



Ceremony of Consecration
of
the cathedral of
St. Joseph
HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT

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May 15, 1962

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Nihil Obstat

John S. Kennedy
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✠ Henry J. O'Brien
Archbishop of Hartford

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In virtue of general faculties granted by the Holy See, The Most Reverend John F. Hackett, Consecrator of the Cathedral, grants a plenary indulgence to all the faithful who visit the Cathedral of St. Joseph on the day of its consecration. Those who visit the Cathedral on the anniversary of the consecration may receive an indulgence of 500 days.



ABOUT THE CONSECRATION

T*o consecrate is to make holy.*

Just as Solomon dedicated the Temple at Jerusalem with high festival and sacrifice, the Church since earliest times has made holy its church buildings, demanding that, before religious services may be held in them, they be set apart for the exclusive use of God. For a church, like the Temple, is a place of prayer and religious assembly. And it is uniquely more. It is a symbol of God's kingdom on earth and a prototype of his kingdom in heaven. It is the most frequent place for the administration of the sacraments. And the church is the house of God in the truest literal sense, since Christ dwells continually under Eucharistic forms in its tabernacle, since he is offered repeatedly in the Sacrifice of the Mass upon its altar.

Church law insists that, of all churches, a cathedral should be dedicated with the solemn ceremonies of consecration, inasmuch as the cathedral is the mother church of its diocese and it is in this church that the bishop permanently sets up the cathedra, or episcopal throne, which symbolizes his authority over the diocese. Consecration, which involves anointings with sacred oil or chrism, must therefore be distinguished from blessing, the simpler form of church dedication by words alone. Both set a church apart from profane use, but a church can be consecrated only when it is constructed of stone, of brick, or of reinforced concrete, and when there is complete guarantee that it will never serve any but a sacred purpose. The actual consecration of the Cathedral of St. Joseph must also be distinguished from the ceremony of its Formal Opening on Wednesday, May 23.

Most of the ceremonies of church consecration were evolved from about the fourth to the eleventh centuries. Lesser ceremonial

additions continued until Pope Clement VIII definitively determined the rite in 1596. By this time church consecration had become a giant among liturgical functions, both as regards the number of rites and the length of time involved in it. The ceremony thereafter remained unchanged for over 350 years. Pope Pius XII finally ordered its revision, along with that of other pontifical ceremonies, for the purpose of abbreviation and clarification; Pope John XXIII directed the reform commission, which had already been laboring for a number of years, to complete its work. On April 13, 1961, the Holy See formally approved a revised *Pontifical Ceremonial*, with a new rite of church consecration that has much of the structure and all of the solemnity of the earlier rite, yet in radically simpler and more consistent form. Copies of the new edition did not become available until January, 1962. The Cathedral of St. Joseph is thus among the first churches to be consecrated according to the new ceremony.

Many rites used in the consecration of a church bear a striking resemblance to those used in the baptism of persons. There are anointings, exorcisms, specially blessed water, invocation of the Holy Spirit, and the changing of purple for white vestments. As at baptism, the name of the church and its patronal saint are also definitively and properly constituted at the time of its consecration. St. Joseph, the foster father of Christ, is patron of the Cathedral of the Archdiocese of Hartford. He was chosen patron of the Cathedral parish by Most Reverend Francis P. McFarland, third Bishop of Hartford, in 1872.

The ceremonies of church consecration are divided into three main parts. The first involves the lustration, or cleansing, and the taking possession of the church; the second, the entombment of the relics of martyrs in the altar; the third, the consecration of the church and the altar. The early Roman martyrs whose relics are entombed in the principal altar of the Cathedral are St. Benignus and St. Pudens.

✠ ✠ ✠ *MINISTERS OF CONSECRATION*

The Most Reverend John F. Hackett, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Hartford, is Consecrator of the Cathedral and of its principal Altar.

A bishop, by his consecration as bishop, has power to consecrate churches and altars; priests with proper delegation can also consecrate. The priests delegated to consecrate the eight other altars of the Cathedral are:

Blessed Sacrament Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. John S. Kennedy*

Our Lady Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. Harry C. Struck*

St. Patrick Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. James P. Kerwan*

St. Anne Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. Terrence P. McMahon*

St. Bernard of Clairvaux Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis A. Fries*

St. Therese of Lisieux Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. William P. Botticelli*

St. Francis of Assisi Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. Francis J. Fazalario*

St. Brigid of Ireland Chapel—*Rt. Rev. Msgr. Joseph F. Donnelly*



The choir consists of the combined Schola and Senior Choir of St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield.

