

Cincinnati cathedral elevated to minor basilica

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CNA Staff, Aug 15, 2020 / 12:19 pm ([CNA](https://www.cna.com)).- The Archdiocese of Cincinnati announced Saturday that Pope Francis has granted the title of Minor Basilica to the Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains, which will celebrate its 175th anniversary this fall.

St. Peter in Chains is the oldest cathedral that was built as a cathedral that is still in use today in the United States.

“For all of us who live and worship in our archdiocese, this is a great blessing and honor that has been bestowed on our cathedral church,” said

Cincinnati Archbishop Dennis Schnurr, who made the announcement of the designation at a Mass on Saturday.

“Let us pray on this day, as we honor Our Lady in her Assumption, that the Church of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, her clergy and faithful, along with all the people of this great city, may benefit from this blessing and give thanks for all that the Lord has brought to fruition.”

The title of minor basilica is an honor bestowed by the pope to signify a church of “particular importance for liturgical and pastoral life,” and signify a “particular link” with Rome and the pope, according to the norms laid out in the Congregation for Divine Worship’s 1989 document *Domus Ecclesiae*.

There are now 89 minor basilicas in the United States. Around 1,700 churches are designated as such worldwide; there exist only four major basilicas, all of which are located in Rome.

The Cathedral of St. Peter in Chains was dedicated Nov. 2, 1845. It was the tallest manmade structure in the city for years. Inside is displayed a large mosaic showing scenes from St. Peter’s life. According to the archdiocese, the cathedral’s artistic influences include Art Deco, Ancient Greek, Eastern Christian and early Roman Christian styles. The building underwent a major renovation in the 1950s.

“It’s the quality of the cathedral’s structure, the absolute beauty of its architecture, the biblical symbolism throughout, the quality and prayerfulness of its liturgy and ecclesiastical significance as a cathedral that make it very important and very special for the archdiocese and in the American Catholic scene,” said Father Jan Schmidt, Rector of the cathedral, in a statement.

Prior to the coronavirus pandemic, St. Peter in Chains hosted more than

1,000 Masses each year and was a popular pilgrimage site.

The cathedral submitted its application to the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments in 2018. Conditions for obtaining the title include the church's status as "a center of active and pastoral liturgy;" "a certain renown throughout the diocese;" and "historical value or importance of the church and the worthiness of its art."

The archdiocese announced that a Mass of Thanksgiving will be held November 7 at the cathedral on the 175th anniversary of its dedication.

Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley offered their congratulations to the Catholic community on the occasion.

"The Catholic Church and the large number of Catholics in our region have helped make the Greater Cincinnati area the great place it is to live, work, play and pray," said Mayor Cranley, who attended the Mass when the announcement was made.

"From starting the major hospitals that have cared for the sick, to feeding the hungry and helping the poor, to educating generations of Catholics who have risen out of poverty and to the heights of civic and business leadership, the Catholic Church has provided a living testament to its core beliefs, and this Basilica has served as beautiful physical embodiment—a sort of Statue of Liberty—of these good works and serves as an ever present reminder to Catholic Cincinnatians that they have a proud spiritual home."