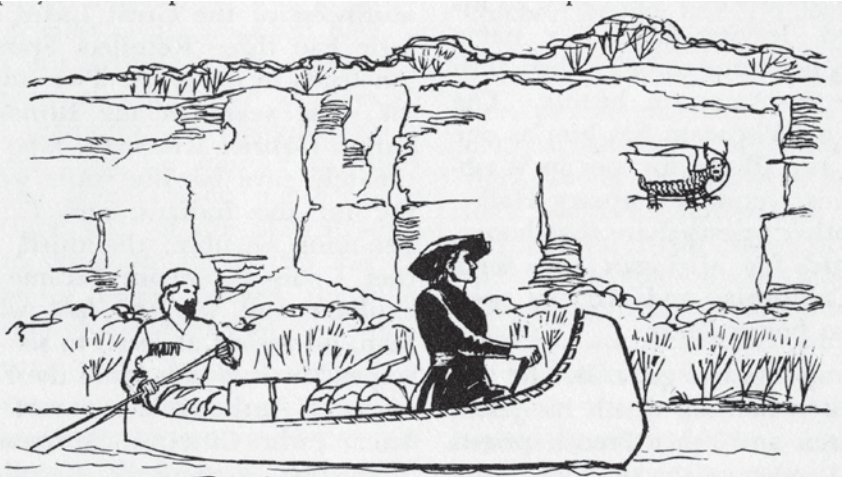




ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Milestone Timeline: From One Frontier See to a Continent of Faith



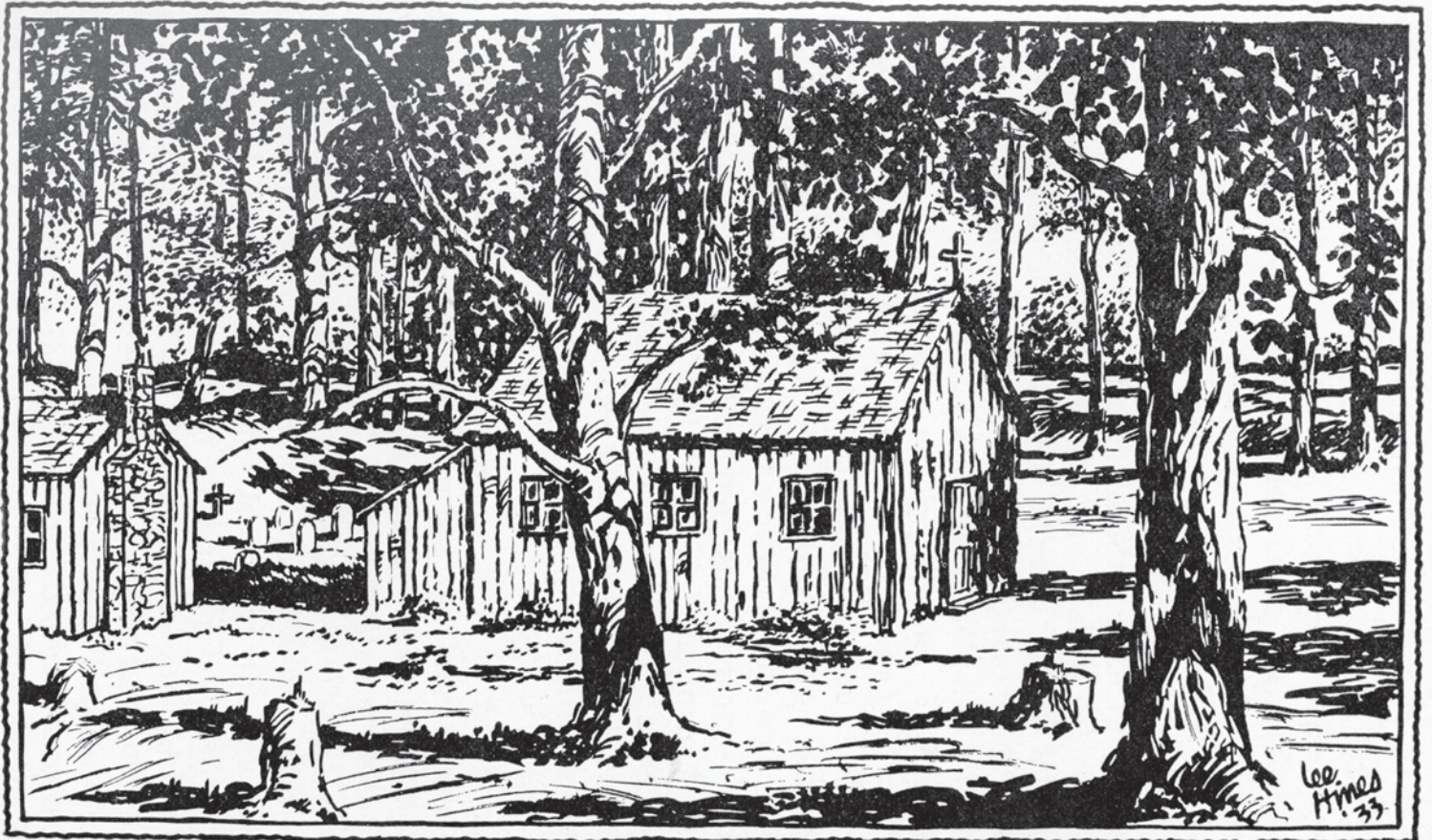
Jolliet and Marquette pass the Illinois bluffs — 1673

