

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DIOCESE OF RICHMOND

Compiled by Reverend Anthony E. Marques (2019, corrected 2020)

- 1534 King Henry VIII initiates the Reformation in England, a decision that eventually results in its future colony of Virginia being Protestant.
- 1553–1558 The reign of Mary I, who restores Catholicism in England.
- 1558–1603 The reign of Elizabeth I, who re-establishes the Church of England.
- 1565 September 8 Spaniard Pedro Menéndez de Avilés founds St. Augustine, the first permanent European and Catholic settlement in what will become the United States.
- 1570 September 10 Eight Spanish Jesuits, led by Father Juan Baptista de Segura, establish a mission near present-day Williamsburg.
- 1571 February 4–9 The martyrdom of the Spanish Jesuits. Between their arrival and the massacre, three of the missionaries make their Jesuit profession. These are the first vocations to the religious life in what will become Virginia.
- 1603–1625 The reign of James I, who upholds Protestantism in England and its colonies.
- 1607 May 14 The founding of Jamestown, the first permanent English settlement in the New World. Captain Gabriel Archer, one of the original settlers, may have been a Catholic in secret.
- 1608 July 3 Samuel de Champlain founds Quebec, the first permanent French settlement in North America.
- 1609 May 13 James I of England formally outlaws Catholicism in Virginia.
- 1613 July Following an English raid on the French outpost of St. Sauveur (present-day Maine), Father Pierre Biard, a Jesuit priest, is brought to Jamestown as a prisoner, and is eventually released. Biard mentions that a doctor at Jamestown is known to be a Catholic.
- 1619 August The first African slaves, who had likely been baptized as Catholics in Portuguese colony of Angola, arrive at Jamestown.

- 1634 May 25 An English Catholic, Cecil Calvert, the second Lord Baltimore, founds the colony of Maryland on principle of religious freedom.
- 1642–1651 The English Civil War, which leads to a Protestant takeover of the government of Maryland. During the subsequent persecution of Catholics, some priests flee to Virginia (1645, 1654–1655).
- 1688 The Glorious Revolution in England, which once again prompts Protestants to seize control of the Maryland government and to mistreat Catholics; some priests to seek refuge in Virginia (1689).
- 1775–1783 The American Revolution: the British colonies' alliance with Catholic France contributes to a lessening of anti-Catholicism in Virginia.
- 1786 January 19 Virginia ratifies the Statute of Religious Freedom, written by Thomas Jefferson, which allows Catholics and others to openly practice their faith in the commonwealth.
- 1789 November 6 Pope Pius VII erects the Diocese of Baltimore, which encompasses the entire United States, and confirms John Carroll as its first bishop.
- Ca. 1794 Organized Catholic communities emerge in the port cities of Alexandria and Norfolk.
- Ca. 1794–1821 The Norfolk Schism, which pits local trustees against the (arch)bishop of Baltimore regarding the authority of lay persons to own Church property and to appoint their own pastors.
- 1808 April 8 Pope Pius VII makes Baltimore an archdiocese and erects the Dioceses of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and Bardstown (later Louisville).
- 1820 July 11 Pope Pius VII erects the Diocese of Richmond and appoints Patrick Kelly of Kilkenny, Ireland as its first bishop.
- 1821 January 19 Bishop Patrick Kelly arrives in Virginia.
- 1822 February 22 Pope Pius VII places the Diocese of Richmond under the administration of the archbishop of Baltimore.
- 1822 June or July Bishop Patrick Kelly leaves Virginia and returns to Ireland to become the bishop of Waterford and Lismore.

