

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON



Celebrating
175 *Years*

A Legacy of Faith, Service & Community

— 1850 — 2026 —

— A Supplement to: —

The Intelligencer • Wheeling News-Register

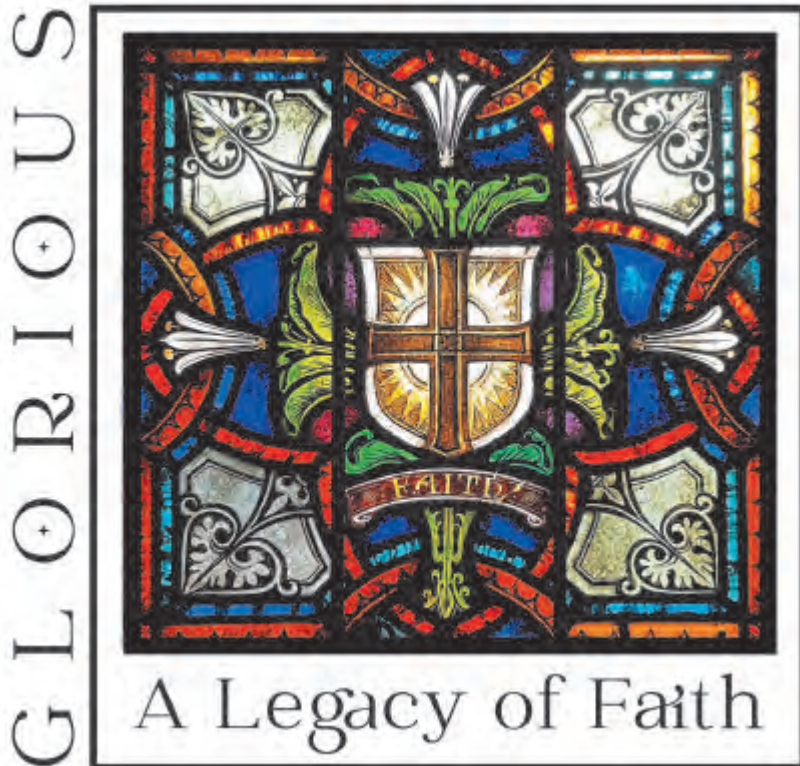
March 31, 2026

St. Michael Church and School joyfully congratulate the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on 175 years of faithful service, leadership, and dedication to sharing the Gospel. This milestone reflects generations of strong parishes, vibrant schools, and a commitment to serving others.

We are proud to be part of this legacy as we form disciples, educate our youth, and live our faith each day.

As we celebrate this remarkable anniversary, we are grateful for the Diocese's continued support as we advance our *Glorious: A Legacy of Faith* campaign, ensuring our parish remains a vibrant place of worship for years to come.

Congratulations on 175 years — and a future filled with promise!



ST. MICHAEL PARISH SCHOOL
Rooted in Faith, Committed to Excellence

St. Michael Parish

1225 National Road
Wheeling, WV 26003

304-242-1560

stmikesparish.org

A Welcome From The Bishop

This welcome from the Most Rev. Mark Brennan, Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, was taken from the diocese's website.

As Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, it is my great joy to celebrate with you our 175th anniversary year.

In 1850, Pope Pius IX established the Diocese of Wheeling, appointing Bishop Richard Whelan as its first shepherd. At that time, West Virginia was still part of Virginia, and the Catholic population was small and scattered among the mountains.

Bishop Whelan laid the foundations of our diocese with great faith and tireless dedication. He built our first cathedral, opened schools and a hospital, and even labored with his own hands to raise up the Church in these hills. From those humble beginnings, our diocesan family has grown and flourished.

Today, we continue the work begun generations before, spreading the Gospel to all nations. This anniversary is not only a time to remember, but also, a time to recommit to our evangelization efforts. I invite you to join us at parish liturgies, vicariate, and diocesan events, moments of prayer, and opportunities for outreach as we work to grow our Church in West Virginia.

May this 175th anniversary year be a time of grace, gratitude, and renewed mission.

In closing, let us pray together the prayer that will be used throughout this 175th Anniversary year.

God of all times and places,
we praise and thank you
for the 175 years
we have spent
around the table of your Son
in these hills and valleys
of West Virginia.

You have walked with us
through every season –
guiding our ancestors,
building up communities of faith,
and forming hearts for discipleship.

As we give thanks
for all who have gone before us,
we ask You now to renew us in
the present
and continue to form us as a people
of hope.

Deepen our faith,
strengthen our unity,
and enliven our commitment
to sharing the Gospel.

As we look to the future,
we ask for the grace to be bold in
mission.

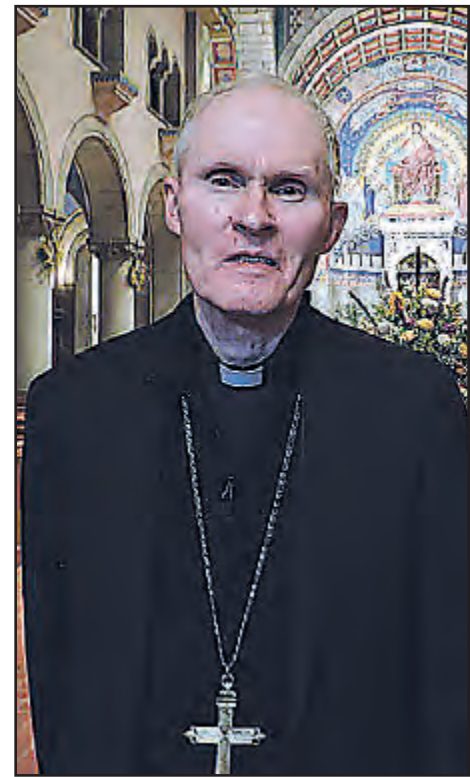
Send us forth with open hearts,
ready to meet the needs of our
neighbors,
to be instruments of justice and
peace.

As we continue on the journey,
may we go forward as pilgrims of
hope
united in the Spirit,
and empowered
by faith that grows,
hope that endures,
and love that transforms.

