The canonization on October 14, 2018 of Pope Paul VI as a saint occasioned memories of the arrival of then-Monsignor Giovanni Battista Enrico Antonio Maria Montini to Pittsburgh in September 1951 to visit the family and the grave of Monsignor Walter S. Carroll – Montini’s closest American co-worker and a highly respected Vatican diplomat.

Montini’s Background
The future pope was born in Concesio in the Diocese of Brescia in northwestern Italy on September 26, 1897. He was ordained a priest in May 1920 at age 22. In 1922, he entered the service of the Vatican’s Secretariat of State in Rome, where he would work with American Father Francis J. Spellman. In 1937, Montini was appointed Substitute (Sostituto) Secretary for Ordinary Affairs under papal Secretary of State Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli. After Pacelli was elected pope (Pius XII) in 1939, Montini continued his role as chief of staff under the new Secretary of State, Luigi Cardinal Maglione. Upon the latter’s death in 1944, Montini was appointed Pro-Secretary of State.

The outbreak of World War II thrust Montini into a pivotal role as Pius XII directed Montini to create an information office to deal with prisoners of war and refugees. Between 1939 and 1947 that office received almost ten million requests for information and produced over eleven million replies. Working under Montini was a young Pittsburgh priest, Walter S. Carroll.

The Three Carroll Brothers
Walter Sharp Carroll (1908-1950) was the youngest of the three sons of Irish immigrants William J. and Bridget Margaret (Hogan) Carroll. The family belonged to Holy Rosary Parish in the Homewood section of Pittsburgh. The priest-diplomat’s two older priest-brothers were Howard Joseph Carroll (1902-1960) and Coleman Francis Carroll (1905-1977), both of whom became members of the hierarchy; Howard served from 1938 to 1944 as assistant secretary of the National Catholic Welfare Conference (later renamed the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops) and from 1944 to 1957 as secretary of the Conference. He was appointed bishop of Altoona-Johnstown in 1957 and died at age 57 in 1960. Coleman became the first auxiliary bishop of Pittsburgh in 1953, was appointed first bishop of Miami in 1958, and then became the first archbishop of Miami in 1968. He died at age 72 in 1977.

Walter S. Carroll
Walter Carroll, like his brothers, attended Holy Rosary elementary and high schools. He then enrolled in Duquesne University from which he graduated in 1930, winning the university’s annual oratorical contest in his senior year. He undertook graduate studies in philosophy at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland, from which he received a doctorate in 1933. He then attended the North American College in Rome, taking theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University, which granted him a licentiate in 1936. He subsequently studied canon law at the Apollinare Institute and received a doctorate in January 1940. He also undertook special studies at the Universities of Tours, Florence, and Perugia, and became fluent in several languages.

During his studies, Walter Carroll was ordained a priest in the chapel of the North American College in Rome on December 8, 1935 by Francesco Cardinal Marchetti-Selvaggiani, the vicar of Rome. Present at the ceremony was the seminary rector, Bishop Ralph L. Hayes, who was a native of Pittsburgh. While continuing his studies after ordination, Father Carroll also did parish work in Rome and England and served temporarily in the Vatican Secretariat of State in 1939. The young priest returned to Pittsburgh in late February 1940 and on March 3 offered his First Mass in 8521 Frankstown Road. Bishop Hugh C. Boyle promptly appointed Father Walter Carroll as assistant pastor of St. Basil Parish in Carrick, but six months later approved Rome’s request that the young priest be granted leave to accept an appointment to the Secretariat of State in September 1940.

Walter S. Carroll became only the third American to serve in the Secretariat of State – Francis J. Spellman, who later became archbishop of New York, was the first; Joseph P. Hurley, who became archbishop-bishop of St. Augustine, was the second. As a special envoy of Pope Pius XII during World War II, Carroll had responsibility for prisoners of war and refugees; that expanded to include resettlement of the enormous number of concentration camp survivors and displaced persons in Germany and Austria in the post-war period. Carroll established a branch of the Vatican Information Bureau in Algiers in 1943 at the behest of Montini to deal with German and Italian POWs and facilitate contacts with the Allies, who were planning the invasion of Sicily and mainland Italy.