- 1834 May 25 Archbishop James Whitfield of Baltimore dedicates St. Peter's Church, the future cathedral of Richmond.
- 1834 November 25 The Sisters of Charity of St. Joseph (later renamed the Daughters of Charity) open St. Joseph's Orphan Asylum and Free School in Richmond; they are the first women religious in the diocese.
- 1835–1840 Irish workers arrive in Lynchburg to build the section of the James River and Kanawha Canal between that city and Richmond, expanding the Catholic presence in central Virginia.
- 1840 December 15 Pope Gregory XVI restores the Diocese of Richmond to independent status and appoints Richard V. Whelan of Baltimore as its second bishop.
- 1841 March 21 Richard V. Whelan is consecrated bishop in Baltimore and arrives in Richmond shortly thereafter.
- 1841 Bishop Richard V. Whelan opens St. Vincent's Seminary in Richmond, to which St. Vincent's College is later attached (November 1843).
- 1841–1843 St. Vincent de Paul is named the patron of the Diocese of Richmond.
- 1842 January 6 Bishop Richard V. Whelan ordains Father James Hewitt to the priesthood, making this the first ordination in the Diocese of Richmond.
- 1842 September St. John Neumann, a Redemptorist priest and future bishop of Philadelphia, preaches a mission to German Catholics at St. Peter's Cathedral.
- 1846 St. Vincent's Seminary and College in Richmond closes.
- 1850–1858 The Louisa (later Virginia Central) and Blue Ridge Railroads connect Richmond and the Shenandoah Valley, expanding the Catholic population in that region.
- 1850 July 19 Pope Pius IX creates the Diocese of Wheeling from Richmond and appoints Richard V. Whelan as its bishop.
- 1850 December John McGill, a priest of Louisville (formerly Bardstown), Kentucky and the third bishop of Richmond, takes possession of the diocese.

- 1854–1855 The “Know-Nothing” movement, which falsely accuses Catholic immigrants of seeking to thwart religious liberty, arises in Virginia.
- 1855 July–November A yellow fever epidemic sweeps through Norfolk and Portsmouth, killing three thousand people. Among the victims is Father Francis Devlin, who ministered to those infected by the disease.
- 1856 March 3 The Virginia General Assembly incorporates St. Vincent’s Hospital in Norfolk, making it the first Catholic hospital in the Diocese of Richmond. The hospital was begun in the home of Ann Behan Plume Herron during the yellow fever outbreak (1855). Herron had given her house to the Daughters of Charity before dying from the disease herself.
- 1861–1865 The Civil War: Bishop John McGill is a strong supporter of the Southern cause; Catholics in Virginia fight for the Confederacy, demonstrating their patriotism; and religious sisters heroically nurse battlefield victims on both sides, improving the image of the Catholic Church in the commonwealth.
- 1861 April 17 Virginia secedes from the Union and then joins the Confederacy (May 23); Richmond becomes the capital of the Confederate States of America (May 30).
- 1862 December Bl. Francis Xavier Seelos, a Redemptorist priest, ministers to Union soldiers at Fort Monroe in Hampton.
- 1863 June 20 The northwestern part of Virginia, having opposed secession, forms the new state of West Virginia and joins the Union, causing the boundaries of the Dioceses of Richmond and Wheeling to cross state lines.
- 1866 October 7–21 The Second Plenary Council of Baltimore urges the evangelization of freed slaves.
- 1868 March 3 Pope Pius IX erects the Diocese of Wilmington, which includes the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The first bishop of Wilmington, Thomas A. Becker, is a priest of Richmond.
- 1869–1870 Vatican Council I, which Bishop John McGill attends, proclaims that, under particular conditions, the pope’s teaching on matters of faith and morals is infallible.
- 1872 January 14 Bishop John McGill dies while in office.