We make this prayer
through the intercession of Mary,
Mother of the Church,
St. Joseph, patron of our diocese
and with all the saints
who have walked this path before
us,
keep us ever close to You-
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit-
now and forever.
Amen.

May God bless you – and may
God continue to bless the Diocese
of Wheeling-Charleston.”

– Bishop Mark E. Brennan



The stories in this special publication have been written by Joyce Bibey, the manager of writing and social media for the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese's marketing and communications department.

The photos have been provided courtesy of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese archives.



**Free Consultations
Over 30 Years Experience
Licensed Contractors**

Bring The Art Of Custom Homebuilding Home

304-233-8800 • www.adbakerhomes.com



**Congratulations to the
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
on 175 years of building faith and community.**



Legendary Ribs

DEE JAY'S

BBQ RIBS & GRILLE

*Specializing In
Tender Juicy BBQ Ribs and Other Delicious Menu Items.*

Call Our RIB-LINE
748-1150
380 Three Springs Drive, Weirton, WV

A Journey of Faith and Perseverance — Celebrating 175 Years of the Diocese

On July 19, 1850, the Diocese of Wheeling was established by Pope Pius IX, marking the adventurous beginning of the present Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

The diocese is celebrat-

ing the milestone from July 19, 2025, through July of 2026, to reflect on how it began and how it has prevailed - giving praise and honor to God. From pioneering founding bishop, Bishop Rich-

ard V. Whelan, to present shepherd, Bishop Mark E. Brennan, the diocese has persevered to share the Gospel by word and deed within its families, parishes, schools, hospitals, and organizations.

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's clergy, religious, laity, and staff strive to exemplify the resilience, faith, and courage of their ancestors - the hard-working souls who built the Church in these mountains.

Blessed Land

In 1749, as an expedition led by French explorer Pierre Joseph Celoron de Blainville of New France (Canada) unfolded to claim land along the Ohio River, Masses were celebrated by Jesuit priest, Fr. Joseph Pierre de Bonnecamp, who served as de Blainville's



Photo courtesy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Richard Whelan, originally the second Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, was named the first Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling in 1850.

chaplain, navigator, and secretary documenting the trip and ultimately creating the first official map of the Ohio Valley. Father Bonnecamp

journalized that six "Celoron Lead Plates" were buried during the celebrations on the shoreline at the various points where the tributaries met the Ohio River. One was found in Point Pleasant, West Virginia, in 1846, measuring 11 inches by 7.5 inches, and the inscription claiming the land for France. (Both France and Great Britain laid claim to the Ohio River Valley, and the French and Indian War ultimately resulted in a decisive victory for Great Britain.)

Few And Far Between

It was more than 200 years ago when Jesuit and Redemptorist missionaries braved the mountainous terrain of western Virginia to serve the few Catholic families who had settled in

the region. These visits, however, were infrequent. Like the Apostles and first disciples, these missionary priests relied on the hospitality of those they encountered, sleeping where they could — a barn, a cave, under the shade of a tree, or if blessed enough in the humble home of a kind soul. They ate what they could, packing staples for their journey, but when those ran out their mission and well-being depended on the people who lived in the hills and valleys of this land.

Their efforts though were not in vain.

By 1818, more Catholic families settled in western Virginia following the completion of National Road.

(Please see JOURNEY, Page 13)

ABBEY'S

RESTAURANT & LOUNGE



HOURS

Mon - Wed 3pm - 9:00pm
 Thu - 11am - 9:00pm
 Fri - 11am - 10:00pm
 Sat - 4pm - 10pm
 Sun - 4pm - 8:00pm

Wheeling Island
(304) 233-0729

WHEELING, WV

Good Shepherd Nursing Home and Welty Home for the Aged are proud to be part of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175-year legacy of faith and service.



www.WeltyHome.org

Anti-Catholic Mob Didn't Rattle First Bishop

The first bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling, Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan, was a shining example of how to guard your faith, just as St. Paul wrote to his friend Timothy (2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14).

It is a bishop's duty as a successor of the Apostles to shepherd his flock — to encourage followers by word and actions. Whelan proved that time and time again.

Just as everyone is called to “rekindle the gift of God that is within you” and “guard the good treasure entrusted to you with the help of the Holy Spirit, living in us,” as St. Paul wrote, Whelan demonstrated it in the 1850s when an anti-Catholic mob threatened the Wheeling cathedral, a visiting Apostolic Nuncio from Rome, and Whelan's parishioners.

According to an article published in The Catholic Spirit, on May 22, 1992, an anti-Catholic crusade in the 1850s known as the Know-Nothing Party, believed that the Catholic Church was a threat to America. They were anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, and any others who were not native-born protestant Americans. The group was truly clandestine. They were a semi-secret organization, whose members when asked about their group they would say “I know nothing.” However, they were a threat — violently attacking convents, churches, schools, and any persons or groups protecting Catholics, burning down buildings and worse — murder.

They capitalized on the fear and hatred of foreigners and the fabricated threat that a foreign country would take over.

“They tried to make people believe that the Pope was out to convert the world and take over America,” the article noted, and added, “Pope Pius IV was very aware of the situation and wanted to find a solution. So, he commissioned (a cardinal, the papal nuncio) to visit America and obtain firsthand information.”

In 1854, Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan, invited the cardinal to Wheeling, Virginia.

Upon learning of this local visit, the Know-Nothings passed out “handbills degrading his character, (declaring the cardinal) ‘is not worthy to breathe the free air from this country.... Destroy the secret plans of the Roman missionary ... Drive this monster back to his bloody master that sends him ...’”

The angry mob planned an attack on the papal nuncio at the Wheeling cathedral where he was to preach.

Wheeling's mayor, Sobieski Brady, would not grant police protection.

So, Bishop Whelan decided to protect the cardinal and the cathedral with all his power.

“As the mob approached the cathedral, Bishop Whelan stood alone to face them. It is recorded that he spoke these words to them: ‘The first one who dare enter the grounds of the cathedral would be immediately shot!’”