✠ ✠ ✠ CEREMONY OF CONSECRATION

PART ONE:

LUSTRATION AND TAKING POSSESSION
OF CATHEDRAL

The ceremony begins outside the Cathedral. The building is still considered vacant. A deacon stands watch inside the closed doors. At the Chancery, the Bishop says a prayer invoking the aid of the Holy Trinity. Then, assisted by deacon and subdeacon, as he is throughout the ceremony, he vests in amice, alb, violet stole and cope. The consecrators of the side altars vest similarly. Still standing, the Bishop intones an antiphon, which is completed by the choir. The Bishop continues:

Assist us, we beseech thee, O Lord, in all our actions by thy gracious favor, and advance them by thy constant help, that every prayer and work of ours may always begin from thee, and begun by thee, be happily ended. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

A. *LUSTRATION OF EXTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL*

The external sprinkling of the Cathedral with specially blessed water is analogous to the baptismal immersion that makes the human person a living temple of God.

Bishop, assistant clergy, and people go in procession to the doors of the Cathedral. There the Bishop sings an antiphon from Psalm 69:

O God, come to my assistance.

The choir continues:

O Lord, make haste to help me. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

Bishop, assistants, and people go in procession around the outside of the Cathedral. The choir sings Psalm 86, extolling Jerusalem as the chosen dwelling place of God. The Bishop proceeds in silence, sprinkling the walls of the Cathedral with Gregorian water. The latter, used chiefly for the dedication of churches, has been blessed previously with ashes, salt, and wine, symbolizing penitence, wisdom, and joy. The name derives from Pope St. Gregory the Great (590–604), who prescribed use of the water.

Returning to the doors of the Cathedral, the Bishop sings:

Almighty and Eternal God, who art everywhere present and completely interested in all the manifestations of thy creation, hear our prayers, and be the Protector of this building which thou hast established; let no power of the Evil One hold sway here but, by the help of the Holy Spirit, may we here always return to thee our faithful and freely given worship. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

B. ENTRANCE INTO CATHEDRAL

The solemn procession into the Cathedral is a figure of man's passage through life into the kingdom of heaven. (Appropriately, the narthex screen, which divides the vestibule from the Cathedral proper, depicts the kingdom as referred to in the Gospels and the liturgy of the feast of Christ the King.)

The Bishop approaches the door of the Cathedral and strikes it three times with his crosier, in honor of the Trinity. He says:

Lift up your gates, O princes, and be raised up, O everlasting gates; and the King of Glory will enter.

The deacon inside the Cathedral asks:

Who is the King of Glory?

The Bishop and clergy all answer:

The Lord of Hosts, he is the King of Glory.

Then all say: **Open.**

The deacon opens the doors; the Bishop makes the sign of the cross with his crosier on the threshold, to ban every demonic influence. He says:

Behold the sign of the cross; let all manifestation of the Evil One flee.

The procession enters the Cathedral, the Bishop saying:

Peace be to this house.

The deacon at the door answers: **At your entry.**

All conclude: **Amen.**

The procession continues to the altar, where the Bishop kneels at the faldstool in the middle of the sanctuary.

The Litany of the Saints is now sung by the choir; it has been chanted at this point in the dedication of a church since at least the time of Pope Gregory the Great. The invocation to St. Joseph, patron of the Cathedral, is repeated three times in the Litany; the invocations to St. Benignus and St. Pudens are said once.

In the latter part of the Litany, the Bishop rises, takes the crosier in his left hand, faces the congregation and chants several special invocations.

Bishop: **That thou deign to visit this place.**

Choir: **We beseech thee, hear us.**

Bishop: **That thou deign to delegate the protection of angels in it.**

Choir: **We beseech thee, hear us.**

With right hand extended, the Bishop then blesses the Cathedral three times.