1698 – First Mass on the Mississippi

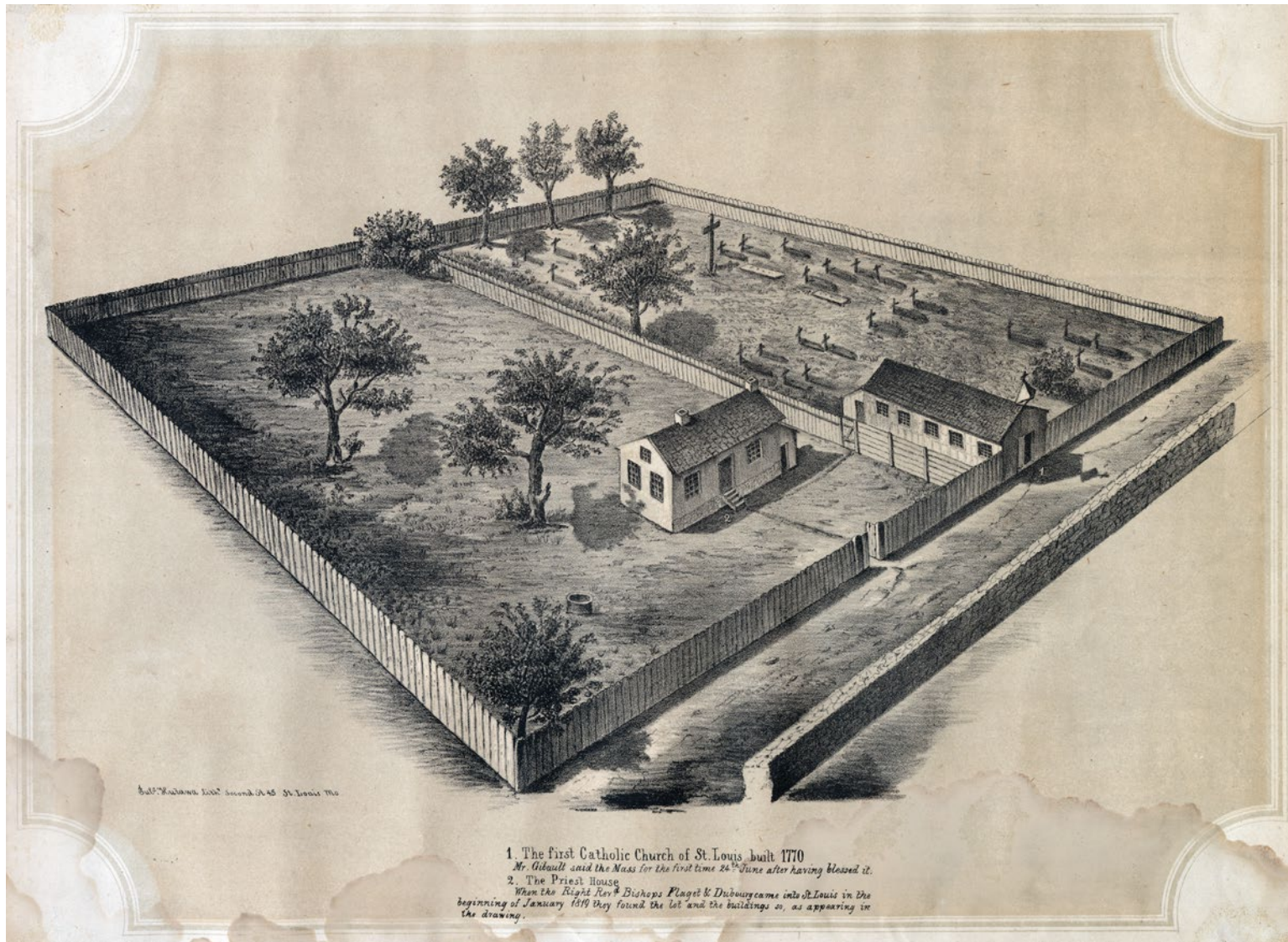
French missionaries celebrated the first recorded Mass along the Mississippi River, planting the first seeds of Catholic life in the territory that would one day be the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

1764 – Founding of St. Louis

Pierre Laclède Liguist and Auguste Chouteau established St. Louis, naming it for King Louis IX — saint, crusader, and model Christian monarch. The Cathedral Block, designated in the original town plan, quickly became the heart of civic and spiritual life.



THE FIRST CHURCH WAS LITTLE MORE THAN A SHED



1. The first Catholic Church of St. Louis, built 1770
Mr. Gibault said the Mass for the first time 24th June after having blessed it.
2. The Priest House
*When the Right Rev. Bishops Flaget & Dubouy came into St. Louis in the
beginning of January 1810 they found the lot and the buildings as, as appearing in
the drawing.*

1770s–1780s – Faith Under Spanish and American Flags

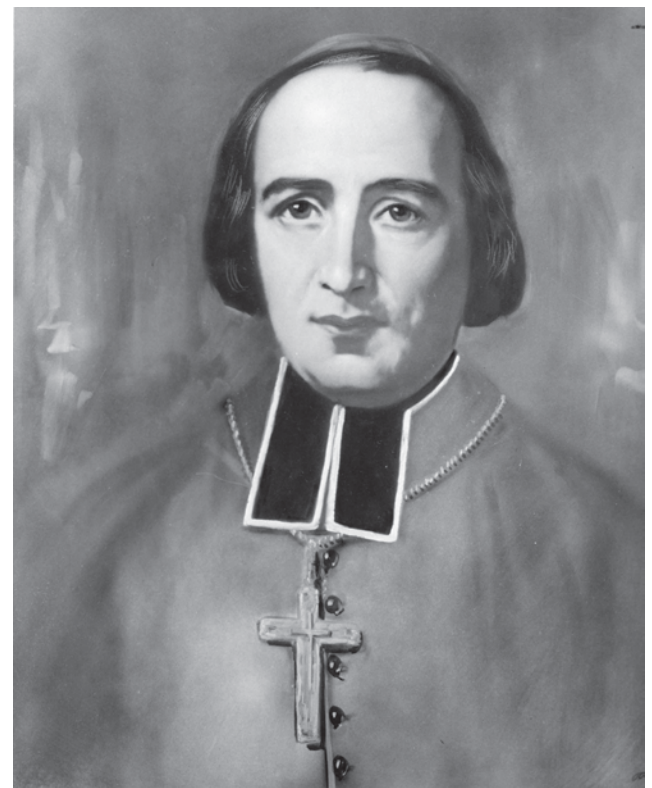
After the American Revolution, lands west of the Mississippi, including St. Louis, remained under Spanish control, while lands east became part of the new United States. Spiritually, this meant St. Louis looked to the Bishop of Havana, Cuba, while Catholics east of the river were placed under John Carroll, the first Prefect Apostolic (later Bishop of Baltimore). The Mississippi divided not just nations, but church jurisdictions, leaving St. Louis Catholics on the edge of the Catholic world.