- 1872 October 20 James Gibbons of Baltimore, vicar apostolic of North Carolina, is installed as the fourth bishop of Richmond.
- 1876 December Bishop James Gibbons publishes *Faith of Our Fathers*, an influential treatise and bestselling book about the Catholic faith.
- 1877 May 29 Bishop James Gibbons is named coadjutor of Baltimore, and becomes archbishop soon after he is notified of his appointment (October 3).
- 1878 August 25 John J. Keane, a priest of Baltimore, is ordained the fifth bishop of Richmond.
- 1885 November 22 Bishop John J. Keane dedicates St. Joseph's in Richmond, the first black church in the diocese.
- 1888 August 28 John J. Keane resigns as bishop of Richmond to focus exclusively on his role as the first rector of the Catholic University of America.
- 1889 October 20 Augustine van de Vyver, a priest of Richmond, is ordained the sixth bishop of the diocese.
- 1895–1899 The “Americanism” controversy over the identity of the Catholic Church in the United States: Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop John J. Keane—both former bishops of Richmond—and Monsignor Denis J. O’Connell—a future bishop of the diocese—play a role in the dispute.
- 1900 St. Katharine Drexel visits Rock Castle, where she and her half-sister, Louise Morrell, founded two schools for African Americans: St. Emma’s (1895) and St. Francis de Sales (1899).
- 1906 November 29 Archbishop Diomedede Falconio, the papal representative to the American hierarchy, dedicates the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Richmond on Thanksgiving Day, highlighting the compatibility of Catholicism and American society.
- 1912 March 19 Denis J. O’Connell, a priest of Richmond, is installed as the seventh bishop of the diocese.
- 1914–1918 World War I
- 1917 April 6 The United States enters World War I by declaring war on Germany; Catholics support the national war effort.

- Ca. 1917 Tidewater and northern Virginia experience their initial stage of suburban growth, which results from the United States' entry into World War I and developments in transportation.
- 1920 February 7 Frank J. Parater, a Richmond seminarian, dies in Rome. The candidate for canonization (2001) offered his life and sufferings "for the spread and success of the Catholic Church in Virginia."
- 1920 July 11 The Diocese of Richmond reaches its centenary.
- 1922 October 22 A local bureau of Catholic Charities, which provides systematic charitable services to the poor, is founded in Richmond.
- 1926 April 3 Denis J. O'Connell, having resigned as bishop of Richmond due to illness (January 26) and served as diocesan administrator, is relieved of his duties.
- 1926 December 16 Andrew J. Brennan, the auxiliary bishop of Scranton, is installed as the eighth bishop of Richmond.
- 1928 June 26–29 Alfred E. Smith is the first Catholic nominated for president. He faces opposition because of his stance against Prohibition (1920–1933) and is a target of anti-Catholic bigotry.
- 1931 April In response to anti-Catholic prejudice in the 1928 presidential campaign, the Diocese of Richmond launches its own newspaper, the *Catholic Virginian*.
- 1932 The Great Depression (1929–1935) strikes Virginia.
- 1934 February 26 Bishop Andrew J. Brennan is incapacitated as the result of a stroke.
- 1935 September 23 Peter L. Ireton of Baltimore is appointed coadjutor and administrator of the Diocese of Richmond.
- 1939–1945 World War II: Catholics in Virginia enlist in the Armed Forces and support the war effort; numerous priests associated with the Diocese of Richmond serve as military chaplains.
- 1945 April 14 Bishop Andrew J. Brennan resigns and Peter L. Ireton becomes the ninth bishop of Richmond.
- 1946–1989 The Cold War

- Ca. 1946 Northern Virginia, followed by Tidewater, undergoes a second stage of rapid growth as the federal government and military continue to expand after World War II and with the onset of the Cold War.
- 1952 August 8 Joseph H. Hodges, a priest of Richmond, is appointed the diocese's first auxiliary bishop.
- 1950–1953 The Korean War: fewer Richmond priests serve as military chaplains than in World War II because they are needed in the diocese.
- 1954–1968 The civil rights movement, which Bishop Peter L. Ireton and his successors support.
- 1954 May 7 Bishop Peter L. Ireton announces the integration of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Richmond; he is the first bishop in the South to do so.
- 1954 May 17 The Supreme Court desegregates public schools (*Brown v. Board of Education*).
- 1955–1973 The Vietnam War: Americans, including Catholics, are divided over the conflict.
- 1958 April 27 Bishop Peter L. Ireton dies while in office.
- 1958 September 30 John J. Russell of Baltimore, bishop of Charleston, is installed as the tenth bishop of Richmond.
- 1960 September 20 St. John Vianney Seminary, for high-school students, opens in Goochland County.
- 1960 November 8 John F. Kennedy is the first Catholic elected president.
- 1961–1970 Bishop John J. Russell, a strong supporter of civil rights, closes some black parishes and makes others into territorial parishes in an effort to achieve integration.
- 1962–1965 Vatican Council II, which Bishop John J. Russell attends, seeks to renew the Church for its mission of evangelizing contemporary society.
- Ca. 1963–ca. 1974 The turbulent decade of the 1960s causes social unrest that affects the Catholic Church.