Bishop: **That thou deign to bless this church and altar, consecrated to thy honor and in the name of St. Joseph.**

Choir: **We beseech thee, hear us.**

Bishop: **That thou deign to bless and sanctify this church and altar, consecrated to thy honor and in the name of St. Joseph.**

Choir: **We beseech thee, hear us.**

Bishop: **That thou deign to bless, sanctify, and consecrate this church and altar, consecrated to thy honor and in the name of St. Joseph.**

Choir: **We beseech thee, hear us.**

The Bishop kneels. The choir concludes the Litany. The Bishop rises again and prays:

Be glorified, O Lord, Our God, in thy saints, and be present in this temple erected to thee; that thou, who performest all things in the children of thy adoption, may always be praised in thy inheritance. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

C. LUSTRATION OF INTERIOR OF CATHEDRAL

The external walls of the Cathedral have been sanctified but, as with a person, external ablution means nothing without interior sanctification. And so the interior walls are also blessed.

The Bishop sprinkles the inside walls with Gregorian water, starting at the rear of the main altar, proceeding along the gospel side, and then going around the entire Cathedral. He walks in silence as the choir sings Psalm 121 (“ . . . May peace be within thy walls, and abundance within thy towers . . .”).

Returning to the altar, the Bishop sprinkles the floor of the Cathedral, beginning at the altar, going down the main aisle, and then going transversely along the cross-aisle. The choir sings Psalm 83 (“ . . . Justice shall go before him and make a way for his footsteps . . .”).

Standing again at the foot of the main altar, the Bishop says a prayer asking that God, in his mercy, will dedicate the Cathedral, that his eye will be upon it day and night, and that he will listen with compassion to all who come to pray within its walls.

D. SPRINKLING OF THE ALTAR

Finally the altar itself is blessed, since the powers of evil know no restraint in their efforts to contaminate all things, even the most sacred, destined for use by men.

The Bishop approaches the altar and, walking around it, sprinkles it with Gregorian water. He ascends the steps and, dipping his thumb in the blessed water, traces the five crosses which are engraved at the center and corners of the altar. Doing so, he prays:

May this altar be sanctified in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The co-consecrators meanwhile sprinkle the side altars. The choir sings Psalm 42 (“ . . . I will go to the altar of God, to God who gives joy to my youth . . .”).

Having finished the sprinkling of principal and side altars, the Bishop and co-consecrators stand before them and pray:

As once thou wert pleased by that wonderful sacrifice offered on the altar of the Cross for our redemption, and as it was prefigured by the sacrifice of the Patriarch, Jacob, who erected a stone as a title on which sacrifice should be offered, and upon which the voice from the gate of heaven might be made manifest; so now we humbly pour forth our prayers to thee, O Lord, that thou command that the polished material of this stone, which is to be anointed for the heavenly Sacrifice, be enriched with the fullness of thy sanctification. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

E. TAKING POSSESSION OF THE CATHEDRAL

The Cathedral building and its altars have been solemnly removed from all profane use and banned to the powers of darkness. Possession of house and altar can now be taken for God.

The Bishop goes to the head of the main aisle. An assistant minister has already laid out a large Greek cross on the floor of the aisle with ashes. With crosier, the Bishop traces the Greek and Latin alphabets on the arms of the cross, to symbolize instruction in Christian doctrine. The choir sings Psalm 47, which extols the sanctity of God's house.

Again at the altar, the Bishop prays:

Beloved brethren, let us humbly beseech our all-powerful God, that he deign to bless and protect this building, that he drive all darkness from it and fill it with the light of his presence, that he permit our raging Enemy no power within its walls, but that it be solely a house for God, with the Evil Enemy enjoying no power here to lead souls to hell.

The Bishop continues: **Let us pray.**

The deacon responds: **Let us kneel.**

All kneel for a few moments. The deacon calls: **Arise.**

All stand. The Bishop prays:

O God, who dost sanctify the places that are dedicated to thy name, pour forth thy blessings upon this house of prayer, so that all who herein call upon thy name may receive the saving help of thy mercy. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ, thy Son, who with thee lives and reigns forever in the unity of the Holy Spirit, world without end. Amen.

The Bishop then chants an ancient Roman Preface, a magnificent anaphora which asks that the Holy Spirit, with his seven-fold grace, will descend upon the Cathedral and make it a place where priests may offer sacrifice, where the faithful may be absolved from the chains of sin, and where all may rejoice in the constant mercy and favor of God.