20

Catalogus Parochiarum et Missionum

Parish Name	Town	County	State	Built of:	Pastor	Language
1. S. Ludovici	St. Louis	St. Louis	Missouri	wood	Amis Dubourg	French English
2. S. Ferdinandi	Florissant	St. Louis	Missouri	lignum	M. Durand	gallica
3. S. Caroli	St. Charles	St. Charles	Missouri	lignum	J. B. Acquaroni	gallica
4. S. Genovefae	St. Genevieve	Genevieve	Missouri	lignum	Hermius Pette	gallica
5. S. Mariae	Carrens Ferry		Missouri	lignum	Paul de la Croix	anglica
6. S. Familiae	Shoeburk	St. Clair	Illinois	lignum	J. Savine	gallica
7. S. Joseph	Paris de Kalb	St. Louis	Illinois	lignum	Douglas Oliver	gallica
8. Conceptionis B. M. V. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Washington	Randolph	Illinois	lignum	Des Moulins	gallica
9. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	St. Louis		Illinois		Bréard	
10. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	St. Louis		Illinois		Portier	
a. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Dezardenne					
b. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Portage des Deux					
c. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Carondelet					
d. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Cotes sans despair					
e. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Mine à Britton					
f. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Vieille Mine					
g. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Mine à la Motte					
h. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Apple Creek					
i. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Cap Girardeau					
j. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Nouvelle Madrid					
11. ^{St. Louis} _{St. Louis}	Cote des Arkansas					

locus ubi Catholici degunt sed Paesia caret
Places where Catholics live but no church.



(Sacred Heart Convent and Saint Charles Borromeo Catholic Church in Saint Charles. Rudolph Goebel, photographer. 1908. Missouri Historical Society Image.)

1818 – Bishop DuBourg Arrives

Bishop Louis William Valentine DuBourg chose to set his episcopal seat in St. Louis, even though he was Bishop of Louisiana and the Floridas. He brought priests, religious sisters, and bold dreams: a cathedral, schools, and missions to Native peoples. He sent St. Rose Philippine Duchesne and the Religious of the Sacred Heart to St. Charles and Florissant, where they opened the first free school for girls west of the Mississippi.

EDUCATION.

The Rev. Mr. Niel, assisted by three other Clergymen, under the auspices and superintendance of the Right Rev. Bishop, will open on the 16th. November next, in the house of Mrs. Alvarez, Church street, an Academy for young Gentlemen.

None will be received before he can read at least tolerably well. The branches of instruction will be the Latin, English and French languages, Arithmetic, the Elements of the Mathematics and Geography, according to the ability of the pupil and the intention of the parents.

Such as may be disposed to encourage this institution, are desired to transmit, during the month of October, their names to Mr. Niel, at the Bishop's, and not to delay sending their children after the commencement, in order that a proper distribution of the classes may be made at once, without confusion and loss of time,

TERMS—Twelve dollars per quarter, payable in advance. Books and Stationary at the expense of parents—each pupil must have a bag to bring in and carry out his books, for the eventual loss of which the masters do not hold themselves answerable.

October, 21 21-25

Advertisement for St. Louis Academy in Missouri Gazette and Public Advertiser, 1818

