

FROM THE PASTOR'S PRINTER

Our Cathedral Got a Promotion

In case you didn't hear, the Cathedral of St Peter in Chains, the cathedral of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, has been designated a minor basilica.

"What is a basilica?" you ask (or not; you may be thinking "I read this column every week just hoping that at some point he will write something intelligent.") The word comes from the Greek meaning royal or kingly. Thus basilicas were building where royal ceremonies took place. When Constantine began building churches in Rome after he had declared Christianity to be the official religion (and bingo its official game), he built them in the style of the royal buildings to give due honor to Christ. (Interestingly, Constantine waited until on his deathbed to be baptized, a chancy thing to do, but it worked for him.) The basilica had a basic design to it. An elongated rectangular building with a garden, trees, and fountain in front and a colonnade (a covered walkway surrounding the garden). Most major churches of the time were built in this style.

However, what we call basilicas today do not require a certain architectural style. Rather the title basilica is given to churches by the Pope himself that have significant historical, liturgical, or architectural merit, and that have shown themselves to provide excellent spiritual care to the community they serve.

A basilica is considered to be a church with an attachment to the pope, therefore the three symbols of a basilica are related to the papacy. The first is an ombrellino, a partially open red, white, and yellow umbrella. The ombrellino in former times was carried above the Pope as a sign of honor, (and maybe to protect him from pigeons, but that is just my theory) and the colors are the papal colors. It is kept partially open as a sign of readiness to serve the Pope (not because they never know when he might stop in for a cannoli, but as a sign of their readiness to assist in shepherding the flock under his care). The second symbol is the tintinnabulum, a set of bells on a pole that used to be carried to announce the Pope's coming into church. (You don't have to worry about ringing in your ears at a papal Mass.) The third symbol is

the cross and keys, the symbol of the papacy (which we heard about in today's Gospel.

But it is not all umbrellas and bells for a basilica. The church must commit itself to excellent liturgical and spiritual care of all who come to it. It is to be a model of liturgical celebration, not simply in following rubrics (liturgical rules), but in imbuing the liturgy with a spirit that reveals the greatness of God, His profound love for His Church, and which inflames the hearts of the people with love of God, neighbor, and a zeal for the spread of the faith.

There are two classes of basilicas. There are major basilicas, all of which are in Rome (which has the home court advantage when it comes to papal things). These are ancient churches with profound significance. Then there are minor basilicas, which can be found throughout the world. (In fact, there are six in the state of Ohio.)

Two questions that may come to mind if you aren't thinking about anything else are: "What is a cathedral anyway?" and "Does the cathedral stop being a cathedral when it becomes a basilica?" Lest these queries keep you up at night, I will answer them. A cathedral is the "home church" of a diocese. It is the diocesan bishop's church. It is called a cathedral because it contains the cathedra or chair of the bishop, which is an ancient symbol of authority (to serve, in the case of the Church). Not only cathedrals, but parish churches and shrines may be designated basilicas. The designation basilica does not change the nature of the building; it recognizes its importance and responsibility to the mission of the church to sanctify through prayer and care those it serves and to stand as a model for other churches. Our cathedral is now known as the Cathedral Basilica of St. Peter in Chains.

I urge you to remember all of this, so that if you want to be left alone at a party, you can begin regaling people with these fun facts. They'll scatter like chickens when a coyote enters the barn yard. I've tried it and it works.

Winner, Winner, Chicken Dinner

While the evil Coronavirus may have halted our festival in June and our parish picnic at Stricker's Grove in September, it cannot halt our love of fried chicken. "Oh, how could we have a chicken dinner with restrictions of six-foot distancing and trying to eat with a mask on?" you might ask. (Have you noticed that you've done a lot of

asking in this week's column?) Well, there's more than one way to pluck a chicken. We will be holding a drive-through chicken dinner on Sunday, September 27th, from 11 am till whenever the last leg has been fried. More details on this and raffle and Bid-n-Buy to follow.