



Shepherding the STEEL CITY FLOCK

By Deirdre Clemente and Elise Canup

The Heinz History Center's new exhibition, *Vatican Splendors*, proves it is hard to outshine Rome when it comes to art and culture. But treasures from our own diocese prove that Pittsburgh isn't just a city of steel, it's a place with its own splendors—religious objects whose significance and symbolism reflect the rich history of Catholicism in the region.

In the year 1700 a group of men under the leadership of French explorer DeLaSalle made its way down the Allegheny River to the forks of the Ohio. During their time here they likely celebrated the first mass in Western Pennsylvania; tradition however, dates that first mass to 1754 when Father Denys Baron, a

chaplain serving the French forces, celebrated mass after landing at the Point near what would become Fort Duquesne.

Some 89 years later, after the French had been ousted from the region and German and Irish Catholics had begun to arrive, the Diocese of Pittsburgh was established. When Bishop Michael O'Connor was installed on August 15, 1843, the new diocese had approximately 30,000 Catholics worshipping in 46 churches. Today, the Diocese of Pittsburgh serves almost three-quarters of a million Catholics in more than 200 parishes. With 300 plus years of Catholic presence in the region, it's no wonder the diocese is home to some splendors of its own. The treasures owned and used by the 12

men who have served as bishops of Pittsburgh are among the most outstanding.

From the first bishop (Irish-born Michael O'Connor, who served from 1843-1860) to the one with the longest tenure (Bishop Hugh Charles Boyle served from 1921-1950), the Diocese of Pittsburgh has been home to some of the Catholic Church's most influential leaders. The liturgical instruments and vestments these men used are notable not only for their ability to inspire the masses but also their beauty. Understanding the symbolism of these historic artifacts, elaborate ecclesiastical vestments, and jewelry makes clear their meaning both to the men who used or wore them and the flock they shepherded.

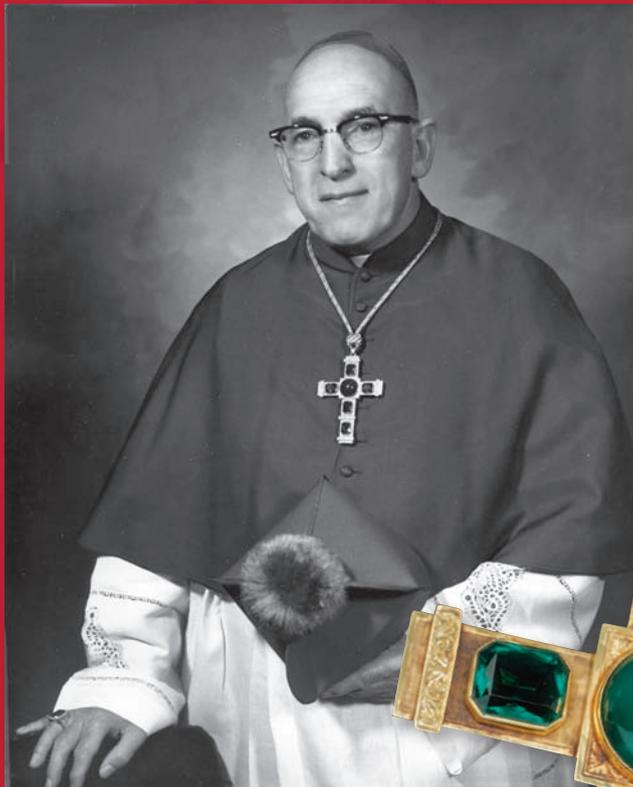


Bishop Michael J. O'Connor.