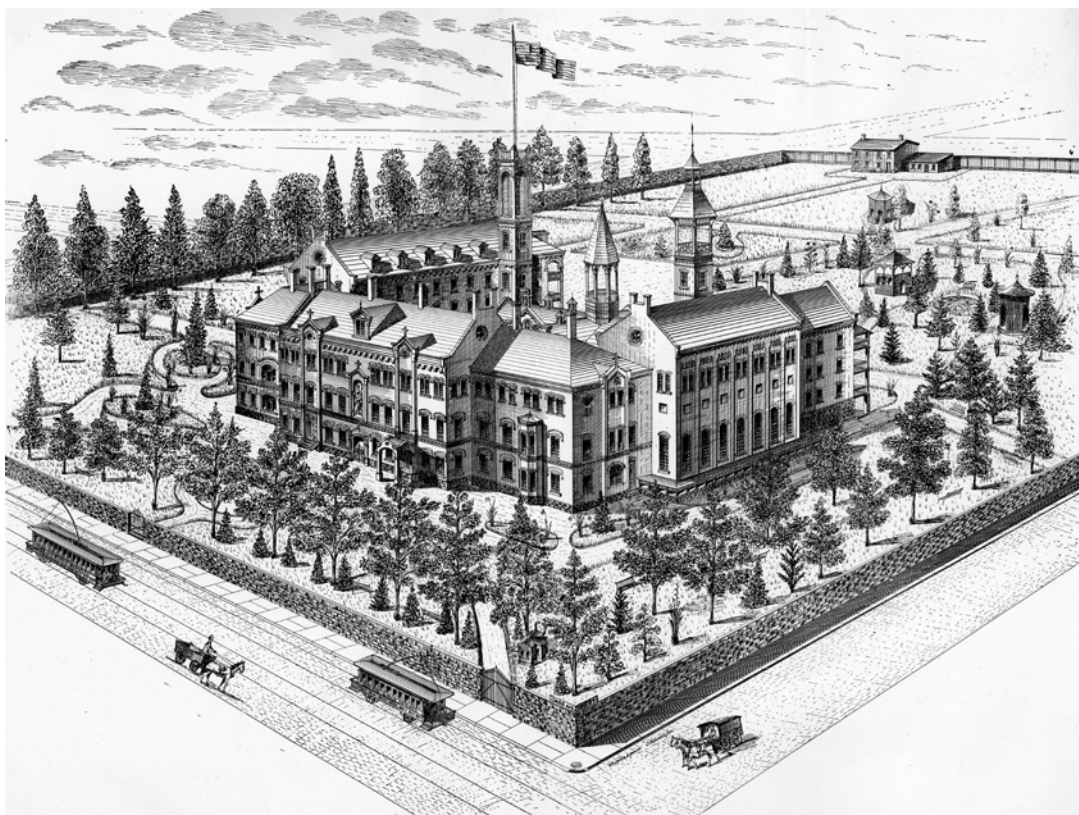
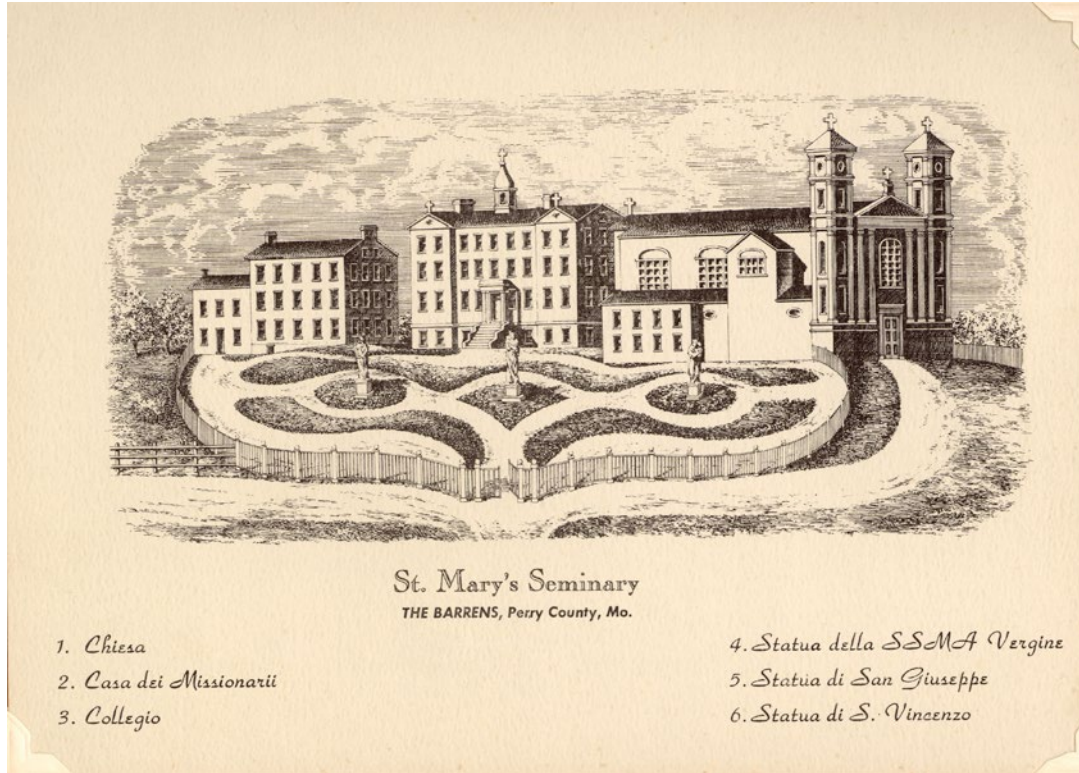
1818 – First College West of the Mississippi

Bishop DuBourg donated his personal library and secured Madame Eugenie Alvarez's home for a new college, appointing Rev. Francois Niel as headmaster. Saint Louis Academy opened on November 16, 1818, becoming the first college west of the Mississippi River and marking the start of the archdiocese's long role in education.

1818. Franciscus Niel, ex consensu sui Ordinarii huius
 Diocesi adscitus ab Illmo ac Rmo D. Ludovico Guillemo
 Du Bourg, Epo Neo-Aurelianensi, Sacerdos ordinatus
 fuit Sancti Ludovici die 19 Martii, 1818.

Francis Niel, ordained March 19, 1818. The first priest ordained in St. Louis

1818 – Founding of St. Mary of the Barrens Seminary
 Bishop DuBourg knew he needed priests to help him direct the spiritual growth and evangelization of Catholics in his vast diocese. At his direction, the Vincentians established St. Mary of the Barrens Seminary in October, 1818, making it the first seminary west of the Mississippi. To this day, priestly formation remains a vital mission of the diocese.



Kenrick Seminary on Cass Avenue in St. Louis, ca. 1895



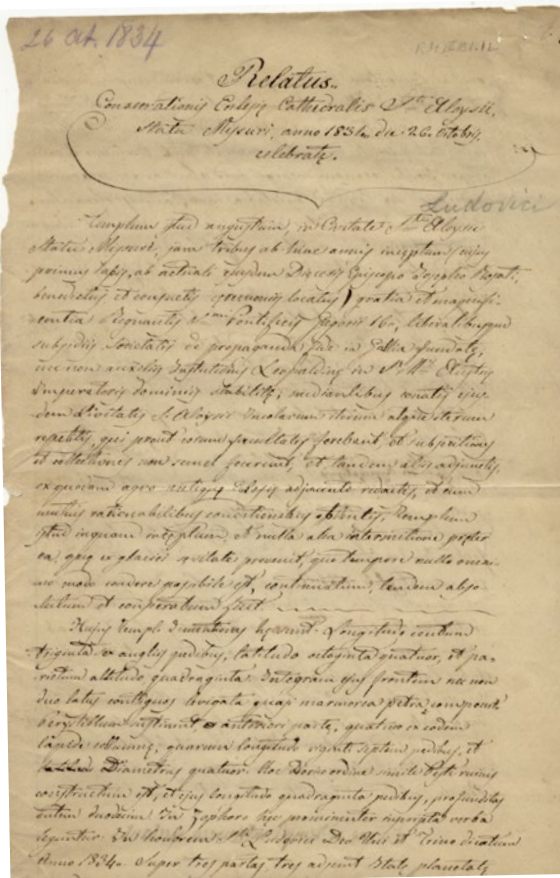
Kenrick Seminary (lower left) and the new Preparatory Seminary (upper right) in Shrewsbury, ca. 1930



