statue of Mary, Queen of Victory (another nod to the recently finished war.)

Another series of murals across the church on the right deserves attention. The first two illustrate the conversion of Ireland to Catholicism by St. Patrick, with a statue of the saint himself between them. The third panel commemorates the many men from St. Paul's who have joined religious life through the ages (with the pastor who built this church memorialized in cassock and surplice next to the bishop!) And finally, one sees the Irish St. Columbkille as he prepares to leave his home to spread the Gospel. (St. Paul's was built by the nickels and dimes of Irish parishioners.)

The icon of St. John Henry Newman is the most recent addition to the church, completed in 2020. He was a renowned convert and writer, and is a patron saint of university students. You can also find here a statue of Our Lady of Lourdes, a favorite place for people to come to offer prayers and light a vigil candle.

The chamber organ is a gem, built in the 1850's by William B.D. Simmons. There are lovely images of St. John the Baptist, St. Elizabeth, and St. John the Evangelist above it.

In the rear of the church, above the side doors, look to the left and right to see scenes from the life of St. Paul in Acts 17 and 19. Finally, in the choir loft, take in the mighty Hook and Hastings organ which has supported the illustrious music program at St. Paul's for almost a hundred years.

We encourage you to look at the websites for the parish, the Harvard Catholic Center and St. Paul's Choir School, and if you are so moved and able, please donate online, at the kiosk in the foyer, or in the basket; it helps to maintain our church and to further the mission of Christ at St. Paul's.

Thanks for being here. We hope this time has given you peace and continues to open your heart and mind to the beauty, truth and goodness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Who love you. Please pray for St. Paul's, and as you leave, look above the main central door to see the great quote from St. Paul: "The Temple of the Living God, the Pillar and Ground of Truth."

God bless you!