In March 1943, Carroll was named a papal chamberlain with the title of Very Reverend Monsignor. The following year, he was elevated to domestic prelate with the title of Right
Reverend Monsignor. He accompanied General Mark Clark to a meeting with Pope Pius XII following the liberation of Rome by American forces in 1944. Monsignor Carroll promptly established the American Catholic Club in the Eternal City as a haven for American soldiers and chaplains, serving over 1,000 per day. He also raised the funds to build the *Sant’ Onorio Monastero* in Rome.10 Carroll was entrusted with broadcasting the pope’s messages in English over Vatican Radio11 and acted as translator during the pope’s meetings with Myron Taylor, President Roosevelt’s personal representative to the Holy See.12 Carroll served as papal representative to the International Red Cross and other organizations during and after the war.

In February 1950, Monsignor Carroll returned to the United States for a rest and to spend time with his mother. His health, impaired by years of overwork and stress, worsened and he was admitted to Georgetown University Hospital in Washington, D.C., for treatment. He died in the hospital of a heart attack on February 24, 1950. He was only 41 years old.

Three Pontifical Requiem Masses were offered for him. Archbishop Amleto G. Cicognani, apostolic delegate to the United States, celebrated a Mass on Monday, February 27, in St. Matthew Cathedral in Washington in the presence of three archbishops, eleven bishops, and the diplomatic corps. Carroll’s classmate, Bishop John J. Wright – newly installed bishop of Worcester and future bishop of Pittsburgh – delivered the eulogy. The body was then brought to Pittsburgh where the remains lay in state in the Cathedral in Washington in the presence of three archbishops, hundreds of priests, representatives of all branches of the U.S. military, leaders of relief agencies, newspaper correspondents, and thousands of ordinary Pittsburghers. A third Mass was celebrated on Saturday, March 4, in the Church of *Santa Susanna* in Rome by Bishop Martin J. O’Connor, rector of the North American College.13 A listing of the participants at each of the three Masses was a veritable “Who’s Who” of the diplomatic, political, military, and ecclesiastical worlds that included a number of future cardinals, archbishops, and bishops.

President Harry S. Truman conveyed the thoughts of many when he wrote to the deceased’s family: “His untimely passing cuts short a life already filled with achievement and rich with promise.” Archbishop Cicognani commented: “Msgr. Walter was called to do a very intimate and personal service of the Holy See, and he dedicated himself and his priesthood wholeheartedly to the important and arduous task.”14 Two strangers that Monsignor Carroll had encountered in Rome years before wrote these words to the Carroll family upon learning of his death: “Even strangers, as we were that first day in Rome, could see goodness and self-sacrifice in all his actions. All who knew him must have a feeling of awe and reverence, for surely he was a saint on earth.”15

**Montini’s Visit to Pittsburgh**

Monsignor Montini had been unable to attend the funeral of Monsignor Carroll with whom he had worked so closely for ten years. But in September 1951, Montini undertook a tour of Canada and the United States that saw him visit Washington D.C., St Louis, and New York. He pointedly added Pittsburgh to the itinerary.16 He came to visit his deceased colleague’s mother, Bridget Carroll, and the two surviving priest-brothers.

Montini was the guest of Bishop John F. Dearden of Pittsburgh and stayed at the bishop’s Edwardian Tudor mansion on Warwick Terrace in the city’s Morewood Heights section.17 Dearden’s secretary, Father Jacob C. Shinar, acted as chauffeur for the visiting prelate. Shinar had already become acquainted with Montini during his own graduate studies in Rome and recalled Montini as “an extremely able and affable man, and a wonderful organizer.”18

Besides visiting with the family, Montini prayed at Monsignor Walter Carroll’s grave in Mt Carmel Cemetery in Penn Township (now, the Municipality of Penn Hills).19 He also celebrated a Low Mass at Sacred Heart Church in Shadyside to mark the opening of the school year; that was followed by his celebration of Solemn Benediction after the Mass. The new Sacred Heart High School, designed under the direction of the recently deceased longtime pastor of 28 years, Father Thomas F. Coakley, opened at that time.20 Father Coleman Carroll had just succeeded Coakley as pastor of Sacred Heart Church. Father Howard Carroll had previously served as assistant pastor at the church for 10 years.21 The mother, Bridget Carroll, would be buried from the church just two years later. The $300,000 bell tower of the church would be completed in 1954 and named for the deceased third brother, Monsignor Walter Carroll.22 The tower carillon contains three bells, one of which – weighing 3,356 pounds and measuring almost five feet in diameter – is inscribed “I, St. Walter, the dead do mourn.”23 The tower dedication completed a quarter-century-long building program at Sacred Heart Church.

