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Basilica Status Bestowed on The Miraculous Medal Shrine

Vatican Decree Elevates Shrine to Minor Basilica Status

Today's Announcement

The Miraculous Medal Shrine, a Marian devotional destination and ministry of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province in the Germantown section of Philadelphia, has been elevated by the Vatican to Minor Basilica status. This designation is shared by only one other church in the City of Philadelphia, the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul, and 91 others across the United States. The Shrine, along with the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception that houses it, are now known as the Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal.

The new designation followed an application process of multiple years and culminated in a decree issued by Pope Francis. The Shrine is now promoted as an exemplary site of liturgical and pastoral activity within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Minor Basilicas are given prominence among other churches and shrines, receive certain honorifics, and are tasked with special responsibilities.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, Archbishop of Philadelphia, said, "I am deeply grateful to the Holy Father for bestowing this tremendous honor on the Miraculous Medal Shrine. This moment is one of great joy for the entire Church in Philadelphia. The Miraculous Medal Shrine is a great gift drawing souls closer to Christ through the intercession of the Blessed Mother. I congratulate the Vincentians and all those working to sustain the Shrine and its ministry. May their work continue to bear great fruit."

Father Timothy V. Lyons, CM, now rector of the Basilica Shrine, said, "It is an esteemed honor

to be recognized by the Vatican as a Minor Basilica. We are both overjoyed and humbled by this recognition. This historic proclamation marks the next chapter in the Shrine's history and recognizes the significant role it has played in the Catholic Church, the Philadelphia Archdiocese, and the Shrine community.”

The Nature, Function, and Symbols of a Minor Basilica

The central functions of a basilica are rooted in the sacramental life of the Church as a site of pilgrimage, an historical landmark, and a house of significant sacred art. The basilica title gives the Shrine certain privileges and responsibilities, principally the celebration of the feast of the Chair of Saint Peter; the solemnity of the Holy Apostles, Peter, and Paul; and the anniversary of the pope's election into pastoral ministry. Additionally, since the designation denotes a special bond of communion with the residing pope, the Basilica Shrine can remove all temporal consequences of sin to individuals, which remain even after the person's sin has been forgiven (plenary indulgence).

As a basilica, the Basilica Shrine will be outfitted with an *umbrellino*, a canopy of yellow and red silk; and together with a *tintinnabulum*, a bell mounted on a pole used for papal visits, forms the Papal Insignia. The Basilica Shrine is also granted the privilege of displaying Vatican City's coat of arms on its facade and the crossed keys of Saint Peter on all its furnishings and liturgical appointments.

Background on the Congregation of the Mission (Vincentian) Priests and Brothers and their Service in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia

As a ministry of the Congregation of the Mission priests and brothers—commonly known as the Vincentians—the Basilica Shrine has held historical significance in the Philadelphia area, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, and the Eastern United States for more than 140 years.

The Vincentians, founded by Saint Vincent de Paul in 1625, arrived in Philadelphia in 1841, where they established a seminary in the city's Germantown section, including construction of a chapel for use by the priests and seminarians. At the request the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, the Vincentians modified their plans for the chapel and in 1878 opened its doors for liturgical celebrations and pastoral assistance for the poor, working-class, and largely immigrant residents of the surrounding neighborhood, who at the time did not have a parish church.

When they initially opened the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception as a parish church, it predominantly served Irish immigrants. A decade later, the Vincentians established a second parish, Holy Rosary, serving Italian immigrants. They also helped establish the first Catholic church in Germantown, Saint Vincent de Paul, and later built Saint Catherine of Siena Church, to serve the needs of the city's African American community.

In 1927, under the leadership of Father Joseph A. Skelly, CM, the Vincentians commissioned an

expansion of the chapel for the creation of a shrine to Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, a title of the Blessed Mother originating with her apparitions to Saint Catherine Labouré at the Rue du Bac Chapel in Paris in 1830.

In 1930, Father Skelly established the Perpetual Novena of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, a devotion that has been prayed at the Shrine every Monday since then and continues every Monday at the Basilica Shrine.

During their presence in Philadelphia, the Vincentians have served as faculty members at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary and as pastors at parishes throughout the Archdiocese as well as other dioceses in Pennsylvania and New Jersey.

The building's Romanesque-style architecture, murals, stained-glass windows, marble altars, sculptures, sanctuary floor, Mary's Central Shrine, side altars, minor shrines, and exquisite artwork, could not be replicated today. Craftsmen, artisans, and local laborers helped to build the Shrine and create its stunning religious artwork.

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Editor's Note: The Basilica Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, a ministry of the Vincentians of the Eastern Province of the United States, is a sanctuary of prayer and an inspiration of Marian devotion for Roman Catholics throughout the world. Established in 1927 on the grounds of Saint Vincent's Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the Shrine, and the Romanesque church that houses it were elevated to a Minor Basilica by the Vatican in 2023.

Visitors come to the Basilica Shrine daily for Holy Mass, solemn prayer and meditation, and pilgrimage to God and the Blessed Virgin Mary, while beholding its breathtaking artwork, sculptures, stained glass, altars and architecture. The Basilica Shrine is also home to the Perpetual Novena, a prayer of devotion to Our Lady recited in person and livestreamed on Facebook and Instagram every Monday.

Please visit www.miraculousmedal.org to learn more.