

Names of Roman Catholic Churches and Schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago

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NAMES OF ROMAN CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS are of interest not only to the philologist but also to the historian and sociologist, for they reveal a great deal about the character and history of Catholicism in their areas. The names of the more than 280 parishes within the city limits of Chicago,¹ of the approximately 170 suburban parishes,² and of the 70 non-parochial Catholic schools³ enshrine much of the cultural past and present of the archdiocese. A study of these names, then, should bring to light many items of interest.

I. REGULATIONS AND TRADITIONS GOVERNING PARISH NAMES

Canon Law does not lay down detailed criteria for the names of churches. It requires simply that "every consecrated or blessed church shall have its own title," that "after the dedication of the

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics given here are based on the following sources: *The Official Catholic Directory for the Year of Our Lord 1961* (New York, 1961), and the *Loyola University 1962 Telephone Directory of Catholic Institutions* (Chicago, 1962). Statistics are generally given in round numbers; since the number of Catholic churches and schools is continually increasing, more exact figures would be obsolete already. In order to ascertain certain historical trends, earlier *Catholic Directories* have also been consulted.

² Some of the parishes in the diocese of Joliet might be considered suburban, but they are not included in this study.

³ "Parochial school" is here used as a technical term referring only to those schools directly under the authority of the pastor of a parish. These schools are given the same name as the parish-church. Most of the larger high-schools and all the colleges and universities in the archdiocese are "non-parochial," i.e., they are owned and operated by religious orders and fall under the authority of the superiors of the orders rather than under that of the local pastors.

church this cannot be changed,” and that “without an apostolic indult churches cannot be dedicated to one who is only beatified” (i.e., those who have not yet been officially declared saints in the fullest sense of the word).⁴ If there is reason for a new title or if two parishes are combined, the usual practice is to form a compound name rather than to suppress one altogether.⁵ Such is the case in Chicago of St. Mel-Holy Ghost parish (the result of an amalgamation) and of the French National Church of St. Joseph and St. Anne (an old church which eventually became the site of a shrine devoted to St. Anne). Commentators on Canon Law indicate that the choice of the name rests with the Bishop, who ordinarily delegates this choice to the priest whom he intends to name pastor of the new parish. Thus the name is usually determined by the devotion of the priest or of his future parishoners.

Despite the vagueness of Canon Law as to permissible names, certain classes of names are traditional throughout the Western Church, and a radical departure from them would require “special approval.”⁶ In his standard commentary on Canon Law, Udalricus Beste lists most of these traditional classes.

First he distinguishes titles referring to God directly: “Sma. Trinitas aut ejusdem aliqua persona; Christus Dominus vel aliquod mysterium vel alia res ad ipsum pertinens, e.g. Salvator, Ascensio, SS. Sacramentum, crux, corona spinea, SS. Cor.” These titles are perhaps the most universal and the least distinctive of particular national groups. Thus there are in Chicago four churches dedicated to the Holy Trinity, established for four separate national groups: Poles, Croatians, Germans, and Hungarians. Similarly there are Sacred Heart parishes for immigrants from Croatia, France, Germany, Poland, and Slovakia. Other typical parish names falling into this first category are the title of the cathedral (Holy Name) and the names of many parishes – names like Blessed Sacrament, Corpus Christi, Christ the King, and Holy Cross. Also into this category fall two rather unusual parish names: Providence of God (a Lithua-

⁴ Canon 1168, paragraphs 1 and 3, tr. John A. Abbo and Jerome D. Hannan in *The Sacred Canons: A Concise Presentation of the Current Disciplinary Norms of the Church*, II (St. Louis, 1960), 442.

⁵ See Udalricus Beste, *Introduction in Codicem*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, Minn., 1946), p. 573.

⁶ *Ibid.*

nian parish on the near South Side) and Divine Providence (in suburban Westchester). Most Catholics think of such names, referring to attributes of God rather than to persons, events, or objects, as characteristic of Protestant rather than Catholic churches.

