

THE WASHINGTON NATIONAL CATHEDRAL

Congress' 1893 Charter to the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation of the District of Columbia

The Washington National Cathedral was founded in 1893 when Congress granted a Charter to the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation of the District of Columbia for its construction. In the Preamble to its Constitution, a threefold purpose for the creation of a Cathedral church in the diocese of Washington is stated:

First. It shall be a House of Prayer for all people, forever free and open, welcoming all who enter its doors to hear the glad tidings of the Kingdom of Heaven, and to worship God in Spirit and in Truth. **It shall stand in the Capital of our country as a witness for Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever,** and for the faith once for all delivered to the saints; and for the ministration of **Christ's Holy Word and sacraments**, which according to His own divine ordinance is to continue always to the end of the world.

Second. It shall be the Bishop's church in which his Cathedra is placed...

And thirdly, the fourfold work of the Cathedral is outlined in order of importance: **Worship, Missions, Education and Charity.**

It is to be lamented that the Protestant Episcopal Cathedral Foundation of the District of Columbia, has blatantly flaunted Congress' 1893 Charter of the Washington National Cathedral, by inviting in 2014, anti-Christian religions to conduct their rituals within its sanctuary; its Constitution stating that "It shall stand in the Capital of our country as a witness for Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever...and for the ministration of Christ's Holy Word and sacraments..."

This was done after the famed "**Prodigal Son**" (Luke, chapter 15) **statue** by renowned sculptor, Heinz Warneke – centered within the spectacular Bishop's Garden on the Cathedral close, was removed and replaced with an ancient boundary marker. The "**Prodigal Son**" is a unique and masterful interpretation of Christ's parable in Luke 15, of a loose-living and reckless son who returns to his father and rightful home. It stands out in the stark simplicity of its dark granite sculptured lines. German-born Heinz Warneke's interpretation of this powerful analogy of a penitent sinner returning to his loving heavenly Father was moving to contemplate.

The official name of the Washington National Cathedral is that of **the Cathedral Church of St. Peter and St. Paul**. In 1907 President Theodore Roosevelt laid the foundation stone of the National Cathedral, which comes from a field near Bethlehem.

An aerial view of the Cathedral discloses the shape of a cross, vivid reminder of our Christian heritage. Completed in 1991, it is slightly smaller than the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, but larger than St. Paul's Protestant Cathedral in London. It is the sixth largest Cathedral in the world.

The Cathedral's great organ comprises over 10,000 individual pipes. Trumpets over the main altar symbolize an important call to assemble and worship the Most High God.

Hundreds of bosses grace the high vaulting of the cathedral's architecture. These can be described as projecting stones, often ornately carved, at the intersection of ribs. Their function is to tie the ribs together into a single neat unit. One of the three largest bosses, four feet in diameter, illustrates a family grouping with open hymnal, worshiping the Lord in song and praise. Father and daughter share an open hymnbook, while mother, son and youngest daughter lift up their hands in a gesture of wondrous praise. Another smaller boss depicts the lines of the Psalm: "O let the earth bless the Lord," and "O ye whales and all that move in the waters, bless ye the Lord."

Themes such as the Good Shepherd, Christ reigning in Majesty and the angel of Revelation 6:5 weighing souls in the scales of Judgment, are here portrayed. The central boss of the crossing shows Christ the Messiah ascending into heaven, the pivotal doctrines of our Christian faith being sculptured in twenty-four main bosses from the west portal to the sanctuary itself. Dynamic in their expression and impact, are the bosses depicting, in turn, Christ's arrest, the soldiers casting lots for His garments, a group of despairing disciples, a strong centurion guarding the sealed tomb, and finally the empty tomb, Jesus Christ, Son of God having risen from the dead.

Impressive in its regal simplicity, the main, **Jerusalem Altar** was consecrated on Ascension Day, 1902. **It is constructed of stone coming from the same quarry outside Jerusalem from which Solomon's Temple was built.** This symbolizes a close association with the place of **Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.** Stones from the chapel of Moses on Mount Sinai are set into the floor before the High Altar, in such a manner as to have the rector stand upon them when a reading of the Ten Commandments is given. One hundred and ten statues are represented in the limestone reredos of this altar. They speak of the many unknown Christians to whom Christ the Messiah referred in the Bible as follows:

"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me..." (Matthew 25: 34-40)

A central figure of **Christ the Majestic** reigns in the midst of these saints, both known and unknown, who loved and served the Lord in this life.

A communion railing divides the great choir from the sanctuary. Needlepoint kneelers depict images of the fruit of the vine and sheaves of wheat, symbols of the Last Supper. The designs of a Victor's crown, which predominates the crown of thorns, symbolize both the suffering and the glorious resurrection of Christ the Messiah. Black, red and white butterflies portray the new life which one receives in Christ Jesus. A polished wooden railing displays twelve columns. The eleven pillars of the church are carved to mirror the faithful apostles chosen by Christ. Only Judas Iscariot, the betrayer, remains unfinished, a solid piece of wood – mute, and without

human form or character. The Canterbury Pulpit is shaped out of stones from Canterbury Cathedral and carved with figures in bas-relief, illustrating the translation of the English Bible. It was given in memory of Archbishop Stephen Langton, the first to divide the Bible into chapters and verses. (Excerpted from, *God's Signature over the Nation's Capital*, © 1985; 1988 by Catherine Millard.)