PART TWO:

ENTOMBMENT OF THE RELICS

A. TRANSFERRAL OF THE RELICS

The evening before the consecration, relics of the martyrs Benignus and Pudens were placed in a reliquary, with three grains of incense to signify the praise and petition which the martyrs constantly offer to the Trinity on behalf of men, and with a parchment testifying to the consecration of the Cathedral and its principal altar. The sealed reliquary was placed in a special shrine at the Chancery and an all-night watch, or vigil, was kept before it.

The reliquary is now carried solemnly to the Cathedral. The transferral of the relics resembles a funeral cortege made joyful by the knowledge that the relics are those of saints for whom martyrdom has earned intimate union with Christ in heaven.

In the sanctuary the Bishop and co-consecrators change the purple stoles and copes for white. All go in procession to the shrine in the Chancery where the relics repose. Standing before the shrine, the Bishop prays:

Grant, O Lord, we beseech thee, that we may worthily touch these relics of thy dearly beloved saints whose constant protection we so earnestly wish to enjoy. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

Placing incense in a thurible, the Bishop incenses the relics. The procession returns to the Cathedral. A deacon vested in red dalmatic carries the bier on which the reliquary is placed. Psalms 149 and 150, which tell of the rewards of a devout life, are sung by the choir.

B. ENTOMBMENT OF THE RELICS

Early Christians at Rome often offered Mass in the catacombs before the tombs of martyrs. This custom is still commemorated with the interment of martyrs' relics in the table of every altar upon which Mass is to be offered.

As the procession enters the sanctuary, the relics are placed on a stand near the principal altar. Again there is incensation of the relics. The Bishop then takes the reliquary and places it in the cavity, or sepulchre, in the center of the altar table. The co-consecrators inter relics of other martyrs in the side altars. Cement mixed with Gregorian water is blessed by each consecrator. Each sepulchre is lined with cement, then covered with a small slab of stone. The Bishop sings and the co-consecrators recite:

O God, who from the company of all the saints doth erect an eternal mansion to thy glory, give a heavenly increase to what thou dost build; and may we always be aided by the merits of those whose relics we here enclose with reverent love. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

PART THREE:

CONSECRATION OF CATHEDRAL AND ALTAR

A. CONSECRATION OF THE CATHEDRAL

Now occurs the essential part of the consecration of the Cathedral, the anointing with chrism of twelve stone crosses set into its inside walls. The crosses symbolize the twelve Apostles on whom, according to the Apocalypse (21:14), the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem are built as upon twelve foundation stones. The anointing with sacred oil or chrism, as at Baptism and Confirmation, symbolizes the imparting of spiritual strength.

Beginning near the sanctuary and proceeding to the main door, the Bishop anoints the six crosses along the gospel side, saying at each anointing:

Let this temple be sanctified and consecrated, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: for the honor of God and the memory of St. Joseph. Amen.

Each cross is incensed three times. As the Bishop moves to the next cross, an assistant minister lights the candle in the bracket before the cross just anointed. (These candles will be lighted again on each anniversary of the consecration of the Cathedral, that is, each year on May 15.) The choir sings Psalm 147, praising God for the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its Temple.

When the Bishop reaches the door of the Cathedral, the anointing of the crosses is interrupted and the two outside jambs of the main doors are anointed as the Bishop says, simply:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The Bishop then prays:

O door, be consecrated, and be set aside for the use of the Lord, our God; door, be a peaceful door, through him who called himself "the door," Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who with the Father and Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

The Bishop resumes anointing the crosses on the epistle side. When he has returned to the altar, he faces the main part of the Church and prays:

O God, who art present as a merciful and generous consecrator everywhere in the world which thou hast made, hear us, we beseech thee, and grant that the consecration of this place may always remain inviolable; and may all the faithful who beseech thee be worthy of receiving the benefits of thy favors. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

B. CONSECRATION OF THE ALTAR

The altar is the place where the Sacrifice of the New Covenant is offered. It is the "alta res," the "raised thing," the focal point of the whole Cathedral. The Cathedral having been consecrated, its chief treasure, the altar, can now be consecrated.

At least one altar must be consecrated when a church is consecrated. While the Bishop is consecrating the principal altar of the Cathedral, however, the other consecrators will do the same for its eight other altars.