Beste's next category of traditional names includes all titles referring to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "B. V. Maria vel aliquod mysterium, miraculum, praerogativa, factum ejus proprium, e.g. Assumptio, Nativitas, Immaculata Conceptio, Septem Dolores." Like those referring directly to God, many of these titles are common to churches established for several different national groups. Thus there are Assumption parishes for Poles, Croatians, Slovaks, and Italians; and Immaculate Conception Parishes for Poles, Lithuanians, and Germans. American Catholics rarely refer to the Blessed Virgin as "St. Mary," but there are more than a dozen parishes with names like St. Mary of the Angels, St. Mary of the Lake, St. Mary Star of the Sea, etc. Often, however, the name referring to the Blessed Virgin specifies some special devotion popular in the Church (Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Perpetual Help), some well-known shrine (Our Lady of Lourdes), Mary's patronage of a particular place or a particular national group (Notre Dame de Chicago, Our Lady of Hungary), or a title drawn from the popular "Litany of the Blessed Virgin" (Queen of the Rosary, Mater Christi, Mary Seat of Wisdom, and Our Lady Help of Christians). Names honoring the Blessed Virgin are extraordinarily numerous among parishes founded in recent years. Twenty-three of the seventy-eight parishes founded between 1948 and 1961 bear Marian names. A few of them are connected with particular shrines and nationalities (Our Lady of Aglona, Our Lady of Fatima, Our Lady of the Snows, Our Lady of Knock, and Our Lady of Loretto) but most belong to the purely honorific type (St. Mary Star of the Sea, Our Lady of the Cross, Queen of Martyrs, Our Lady of Hope, etc.).

The next category of names cited by Beste includes all those referring to saints recognized by the Church: "Sancti quorum nomina reperiuntur in martyrologio,⁷ vel factum speciali memoria dignum, e.g., Conversio S. Pauli, Stigmata S. Francisci, Decollatio S. Ioannis." Since this category includes by far the greatest number

⁷ The *Martyrology* is a list of all saints commemorated on each day of the ecclesiastical year.

of possibilities, it is not surprising that about 310 of the 440-odd parishes in the archdiocese are named after the saints (not including the Blessed Virgin). Two parishes are named simply "All Saints." Saints chosen as patrons of parishes established in the last fifteen years tend to be those venerated widely in all parts of the world, those somehow connected with America or England, and those recently canonized.⁸ Widely venerated saints recently honored in the names of new parishes include St. Eugene, patron of Pope Pius XII; St. Francis Borgia, an early Jesuit superior-general; St. John Baptist de la Salle, founder of the Christian Brothers and patron of Catholic education; St. Thaddeus the Apostle, popularly venerated as the patron of "lost causes"; and such fathers and doctors of the Church as St. Irenaeus, St. Peter Damian, St. Albert the Great, and St. John of the Cross. Among saints connected with America or England recently honored by new parishes are St. Bede the Venerable, St. John Fisher, St. Peter Claver (the "Apostle of the Negroes" in seventeenth-century South America), and St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (an Italian-American nun who died in Chicago). Such recently canonized saints as St. Catherine Laboure, St. Louise de Marillac, St. Therese, and St. Joan of Arc are patrons of several of the new parishes. Although Beste recognizes that parishes may be named in honor of "deeds worthy of special commemoration" connected with the saints, I have not found any parishes in the archdiocese so named. Such titles seem to be quite rare in the United States.

Finally, Beste notes that parishes may be dedicated to the angels: "angeli, sive omnes globatim sive singillatim sumpti, dummodo in posteriori casu eorum nomina noscantur." Since Scripture and Catholic tradition specify the names of only three angels (Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael), the possibilities are limited, but there are several Chicago-area parishes in this category: Holy Angels, Holy Guardian Angels, St. Gabriel's, St. Raphael's, and six different St. Michaels'.

II. NAMES OF NATIONAL CHURCHES

Canon 216 recognizes the existence of parishes "for the faithful of diverse language or nationality." The national parish is regarded as

⁸ Most relevant hagiographical information can be found in *A Dictionary of Saints*, ed. Donald Attwater (New York, 1938).

a transitory institution aiming to assist immigrants,⁹ but in the Chicago area it has in many cases lasted through several generations up to the present. In 1915, more than half (109 out of 212) of the parishes within the city limits of Chicago were national.¹⁰ By 1961, however, the proportion had greatly decreased: only 101 national parishes were still in existence within the city limits, and 119 in the entire archdiocese, out of a total of nearly 450 parishes. The proportionate decline is explained, of course, by the gradual Americanization of immigrants and by their tendency to move away from "national" neighborhoods into the suburbs. Only four national parishes have been established since 1928 (one each for Byelorussians, Syrians of the Maronite liturgical rite, Chinese, and Negroes¹¹).