At that moment the Irish Catholics, under the direction of Bishop Whelan, appeared and surrounded the cathedral armed with rifles.

“The only violence that occurred that day was when a rioter threw a stone and broke a pane of glass. Slowly,

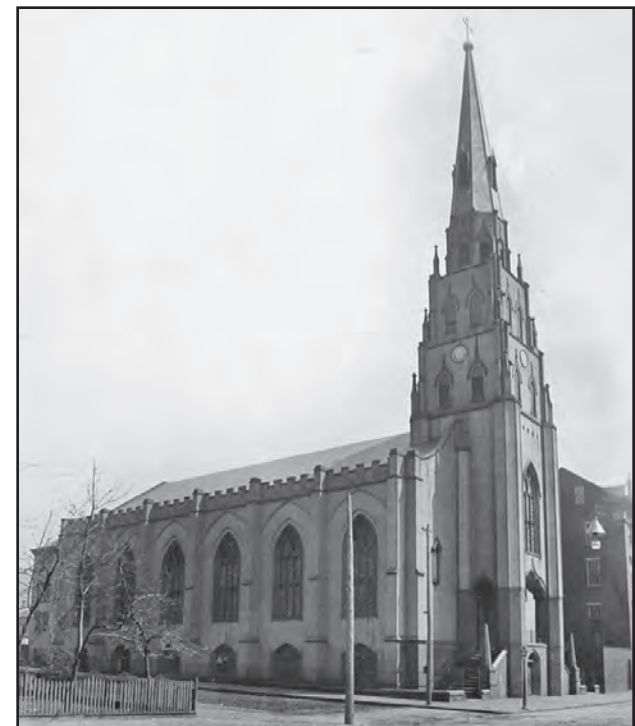


Photo courtesy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. As Know-Nothings arrived at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, Bishop Richard Whelan was joined by Irish Catholic residents of Wheeling to help protect it.

one by one, the rioters walked away,” the article concluded.

Diocese of Steubenville



Bishop Edward M. Lohse and the Diocese of Steubenville offer their Congratulations to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on their 175th Anniversary.

Congratulations

The Sisters of the
Congregation of St. Joseph

offer sincere congratulations and blessings to the

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

as you celebrate your

175th Anniversary

We live and work in partnership with you to bring unity, peace, and justice to our community and dear neighbors. We are grateful for and support your essential work and faith-filled service to the people of Wheeling-Charleston and West Virginia.



Learn more at CSJoseph.org, follow us on Facebook and Instagram, and listen to **Beyond the Habit** wherever you get your podcasts.



Altenheim COTTAGES

INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR SENIORS: MEN, WOMEN & COUPLES

- Two bedrooms, two baths
- Two car garage with storage space
- Fully equipped kitchen • Separate washer & dryer units
- Dining & living room



ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
CALL 304-281-8797
FOR RENTAL INFORMATION

Visit our website at www.altenheimcommunity.com

Sweet Springs Chapel – A Monroe County Treasure of Faith and History

Faith and history are still celebrated in Sweet Springs. Each summer on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, faithful Catholics and visitors of Monroe County get together to honor Mary, local history, and pay tribute to the pioneering priests, religious figures, and ancestors who laid our spiritual foundation centuries ago for St. John the Evangelist Chapel in Sweet Springs, the oldest standing Catholic church in West Virginia.

After the Mass, everyone lingers to enjoy an old-fashioned inside of the brick church that sits in a little vale surrounded and shaded by tall trees that line the property.

Saint John the Evangelist Chapel 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 (and brother to Virginia's 31st Governor, John B. Floyd from 1849-52). Interestingly, many Virginians thought of Letitia Lewis as the black sheep of the Floyd family for converting to Catholicism, a faith despised because of the British Protestant Reformation and an assumed threat to political order. However, several others in her family and friends followed her lead and also professed the Catholic faith, those included her father the former governor, her mother, her sister, and in-laws.

While the chapel was initially used for the Floyd and Lewis families, it was later used also by Irish immigrants and former slaves working in the area for the railway, wealthy Virginia families, or at the Sweet Springs Resort. Records note St. John's Chapel was established as an official church in 1859.

Church sacramental

books record the first baptism in 1853, an increase in the Catholic population with 174 baptisms in 1860, and proof that three soldiers were baptized in 1862 during the Civil War.

The diocese purchased the property in 1977 from

the Lewis descendants and others. The chapel was restored and then rededicated by Bishop Joseph Hodges on April 17, 1983.

Former Pastor of St. John's Chapel published Cloud of Witnesses Father Harry Winter,

O.M.I., who served in the southern region of West Virginia throughout the 1980s into 1991, published the book "Cloud of Witnesses - The Floyd-Lewis Chronicles." It showcases the history of the Floyd and Lewis families.

Cloud of Witnesses also highlights the family's conversion to the Catholic faith and the prominent family's influence on the Appalachian region.

(Please see SPRINGS, Page 11)

COLEMAN'S FISH MARKET

Complete Seafood Center

Featured in Gourmet Magazine

Fresh & Frozen Seafoods

From Around The World



304-232-8510

2226 Market St.
Wheeling, WV



CATHOLIC CHURCH OF PRESTON COUNTY

ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR, TERRA ALTA · ST. SEBASTIAN, KINGWOOD · ST. ZITA, MASONTOWN

Congratulations on 175 years
of Catholic Tradition

St. Sebastian Parish - Kingwood
St. Zita Mission - Masontown
St. Edward the Confessor Mission
Terra Alta

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

SERVING THE FAITHFUL SINCE 1850

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church

67 Liberty Street
Berkeley Springs, WV 25411



Pioneering Priests — The Cornerstone of the Catholic Church of West Virginia

Editor's note: The following article honoring the 175th Anniversary of our diocese is written referencing a dissertation of Fr. James Francis Tierney's "Biographical Notices of The Earliest Wheeling Priests," when he was at Saint Mary's Seminary, Baltimore, and archived documents of the diocese.

