



The stained glass windows depicting the 15 mysteries of the Rosary were erected in 1909. There is no record of the originals. In the apse are four more windows, with St. Boniface (German), St. Louis (French), St. Thomas More (English) and St. Patrick (Irish) reflecting the parish's ethnic makeup.

The baptismal font is made of marble. Until 1980, it resided in the old baptistry located near the main entrance of the church. In 1982, it was moved to its present location. It is surrounded by a medallion of green marble, that used to serve as part of the former communion rail in the front of the church. The font was given by A.W. Alyworth.



As previously mentioned the first Mass was held under an oak tree at the Shorb residence. Because of the significance of that tree to Catholics, the wood was used to carve a chair, which was given to the parish on Easter 1909 by Ellen Shorb Moore, on behalf of the John Shorb Family.

Located in the sanctuary are two items that are always displayed in a basilica. The *Tintinnabulum*, processional bell, is carried in procession on solemn occasions. It was used to alert the people of the approach of the Holy Father during papal processions. The *Ombrellino*, or umbrella, is a mark of honor for a basilica. Originally it served as protection from inclement weather, today its function is symbolic. The pavilion is made of yellow and red alternating strips of silk, embroidered with symbols associated with the basilica and diocese. It is always half open. Our Ombrellino is adorned with the coat of arms of Pope Benedict, XVI, the Diocese of Youngstown, our

present Bishop, The Most Reverend George V. Murry, S.J., and the *Basilica of Saint John the Baptist*.

Other features of the church include the spire atop the tower. It soars 180 feet into the air. The tower contains a great clock with four faces. Four bells were installed in 1923, as well as the original 1,000 pound church bell named in honor of St. John the Baptist. In 2008, new clock faces and a new control system were installed, allowing the bells to chime the hour, toll, and peal automatically.

Our pipe organ was built by Charles Kegg of Kegg Pipe Organ Builders, Hartville, Ohio and installed in 2004. It consists of 78 ranks spread out over six division and contains many beautiful color stops (English Horn, Orchestral Oboe, Clarinet, Cornopean, Clarabella, Tuba Mirabilis, etc.). It is one of the finest examples of pipe organ craftsmanship available today. The Gothic case contains carvings, finials, and gold facade pipes. World renowned organists have performed major concerts on this organ.



Photography by Joe Smithberger
Smithberger Photography



Basilica of Saint John the Baptist
Landmark of Catholicism
established in 1823

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The Parish

One year after Canton was founded (1806), John Shorb and his family settled here and were the first representatives of the Catholic Church. By 1812, there were 15 Catholic families. Fr. Edward Fenwick came to offer the first Mass in the area. This Mass was held under an oak tree at the Shorb residence in 1817.

In 1822, Fr. Fenwick became the first bishop of Cincinnati and all Ohio. In 1823, he gave permission to build a church on 5 acres of land donated by John Shorb, the present site of our Basilica. The first building was dedicated in 1824.

St. John the Baptist became a center of missionary activity. Its pastors ministered to Catholics in more than 20 counties, and 15 parishes were founded as missions of this church.

The first building was enlarged twice, and was still no longer adequate to accommodate all who wished to worship there. Under the new pastor, Fr. Berthelet, the present church was built in 1870-71. The original church building was demolished.

In 1924, a parish centennial celebration was held. The church was refurbished for the occasion, and its solemn consecration was the highlight of this event. The Canton Repository described the ceremonies with the three bishops and over a hundred clergy, and thousands of people, as significant and impressive.

St. John Nepomucene Neumann visited the parish in 1841 and baptized Catherine Kunz on November 21, 1830. The en Chamade (horizontal) trumpet in the organ was named after him. In the first 90 years there were 5,349 Baptisms, in the next 60 years, 7,256.

Five former pastors and one native son became bishops. Records show that 27 priests and 92 religious came from St. John the Baptist.

In 2000, the interior of the church was repainted. In 2004, the new pipe organ (Kegg Pipe Organ Builders) was installed and used for the first time at the Easter Vigil.

On June 19, 2012, St. John the Baptist was elevated to a Minor Basilica by the Holy See. This honor was under the supervision of the Very Reverend Ronald M. Klingler, Rector. The criteria for basilica status were: Architecture & History, Religious Education, Outreach and Liturgy & Music.



The Building

The present building was built in 1870-1871, of pure Gothic design with a clerestory. The church without tower and sacristies is 144 feet long and 60 feet wide. The cornerstone was laid Sunday, July 10, 1870, with a crowd of 5,000 persons present. The church was dedicated by Bishop Gilmour on December 29, 1872

The architects were Renwick and Kiely of Brooklyn, New York, who also designed St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. The cost, without interior decorations, was \$80,000.00. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, the 150th anniversary year of the parish.



The marble altar was consecrated by Bishop Hortmann on February 10, 1897, a gift from Joseph Dick. The Bavarian terra cotta Stations of the Cross were erected in 1896, a gift from Mrs. W.A. McCrea in honor of her parents who had been married in the first church building in 1838.

The statues flanking the high altar are of St. John the Baptist, our patron saint, and St. Anne and her daughter Mary.

The pieta which is inspired by Michelangelo's marble masterpiece in the Basilica of Saint Peter in Rome, originally hung over the main altar for an untold number of years. When the Sanctuary was remodeled in the early 1980's it was moved to the back of the church, housed in its own niche.



During the remodeling, the area known as the Sanctuary was elevated and covered with a parquet floor. An altar of sacrifice was added so the priest could face the congregation during Mass.



The altar on the far left of the church honors the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of Jesus. It is often decorated by bouquets of flowers after weddings, and during the month of May, which is devoted to Mary. The statue to the left of Mary's altar is of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This altar was given in 1906 in memory of Frances A. Alexander.

The altar to the right is devoted to St. Joseph, the foster father of Jesus. The statue to the right is of Saint Therese of Lisieux. This altar was also given in 1906 in remembrance of Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Alexander.