Many of the former national parishes have become ordinary territorial parishes. This is especially true of the former German parishes, twenty-six of which have become purely territorial parishes in the past thirty-five years. Other nationalities cling to their own parishes more tenaciously; in the same period only six Polish churches (five of them in the suburbs), one French, one Lithuanian, one Bohemian, one Italian, and one Negro parish have dropped their national status. Occasionally, because of the influx of new groups into a neighborhood, a parish may change from one nationality to another. Some of the national churches also serve as the territorial parishes for all Catholics in their immediate areas; the *Catholic Directory* designates these as "German and English," "Italian and English," etc. Because of the decline of national clannishness and the changing character of the older neighborhoods, this double role is now much more common than it was formerly.

The national parish often, but by no means always, bears a distinctive name. Among the thirty-six Polish parishes still existing in the archdiocese, we find such distinctively Polish titles as St. Adalbert, St. Casimir, St. Florian, St. Hedwig, St. Hyacinth, St. John Cantius, St. Ladislaus, St. Salomea, St. Stanislaus Kotska, and

⁹ Abbo and Hannan, II, 279.

¹⁰ See Herbert L. Wiltsee, *Religious Developments in Chicago, 1893-1915*, M. A. Diss. (University of Chicago, 1953), p. 10.

¹¹ Corpus Christi Parish is the only parish which at present gives any indication of being organized especially for Negroes. Most Negro Catholics belong to the territorial parish for the area in which they live. Thus many parishes have a large proportion of Negroes in their membership.

St. Mary of Czestochowa. Only a few parishes for other Eastern-European groups are distinguishable by their titles. The famous biblical scholar St. Jerome was probably chosen as the patron of a Croatian parish because he is thought to have been a native of Croatia; Saints Cyril and Methodius, the "apostles of the Slavs," are honored in the name of one Slovakian parish; Lithuanian parishes are dedicated to St. Casimir and Our Lady of Vilna. The Slovenian Mother of God parish reveals something of its East-European origin when one realizes that this title (which translates the Greek "theotokos") is the usual one given to Mary by nations which owe their faith to Greek apostles. The great majority of the Slavic national parishes, however, bear quite commonplace names like St. George, Holy Trinity, and St. Joseph.

The Bohemian parishes form an exception to this generalization. Among them we find churches dedicated to saints particularly venerated among the Bohemians such as Blessed Agnes, St. John Nepomucene, St. Ludmilla, and Saints Cyril and Methodius. Only three Bohemian parishes (Our Lady of Good Counsel, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Our Lady of the Mount) do not seem to have distinctive names.

Curiously enough, only one of the present German national parishes (St. Gertrude's) bears the name of a German saint. Only two more of the parishes listed as "German" in the 1928 *Catholic Directory* take their titles from saints especially connected with Germany: St. Henry (a Holy Roman Emperor) and St. Boniface (the "Apostle of Germany"). However, certain parish names occur more than once among the German churches: St. Alphonsus, Sacred Heart, St. Joseph, St. Nicholas, St. Benedict, St. Peter, and St. Paul. These names, together with a few others represented by at least one German parish in Chicago (e.g., St. Anthony of Padua, St. Matthias, St. Aloysius, and St. Boniface), occur frequently as the names of German parishes throughout the country, probably because they are favorites among German-speaking people – suggesting, therefore, that these saints were given special veneration in Germany. Some of them (St. Alphonsus, St. Benedict, St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Aloysius) are connected with religious orders (Redemptorists, Benedictines, Franciscans, and Jesuits respectively) which have labored extensively among Germans and German-Americans.