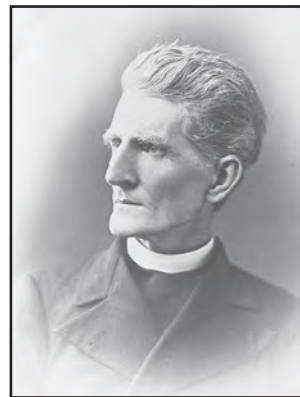
Trailblazing missionary priests and the determined leadership of Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan

laid the foundations of the Catholic Church in West Virginia.

Just before being ordained a priest in 1937, Fr. James Francis Tierney, wrote his dissertation for St. Mary's Seminary about more than 70 early priests of West Virginia, a state with the "most varied topography" and "almost unrivaled scenic beauty."

Tierney, a native of Weston, later served parishes across West Virginia for 45 years, including Beckley, Weirton, Grant Town, Huntington, Fairmont, and Farmington.

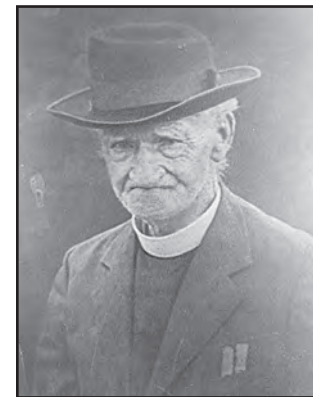
His dissertation documented that organized parish life in Wheeling began in the early 19th century. Records show Rev. Francis Rolf performing the first recorded baptism there in 1829. For more than a decade afterward, Catholics received only intermittent pastoral care, often seeing a priest just once or twice a month as clergy traveled long circuits across the rugged western Virginia mountains. Earlier missionary efforts had centered in the Eastern Panhandle, where Irish priest Father Denis Cahill evangelized along the Potomac Valley in the late 1700s.



FR. HENRY F. PARKE



FR. JOESPH W. STENGER



REV. MSGR THOMAS A. QUIRK

The Church's presence expanded when the Diocese of Richmond Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan and Jesuit Father James Ryder brought Catholicism to the western region. The duo traveled far and wide to bring Mass and sacraments to Catholics "scattered through the territory." As the result, Whelan assigned priests to Wytheville, Summersville, and Kingwood.

By 1846, Bishop Whelan moved his base from Richmond to Wheeling, and his first recorded baptism there in the notes is dated November 2, 1846.

(Please see PIONEERING, Page 16)

The Olive Branch Christian Gifts

The Ohio Valley's
Premiere Christian Gift Store!

New Location

126 W Main St., Saint Clairsville, OH • (740) 827-6830
OliveBranchStc@outlook.com • olivebranchchristiangifts.com

The land for Priest Field Pastoral Center, was donated in 1802. The parish of St. James the Greater in Charles Town, is grateful for the opportunity to fund and manage the center, enabling its expansion and continued ministry to thousands of souls, under the patronage of Fr. Gallitizin and St. Bartolo Longo.

*Congratulations to Wheeling
Charleston on their 175th
Anniversary!*



PRIEST FIELD



The
Catholic Church
in Pocahontas County

celebrating 175 years
and inviting you to the next 175 years

Faith, Heritage, and Hope: The Living Legacy of Catholic Education in the Mountain State

Catholic education in West Virginia began four years before the diocese was founded in 1850. Schools were established to serve the growing Catholic immigrant population.

Nine schools were established during the tenure of the Diocese of Wheeling's first shepherd, Bishop Richard V. Whelan. When Whelan's leadership began, there were an estimated 5,000 Catholics in the region. At the end of his tenure, in 1874, there were 18,000. From the nine schools he opened to today's 25 Catholic schools under the guidance of Superintendent Jenn Hornyak and Bishop Mark E. Brennan, each has consistently provided a values-based education in a Christ-centered environment. The diocesan and parochial schools have always been the largest private school system in the state.

In the early years, Catholic immigrants faced religious persecution, so parochial schools became a crucial safe haven for learning while preserving their cultural and religious identity.

When Wheeling, Virginia, was still the Diocese of Richmond, the first official Catholic school in what would be the Diocese of Wheeling was opened in 1846, known as the "German" school (later

known as St. Alphonsus Parish School). Then-Fr. Richard Whelan staffed the school with lay teachers.

In 1848, Whelan successfully petitioned the Visitation Sisters from Baltimore to open an academy for young women — the Wheeling Female Academy (later named Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy) with 30 students enrolled. It was the first of three academies established by the order in the diocese [De Sales Heights Academy, Parkersburg, and Villa Maria Academy, Abingdon (later Wytheville)]. Originally located near the cathedral, the academy and convent relocated outside of Wheeling in 1865 (where it operated until its closure in 2008). The Visitation Nuns also established St. Joseph's Benevolent School for the children of St. James Parish in 1848. In 1865, The Sisters of St. Joseph ran the school and renamed it Cathedral Parish School in 1896, and then Wheeling Catholic Elementary School before it closed in 2011.

Whelan's successor, West Virginia-born Bishop John J. Kain saw the Catholic population jump to 20,000 to (1875-1893). Bishop Kain established six schools, expanding Catholic education to the central and southern parts of West



Photo courtesy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
Students at Cathedral Grade School in Wheeling play during recess.

Virginia.

Bishop Patrick J. Donahue (1894-1922) saw the Catholic population triple to 62,000. The diocese had 21 schools at the time of his death.

Significantly of those were St. Francis Central Catholic School, in Morgantown, founded by its pastor Father Peter Flynn and the Ursuline Sisters in 1915. The building was actually a private home and

provided elementary and later high school education. It's first graduation high school class was in 1923, when the school was on Beechurst Avenue. The school moved its campus to Evansdale and served grades K-12 until 1990. In 2006, the pre-K to grade 8 school moved to its current location on Guthrie Lane).

(Please see EDUCATION, Page 14)



**CENTRAL CATHOLIC
HIGH SCHOOL**



CCHS proudly congratulates the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on 175 years of faith, service, and unwavering commitment to our community.