Dedication of Kenrick Seminary in Shrewsbury, April 27, 1916



"St. Louis Cathedral" (Bishop's residence on the right, orphanage on the left). Lithograph by J.C.Wild. ca. 1840. Missouri Historical Society Image



1834 – Dedication of the Old Cathedral

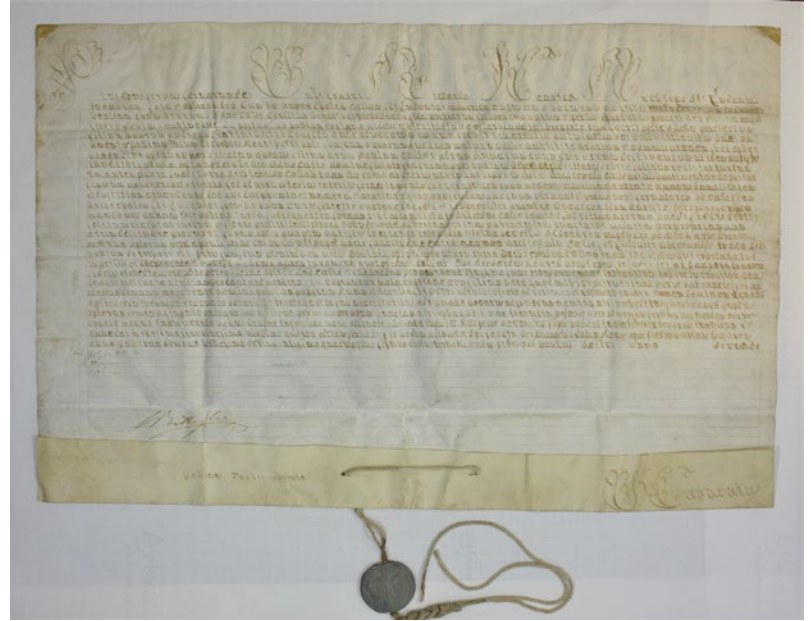
Bishop Rosati consecrated the Old Cathedral — the first cathedral built west of the Mississippi. Its Greek Revival stone walls replaced the frontier log church and became a beacon for Catholic life. The Old Cathedral was the only church in the city until the 1840s, serving French, German, Irish, and English-speaking Catholics, as well as Native American delegations who traveled there to learn the faith.

Consecration of the Old Cathedral by Bishop Joseph Rosati



St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, established 1847. Archbishop Kenrick preferred St. John to the Old Cathedral and used it as his “pro-cathedral” during his time in St. Louis.

1847 – St. Louis Elevated to an Archdiocese
 On July 20, 1847, St. Louis became the first archdiocese in the Mississippi Valley. Archbishop Peter Richard Kenrick, the “Lion of St. Louis,” guided the local church through waves of immigration, epidemics, anti-Catholic riots, and explosive growth. From St. Louis, the Church spread outward, giving birth to more than forty dioceses across the Midwest and Plains.



Papal Bull providing instructions for Kenrick to receive his pallium, symbol of his new role as Archbishop of St. Louis.



Ruins of the St. Louis riverfront with the spire of the Old Cathedral in the background, 1849. Thomas M. Easterly, photographer. Missouri Historical Society image.

1849 – Year of Fire and Cholera

A cholera epidemic claimed thousands of lives, while a massive fire swept through the riverfront, nearly consuming the Old Cathedral. Archbishop Kenrick and religious sisters ministered to the sick and buried the dead, embodying the Church’s mercy and resilience.

1870 – A Cradle of Bishops

By the time of the First Vatican Council, so many priests from St. Louis had been consecrated bishops that the city was called “the cradle of bishops.” They carried the missionary spirit of St. Louis to dioceses across the nation, from Philadelphia and New Orleans to Los Angeles and Dubuque.

Milestones: A Growing Church in the New Century

1904 – World’s Fair and a Vision for the Future

As St. Louis hosted the World’s Fair, Archbishop John J. Glennon envisioned a Church as impressive as the city’s global showcase. His dream of a new cathedral on Lindell Boulevard became the defining symbol of Catholic confidence in a modern age.



1908 – Cornerstone of the Cathedral Basilica

On October 18, 1908, the cornerstone was laid for the Cathedral Basilica of Saint Louis. Blending Byzantine and Romanesque design, it would become one of the most magnificent churches in the Western Hemisphere. For Glennon, it was to be the visible sign of Catholic faith at the heart of the Midwest.