The five crosses engraved on the table of the altar, which represent the five wounds of Christ, have already been blessed with Gregorian water. The Bishop now ascends the altar steps and anoints the crosses with sacred chrism:

Let this altar be sealed, sanctified and consecrated, in the name

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, for the honor of God and the memory of St. Joseph. Amen.

The Bishop anoints, in the form of a cross, the front of the altar; he then anoints the four corners where the table of the altar joins the supports, as if to make them fast, to indicate that this altar is to be a firmly fixed source of grace to all. At each anointing the Bishop repeats:

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

The co-consecrators anoint the other altars. The choir sings Psalm 44, the royal psalm in honor of Christ the Messiah.

The Bishop, as well as each of the co-consecrators, puts incense in a thurible, blesses it, and incenses the altar. Afterwards they pray:

May our prayer, we beseech thee, O Lord, be directed like incense in thy sight; and may the Christian people procure abundant blessings, so that whoever offers gifts to be consecrated on this altar, or receives from it gifts that have been consecrated, may receive assistance in this life and may obtain, together with the remission of all his sins, the grace of eternal redemption. Through Christ Our Lord. Amen.

The Bishop, taking specially blessed incense, puts a little in the form of a cross on the five places on the altar that have been anointed. Slender crosses of wax are placed on top of the incense, then lighted, so that the incense burns and gives the impression of a smoking altar ready for its victims.

The co-consecrators perform the same ceremony at the side altars. All then kneel, and the Bishop intones the ninth century hymn to the Holy Spirit, the "Veni, Creator Spiritus," which the choir takes up and sings to its conclusion.

After the hymn, all rise; the Bishop, facing the people, prays:

Dearly beloved brethren, let us beseech the mercy of God, the Father Almighty, so that, moved by the force of our prayers, he may sanctify with his blessing this altar that is to be consecrated by spiritual sacrifices; so that he may always deign to bless and sanctify the offerings which his servants will place on it through the zeal of their faithful love for him and, appeased by spiritual incense, he may be present as a ready hearer of the prayers of his household.

The deacon sings: **Let us kneel.**

All kneel for a few moments. The deacon sings: **Arise.**

All arise. The Bishop and co-consecrators say a prayer of summation:

Almighty God, in whose honor we consecrate this altar under the invocation of thy name, mercifully and graciously hear the prayers of our lowliness, and grant that the offerings on this table may be acceptable to thee, may be pleasing, may be fruitful, and may always be moistened with the dew of thy Holy Spirit, that evermore thou mayest dispel the anxious cares of thy family, who implore thy aid in this place: that thou mayest cure their ailments, hear their prayers, accept their vows, strengthen their desires, and grant their requests. Through Our Lord Jesus Christ thy Son, who lives and reigns with thee in the unity of the same Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

In conclusion, the Bishop sings, and the co-consecrators recite, an old Roman Preface of Dedication. There are the usual introductory versicles. Then the consecrators ask that God will bless and sanctify the Cathedral. They ask that angels of brightness will stand by its altar, and that it will shine with the light of the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Preface ends with the petition

that all who partake at the altar of the Heavenly Banquet will thereby obtain the gift of eternal life.

The Bishop continues: **The Lord be with you.**

The deacon responds: **Let us bless the Lord.**

All conclude: **Amen.**

All retire to the sacristy, where the Bishop and assistant ministers vest, in white, for Mass. The altars, throughout the ceremony, have been bereft of any ornamentation. The altar appointments, which have been previously blessed, are now put in place on the principal altar.

✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ ✠ *PONTIFICAL MASS*

The celebration of Mass is an essential constituent of the consecration of the Cathedral. The whole purpose of the latter was to prepare a fitting place for the Sacrifice which is the center of Catholic worship.

The Proper of the Mass is that for the Dedication of a Church; there is a *Gloria* and a *Creed*.

The Mass begins immediately, without the prayers at the foot of the altar, with the kissing of the altar and the recitation of the *Introit*.

The Last Gospel is omitted.

The intention of Mass is an essential condition of the consecration of the Eucharist. The whole purpose of the Mass was to prepare a fitting place for the Sacrament which is the center of Catholic worship.

The Proper of the Mass is that for the Dedication of a Church, Mass is a Church and a Creed.

The Mass begins immediately without the prayers at the foot of the altar, with the singing of the Introit and the recitation of the Introit.

The Last Gospel is omitted.