Your legacy of guidance, education, and compassion continues to inspire generations, and we are honored to be part of that tradition.

cchsknights.org

(Continued from Page 8)

Call Across the Atlantic: Brutal Honesty

While the populations grew thanks to roads and rail, supplying clergy in western Virginia was becoming an impossible task. Priests were given assignments covering at least a 100-mile radius and traveled by horseback or on foot. Bishop Whelan was also exhausting the hospitality of bordering priests and knew he had to attract priests and seminarians from outside of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

So, putting pen to paper, he wrote to seminaries in Ireland and France, knowing he had to be brutally honest to attract young men who not only embraced a strong relationship with Christ, but also a strong backbone to endure the hardships required. His recruitment pitch to All

Hallows Seminary in Dublin, Ireland said:

“Catholics are very few and generally very scattered ... a priest may have a circuit of 100 miles in diameter ... (This country is) exceedingly mountainous, with bad roads, and a very uncultivated population. (Any missionary) must expect a life of great labour and fatigue, much exposure to the cold, heat, and rain... a very indifferent diet, and lodging, but little respect for his dignity ... a compensation barely adequate to support him.

“I wish no one to be taken by surprise ... if they select my Diocese, I shall regard their character and honor compromised if afterwards they flinch, and I shall even refuse an exeat where there is no other good controlling motive.”

And with that, strong-willed evangelizing priests came. They took him se-

riously; seminarians and priests came and continued for more than 180 years.

The Diocese of Wheeling

In 1850, the Holy See granted Whelan’s repeated request to divide the Richmond diocese (which was formerly part of the Archdiocese of Baltimore until 1820) to create the Diocese of Wheeling with Whelan installed as its first bishop at the age of 41. The Eastern panhandle remained part of the Diocese of Richmond (prior to 1820, it was part of the Archdiocese of Baltimore).

The diocese quickly grew – from about 7,000 Catholics and a dozen churches in the mid-1850s to nearly 20,000 Catholics and more than 40 churches by 1870.

Bishop Whelan’s In-House Seminary

It would take time for the Irish priests to come, so Bishop Whelan’s task

of securing priests for the region would continue to be difficult. So, the forward-thinking bishop rolled up his sleeves and worked on a solution, opening a seminary in his home in the early 1850s.

It was the second time the gritty young bishop opened a seminary. The first – St. Vincent Seminary – was opened in Richmond. However, diocesan administrators there insisted it have a large property and new facilities. Those hefty costs were to the seminary’s demise, and it closed soon after its inception because of lack of funding.

The Wheeling seminary trained future priests for more than 20 years.

There were four seminarians in its first year. Whelan wasn’t going to accept just anyone. His notes stated, “none need apply who cannot produce the strongest recommendations for piety and ability.”

In addition to their studies, the seminarians taught children in the cathedral school. Among its notable graduates were Fr. Henry F. Parke, ordained in 1851 and would go on to serve as Vicar General for the Wheeling diocese; and Monsignor Thomas A. Quirk ordained in 1870 by Whelan and quickly become known to be much like his servant leader, knowing no limits – doing whatever it took to bring Christ to the most remote areas to build up the Church.

In a late 1800s sermon about Bishop Whelan, Fr. Joseph W. Stenger said Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan combined personal strength, high standards, and “stern virtues”. However, he also maintained a Christ-like compassion, showing mercy when others only criticized them and him. Even if the recipient was ingrateful,

the thick-skinned bishop continued to give the lost soul grace, even priests. Going on to say, “neither the remonstrances (objections) of his own priests, nor the opinion of others, nor even the ingratitude of the unworthy man who abused his goodness, had the slightest effect in extinguishing... this nobly folly (seemingly foolish but admirable mercy toward sinners).”

Profiles of Pioneering Priests by Tierney

The Very Rev. Henry F. Parke, born in Ireland in 1823, immigrated to America as a young man and converted to Catholicism after meeting an Irish priest, Father Edward Fox, in Wytheville, who encouraged him to enter the priesthood. His initial assignments stretched from Wheeling to Wytheville before he was named Vicar General and the pastor for the Catholic families in Parkersburg. He served St. Francis Xavier in Parkersburg for much of his life until his final years he served at Mt. de Chantal in Wheeling. Upon the death of Bishop Whelan on July 7, 1874, Fr. Parke served as administrator of the diocese until Bishop John Kain was installed as the diocese’s second bishop.

He was described as “a small little man... extremely active; he was an engaging conversationalist. An instance of his charity is given in connection with a smallpox epidemic in Parkersburg, when Father Parke is known to have baptized, fed, and cared for a victim; and then finally with his own hands had to bury him.”

Father Parke died tragically on Holy Thursday, April 9, 1895. On his way to Chrism Mass at the Cathedral, a brick wall collapsed and killed him.

Monsignor Thomas A. Quirk was born in Clon-

mel, County of Tipperary, in southern Ireland, on March 7, 1844. He was educated in England before coming to America. He was in seminarian studies at St. Sulpice in Paris, when he met Bishop Whelan. He was the only seminarian there to commit to the Diocese of Wheeling. After his ordination in Wheeling on August 31, 1870, Fr. Quirk served in Wheeling at the Cathedral for his first nine months before going to serve in Parkersburg, Guyandotte and Huntington. About the latter, he wrote, “There was no church in Huntington when I got there; we had Mass in the roundhouse and in a shanty. Neither was there any available money. I went to a lumber dealer and explained. He answered that I was to have all the materials I wanted. Thus, within six months I had a church and school; the church was used for twenty years....” He served the Huntington faithful for 12 years, purchasing the property for the present-day St. Joseph Church prior to his departure.

From there he served in Lewis County. The people loved and respected him as the man who built the Church in those hills from the ground up. Even in his 90s, he was described as “one of the ablest and most remarkable priests ever in the Wheeling Diocese, or... our whole country.”

