



# CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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Second Sunday of Easter

## Two Hundred Years in New York City

Beginning this month, and for the coming year, the Archdiocese of New York will celebrate its bicentennial. You'll know about it because you'll receive an envelope for the bicentennial appeal, a worthy cause but a subject for a different essay. You will read about it today and again in the days to come, in *Catholic New York*, and probably in the secular papers as well. We Catholics have become quite a force in the life of this city; in the heyday of Cardinal Spellman, politicians in the city referred to St.

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Patrick's Cathedral and the Archdiocesan offices as "The Powerhouse." Some still do.

But this is not a celebration of present day Catholic influence in our city; it is really a celebration of us, all of us, and our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents. Most of them walked off boats in the harbor, carrying nothing but their dreams, their willingness to work hard, and their faith. They did work hard, for very little money, and what they had they sent home to parents, brothers and sisters, but always, on Sundays, they gave to their Church. One of my proudest moments as a young adult was when Pope Paul VI, visiting New York, declared that the great Cathedral of New York had been built "with the pennies of the Irish serving girls." And the glory of our Archdiocese is that it was not only the Irish, but the Italians and Germans and Poles, emancipated slaves, and, later – Hispanics, Koreans, Slavs, and Chinese. When James

Joyce said that the Catholic Church is "here comes everybody," he must have been thinking of New York. No wonder Elizabeth Seton's Episcopalian in-laws were appalled when she announced her decision to become one with these poor wretched Catholics!



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The story of the Archdiocese is largely the story of giants: lay people who built churches and petitioned for priests to minister to them, the priests who came, and the Sisters and Brothers who dedicated their lives in service to God and those whom God called them to serve. On April 8, 1808, Pope Pius VII created four new Dioceses in the United States; Boston, Philadelphia, Bardstown, KY, and New York. A Dominican priest, Richard Luke Concanen, from Kilbegnet, Co. Roscommon, Ireland (exactly where my mother was born about 100 years later!) became the first Bishop. However, in one of those strange New York stories, Bishop Concanen was not as fortunate as my mother later was; he never set foot in his new Diocese, but died en route in Naples, Italy. Most interesting to us at St. Ignatius; the priest asked to administer the Diocese in the absence of the Bishop was Father Anthony Kohlmann, S.J., a Jesuit from Alsace in eastern France. Fr. Kohlman's achievements and influence were so great that he is considered to be "the founder of the Diocese of New York."

The first Church in New York was St. Peter's, where the newly widowed Elizabeth Seton was received into the Catholic Church. It later became the parish church of the freed slave, Pierre Toussaint. However, the Catholic population swelled so quickly that Fr. Kohlman decided to build another Church which would be larger and would serve as the Cathedral of the Diocese. This was the Church on Mott & Prince Streets now referred to as "St. Patrick's Old Cathedral." Throughout the 1800s, the Church in New York grew rapidly, especially in the years following the Great Hunger in Ireland. The hordes of new immigrant Catholics were not welcomed by "native" New Yorkers, most of whom dated their families back to pre-revolutionary times and considered themselves to be guardians of New York Society. One of my favorite New York characters of that period was Archbishop "Dagger John" Hughes, an Irish immigrant who became the first Archbishop of New York and founder of St. John's College, later Fordham College. Dagger John was a force to be reckoned with and pacifism was not his strong suit. When nativist "Know-Nothings" threatened Fordham and Catholic parish churches, Hughes mobilized the Knights of Columbus and the Ancient Order of Hibernians to protect them and warned the Mayor of New York of dire consequences should any Catholic building be attacked.

During the 1800s, the need to care for orphans, and poor young working women, the sick, and children caused successive Bishops to call for Sisters to come to New York. The first Community of Sisters to make a permanent establishment in New York was, fittingly enough, the Sisters of Charity, founded by New York native Elizabeth Seton. Following them, the Religious of the Sacred Heart arrived from France, the Sisters of Mercy from Dublin, German speaking Franciscans and Dominicans, Ursuline Nuns, Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, and other communities of Sisters. These women and their Congregations, as well as those later founded in New York; the Cabrini sisters, Hawthorne Dominicans, Sisters of Divine Compassion, Franciscan Handmaids of Mary, Franciscan Sisters of Peace, and so many others, as well as the communities of Religious Brothers, have played a major role in the growth and development of the schools and hospitals, orphanages and parishes of New York.