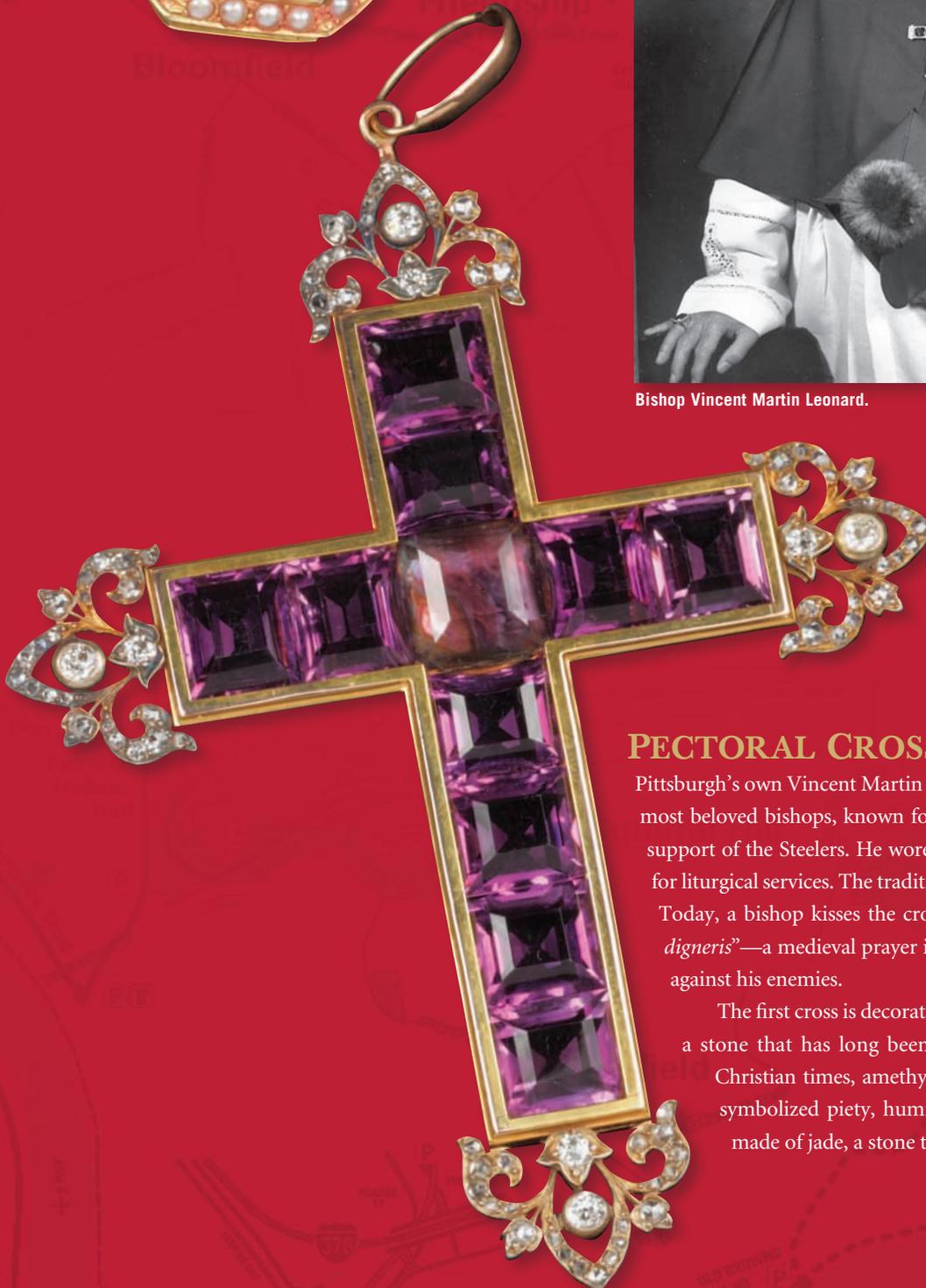
DIARY:

Among the most historically significant treasures of Western Pennsylvania's Catholic history is the diary of the first bishop of Pittsburgh, Right Reverend Michael J. O'Connor. Born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1810, O'Connor, a gifted student and theologian, earned a Doctorate of Theology at age 23. That same year he requested special permission for ordination because he was not yet 25, the canonical age to assume the priesthood. In 1839 O'Connor accepted an invitation from his friend and former classmate, Bishop Francis Kenrick of Philadelphia, to serve as chair of Theology at St. Charles Seminary. He left Ireland and set sail for the New World. After serving for some time as president of the seminary, O'Connor was sent to Pittsburgh in 1841 to become the pastor of St. Paul Church and the vicar-general of the Western Part of the Pennsylvania Diocese. His journal, housed in the diocesan archives, begins on the day he arrived in Pittsburgh to fulfill that duty, June 17, 1841. Two years later he was consecrated as the first bishop of the Diocese of Pittsburgh.