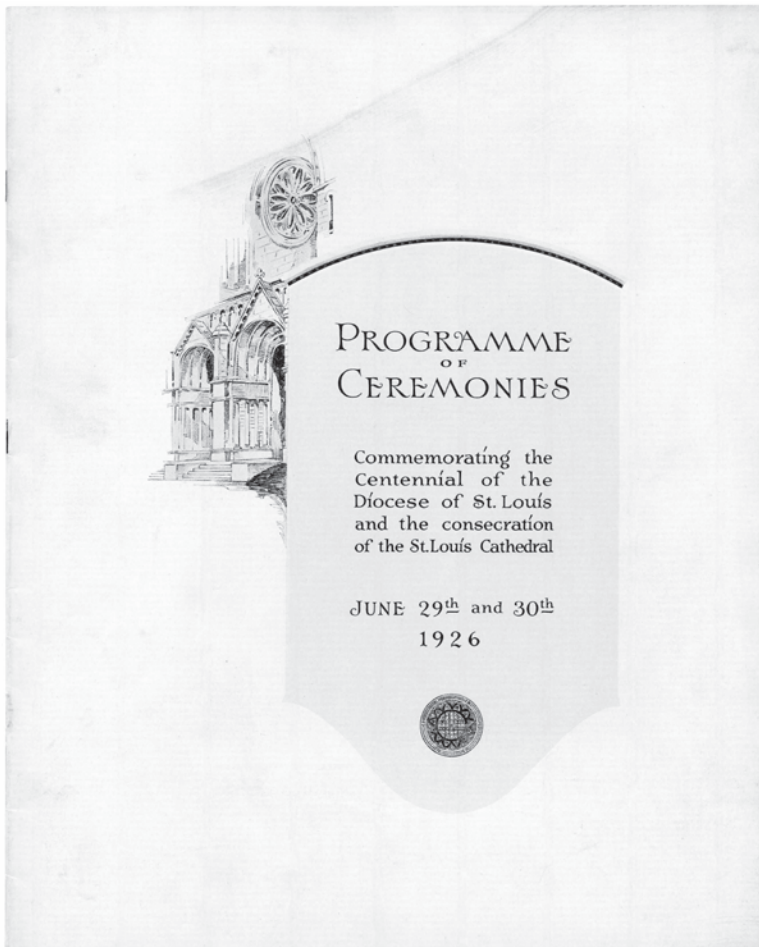


1926 – Centennial and Dedication of the New Cathedral

On June 29, 1926, the centennial of the Diocese of St. Louis, the Cathedral Basilica was solemnly dedicated. Pope Pius XI would later praise it as “the most beautiful church in the new world.” More than 100,000 faithful lined Lindell Boulevard as the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession, celebrating both a century of faith and a future of promise.



Procession for the Consecration of the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis (the “New Cathedral”), 1926



ST. LOUIS CATHEDRAL

This consecration of this magnificent and imposing structure was held on Sunday, October 18th, 1926, by the Most Reverend Apostolic Delegate, Donato Fabris, D. D., Vicar Archbishop of Lyons. On that occasion seventy-nine city parishes participated in the grand parade, making the largest demonstration ever seen in the city.



Rev. Timothy Dempsey and the "Faugh a Ballagh" band, ca. 1930.

1930s–1940s – Parishes and Charity at the Heart of Catholic Life

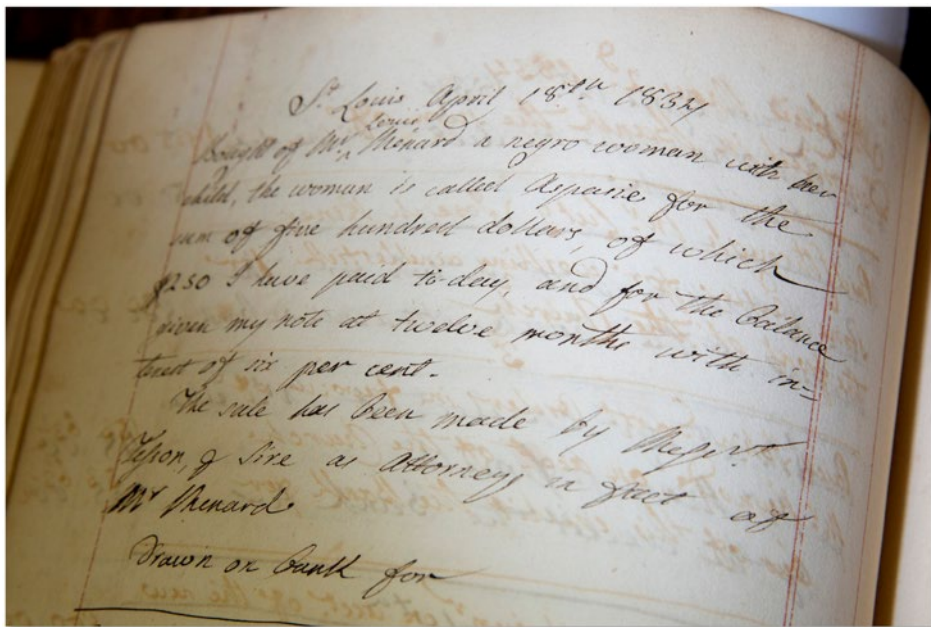
Neighborhood parishes shaped Catholic identity across the city — spiritual centers, schools, and cultural homes for immigrants from Germany, Ireland, Poland, Bohemia, and Italy. Priests and sisters carried out the Church's works of mercy: Father Peter Dunne cared for "street children," Father Tim Dempsey established residences for the homeless, and Catholic Charities organized a growing network of orphanages, shelters, and hospitals.



Father Tim Dempsey's Breadline, Saint Patrick Church, ca. 1932.



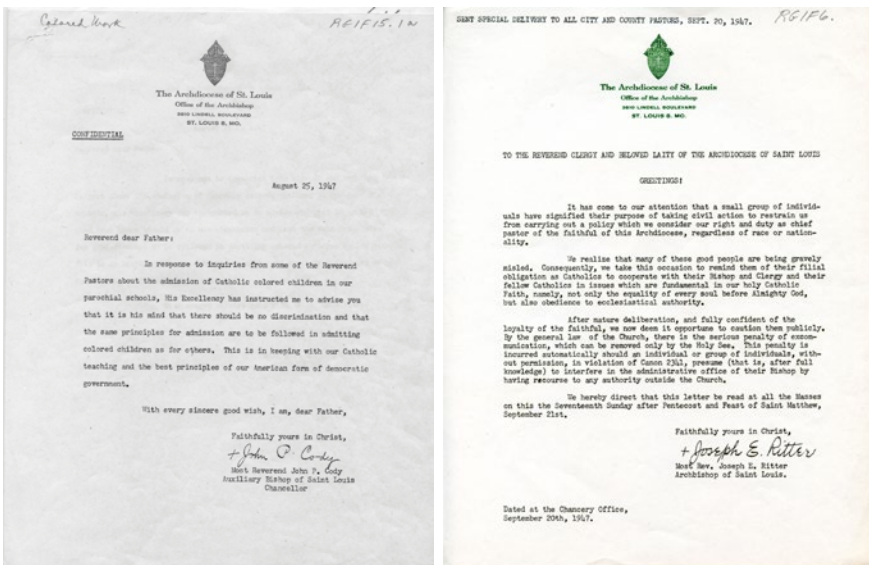
Father Dunne's News Boys' Home, Locust Street, ca. 1946.