- 1963 July 19 Dorothy Day, co-founder of the Catholic Worker movement, and a candidate for canonization (2002), participates in a civil rights demonstration in Danville, Virginia.
- 1968 A year of social upheaval and controversy: the Tet Offensive (January 30) triggers increased opposition to the Vietnam War; Martin Luther King Jr. (April 4) and Robert F. Kennedy (June 6) are assassinated; race riots erupt in major cities (April–May); there is public disorder and police brutality at the Democratic National Convention (August 26–29); and Pope St. Paul VI upholds the Church’s prohibition against artificial contraception (July 25).
- 1972 May 26 Auxiliary Bishop Walter F. Sullivan ordains John Bowler, the first permanent deacon of the Diocese of Richmond.
- 1973 January 22 The Supreme Court legalizes abortion (*Roe v. Wade*).
- 1973 April 28 Bishop John J. Russell retires, the first bishop of Richmond to do so.
- 1974 July 19 Walter F. Sullivan of Washington, DC, auxiliary bishop and administrator of Richmond, is installed as the eleventh bishop of the diocese.
- 1974 August 13 The territory of the Diocese of Richmond is reconfigured: Pope St. Paul VI erects the Arlington Diocese in northern Virginia; Richmond cedes the northeast panhandle of West Virginia to the Wheeling Diocese and Wheeling transfers southwest Virginia to Richmond; the Wilmington Diocese cedes the Eastern Shore of Virginia to Richmond.
- 1978 June 30 St. John Vianney Seminary in Goochland County closes.
- 1983 March 9 Pope St. John Paul II issues a call for a “New Evangelization” to revive the faith of the increasing number of inactive Catholics in traditionally Catholic areas.
- 1983 June 28 Archbishop John L. May of St. Louis, acting on behalf of the Vatican, conducts an investigation of the Diocese of Richmond concerning various doctrinal, sacramental, liturgical, and parochial questions.
- Ca. 1990–ca. 2000 The number of Hispanic immigrants in the Richmond Diocese more than doubles, from roughly three thousand to seven thousand.

- 2001 December 12 The death of Mother Maria Bernadetta of the Immaculate, a Poor Sister of St. Joseph, who was a cook at St. John Vianney Seminary in Richmond (1966–1978), and a candidate for canonization (2019).
- 2002 June 14 In response to the first clerical abuse crisis, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops adopts the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (Dallas Charter).
- 2004 May 24 Francis X. DiLorenzo of Philadelphia, bishop of Honolulu, is installed as the twelfth bishop of Richmond.
- 2004 November 16 Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo and Bishop Arturo M. Bastes of Sorsogon, Philippines sign a covenant for priests of that diocese to temporarily staff parishes in the Diocese of Richmond. It is the first of several covenants with dioceses in other countries.
- 2006 November 7 Voters in Virginia approve an amendment to the state constitution banning same-sex marriage.
- 2011 July 1 In an effort to implement the “New Evangelization” more effectively, the Diocese of Richmond forms an Office for Evangelization.
- 2015 June 26 The Supreme Court legalizes same-sex marriage (*Obergefell v. Hodges*).
- 2017 August 17 Bishop Francis X. DiLorenzo dies while in office.
- 2018 January 12 Barry C. Knestout of Cheverly, Maryland, an auxiliary bishop of Washington, DC, is installed as the thirteenth bishop of Richmond.
- 2018 June The second clerical abuse crisis begins.
- 2020 July 11 The Diocese of Richmond commemorates its bicentennial.