Italian churches tend to take names quite indicative of their national character. Several of them are named after Italian saints: St. Callistus, St. Francis de Paula, St. Philip Benizi, and St. Rocco. Five of the seven Italian parishes dedicated to the Blessed Virgin bear titles of special significance to Italians: Santa Maria Addolorata, Santa Maria Incoronata, Our Lady of Pompeii, and two St. Mary's of Mount Carmel. Italian parishes seem to be the only ones which have shown a notable tendency to keep their titles in the Italian form. Only two of them still do so (Santa Maria Addolorata and Santa Maria Incoronata), but two more formerly were listed in the *Catholic Directory* as "San Rocco" and "San Callisto." Another parish still having an Italianate name today (Annunciata) is not officially classified as a national parish, but it is staffed by the Servite Fathers who have worked extensively among Italian immigrants in the area. Two completely non-Italian churches have adopted names in Italian forms, possibly from some feeling that such names have a prestige value. These are Santa Maria del Popolo Church in suburban Mundelein and the Madonna della Strada Chapel of Loyola University.¹² Since the official titles are always given in Latin, this use of foreign forms is dependent on the whims of local authorities.

Only one of the four French-speaking churches bears a name that is unmistakably French (Notre Dame de Chicago), but the other three have titles referring to special devotions of the French and the French-Canadians: St. John the Baptist, St. Joseph and St. Anne, and Sacred Heart. The 1928 *Catholic Directory* lists a fifth French parish, with a name distinctively French (St. Louis); it has since lost its national status.

Five other national groups (besides the Oriental Rite Catholics, who will be considered later) have one parish each; in every instance the parish has a distinctive title. The Belgian parish is dedicated to St. John Berchmans, a Belgian Jesuit; the Mexican parish, to Our Lady of Guadalupe; the "Hollandish" church, to St. Willibrord, the "apostle of the Frisians"; the Chinese mission, to St. Therese of Lisieux, patroness of all Catholic missions; and the Hungarian church, to Our Lady of Hungary.

¹² This tendency is evident in at least one other area. Two nearby churches in exclusive suburbs of St. Louis bear Italian names (Annunziata and Immacolata), although they were never national churches.

Apparently there has never been an Irish national church in Chicago,¹³ because there was no language-barrier for the Irish; but of course Irish immigrants made up the bulk of the congregations in the early English-speaking parishes. Thus the names of Celtic saints grace many churches: St. Ailbe, St. Brendan, St. Bridget, St. Ita, St. Jarlath, St. Margaret of Scotland, and St. Patrick – the list is by no means complete. Unlike most of the other names with national connotations, Irish names are still used frequently for new parishes: territorial parishes dedicated to St. Kieran, St. Patrick, St. Lawrence O'Toole, and Our Lady of Knock have been founded within the past fifteen years.

There are a number of Catholic Oriental-rite churches in the Chicago area. These churches acknowledge the authority of Rome and accept all Catholic doctrines, but they follow ancient liturgical and disciplinary practices similar to those of the various Orthodox Churches. The Byzantine Rite is represented by eight parishes, all of which bear very common and ancient names. Only two of them (St. Nicholas and St. Basil) are named after saints of the Eastern Mediterranean area. The *Catholic Directory* reveals this as a pattern common to oriental-rite parishes: relatively few names, most of them very ancient, suffice for all their churches in the United States. The five other oriental-rite churches in Chicago, each of a different rite, follow this pattern. Only two of the titles (St. Ephrem and Our Lady of Lebanon) suggest the middle-eastern character of the churches.

III. NAMES OF CHURCHES IN THE CARE OF RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Most parishes in the archdiocese of Chicago are in the care of diocesan priests, who are ordained specifically for the needs of the area. However, close to eighty parishes are staffed by priests of twenty-four different religious orders. Several of the religious-order parishes bear names of special significance to the groups which staff them.

¹³ See Wiltsee, pp. 10–12 *passim*. This inference is also drawn from statistics presented in Marvin Reuel Schafer, *The Catholic Church in Chicago, Its Growth and Administration*, Ph.D. Dissertation (University of Chicago, 1929), *passim*.