**".....Jesuits ....like Fr. "Pete" Corridan, S.J., the model for the priest in the film, *On the Waterfront*, continued [the] tradition of support for working people."**



By the end of the century not all New York Catholics were poor; Thomas Fortune Ryan, William Russell Grace, and John Crimmins were among America's first Catholic millionaires. Men like Orestes Brownson and Isaac Hecker were New York Catholic intellectuals, influential in promoting the life of the mind. Isaac Hecker left the Redemptorists to found a Religious Congregation of men, the Paulist Fathers, whose mission was to be exactly that; promoting Catholic intellectual growth.

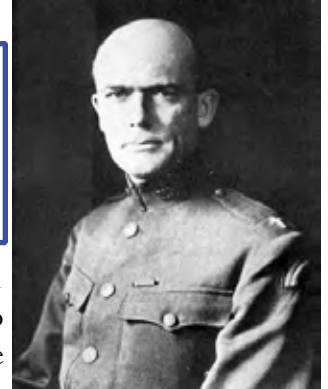
But most immigrant Catholics were blue collar laborers, duped by recruiters who met them at the pier, and by unscrupulous employers who exploited them with draconian work rules and the lowest possible wages. Following their brothers and sisters in Europe, they began to organize and the Knights of Labor was founded, with a Catholic President, Terrance Powderly. Archbishop Corrigan of New York lobbied Rome to ban the Knights, but fortunately, Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore championed their cause. This was the beginning of clerical support for the social gospel, personified in New York by Fr. Edward Mc Glynn, who was first excommunicated for his troubles and later received back into the Church and the priesthood and given a pastorate. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Jesuits of the Xavier Labor School and priests like Fr. "Pete" Corridan, S.J., the model for the priest in the film, *On the Waterfront*, continued this tradition of support for working people.

The turn of the century brought a wave of Italian immigrants, the most famous of whom is Mother Francis

Xavier Cabrini, whose body still rests in New York at Cabrini High School. The Scalabrini fathers founded Columbus Hospital to care for Italian immigrants and Mother Cabrini's daughters opened schools for their children.

Twentieth Century Catholicism in New York is marked by the towering figures of Dorothy Day, who founded the Catholic Worker, theologian John Courtney Murray, S.J., once silenced by the Vatican, who later, as *peritus* to Francis Cardinal Spellman at the Second Vatican Council, became the architect of the Declaration on Religious Freedom, *Dignitatis Humanae*, and my friend, Thomas Merton, who discovered his Catholic faith while a student at Columbia and who was baptized at Corpus Christi Church on the West Side.

**"There are so many heroes and heroines of Archdiocesan history – perhaps I have overlooked your favorite."**



Who is this???  
(think *Times Square*)

Maryknoll, the distinctively American Mission Society, was established in New York, and its first seminarian was Francis Xavier Ford, later Bishop Ford, from Brooklyn, who died of mistreatment in a Chinese prison camp. And let's not forget Fr. Dan Berrigan, the New York Jesuit, and his brother Philip, prophets of both the Civil Rights Struggle and the Catholic Peace Movement.

This brief essay merely skims the surface; there are many more stories, of the building of St. Patrick's, the forming of our own parish under the patronage of St. Lawrence O'Toole, the coming of the Jesuits from Fordham to minister to the poor on "Welfare," now Roosevelt Island, and their desire for a parish nearby which brought them to this parish, now renamed St. Ignatius Loyola, after their founder. There are so many heroes and heroines of Archdiocesan history – perhaps I have overlooked your favorite. What a marvelous heritage we all have in this great city, in this great Archdiocese.

Isn't it wonderful that we have a whole year to celebrate? Here at St. Ignatius we will be holding a series of lectures in the Fall of 2007 and Spring of 2008, the *Elizabeth Higgins Sciutto Memorial Lecture Series*, to honor some of the outstanding New York Catholics of the past two hundred years. More information on that to come!

**Mary Naughton, Pastoral Associate**

## ***BICENTENNIAL FACTS***



**D**id you know that nearly 200 years ago the Suffragan Diocese of New York was established under the Archdiocese of Baltimore? At the time the terrain covered by our diocese included all of what is the State of New York and much of the current State of New Jersey. It was estimated that the Catholic population totaled only 14,000 in 1808. Today, while much smaller in territory (the Archdiocese of New York spans 10 counties within the State of New York – 4,900 square miles) it is a home to nearly 2.5 million Catholics. Please visit [www.archny.org](http://www.archny.org) regularly to learn more about our Archdiocese – then and now.