June 17. 1841
Arrived in Pittsburgh on this day (Thursday)
Lodging at Mr. Timmons at \$4.00 per week
Monday 21st Learned the difficulties of
German congregations. They are displeas-
ed at the conduct of the Superior of the
Redemptorists, and at the contract w^h
he proposes to them. Think the B^p
look upon the purchase as an impos-
sible one, and wish to get rid of it. Write
to Fr. Czarkent to explain his obligation
to retain it. Apprise the bis. Bop of the state
of affairs. He is determined not allow Mr
Prot to remain here if the B^p go away. He
considers the conduct of the Supr. imprudent
but declines interfering, if it can be avoid-
ed.
July 5th Received a letter from O'Connell
telling me that he wishes to enter Balt.
Semi. a subject of Boston. In answer I request
him to communicate to the Bp of Boston that
he had been in Maynooth. Mr. Quarter



Bishop Vincent Martin Leonard.



PECTORAL CROSSES:

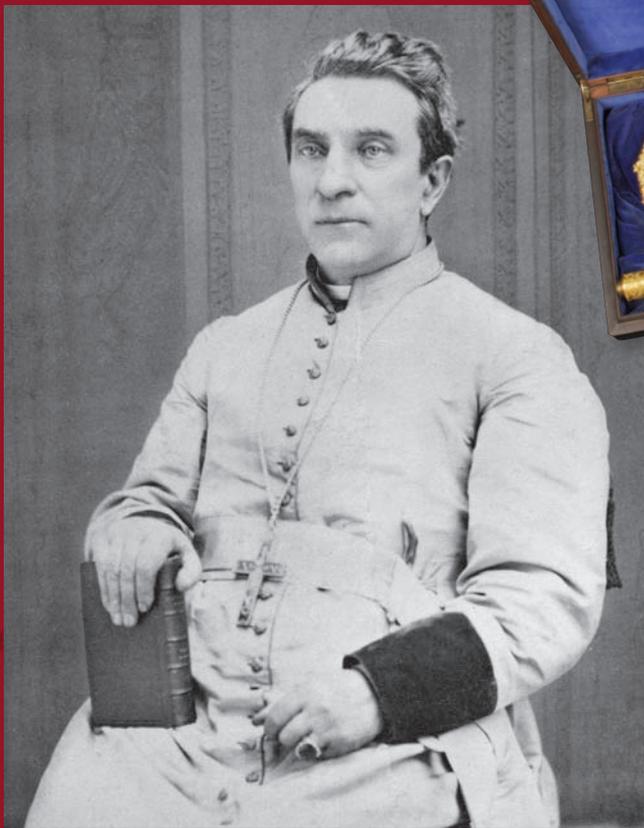
Pittsburgh's own Vincent Martin Leonard (served 1969-1983) was one of the city's most beloved bishops, known for his quiet demeanor, as well as his unwavering support of the Steelers. He wore these pectoral crosses and their matching rings for liturgical services. The tradition of the pectoral cross dates to the Middle Ages. Today, a bishop kisses the cross, puts it on his neck and recites "*Munire me digneris*"—a medieval prayer in which the bishop petitions God for protection against his enemies.

The first cross is decorated with small diamonds and is made of amethyst, a stone that has long been regarded as a talisman against witchcraft. In Christian times, amethyst was known as "the bishop's stone" because it symbolized piety, humility, and spiritual wisdom. The second cross is made of jade, a stone that connotes dignity, grace, and morality.

TIFFANY CROZIER:

Shaped like a shepherd's crook, the crozier symbolizes leadership and is bestowed upon the bishop at his ordination. Bishops use the staff to confer sacraments and conduct liturgical services. The bishop carries it in his left hand in order to leave his right hand free to give blessings.