For example, one of the parishes staffed by the Scalabrini Fathers is named after the order's official patron, St. Charles Borromeo. The Order of Servants of Mary conducts three parishes named in honor of the Blessed Virgin: Annunciata, Assumption, and Our Lady of Sorrows. The devotion to Our Lady of Sorrows is especially promoted by this order, usually known as the Servites. Another Servite church is dedicated to the founders of the order (Seven Holy Founders Mission). Benedictines from several different monasteries staff seven parishes in the archdiocese, only two of which bear names in any way associated with the order: St. Procopius and St. Vitus. Neither of these saints was a Benedictine, but each of them is an object of special devotion for the monks of nearby St. Procopius Abbey. The first is the Abbey's patron saint, and devotion to the second as a protector against mental disease is promoted by the monks of the Abbey.

A great many of the religious-order parishes, of course, bear names that are in no way distinctive; yet examples of the orders' influence could be multiplied. Redemptorist priests staff a parish named in honor of their founder, St. Alphonsus. The Congregation of the Mission is in charge of one parish named after the order's founder, St. Vincent de Paul. The two Augustinian parishes are dedicated to Augustinian saints: St. Clare de Monte Falco and St. Rita of Cascia. Two of the three Dominican parishes bear the names of Dominican saints: St. Pius V and St. Vincent Ferrer.

IV. NAMES OF SCHOOLS NOT ATTACHED TO PARISHES

A few grade schools, most of the larger high schools, and all of the colleges and universities in the archdiocese are owned and staffed by religious orders and are thus immediately subject, at least in educational matters, to the superiors of the orders rather than to pastors of parishes. Consequently most of these schools bear names associated with the orders which staff them. No regulations govern the naming of Catholic schools. Hence many persons, devotions, and religious groups are honored in the names of these institutions.

Among the colleges and universities, DePaul is dedicated to St. Vincent de Paul, the founder of the Congregation which directs the university. Loyola is named after the founder of the Jesuits; its Stritch School of Medicine honors Cardinal Stritch, archbishop of

Chicago from 1939 to 1958. Mundelein College for Women is named after another Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago. The college staffed by Dominican nuns is named Rosary College because St. Dominic and his followers have always been special promoters of the rosary devotion. Barat College is named in honor of St. Madeleine-Sophie Barat, foundress of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, who conduct the college.

Many of the non-parochial elementary and secondary schools are named after founders or members of the religious orders which direct them. This group includes Aquinas High School, staffed by Dominican nuns; Brother Rice High School, named after the founder of the Christian Brothers of Ireland; De La Salle High School, dedicated to the founder of the Christian Brothers in France; Gordon and Weber High Schools, named after prominent members of the Resurrectionist order; and Mendel High School, named after the Augustinian monk who laid the foundations of modern genetics. Similarly, Mother McAuley High School is dedicated to the foundress of the Sisters of Mercy; Fenwick High School is named after an early Dominican Bishop of Cincinnati; Hardey Preparatory for Boys is named after an early Religious of the Sacred Heart who became the superior of all the American nuns of that order. Many more examples of this kind of name could be added.

Several schools take on the name of the order itself. For example, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, in accord with their world-wide custom, name one of their schools in the area simply "The Convent of the Sacred Heart." Similarly, Holy Family High School is directed by the Sisters of the Holy Family, Loretto Academy by the Ladies of Loretto, etc.

Finally, several schools are named after devotions or events of special significance to the orders conducting them. The names of Alvernia High School and Mt. Assisi Academy, both directed by Franciscan Sisters, commemorate places important in the life of St. Francis. Mother of Sorrows High School honors the Blessed Virgin with a title especially venerated by the Servite Sisters. The Holy Cross Fathers have named their high school Notre Dame, in order to express their special devotion to the Blessed Virgin and to recall that Notre Dame University is under their direction. Again, numerous examples of this kind of name could be cited.

If one needed any proof for the truism that names reflect cultural experiences, this study would certainly provide it. The varying national origins of Chicago Catholics, the contributions of religious orders to the archdiocese, and much local church history are clearly reflected in the names of Chicago's Catholic churches and schools. The many sociological, theological, and devotional changes now taking place within the Catholic Church will certainly have their impact on the naming of future institutions. Undoubtedly these trends will veer away from the honoring of European patrons and away from certain forms of devotion to the saints and to the Blessed Virgin which are becoming obsolete. Future names will undoubtedly reflect a Catholicism that is more fully integrated into American culture and more influenced by modern theological thought.

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