

**TRANSLATION OF THE APOSTOLIC BRIEF
FOUNDING THE DIOCESE OF RICHMOND***

To Our Beloved Son Patrick Kelly, Priest of the Diocese of Ossory in Ireland, elected as the New
Bishop of Richmond

Pope Pius VII

Beloved Son, Greeting and Apostolic blessing

Among the multiple and weightiest responsibilities of Our Apostolate, that which concerns the status of Dioceses spread throughout the whole world holds no small part. For indeed it pertains to our supreme power and judgment to regulate them and to set or change their boundaries as We determine leads to the benefit of the faithful, taking into account the times and circumstances. Since now for a long time it has been implored of Us that the State of Virginia in North America, which was enclosed in the Diocese of Baltimore, be erected into a new Diocese separated from it, and since it seems to be very expedient for the extinction of the schisms which have arisen in it that a Bishop of its own be established in it; even more because the State of Maryland, which is subject to the Archbishop of Baltimore and which is filled with a very large number of Catholics, furnishes the same Archbishop with such ample matter for pastoral zeal that he can with difficulty extend his care to other States, We, upon the advice of Our Venerable Brothers the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church set over the affairs of the Propagation of the Faith, have established and decreed that, after the separation of the said State from the Diocese of Baltimore, a new Episcopal Church, suffragan of Baltimore, should be erected at Richmond, which is the capital city of

* Rev. Msgr. Robert Trisco, professor emeritus of Church history at the Catholic University of America (Washington, DC), made this translation (2018), which is based on the collated transcript that he also prepared.

Virginia, and that it should embrace the whole State of Virginia, not including [the District of] Columbia, as by Apostolic Authority and the tenor of the present decree We separate and erect it as a new Episcopal Church of Richmond, suffragan of Baltimore, with all the rights and prerogatives belonging to these kinds of Churches according to the Sacred Canons.

We also, intending with paternal and solicitous zeal, in which no one besides Ourselves could or can inject himself, to provide quickly and felicitously for the aforesaid new Episcopal Church thus erected, after a diligent and fruitful deliberation that We have had with Our aforesaid Venerable Brothers the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church in charge of the affairs of the Propagation of the Faith about appointing a person for the same new Church, have directed the eyes of Our mind at last to You, who have been procreated from a legitimate matrimony and are also of legitimate age and of whose purity of life, probity of conduct, as well as piety, assiduity, and learning and zeal for the Christian Religion and the Catholic Faith, and foresight in spiritual matters and caution in temporal matters trustworthy testimonies are furnished, all these things having been considered with due reflection, absolving you and believing that you will be absolved from any sentences of excommunication, suspension, or interdict, and from any other ecclesiastical sentences, censures, and penalties imposed by law, or by man on any occasion, or serially, We provide this same new Episcopal Church of Richmond with your person acceptable to Us and the named Cardinals because of the claim of your merits. And by the advice of the same Brothers, by the afore-mentioned authority and tenor, We set you over it as Bishop and Pastor, fully committing to you the care, government, and administration of the Church of Richmond in spiritual and temporal matters, trusting in Him, who gives grace and bestows gifts, that as the Lord guides your actions the aforesaid Church of Richmond will be beneficially and prosperously directed though your diligence of foresight and zeal and will experience pleasing increases in spiritual and temporal

matters. Accepting therefore with ready devotion of spirit the Lord's yoke laid on your shoulders, may you so faithfully and prudently carry out the aforesaid care and administration that the Church of Richmond may rejoice that it has been committed to a prudent governor and productive administrator. And may you, besides the reward of eternal retribution, more copiously merit to attain therefrom also Our and the Apostolic See's blessing and favor.

Given at Rome at St. Mary Major under the ring of the Fisherman, the Eleventh Day of July in the year 1820, the twenty-first of Our Pontificate.

H. Card. Consalvi[†]

[†] *Hercules Cardinalis Consalvi*. The name refers to Ercole (Latin: *Hercules*) Consalvi, a deacon and cardinal of the Church. At the time the Diocese of Richmond was founded, he was the secretary of state (1814–1823), and later became the pro-prefect (1822–1824) and then prefect (1824) of *Propaganda Fidei*. (Cardinal Francesco Fontana was the prefect of Propaganda Fidei [1818–1822] when the diocese was founded.)