



The First Mass at Immaculata – December 9, 1860

In the mid-nineteenth century, if a neighborhood wished to have a Catholic church, they did all the heavy lifting. They sought permission from the Archbishop to build the church, raised money, bought land, hired an architect and chose a contractor.

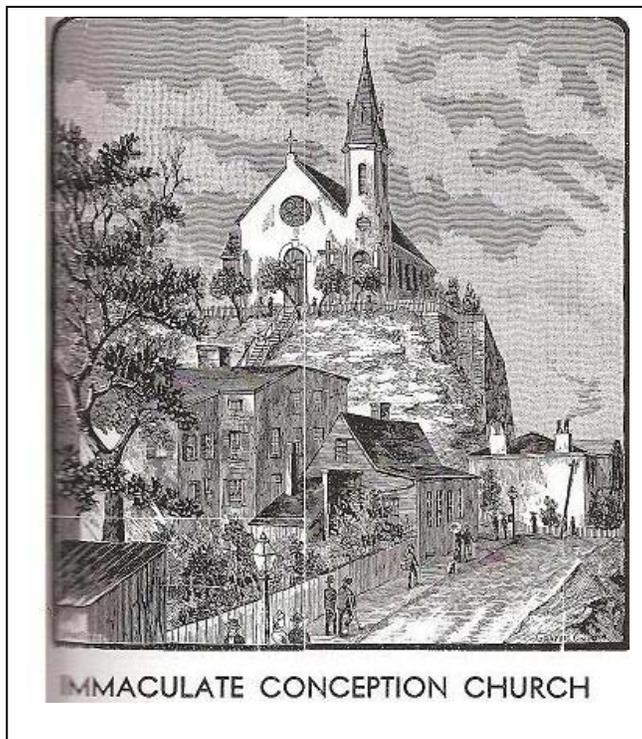
The creation of the Immaculate Conception Church was quite different. Cincinnati Archbishop John B. Purcell donated the land, lime stone (which was quarried on Mt. Adams) and, by some reports, \$10,000 toward the construction of Immaculata. He hired the architects, Louis Piket and Son (also architects for the second Mt. Adams Holy Cross church built in 1895) and the contractor, John Foley. Purcell made frequent visits to the building site to oversee construction.

Immaculate Conception Church, architecturally described as simple gothic, was completed in November of 1860 and soon thereafter became known as the Archbishop's Church.

The first mass at Immaculata was celebrated on December 9, 1860, six years after Pope Pius the IX's Proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception.

Archbishop Purcell was present at the dedication and spoke for twenty minutes. Purcell began his remarks by repeating the Angel Gabriel's salutation to the Virgin Mary: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." He continued, "These words were sent from Heaven, and uttered by that high functionary of Heaven's King, the Angel Gabriel. No words more appropriate than these can be selected to proclaim the praises of Mary, the mother of Jesus. We have in humble trust upon her favor raised this monument to the Immaculate Conception, on the highest point overlooking our city, from the east, within our control. The Seminary and Chapel of St. John the Baptist stand on higher ground, but they are not as visible along the line of the river as is this beautiful temple of Mary. Catholics in all ages of the world have been anxious, that every crowning hill and every beautiful valley shall be sanctified by the cross. All over Europe, Asia, Africa, and the New World, we find this Catholic idea carried out. Some may object that too much expense has been incurred in the erection of this building.

We do not think so; nothing can be too good for Mary. It is now six years since the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was promulgated by the Holy Father. From the earliest ages this belief has been held by the Catholic Church. In the fourth century it was commemorated by a festival under the name "Conception of St. Anne," by which is meant the conception of Mary by her mother St. Ann.



A print of Immaculata from the 25th anniversary celebration publication of the first mass at Immaculata.



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The church has always believed that Mary was Immaculate, and that 'God never allowed her to be stained with the original sin in her conception.' The Almighty knew that she was to be the mother of Christ, and preserved her from that stain. Our mother Eve was created Immaculate, notwithstanding all the evil she brought upon us. And why should not Mary, the second Eve, our true mother, be as much favored as the first?"

At the completion of his remarks, Purcell introduced the first Archdiocesan pastor of Immaculata, Rev. George Brunner, whom he had appointed that day and who addressed the crowd in German. A collection of \$62 was taken in at the mass.

Immaculata was a church for the German-speaking people of Mt. Adams, and the Irish who attended had to cope as best they could, although that would

change in 1873 when Holy Cross Church, two blocks west of Immaculata, was dedicated for the English speaking people of Mt. Adams.

The Catholic Telegraph published a short statement by the Archbishop following the first mass: "The Most Rev. Archbishop requests us to say that he is not at all anxious to monopolize all the merit for the building of the Church of the Immaculata. He will cheerfully share with all who contribute to pay the debt and to furnish the Church, the grace and blessings promised those who love Jesus and Mary."

Thus began the long tradition of faith and grace associated with the Archbishop's Church, Immaculata. It was a simple, spiritual beginning for the small community of Mt. Adams and one that continues 150 years later.

~ Jim Steiner

Archbishop Purcell Defends His Parishioners

The fact that the first pastor of Immaculata was a German priest who addressed the congregation in German brings to mind a raging debate in the Catholic Church of the day, in which Immaculata patron Archbishop Purcell was engaged.

The issue was: Should German and Irish Catholic immigrants keep their traditions and languages or assimilate into American society? On one side, the Archbishop vigorously defended the immigrants' choices. Boston's Orestes Brownson, America's leading Catholic intellectual and best friend of Henry David Thoreau, advocated assimilation. The Archbishop predicted that Brownson "is destined to be our worst enemy in these United States."

A decade ago, writing for the Notre Dame Club, the undersigned wondered who this Brownson fellow was, since he was buried in the floor of the crypt at Sacred Heart Church at Notre Dame near a hall named in his honor. After we were bounced from one Notre Dame office to another, the Library Archives produced a dusty speech from 1976 that revealed that Brownson was a good friend of Notre Dame founder Fr. Sorin. Turned out, though, that Brownson never visited campus until his interment in the crypt.

Our founding patron had formidable opposition in the assimilation debate but in his Archdiocese if his Immaculata Germans wanted Masses in German, they got Masses in German, Orestes Brownson notwithstanding.

~Ed Adams