Bishop Joseph Rosati financial ledger entry noting the purchase of Aspasia LeCompte, an enslaved woman, April 18, 1834. LeCompte would eventually sue to win her freedom in 1839.

1946 – Archbishop Ritter Integrates Catholic Schools


Turning from a shameful past that included use of enslaved labor by the clergy of the local Catholic Church, Archbishop Joseph Ritter, in one of his first acts after arriving in St. Louis, ordered the racial integration of Catholic schools. He acted eight years before the U.S. Supreme Court’s *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. When segregationist opponents threatened lawsuits, Ritter declared they would incur automatic excommunication. His decisive leadership made St. Louis a model of Catholic commitment to justice.



Letter published by Cardinal Ritter to be read Sunday Mass in every parish in the archdiocese

**HIS EMINENCE
JOSEPH CARDINAL RITTER
ARCHBISHOP OF ST. LOUIS**

ON
HUMAN RIGHTS




THE TIME IS NOW

Cardinal Ritter feels "the time is now" to deal with what many call the "Negro problem" - what some are beginning to call the "whole problem" but what President Kennedy called the "American problem."


That the "time is now" was evident in the Cardinal's own words of doubt about any real transformation in Catholic attitudes about civil rights and racial justice. He knows and admits that there are some Catholics who are still resisting the implications of Negro equality. "These are the people the Church must reach. We must bring our own people to the full acceptance of civil rights for all."

Cardinal Ritter believes that some people are only conforming to the demands without accepting the spirit or having "lived the implications of integration because they have escaped being personally involved."

With this he singled out a major problem of the Church's posture in this area of social justice. "We have many apologies to make for being neutral in this, for not fulfilling our religious ideals, for Catholics have gone along with the pattern of the rest of the people. We have failed in our prophetic mission toward justice."



COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS
4445 LINDELL BLVD. • ST. LOUIS, MO



**If anyone says:
"I Love God",
and hates his brother,
he is a liar.**

St. John's 1st. Epistle 4:20



Groundbreaking ceremony for Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital, June 11, 1953

1950s – A Boom of Parishes, Schools, and Hospitals

With the postwar baby boom and suburban expansion, Archbishop Ritter established new parishes at the pace of three per year. He expanded high schools, built Duchesne in St. Charles, and opened Cardinal Glennon Memorial Children's Hospital in 1956 — the only hospital in the U.S. operated by an archdiocese.



Bishop DuBourg High School construction, August 17, 1951



First public Mass at La Paz, 1956

1961 – Saving the Old Cathedral

As the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial (now Gateway Arch National Park) was created, the Old Cathedral was preserved as the lone surviving structure of the city's founding blocks. In 1961, Pope John XXIII elevated it to the dignity of a basilica, ensuring its role as the mother church of Catholicism in the West.



Papal decree designating the Old Cathedral as a minor basilica, January 27, 1961

1956 – Archbishop Ritter Establishes Bolivian Mission

In a sign of support to the continued spiritual needs of the Latino community in St. Louis and Central and South America, Archbishop Ritter established a mission to Bolivia in 1956. The mission was the first of its kind by any diocese in the United States. Operating in the Archdiocese of La Paz, archdiocesan priests served rural and impoverished areas for the next 64 years.



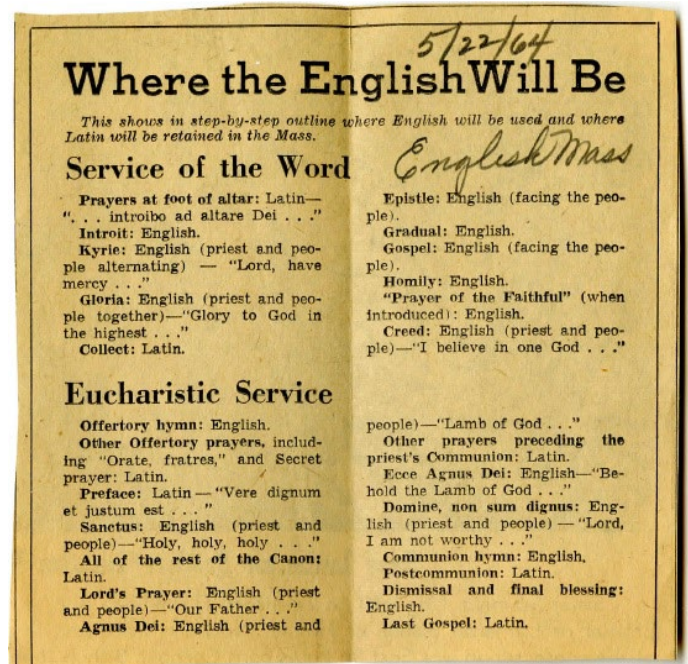
Basilica of St. Louis, King of France, with the Gateway Arch under construction, 1965

1962–1965 – Vatican II and Renewal

Cardinal Ritter played a leading role at the Second Vatican Council, becoming one of the most prominent American voices for reform. He brought the Council home, launching Operation Renewal with 2,600 parish study groups, and celebrated the first authorized English-language Mass in the world in St. Louis in 1964.



First English Mass in the United States, Keil Auditorium, 1964.



