



# HISTORY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF ATLANTA

## The Catholic Church in Georgia

From a simple log church in Locust Grove, Georgia, where the faithful worshipped in 1790, the Catholic population in North Georgia has experienced steady growth. By 1820 the Catholic population had grown to 1,000 in the Carolinas and Georgia under the leadership of Bishop John England. At the time of the Civil War there were 4,000 Catholics in Georgia alone, with parishes in Atlanta, Savannah, Macon, Columbus and Locust Grove. A new diocese, the Diocese of Savannah, was established in 1850 and headed by Bishop Francis X. Gartland. It included all of Georgia and parts of Florida.

Post-war Atlanta had begun to rebuild. Along with the renewal of the city came a growth in the Catholic population. The mother parish, the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, was joined by Sacred Heart Parish in 1879. In 1880 the Sisters of Mercy opened an infirmary on Baker Street that was to become St. Joseph's Hospital. St. Anthony's Church opened in 1903, adding a school in 1912, the same year Our Lady of Lourdes Church opened.

In 1936 the Diocese of Savannah-Atlanta was established and the Co-Cathedral of Christ the King was erected. Bishop Gerald P. O'Hara who was appointed Bishop of Savannah in 1935 was the last bishop to serve the faithful of the entire state of Georgia.

## The Archdiocese of Atlanta

The Diocese of Atlanta was established in 1956. The northern 71 counties of the state were separated from the Diocese of Savannah and assigned to the new diocese giving the state two dioceses. (The number was later reduced to 69 when two counties were returned to the jurisdiction of the Savannah Diocese.)

At the time the Diocese of Atlanta, which covered 23,000 square miles, numbered 23,600 Catholics in 23 parishes and 12 missions. The overall population in this region totaled 1,800,000.

In 1962 the Diocese of Atlanta was elevated to the status of archdiocese, becoming the center of an Ecclesiastical Province that covered the states of Georgia, North and South Carolina and Florida. (Florida was detached in 1969 to become the Province of Miami). In 1962 the Catholic population of the archdiocese numbered 32,000 out of a total population of 2,152,000.

### *Bishops and Archbishops*

The first bishop of the Diocese of Atlanta was **Francis E. Hyland**, a native of Philadelphia, who had served as Auxiliary Bishop of Savannah since 1949. He began his service to the new diocese as both the city of Atlanta and the resident Catholic population were experiencing rapid growth. At age 60 Bishop Hyland resigned because of ill health.

On February 21, 1962 the Diocese of Atlanta was elevated to the status of archdiocese. **Paul J. Hallinan**, Bishop of Charleston, S.C. was named the first Archbishop of Atlanta.

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Born in Painesville, Ohio, on April 8, 1911, he was ordained to the priesthood in 1937 in Cleveland. He served as an army chaplain in the South Pacific during World War II. He was installed as Archbishop of Atlanta on March 29, 1962. Archbishop Hallinan is best remembered for his personal dedication to the cause of social justice and his involvement in the civil rights activity of the 1960's. He was also deeply involved in the renewal of the Catholic Church, especially in the area of worship, during and following the Second Vatican Council. On March 27, 1968 Archbishop Hallinan died after a long battle with hepatitis.

During the last two years of his life Archbishop Hallinan was assisted by Auxiliary Bishop Joseph L. Bernardin, who subsequently became Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago.

**Thomas A. Donnellan** was appointed the second Archbishop of Atlanta on May 24, 1968 and was installed on July 16, 1968. Archbishop Donnellan, 54 years old at the time, was a native of New York City. Prior to his Atlanta appointment he had served four years as Bishop of Ogdensburg, New York.

The population of the Atlanta archdiocese tripled during Archbishop Donnellan's 19 years as archbishop. Thirty-two parishes were established during this time. Archbishop Donnellan suffered a stroke on May 1, 1987 and died on October 15, 1987.

**Bishop Eugene Marino, S.S.J.**, a native of Mississippi, became the third Archbishop of Atlanta on May 4, 1988, and the first African-American Archbishop in the United States. He served until his resignation on July 10, 1990.

**Archbishop James P. Lyke, O.F.M.**, was appointed as Apostolic Administrator on July 10, 1990, before being named fourth Archbishop of Atlanta on April 30, 1991. He was installed on June 24, 1991 and served until his death from cancer on December 27, 1992.

**Archbishop John Francis Donoghue** was appointed the fifth Archbishop of Atlanta on June 22, 1993 and was installed on August 19, 1993. Born on August 9, 1928 in Washington, D.C. he was educated for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and the Catholic University of America in Washington. He was ordained on June 4, 1955. In 1973 he was appointed chancellor and vicar general of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C. by the late Cardinal Patrick O'Boyle. In 1984 Pope John Paul II appointed him the second Bishop of Charlotte where he was ordained to the episcopate on December 18, 1984.

In 1996 Archbishop Donoghue introduced a Eucharistic Renewal program in the Archdiocese to ensure that Catholics understood the meaning of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist. Since this initiative began, approximately 20,000 Catholics gather annually to celebrate this event each year on the feast of Corpus Christi. Currently ten parishes in the Archdiocese have perpetual adoration and 46 parishes have regularly scheduled adoration. In 1997 Archbishop Donoghue ran a successful capital campaign, "Building the Church of Tomorrow" that raised more than \$70 million. Through the generosity of this campaign the Archdiocese was able to build three state-of-the-art archdiocesan elementary schools and two new high schools. The vocations program has also flourished. During Archbishop Donoghue's tenure he has ordained approximately 98 men to the priesthood and 78 men to the permanent diaconate.

## **The Archdiocese Today**

**Most Reverend Wilton D. Gregory, SLD**, was appointed the sixth Archbishop of Atlanta on December 9, 2004. He will be installed as the Archbishop of Atlanta January 17, 2004 at 1:30 p.m. at the Georgia International Convention Center.

Born December 7, 1947 in Chicago, Illinois, Bishop Gregory is the son of Wilton (Sr.) and Ethel Duncan Gregory. He attended St. Carthage Grammar School, Quigley Preparatory Seminary South, Niles College (now St. Joseph's College Seminary) of Loyola University, and Saint Mary of the Lake Seminary. He earned his doctorate in Sacred Liturgy in 1980 at the Pontifical Liturgical Institute (Sant' Anselmo) in Rome.

Bishop Gregory was ordained a Catholic Priest for the Archdiocese of Chicago on May 9, 1973. He was ordained a Bishop on December 13, 1983. Bishop Gregory was installed as the Seventh Bishop of Belleville on February 10, 1994 following ten years as Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago.

On November 13, 2001, Bishop Gregory was elected President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, following three years as Vice President under Bishop Joseph Fiorenza of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston.