

The following historical account of the [Cathedral of Saint Andrew](#) in Grand Rapids is excerpted from *The Catholic Church in the Grand River Valley 1833-1950* by John W. McGee:

The date set for the dedication and consecration of the Cathedral (which being completely debt-free could now be solemnly consecrated), was July 4, 1903. The consecration was to be one of the most solemn and imposing functions ever seen by the citizens of Grand Rapids, particularly because the Most Reverend Diomedo Falconio, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, was to be present. ... As the special car bearing Archbishop Falconio arrived at the corner of Sixth and Scribner Streets N. W., a tremendous crowd, assembled from all over the city, surrounded the train, and shouted a welcome to the delegate of the Holy Father.

All the parishes of Grand Rapids were represented, with the men marching in the order of the age of their parish, St. Isidore's, the youngest parish, marching first, followed by St. Alphonsus, St. Joseph's, St. Adalbert's, St. James', St. Mary's, and St. Andrew's.

The Papal Delegate stepped from the interurban car to be met by Bishop Richter and the priests of the city, and was escorted by them to the episcopal carriage, decked with the national and papal colors. Solemnly he stepped in, and at a sign from Lt. Mullaley of the Police Department, the standards of church and state were hoisted, and with the music of six bands and to the marching feet of two thousand men, the procession headed by Sgt. Madigan and a platoon of police, marched four deep through Monroe Street toward the Cathedral. All the dignitaries of the church rode in gaily decorated carriages, trimmed in red, white, and blue, for the country, and in yellow and white, for the Holy Father. ... In the parade, too, rode Mayor Palmer and all the aldermen of the city. Behind them marched the Furniture City Band, and a delegation of soldiers from the Soldiers' Home, each group carrying the colors of their regiments. On the lawn of the bishop's house, a reception for the delegate was held immediately. The Honorable Millard Palmer, Mayor of Grand Rapids, gave an address of welcome, saying, "I, as a young man witnessed the laying of the corner stone of St. Andrew's Church, and as a young man saw the consecration of your Bishop; I feel, then, that I speak understandingly when I place in the front rank of our religious institutions this Cathedral which has so quickly risen from the ashes of its former self. Fortunate is that community which is blessed by institutions which wield such a broad and abiding influence as this-and happy the city which has not one but many such within its borders We appreciate, too, the honor conferred upon us by the presence of your Excellency as the authoritative delegate of the Holy Father. For myself, and for the city, I thank you."

The Consecration Ceremonies

During all this time, the actual ceremonies of consecration had been under way since early morning. Shortly after 6:30, Archbishop Moeller, Coadjutor of Cincinnati, preceded by a long procession of assistant priests, acolytes, and seminarians, proceeded to the front entrance to the Cathedral, where the Litany of the Saints was begun, and the beautiful prayers that consecrate a

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house of worship permanently to Almighty God, were chanted. In the center of the church, a throne had been erected for the consecrator, and there the Archbishop took his place while the twelve candles affixed to the walls of a consecrated church, were lighted.

Thereupon the procession returned to the private chapel in the episcopal residence, with a Deacon-custodian left to guard the doors of the Cathedral. In a few moments the procession returned, chanting "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be lifted up, ye eternal doors." Within the Cathedral the pews had been loosened and moved out to form a large X or St. Andrew's Cross from all the four comers of the building. Along this cross, according to the age-old ritual of consecration, blessed ashes were strewn in circles at distances of every few feet. Now the consecrating Archbishop, attired in full pontificals, moved slowly along the bars of the cross, forming along one line the letters of the Greek alphabet, and along the other those of the Latin alphabet. Then the Veni Creator was chanted, invoking the help of the Holy Spirit. Ashes, wine, and salt were blessed at the entrance to the sanctuary, and these placed in blessed water, to yield Gregorian Water for the blessing of the walls. The Archbishop at once blessed the walls of the interior of the church, and the exterior of the church. Mortar was solemnly blessed for the altar stone. There followed, according to the consecration ritual, another procession to the private chapel of the bishop where a nightlong vigil had been kept over the sacred relics of St. Theophilus, St. Benignus, and St. Audacta, relics of Roman martyrs which had been embedded in the altar table of the old stone church on Monroe Avenue. The relics were placed in a gold relic box, and carried by four priests upon a litter, under a silk canopy carried by four priests vested in red. At the altar, the relics were cemented into the table of the high altar, the twelve crosses on the walls of the church were anointed, the altar decorated, the candles lighted, and all was in readiness for the Solemn Mass.

The Pontifical Mass

At about eleven o'clock A. M., a solemn procession of priests and bishops left the bishop's house and marched toward the main entrance of the church. The doors had been opened now, and the congregation had filled the church and spread about the steps and street. Preacher for the consecration was Archbishop Quigley, of Chicago, who won the hearts of all with his eloquence. "Fear not, little flock, it hath pleased the Father to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32), was his text. The Archbishop said: These words, spoken two thousand years ago by Jesus Christ to his small band of apostles, unfolded for them the characteristics of his kingdom: it was to be worldwide - "You shall be witnesses to me in Judea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world"; it was to be indestructible, "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"; it was to be everlasting - "behold, I am with you all days"; it was to include all nations, "go into the whole world and preach the gospel." That little flock was to spread to the ends of the earth, and within its fold was to be found the regeneration of the human family, gone so far astray To this flock was given such power of expansion as to enable it to contain the whole world, - such power of cohesion as to enable it to preserve its identity in all places I see here in this Cathedral Church today the power of this little flock exemplified in your bishop, the apostle, the messenger of Christ, who has set up his throne in this cathedral, and spreads about him, like another Paul or Titus, the light of the gospel of Christ, the grace of His sacrifices, His sacraments, His blessed

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ordinances.... It was well past noon when the Pontifical Mass was concluded. The music, all agreed, had been magnificently rendered by Professor George Foertsch and his choir of thirty-eight voices, who sang the Proper in Gregorian, and the Mass for the Papal Jubilee, by Zangi.

After the Mass, prelates and clergy were given a banquet by Bishop Hichter in the parish school hall. Father Rafter was toastmaster, and seminarians acted as waiters. A proposed ride around the city was abandoned because of a heavy downfall of rain. In the evening, Bishop O'Donaghue lectured in the Cathedral on "The Priest and his People." There was a good attendance despite the heavy rainfall, for this was the first opportunity for the general public to view the lighting effects in the remodeled church. Pontifical benediction was given by Bishop Janssen of Belleville, Illinois. On Sunday, July 5, Bishop Richter pontificated for the first time in his newly consecrated Cathedral at 10:30 A. M., and Bishop Alerding of Fort Wayne preached the sermon. So passed the consecration of St. Andrew's Cathedral, a day memorable for years to come in the history of the parish, and a day still commemorated each year on the Fourth of July.