

TOGETHER

a monthly bulletin insert from the archdiocese



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THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. RAPHAEL: OUR CHURCH, OUR HERITAGE

By Cassie Bird

A religious pilgrimage can take many forms. According to the USCCB, "Pilgrimage may mean embarking on a journey of prayer; accompanying the poor, the oppressed, and refugees in their times of trial; visiting local holy sites; and countless other acts of faith."

Pilgrimages, in some cases, may mean traveling great distances. In others, pilgrimages can be described as accompanying someone on a spiritual journey in your own community. Whether traveling to the Holy Land or somewhere closer to home, they can be a great act of faith and spiritual growth.

This fall, a group of 14 Archdiocesan parishioners from Durango, Dyersville, Earlville, Manchester, New Vienna, Parkersburg, Ryan, and Worthington made a pilgrimage to the Cathedral of St. Raphael in Dubuque to visit the mother church of our archdiocese. Although the physical distance they traveled may not have been long, that does not diminish the spiritual journey of their pilgrimage. They are among hundreds that make a visit to the Cathedral each year.

Connection to Past, Present and Future

If you speak with Fr. Dennis Quint, the current pastor of the Cathedral of St. Raphael, he will tell you about how making a pilgrimage to the mother church offers a spirit of unity with our fellow parishioners from the past, present, and future.

Visiting the Cathedral provides a connection to the past with the oldest congregation of Christians in the state of Iowa in a parish established by Venerable Samuel Mazzuchelli. "Pilgrims can pray in the presence of the

earthly remains of most of the bishops of the Archdiocese of Dubuque (including our first bishop, Matthias Loras) who are interred in the lower level mortuary chapel," Fr. Quint said.

There is also opportunity to come together in the present in communion with Christ through adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and communion with the saints, by praying in the Corridor of the Saints. "We have many relics of saints, including one underneath the altar," Fr. Quint pointed out.

He is referring to the relics of St. Cessianus. St. Cessianus was a Christian boy martyred for his faith during the persecution by the Emperor Diocletian (who reigned 285-305). Pope Gregory XVI gave this relic to Bishop Loras, who brought the relics to Dubuque in 1839.

This is in addition to special celebrations that are held in the Cathedral as the mother church of the archdiocese. "Archdiocesan liturgies are celebrated here, such as the Chrism Mass, Rite of Election, and the Ordination of deacons and priests."

As for the future, visitors are able to "... Anticipate the fulfillment of our goal of eternal life in heaven one day as we contemplate the stained glass, behold the artwork, and engage in the beautiful music, especially from our pipe organ which has three manuals and 45 ranks," Fr. Quint said.

The Guides

Mary Rae Bragg is not only the secretary of St. Patrick's Church in Dubuque, but also a parishioner of the Cathedral and a volunteer tour guide for the Cathedral of St. Raphael for almost 8 years.

Bragg, along with the other volunteer tour guides of the Cathedral who include former Cathedral pastors, deacons, and retired educators, have led thousands of individuals through the mother church over the years – people of all ages, and from parishes across the archdiocese and beyond.

"My personal favorites among those I led on tours were the young people preparing to be Confirmed," Bragg said. "That is such a difficult



St. Raphael Cathedral in Dubuque (above) is a beneficiary of ArchdioceseOne. The mother church of the archdiocese contains relics, stained glass windows and other sacred art. Many pilgrims have visited it in order to enhance their faith. (Contributed photo)

age – for both the child and the adults in their life! – that seeing their awestruck reaction to St. Raphael Cathedral never failed to lift my spirits. Those tours also offered many of the adult chaperones a first-time opportunity to see their mother church, which was fun to see, too."

Bragg also spoke about how far some of the youngest parishioners in our diocese make the journey to Dubuque with school groups to visit the Cathedral – some traveling three hours each way to visit.

In fact, each year the 5th grade students from St. Francis Elementary in Dyersville make a pilgrimage to the Cathedral for a tour to learn more about its history, and the history of the Archdiocese of Dubuque. This past fall, 5th grade teacher Shellie Olberding accompanied her class for their annual visit.

“They are always in awe of the beauty of the Cathedral, and they find the history of the church and the archdiocese interesting. They are especially interested in learning about the relics of St. Cessianus which are in a box under the altar,” Olberding said.

“But their favorite part of the tour is the Mortuary Chapel located under the Cathedral, where former archbishops are buried. That is always the highlight of the tour. The ones that stand out are Archbishop Hennessy, Bishop Loras, and Archbishop Beckman. Some of my students attended the former Hennessy school located in New Vienna. They are amazed that he is buried under the Cathedral. Of course, they have all heard of Loras College. They also find it amazing that the college is named after a Bishop, and that he is buried under the Cathedral too. Most of these students will attend Beckman Catholic High School after they leave Xavier. They are always surprised to hear there was an Archbishop Beckman (an actual person), and they think it’s cool that he is also buried under the Cathedral also.”

Our Heritage

Thinking back to the first Catholics who celebrated in the Cathedral highlights the significance that it had to the community

of Catholics back then, just as it holds significance as our mother church in the archdiocese today.

The first Mass held at the Cathedral as we know it today was on Christmas Day, 1857. Even though construction had not been completed – there was no heat, and even the roof had not yet been finished – parishioners were so eager to celebrate Mass in the new space that they did not mind that it was not fully completed. Many of the Cathedral’s first parishioners were very poor, but still gave what they could to help construct a building in which they could celebrate their faith together – it was so important to them spiritually that they gave sacrificial gifts to aid in its construction.

A recent participant in the Rite of Election commented, “The Cathedral is a beautiful place to spend time in God’s presence. The stained glass windows, the Stations of the Cross, and the many paintings all provide a great atmosphere for prayer and reflection.”

Over 165 years later, and the Cathedral remains an important part of not only our heritage, but our faith today as members of the Archdiocese of Dubuque, and it is our privilege to maintain it for generations of Catholics to follow.

“We have a responsibility to maintain it and come and share it with others,” Bragg said.

Thanks to the generosity of so many in the archdiocese and contributions to the ArchdioceseOne special appeal, repairs to the roof and windows are scheduled to take place yet in 2023.

Interested in making a visit or pilgrimage?

Visitors are welcome and encouraged to schedule a date and time to visit the Cathedral. Groups are asked to schedule a tour at least a month in advance so that staff and volunteers are able to prepare properly to provide the best experience possible. There is a registration form that can be filled out on the Cathedral’s website to begin the scheduling process. Self-guided tours are also possible, with a brochure and audio tour available.

Mass is celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Raphael at 9am and 5pm on Sundays, Mondays at 7:30am, Wednesdays at 5:15pm, and Fridays at 7:30am.

ArchdioceseOne Update

Thanks to your sacrificial gift, over \$14.7 million has been raised for the ArchdioceseOne special appeal. Over \$7.3 million of this amount has been left unrestricted, and over \$1.6 million has been restricted for necessary repairs and upgrades to the Cathedral of St. Raphael.



St. Raphael Cathedral in Dubuque (above) has hosted an active Catholic community of faith for over 165 years. The first Mass in the building as we know it today was held in 1857. (Contributed photo)