

# BOOK REVIEWS

David G. Wilkins, ed. *A Reflection of Faith: Saint Paul Cathedral, Pittsburgh 1906-2006*. (Pittsburgh: Saint Paul Cathedral Centennial Book Committee, 2007), 190 pp., illus., addenda, bibliography, glossary, index [available at St. Paul Cathedral rectory, 108 N. Dithridge Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15213 — \$100 hardcover/\$40 softcover]

This book is the culmination of several years of work undertaken initially by a committee of four parishioners and this writer as a representative of The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, which over time enlarged to a full-time undertaking headed by an editor (professor David Wilkins – who produced the history of the Duquesne Club), a project manager, a graphic designer, and a small army of parishioners who researched and wrote much of the text of this volume. The result is an attractive coffee table presentation of the rich architectural history of the third building to serve as the cathedral church of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

Reflective presentations by then-ordinary Bishop Donald Wuerl and theologian Scott Hahn are followed by a series of chapters that present, in narrative and pictorial form, the history of the three successive structures that have served the diocese. Former CHS President, Rev. James Garvey, recounts the history of the first two cathedrals that stood in Downtown at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Grant Street, until the move to Oakland shortly after the turn of the 20th century. It is the centennial of the consecration of the third and current cathedral that this work celebrates. And it does so lavishly.

Rich illustrations of every aspect of the cathedral's architecture fill the pages, explaining the narrative just as the magnificent artwork of the great European cathedrals explained Christ and the church to illiterate worshippers centuries ago. From the rich hues of the fully-illustrated stained glass windows to the massive von Beckerath organ, to the marble altars and the stone statues of the saints, every aspect of St. Paul Cathedral is illustrated and explained. Narrative commentary by professionals and parishioners alike supplements the pictures.

The contributed services of the graphic designer — a cathedral parishioner with years of experience at CMU — produced a superlative visual presentation of the cathedral's interior and exterior. The researchers were thwarted by the lack of any real history of the structure, despite its 100 years of existence; the absence of the original plans and construction photographs created additional historical lacunae that the Committee ably attempted to overcome.

The recent restoration and physical expansion of the cathedral in anticipation of its centennial in 2006 are also chronicled in the work, which concludes with brief biographical vignettes on the bishops of Pittsburgh and the priests who so ably served the cathedral as rectors or pastors.

Considering that 100 years passed before the architectural history of the cathedral was committed to print, one can only hope that a similar period will not elapse before devoted parishioners address the yet-to-be-told history of the parish, its schools, the devoted Sisters of Mercy who educated the parish youth, and the various ministries that the cathedral has undertaken not just within Oakland to its constituent communities (the university communities, the St. Regis Chapel ministry to the Italians of South Oakland, the Central Catholic High School connection, and the unique relationship with the diocesan offices that have been housed in or close to the cathedral complex) but to the larger population of the diocese itself.

This book will be a collector's item — but I encourage you to obtain and read the work for its wonderful statement of the faith of those immigrants who erected this cathedral and spared no expense in decorating this magnificent structure, and the continuing love of parishioners and diocesan faithful who have worshipped within its towering walls for 100 years.

— *John C. Bates*

## Recollections

### Fifty Years Ago in The Pittsburgh Catholic

#### HISTORICAL SOCIETY TOUR

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania has announced a busy and varied schedule for 1958.

Included on the calendar of events will be a tour of St. Paul Cathedral, Oakland; the annual Msgr. Andrew Lambing Lecture and an exhibition of historical Catholic art objects.

The tour of the Cathedral is scheduled for March 2 at 2 p.m. It will be followed by a brief organ recital and a reception and buffet in the Georgian Terrace Room of the Webster Hall Hotel.

The tour is open to the public but the attendance at the luncheon will be by registration only. Non-members will be assessed \$1.50 each.

February 13, 1958

*Special thanks to Kerry Crawford for providing the above article.*