Tiffany & Co. designed this crozier for Bishop John Tuigg (served 1876-1889). The famed jewelry firm, established in 1837, had an impressive business in processional items for the Catholic Church. They offered croziers, chalices, and other altar items. This model of crozier was available in four different materials: gilt, silver gilt, colorful enamel, or, as is the case with this particular piece, gilded brass. The manufacturing costs for the staff totaled \$240, expensive for the 1870s.



Bishop John Tuigg.

ORNATE MITRE:

Bishop John F. Deardon (served 1950-1958) may have been described by his mother as “quiet and undramatic,” but his consecration was quite the contrary. The *Pittsburgh Press* noted, “Packed into the 2 ½ hour consecration mass are 20 centuries of awe-inspiring religious pageantry, handed down from the days of St. Peter.” At the close of the ceremony Deardon was given this mitre that originally belonged to Bishop Joseph Schrembs, bishop of Cleveland, and features the image of the dove, the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

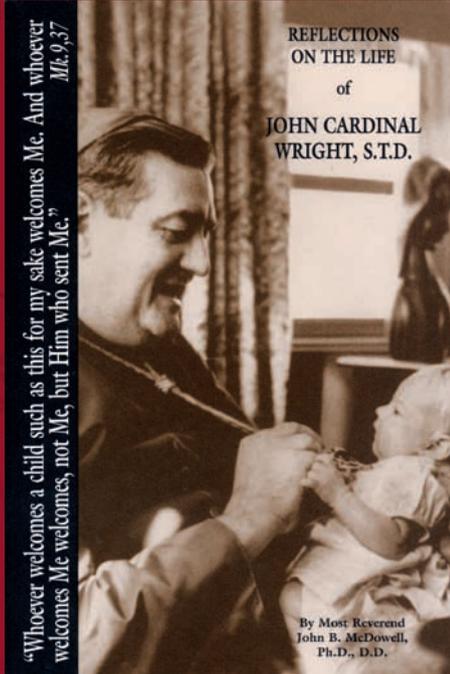
Some historians of religion date the use of the mitre to the time of the apostles; others believe it was first used in Rome in the mid-10th century. The cap has two horns to represent the two rays of light that came from the head of Moses upon receiving the Ten Commandments and two lappets decorated with red fringe. Three types of mitres are commonly worn by bishops: the *simplex* (made of undecorated white linen or silk and worn at funerals or on Good Friday); the *auriphrygiata* (made of plain gold cloth or white silk with gold embroidery and worn to preside over sacraments); and the present example, the *pretiosa* (decorated with precious stones and golden thread, to be worn on Sundays and feast days).



Bishop John F. Deardon.



A 2003 biography of Cardinal John Wright.



ORNATE CROZIER:

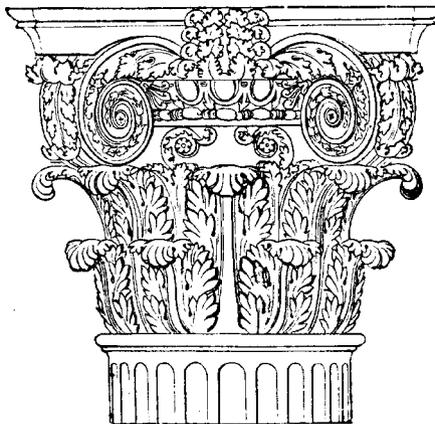
Born in Boston as the son of a factory clerk, Bishop John Wright was one of the diocese's most prolific leaders. In his 10-year tenure (1959-1969), Wright established 21 new parishes, 25 new elementary schools, 10 secondary schools, and La Roche College. Wright was made a cardinal in 1969 and was instrumental in electing Pope John Paul II.

His crozier features a representation of the Madonna and Child enthroned and attended by an angel. The tiny Baby Jesus raises his right hand in blessing, an appropriate symbol for a bishop to carry as he blesses his flock. 

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