The Legacy

From scattered missions to vibrant parishes, the Church in West Virginia grew through the enduring power of grit and grace. These pioneering priests met every hardship with courage and every challenge with faith, trusting that God would guide their work. Today their legacy remains alive in every Mass celebrated and every soul drawn closer to Christ.



The late Popes John XXIII and John Paul II famously noted, we Jews are your “older brothers.” Here in Wheeling, the same is the case, as Temple was founded in 1849, so it is our honor and pleasure to celebrate your major milestone by saying, “Welcome to the Club!”

Temple Shalom is always honored to work with our friends and neighbors at the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston as together we try to do more good in our world, for all with whom we share it. We wish our neighbors all the best for many more years of health and success to come.

23 Bethany Pike • Wheeling, WV 26003
(304) 233-4870

Follow us online at
www.YouTube.com/@templeshalomwv

We hope to see you at the Chocolate Extravaganza on Sunday, May 3!

SPRINGS

(Continued from Page 7)

Above the doors of St. John's Chapel are the words, "One Lord, One Faith, and One Baptism." This mantra was echoed in the promise made to Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Francis Schulte in 1986 to "faithfully maintain St. John's Chapel, so that our Catholic faith may be witnessed in this Sweet Springs Valley." The promise honors their ancestors and all who made the chapel possible as their "Cloud of Witnesses."

This reference, just as the title of the book, is a compliment to Saint Paul's writing - Hebrews 12:1, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us* and persevere in running the race that lies before us." The great apostle is saying that people need to have con-

fidence as they run their race, because they are surrounded everyday by great prophets and saints who are cheering them on.

Today, the chapel is part of the group of parishes in the Beckley Vicariate that includes St. Catherine of Siena in Ronceverte,

St. Charles Borromeo in White Sulphur Springs, Chapel of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Williamsburg, and St. Louis King of France Chapel in Lewisburg; all under the leadership of Rev. Msgr. Kevin M. Quirk, J.C.D.

Drover's Inn



*If You Haven't Tried Our Wings
You Don't Know What You're Missing.*

**1001 Washington Pike, Wellsburg
Located 3 miles East off WV St. Rt. 27
Wed.-Sat. 4-10pm • Sun. 12-7pm**

Dine-in or Carry Out

304-737-0188

The SoupKitchen OF GREATER WHEELING INC.

EMPOWERING OUR COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Honored to celebrate 175 years of faith and service with the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.



At the Soup Kitchen of Greater Wheeling, we do more than serve meals; we provide a beacon of hope and understanding for those navigating life's toughest challenges.

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY OF CHANGE-MAKERS!

In our kitchen, every meal is prepared and cooked with care and dedication. Our team, composed of compassionate individuals driven by community spirit, operates like a close-knit family to nourish those in need. If you're interested in volunteering with us, we would love to have you.

1610 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV 26003 • (304) 233-2992



*In thanksgiving of
your guiding light
for 175 years.*

*Luceat Lux Vestra
Let Your Light Shine*

ST FRANCIS XAVIER CHURCH, MOUNDSVILLE
SINCE 1857



**Not just a Church, a Family
A Place to Belong. A Faith to Live.**

Come home... and let Christ change your story.

Family Owned Since 1917

Serving Ohio County, Marshall County,
and all of our surrounding Communities



Congratulations,
our funeral home celebrates
this remarkable milestone with
you and appreciates the strength and
guidance you continue to
bring to our community.

***Congratulations to the Diocese of
Wheeling-Charleston for Celebrating 175 years
of Catholic Tradition***



St. Thomas Parish

624 Kanawha St. | Gassaway, WV 26624

Phone: (304) 364-5895

stthomasgassaway@gmail.com

Pastor Rev. Dominic Huyhn Pham, S.V.D.

We, the people of St. Thomas Parish in Braxton County, West Virginia, have an ardent desire to see the Spirit of Jesus alive in our lives by conscientiously following our Catholic beliefs.

**Our Lady of Peace Church and School Congratulates
the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on
175 Years of Faith-Filled Service!**



We are the People of PEACE!

Empowering Children Through Knowledge and Faith - PreK3-8th grade

690 Mount Olivet Road, Wheeling, WV 26003

Register now for 2026-2027! www.olpschool.org Check us out on facebook! @OLP.School

(Continued from Page 4)

The first Masses in Virginia were celebrated in homes, on farmland, along creeks, and tops of mountains. A growing Catholic population resulted in the need to establish the Richmond diocese, encompassing the entire state of Virginia, in 1820.

By 1821, Wheeling had its first Catholic church constructed in St. James Parish - on land donated by Noah Zane at the corner of 11th and Chapline Streets in Wheeling. However, the church was not assigned a resident priest - Fr. Francis Rolof - until 1828.

Eastern Panhandle - Tracks to Expansion

St. John Parish (later known as St. Joseph's) in Martinsburg was established in 1825 and was served by Rev. John B. Gildea.

By the 1830s, growth and expansion of the railways westward led German and Irish immigrants to settle in this region of western Virginia.

For the communities of Harpers Ferry and Martinsburg, this meant an expanding Catholic community. The Martinsburg Catholics had purchased the land for their church building in 1802, but waited 34 years to see it completed.

Before this, families gathered for Mass in private homes and later a rented house until the first church was completed. The parish's second church was completed in 1860 and dedicated to St. Joseph. The church was used as a headquarters for the occupying Union troops during the Civil War, with the main floor serving as a hospital and the basement as a stable for the soldiers' horses. A school

was opened in 1870 and staffed by lay teachers until the Sisters of Charity arrived in 1883.

Whelan Enters Diocese History

In Harpers Ferry, Saint Peter's Church was constructed in 1833 on a rocky hilltop near the Maryland border. In 1834, a young priest, Fr. Richard V. Whelan, was assigned to what would become the iconic Harpers Ferry church, taking residence there. Father Whelan, a Maryland native, also served the Martinsburg mission. When the church at Martinsburg was completed, Whelan moved his residence to Martinsburg.

Five years later, in 1841, Whelan was named the second bishop of the Diocese of Richmond.