**Montini’s Later Career**

Subsequent to his trip to America, Monsignor Montini was appointed archbishop of Milan in 1954. Pope John XXIII named him a cardinal in 1958. In 1960, Montini visited the United States for a second time, stopping in New York City, Washington D.C., Chicago, the University of Notre Dame, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Montini was elected pope on June 21, 1963, taking the name Paul. As the “Pilgrim Pope,” Paul VI traveled the world, including a whirlwind 14-hour visit to New York City to speak at St. Patrick’s Cathedral and the United Nations on October 4, 1965. Neither of these trips included stops in Pittsburgh; by then, all members of the Carroll family had died except for Coleman who was serving as bishop of Miami.

At the episcopal residence in Pittsburgh (September 1951). L to R: Fr. Joseph Lonergan (pastor, St. Bernard), Fr. Jacob Shinar (secretary to bishop), Msgr. Henry Carlin (vicar general and pastor, Holy Rosary), Msgr. Montini, Bishop Dearden, Fr. Howard Carroll, Mrs. Bridget Carroll, Msgr. Coleman Carroll (pastor, Sacred Heart and later archbishop of Miami), Fr. Thomas Lappan (director of St. Vincent de Paul Society, director of Refugee Resettlement Program, and pastor, St. Athanasius), and Fr. Joseph McGeough of the Vatican Secretariat of State (later, archbishop and nuncio to Ireland)

Source: The Pittsburgh Catholic

Endnotes:

1 English-language wire reports of the election and coronation of Cardinal Pacell as Pope Pius XII were the work of Rome-based Father Walter S. Carroll of Pittsburgh as special correspondent of N.C.W.C. News Service. See “Triple Tiara of the Papacy Placed on Head of Pius XII: Pittsburgh Priest Tells of Impressions as He Witnessed Pontiff’s Coronation,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, March 16, 1939, 1-2.


4 “Local Priests’ Brother is Ordained in Rome,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, December 12, 1935, 1.

5 “Pittsburgher, Ordained in Rome, to Offer Mass His Brothers Assisting,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, February 29, 1940, 1, 16. The mother’s home was near the parish church and lay directly across the street from the site on which the parish would construct a new complex.

6 “Pittsburgh Native Named to Vatican State Secretariat,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, September 26, 1940, 1, 3.


9 “Pittsburgh Priest Made Monsignor,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, March 18, 1943, 1.


11 “Father Carroll Gives Broadcast in English of Pontiff’s Message,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, April 17, 1941, 1.


14 Harry S. Truman and Amleto G. Cicognani, respectively as quoted in “Msgr. Carroll Mourned by 2000,” 2.


16 Msgr. Montini Pays Visit Here,” The Pittsburgh Catholic, September 13, 1951, 1.

17 Montini’s stay at the residence was recalled 58 years later when the mansion was put up for sale. Marylyne Pitz, “Bishop’s Mansion for Sale,” Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, March 11, 2009, 1, 3.


19 Mt. Carmel Cemetery was established in 1889 by the Carmelite Fathers who staffed Holy Trinity (German) Parish in Pittsburgh’s Hill District. It remained a parish cemetery until 1958 when it became the first parish cemetery to be merged into the Catholic Cemeteries Association.


24 Of the last ten deceased popes who served in the 159-year period 1846-2005, four have been canonized (Pius X, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II), one has been beatified (Pius IX), and two have been declared Venerable (Pius XII and John Paul I).

25 Italian historian Andrea di Stefano has undertaken research on the diplomatic and political aspects of relations between the Holy See and the United States. See Andrea di Stefano and Ann Rodgers, “Pittsburgh Priest Had Role in Liberation of Rome in 1944,” Pittsburgh Catholic, June 7, 2016.

After Monsignor Carroll’s death, his diaries and personal papers were entrusted to his brother Coleman Carroll. Coleman’s successor as archbishop of Miami, Edward A. McCarthy, subsequently selected George R. Kemon — a Philadelphia native, former editor of the Miami archdiocese’s newspaper, and adjunct college professor — to write Monsignor Carroll’s biography. Kemon’s untimely death in May 1988 left the project unfinished. See Ann Rodgers, “Diaries of a Wartime Priest,” Fort Myers News-Press, July 14, 1984, 1D-2D.