1968 – Cardinal Carberry and Pro-Life Leadership

Installed in 1968, Cardinal John J. Carberry led the Archdiocese during turbulent years of war, social change, and the legalization of abortion. He established the nation's first diocesan Pro-Life Committee in 1973 and ordained the first permanent deacons in 1977. Even as the city's population declined, the Archdiocese became a national leader in defending life and embracing new ministries.



Cardinal Carberry celebrating a memorial Mass following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1968.



Cardinal Carberry attending the first pro-life rally in St. Louis following the Roe v. Wade decision, October 21, 1973.



1980s – Archbishop John L. May and a Completed Cathedral

Archbishop John May guided the Archdiocese with strong leadership in ecumenism, race relations, and pastoral renewal. In 1986, he blessed the final mosaics of the Cathedral Basilica, completing one of the largest mosaic collections in the world. He also ordained the first African American auxiliary bishop of St. Louis, J. Terry Steib, S.V.D.

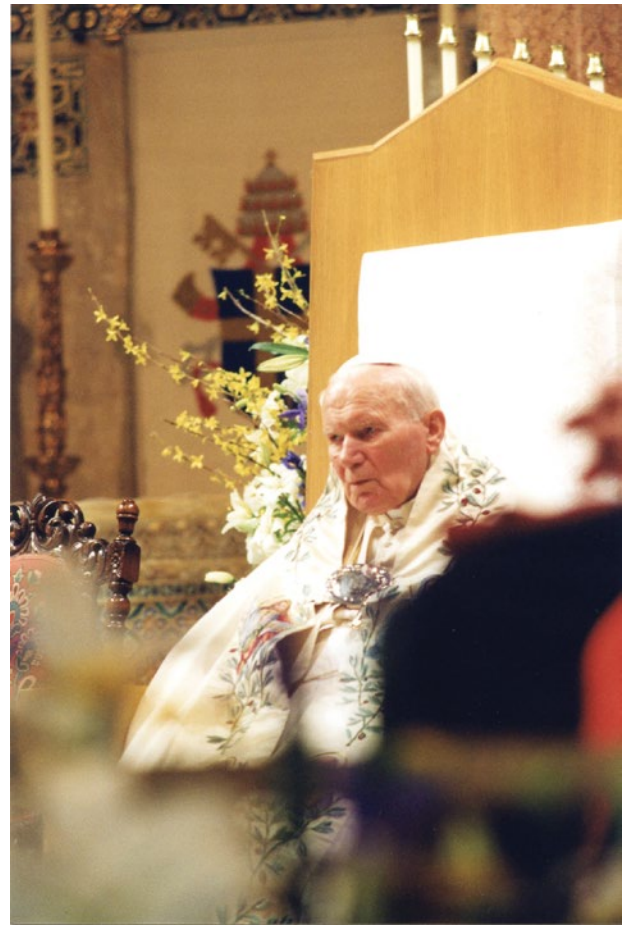
Bishop Steib offering his homily at Mass following his consecration as bishop, 1984



Archbishop May welcomes St. Teresa of Calcutta to St. Louis, June 8, 1971

1999 – Pope John Paul II Visits St. Louis

On January 27, 1999, Pope John Paul II visited St. Louis, celebrating Mass at the Trans World Dome before more than 100,000 faithful. His call to “be witnesses to hope” became a touchstone for a new millennium of Catholic life in the “Rome of the West.”



Milestones:

The Church in the New Millennium

2002 – Confronting the Abuse Crisis

Like the wider Church, St. Louis faced painful revelations of clergy sexual abuse. The Archdiocese implemented the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, establishing safe environment programs, background checks, and a review board. These efforts sought to restore trust, provide justice for survivors, and ensure the safety of future generations.

2003 – A New Archbishop, Raymond L. Burke

Archbishop Raymond Burke arrived in St. Louis with a strong focus on canon law, liturgy, and pro-life witness. He established the St. Louis Marian Conference and reinvigorated Eucharistic devotion. His leadership drew national attention for his outspoken defense of Church teaching.

2008 – Archbishop Robert J. Carlson Installed

Archbishop Robert Carlson was installed in 2009, leading with a pastoral emphasis on vocations, evangelization, and Catholic education. He helped strengthen Catholic schools through Alive in Christ, a plan to sustain urban and suburban parishes while prioritizing accessibility to Catholic education.

2015 – Archbishop Robert J. Carlson Welcomes Pope Francis’s Laudato Si’

Under Carlson’s leadership, the Archdiocese engaged ecological awareness and social justice initiatives, echoing Pope Francis’s call to care for creation and the poor. Catholic Charities expanded its outreach, making the Church’s witness visible in communities most affected by poverty.

2020 – Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski Installed

Archbishop Rozanski was installed as the 10th Archbishop of St. Louis during the COVID-19 pandemic. He guided the Archdiocese through unprecedented challenges of public health restrictions, livestreamed Masses, and new forms of pastoral care. His leadership began shaping a renewed vision for mission and evangelization in a changed world.

2022 – All Things New Pastoral Planning Initiative

Recognizing demographic shifts, declining clergy numbers, and changing parish realities, Archbishop Rozanski launched All Things New. This ambitious pastoral planning process sought to strengthen Catholic life by restructuring parishes and schools while calling the faithful to renewed missionary discipleship.

2025 – Jubilee Year of Hope

In preparation for the Church’s 200th anniversary, the Archdiocese entered the Jubilee Year of Hope, aligning with the global Jubilee Year proclaimed by Pope Francis. Parishes, schools, and ministries celebrated with prayer, service, and evangelization, rediscovering the light of Christ at the center of Catholic life in St. Louis.

2026 – Bicentennial of the Archdiocese of St. Louis

On July 18, 2026, the Archdiocese will mark 200 years since its founding as a diocese. The Bicentennial Jubilee celebrates St. Louis’s legacy as the “Rome of the West” and its mission to carry the Gospel from the banks of the Mississippi to the ends of the earth. From one frontier see to a continent of faith, the Archdiocese continues to be a beacon of Catholic witness for the nation.