Growing Pains

In 1846, Bishop Whelan moved to Wheeling in the northwestern corner of the Diocese of Richmond. He took charge of St. James Parish and opened a small school for German Catholic children.

Within two years, women religious from the Visitation Sisters came to Wheeling to open the Wheeling Female Academy (later known as Mount de Chantal Academy).

Also in 1848, St. Patrick Parish in Weston was established to serve an increasing Catholic community of Irish immigrants who had labored on the Staunton and Parkersburg Turnpike. Father Austin Grogan purchased property at a corner of High Street for \$100 to build a two-story church. Because of the generosity of both Catholics and non-Catholics, the church was opened in 1848 without debt.

The year 1849 saw the

establishment of St. John church in Summersville and a newly constructed St. James Church in Wheeling - moved from its Chapline Street location to 13th and Eoff Street in Wheeling.

In 1853, the Sisters of St. Joseph (today the Congregation of St. Joseph) arrived in Wheeling to operate a hospital, which continues to thrive today as WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital, the oldest Catholic hospital in West Virginia. The sisters' essential ministries in health care, catechism, evangelization, education, charity, and prayer have continued for more than 170 years, an indelible and living link to the earliest days of the diocese.

Brutal Honesty

While Catholic populations grew, clergy in western Virginia had a nearly impossible task. Priests were given assignments covering a 100-mile radius, traveled by horseback or on foot.

Bishop Whelan was exhausting the hospitality of bordering priests and knew that in order to properly serve and evangelize, he had to attract priests and seminarians from outside of Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

So, putting pen to paper, he wrote a seminary in Ireland.

He knew he had to be brutally honest to attract young men who not only embraced a strong relationship with Christ, but also a strong backbone and an adventurous willingness to endure the many hardships required.

Bishop Whelan's recruiting pitch to All Hallows Seminary in Dublin, Ireland, advised prospective priests:

"Catholics are very

few and generally very scattered, requiring a priest sometimes to attend a circuit of 100 miles in diameter." He described the state as "quite unimproved, less so perhaps than many portions of the remote west, exceedingly mountainous, with bad roads, and a very uncultivated population. (Any missionary) must expect a life of great labour and fatigue, much exposure to the cold, heat, and rain, bad roads, very indifferant diet and lodging, but little respect for his dignity, few Catholics, little of society, a compensation barely adequate to support him in the plainest and most economical manner. I wish no one to be taken by surprise. Many of our missions are just such as this; and I want no priest who does not come fully prepared to enter upon such a charge, certain that his recompense is not to be expected here, but hereafter. Make the young men whom you may think of selecting fully aware of this; inform them that there are places much more desirable elsewhere, where they may labour advantageously, and that if they select my Diocese I shall regard their character and honor compromised if afterwards they flinch, and I shall even refuse an exeat where there is no other good controlling motive."

The young priests took Whelan's warnings to heart. Not only did they travel to labor in these West Virginia mountains, but they also continued an association for more than 180 years.

He Had a Reputation - Tough As Nails

When the original St. James Church in Wheeling had fallen in disre-

pair, Bishop Whelan led the campaign for a new church to be constructed. A site was secured and, in 1847, a cornerstone laid for the parish that later became the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

But it wasn't just his determination and administration that was so impressive, it was also his strength. It was Bishop Whelan that climbed more than 200 feet in the air to place a cross on top of the new spire at St. James's after construction workers refused the dangerous task.

In 1872, Bishop Whelan successfully appealed to Pope Pius IX to change the patronage of St. James to St. Joseph - the Terror of Demons and Guardian of the Redeemer, patron of the entire church - would further protect and strengthen the faithful of the Diocese of Wheeling.

Becoming Their Own In 1849, Bishop Whelan convinced the Church hierarchy in the Archdiocese of Baltimore to divide the Diocese of Richmond by the natural barriers of the Allegheny Mountains.

On July 19, 1850, the

Holy See established the Diocese of Wheeling. The diocese included all of what is now West Virginia except for the eastern panhandle and Potomac highlands, and included several counties in southwestern Virginia, all the way to the Tennessee border.

Four days later, on July 23, 1850, Blessed Pope Pius IX named Bishop Richard Whelan as the first bishop for the diocese.

According to Bishop Whelan's diocesan records from 1850, churches completed, or nearing completion were in Martinsburg, Harpers Ferry, Bath (Berkeley Springs), Union (Monroe Co.), Sweet Springs, Tazewell Court House (Va.), Wytheville (Va.), Wheeling, Parkersburg, Howesville, Fairmont, Morgantown, Weston, Braxton Court House, Summersville, Charleston, and Grafton.

Bishop Whelan died at the age of 65 in 1874.

It took another 100 years, in 1974, for the Holy See to redraw the boundaries of the diocese to correspond with the state and further renaming it as the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.




The 45th Glass Show & Sale
June 12, 13, 14 2026

901 EIGHTH ST MOUNDSVILLE, WV - MOUNDSVILLE CENTER BLDG
HISTORIC WV PENITENTARY
ADMISSION FOR ALL THREE DAYS \$20

<p>FRIDAY</p> <p>PREMIER 4PM-7PM ADMISSION \$10</p> <p>DINNER 7:15PM PRE-REGISTER BY 5/30</p>	<p>SATURDAY</p> <p>SHOW 11AM-4PM ADMISSION \$8 PER DAY</p> <p>SEMINAR 1PM GUEST SPEAKERS MATT SPIVEY-BEVINGTON - "HERMITAGE" T. WAYNE MAPLES - "PEBBLE BEACH"</p> <p>AUCTION 4PM PREVIEW 5PM AUCTION PROCEEDS BENEFIT THE FGSA MUSEUM</p>	<p>SUNDAY</p> <p>FLEA MARKET 7 AM-NOON ADMISSION=DONATION</p> <p>SHOW 10AM-2PM ADMISSION \$8</p>
--	--	---

FOR MORE INFORMATION

GENERAL: RALPH/FGSA MUSEUM 304-845-9188
SHOW INFO: CHUCK HILL 304-242-3176 OR CJ_GLASS@COMCAST.NET

PRE-REGISTER AT WWW.FOSTORIAGLASS.ORG

EDUCATION

(Continued from Page 9)

Also, during Bishop Donahue's tenure, Saints Peter and Paul Church in Oak Hill opened its grade school in its parish hall in Scarbro in 1913.

