



Seat of Unity

Every diocese has a *cathedra* – the bishop’s chair – which gives its name to the church building that houses it: the cathedral. The *cathedra* is the object which symbolizes the bishop’s role as authoritative teacher of the faith and as shepherd responsible for the sacramental sanctification of his flock.

From the seat of his Christ-given authority each successor to the Apostles oversees and safeguards the Christian life of the people in the territory entrusted to him, his diocese. His overriding mission is to preserve and foster their communion in faith and love and to maintain the bonds of unity with every other diocese under the successor of Peter, the Pope.

The bishop’s *cathedra* links him to all other bishops in their cathedrals, each one giving witness to the same baptismal faith, the same Eucharistic unity, the same God-given commandments. A cathedral tangibly testifies that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.”

Christ is forever “the same”; yet He comes “to make all things new.” His is a dynamic sameness that mirrors the delicate balance of cathedral architecture’s two dimensions: horizontal and vertical. A cathedral’s high-walled vertical ascent into the sky sweeps all eyes upward into its dramatic reach toward the great God Who reigns above. But the building’s horizontal extension bears images of the same God come down to earth to form bonds of compassion and love here below.

The cathedral’s architectural form “sends” us in both directions: up to God and across to our neighbor.

The humble parishioners who constructed St. Francis de Sales Cathedral just over a century ago left us a remarkably beautiful sign of their commitment to our spiritual welfare. They proved to be “living stones” in the House of Prayer to the God Who makes us one. A look at the Cathedral—the work of their hands and hearts—is enough to make us wonder what we can leave to those who come after us that could equal what we freely receive from them.