Bishop John J. Swint, who served from 1922 to 1962, was nicknamed "God's Bricklayer." He oversaw the growth of the Catholic school system, which operated as many as 52 schools and one college, Wheeling College (now Wheeling University).

As the Catholic population peaked in the mid 20th century to about 110,000 in 1960, it began a steady decline to 100,000 in 2000, and less than 61,500 in 2024.

This has taken a toll on the Catholic schools. Over time, changes in demographics, including the movement of Catholics to more suburban settings, led

to shifts in school enrollment and the need for tough and emotional decisions — mergers and closures.

Bishop Joseph H. Hodges, who succeeded Swint, began his tenure with 43 Catholic schools and, at the time of his death in 1985, there were 38 diocesan/parochial schools. It is important to note that, in 1974, the boundaries and name of the diocese changed from the Diocese of Wheeling to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. From 1974 forward, the diocese was inclusive of all of the state of West Virginia. Therefore, the diocese gained its eastern region (from the Diocese of Richmond), and lost the southwestern-most part of Virginia which extended to the Tennessee border.

During the era of Bishop Francis Schulte, the sixth bishop of the diocese from

1985-1989, there were 37 diocesan/parochial schools.

Wheeling native Bishop Bernard Schmitt served the diocese as its seventh bishop from 1989-2005. He was the overseer of much diocesan reorganization, which included the 32 diocesan/parochial schools within its territory.

There were 25 Catholic schools in 2018, when Bishop Michael J. Bransfield, the eighth bishop of the diocese, resigned his position (historical note: ultimately a disciplinary measure was issued by Pope Francis in 2019, banning him from public ministry and residing in the diocese in 2019).

When Bishop Mark Brennan was installed as the diocese's ninth bishop, within his first week, he put boots on the ground. His first school stop was Our Lady of Peace School in

Marshall County, where he arrived before the students so he could greet them personally. The school's Facebook post that day — Aug. 26, 2019 — said, "We honestly don't know who enjoyed the morning more! Bishop Mark Brennan was at OLP bright and early to greet our students and some of our parents and grandparents who dropped off today. It was obvious that OLP was eager and excited to have our new bishop here, but what was so impressive was his genuine happiness to be present with us. We pray for Bishop Brennan as he works hard to keep all of us in our beautiful Mountain State ANCHORED IN CHRIST." Our Lady of Peace School is the only Catholic school in the county. They welcomed students from St. Francis Xavier (Moundsville) and

St. James and Johns (Benwood) after their closures.

Because of his dedication to the Church and the faithful in West Virginia, Bishop Brennan became known as an "on the road again" bishop, prioritizing being among the people of the schools and parishes in the state.

Further cementing his reputation as a bishop who values Catholic education and schools with strong Catholic identity, he announced in May 2025 that he was forgiving more than \$9.3 million in Catholic school debt.

Superintendent Hornyak said, "This is a blessing to the faithful of the diocese who work, volunteer, and support our parishes and Catholic schools in this Jubilee Year of Hope. Many of our principals and current school pastors had inherited the debt that has

now been forgiven."

"Since his arrival in August of 2019, Bishop Brennan has always been a strong supporter and promoter of Catholic education and its importance for the children of West Virginia," she said.

The West Virginia Catholic schools today at a glance include 18 elementary schools, six high schools, plus the newly opened St. Joseph High School with ninth grade only for 2025-26. All of the schools are nationally accredited by COGNIA. The students are 47% Catholic and 43% non-Catholic.

The schools office reported that, in the last three years, Catholic school enrollment has continually increased. In 2022-2023 there were 4,370 students and in May 2025 there were 4,673.

Celebrating 175 Years of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston



Panhandle

CLEANING & RESTORATION

FIRE

SMOKE

WIND

MOLD

SEWAGE

WATER

800-504-7054 PanhandleCR.com

Wheeling • Morgantown • Charleston • Pittsburgh • Sarasota

THE OHIO VALLEY'S
50-YEAR ROOF

DIAMOND
SHIELD
WARRANTY

Installed by

A1 ROOFS
DONE RIGHT

*Proud to Celebrate the Diocese of Wheeling's 175 Years
of Faith, Service, and Community.*

BUILD YOUR DREAM HOME
STS CUSTOM HOMES



304-280-5443

WILSON
FURNITURE



La-Z-Boy

Family owned and operated business since 1898, your one-stop destination for high-quality, stylish home furniture and mattresses.

*Celebrating 175 Years of Faith and Service
Congratulations to the Diocese of Wheeling!*

Store Hours:

Monday/Thursday/Friday/Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Closed: Tuesday/Wednesday/Sunday

227 N Lincoln Ave,

Bridgeport, OH

740-635-0652

A Number

You May Never Need

1-888-264-8240

Don't hesitate to call the above toll-free number if you live near an Eastern Gas Transmission & Storage, Inc. pipeline and you suspect a potential pipeline hazard or notice any signs of a gas leak, such as:

- Hissing, blowing or roaring sounds of escaping gas;
- The smell of natural gas;
- Unexplained dead vegetation or ground discoloration;
- Blowing dirt, sand or water; bubbles coming from standing water; exposed pipelines, or frozen ground when the weather is warm.

That number will put you in touch with the Eastern Gas Transmission & Storage, Inc. 24-hour, 7-day emergency service.

If you plan excavation work, please call **811** or:

1-800-245-4848



Know what's below.
Call before you dig.



EASTERN.

GAS TRANSMISSION AND STORAGE

A BHE PIPELINE GROUP COMPANY

© 2026 EGTS/WV

Congratulations



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

Celebrating 175 years of faith, hope, and love.