

## Brief History of the Diocese

1300s - The first to establish settlements in the North Country were the Iroquois (14<sup>th</sup> century).

1600s - French, Dutch, and English fur-traders came; followed shortly after by the French missionaries, Father Issac Joques, S.J. companions who were martyred establishing the first missions among the Five Nations.

For a long time the Church of the North Country was served by the Bishops of Quebec because of the intolerance of the English and later the American Rule. The Catholic Church was suspect because of the ties to the English enemy, France.

1752 – The mission of The Holy Trinity at La Presentation Fort (Ogdensburg) was established May 29, 1752.

1808 – Established as part of the Diocese of New York.

1847 – Established as part of the Diocese of Albany.

1872 - The Diocese of Ogdensburg was acknowledged on February 16, 1872 by Pope Pius IX, “We, with definite knowledge, mature deliberation, and by our Apostolic Authority, in virtue of the present document, separate and sever from the Diocese of Albany, the following territory – the counties of St. Lawrence, Franklin, Clinton, Jefferson, Lewis and Essex, together with part of the counties of Herkimer and Hamilton which lies above the northern line of the townships of Ohio and Russia; and this same territory we erect and constitute as a true and properly called diocese.”

### **Ref. *A History of Catholicism in the North Country* by Sister Mary Christine Taylor, S.S.J., Ph.D. (1972)**

#### ◆ **First Bishop Edgar P. Wadhams, D.D**

May 5, 1872 – December 5, 1891

Former Vicar General of Albany, NY

Born – Lewis, NY 1817

*As the first Bishop of the Diocese of Ogdensburg **Bishop Wadhams** built more than 25 churches, St. Joseph’s Home for the aged, 17 Catholic schools and welcomed 18 communities of women religious women and four communities of men religious to the diocese. Among them was the Society of the Sisters of St. Joseph, a diocesan religious community of Sisters, which remains present in the diocese today.*

#### ◆ **Second Bishop Henry Gabriels**

May 5, 1892 – April 23, 1921

Former Rector of St. Joseph’s Seminary, Troy, NY

Born – Wannegem-Lede, Belgium, 1838

*During the tenure of **Bishop Gabriels**, several hospitals were founded by religious communities in northern New York. In 1898, St. Mary’s Cathedral in Ogdensburg became the first cathedral in New York State to be consecrated.*

- ◆ **Third Bishop Joseph Henry Conroy, D.D.**  
 January 18, 1922 – March 20, 1939  
 Former Auxiliary of Bishop of Ogdensburg  
 Born – Watertown, NY 1858  
***Bishop Conroy**, a native of Watertown, received the Atonement Friars and Religious, formerly Episcopalians, into the church. He also opened Wadhams Hall Seminary which educated diocesan priests for the next 75 years.*
  
- ◆ **Forth Bishop Francis Joseph Monaghan, S.T.D.**  
 May 2, 1939 – November 13, 1942  
 Former Coadjutor of Diocese of Ogdensburg  
 Born – Newark, NJ 1890  
***Bishop Monaghan** relocated and reorganized the Chancery Offices, built a new Wadhams Hall, and two parish churches in spite of illness and the constraints from World War 11.*
  
- ◆ **Fifth Bishop Bryan Joseph McEntegart**  
 August 9, 1943 – August 18, 1953  
 Former Organizer of Catholic Charities  
 Born – Manhattan, NY 1893  
 Appointed – Rector of Catholic University, Wash. DC and later Bishop of Brooklyn, NY  
*As fifth bishop, Bishop **McEntegart** came to the North Country with years of experience in the charitable work of the Church, helping to organize Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of New York. Along with this commitment to the poor, he brought a commitment to communication and established the North Country Catholic diocesan newspaper in 1946. He also appointed the first full-time Secretary of Education.*
  
- ◆ **Sixth Bishop Walter Philip Kellenberg, D.D.**  
 March 25, 1954 – May 26, 1957  
 Former Auxiliary Bishop of New York  
 Born – New York, NY 1901  
 Appointed – Bishop of Rockville Center, NY  
***Bishop Kellenberg** had a particular concern for Catholic education with a focus on CCD, providing religious education for children in public schools and lay catechists.*
  
- ◆ **Seventh Bishop James Johnston Navagh, D.D.**  
 June 14, 1957 – May 8, 1963  
 Former Auxiliary Bishop of Raleigh, NC  
 Born – Buffalo, NY 1901  
 Appointed – Bishop of Paterson, NJ  
*The seventh bishop, **Bishop Navagh** aimed to provide Catholic education for all Catholics, from kindergarten through college. He built 15 Catholic schools and a dozen catechetical centers. He*

*directed the erection of Mater Dei College in Ogdensburg, the only Catholic co-ed college in the diocese. In 1961 he responded to the pope's appeal for missionary aid to the Latin American Church, opening the Ogdensburg Peruvian Apostolate. He also established the Office of the Lay Apostolate, the Bishop's Committee for Christian Families and the Diocesan Development Fund, later known as the Bishop's Fund.*

◆ **Eighth Bishop Leo Richard Smith, Ph.D., J.C.D.**

May 13, 1963 – October 9, 1963

Former Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo

Born – Attica, NY 1905

***Bishop Smith** died at the Second Vatican Council in Rome after only five months of service as Bishop of Ogdensburg. During his short tenure, Edmond A. Guggenheim donated property in Saranac Lake which was later converted to a diocesan summer camp, construction for a new Wadhams Hall was begun and ground was broken for Avila Hall at Mater Dei.*

◆ **Ninth Bishop Thomas Andrew Donnellan, J.C.D.**

April 13, 1963 – June 14, 1968

Former Rector of the Major Seminary of New York

Born – Bronx, NY 1914

Appointed – Archbishop of Atlanta, GA

***Bishop Donnellan** was responsible for implementing reforms of Vatican II. He was interested in the laity and directed that parish councils be established in every parish, supported the Catholic Lawyers Guild and the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women and established the Lay Employees Retirement Plan.*

◆ **Tenth Bishop Stanislaus Joseph Brzana, S.T.D.**

October 22, 1968 – November 11, 1993

Former Auxiliary Bishop of Buffalo

Born – Buffalo, NY 1917

Retired at age 75

***Bishop Brzana** was the longest serving Bishop of Ogdensburg, leading the North Country Church for 25 years. As in dioceses across the country, it was a time of change. Some Catholic schools closed while others merged into central schools serving several parishes. Parishes closed or became oratories of began sharing pastors. The first official cycle of diocesan planning, in response to a decrease in the number of priests, began. Bishop Brzana established the Diocesan Pastoral Council, the Permanent Diaconate, the Formation for Ministry program and the RCIA.*

◆ **Eleventh Bishop Paul S. Loverde, S.T.L., J.C.L.**

January 17, 1994 – January 25, 1999

Former Auxiliary Bishop of Hartford, CT

Born – Framington, MA 1940

Appointed Bishop of Arlington, VA

***Bishop Loverde** began a New Evangelization initiative as called for by Pope John Paul II. He created the Office of Evangelization and opened the Office of Planning.*

◆ **Twelfth Bishop Gerald M. Barbarito, D.D., J.C.L.**

January 7, 2000 – July 1, 2003

Former Auxiliary Bishop of Brooklyn

Born – Brooklyn, NY 1950

Appointed Bishop of Palm Beach, FL

*A major focus of **Bishop Barbarito** was family life. He also continued many of the programs and initiatives of Bishop Loverde's time such as evangelization and planning.*

◆ **Thirteenth Bishop Robert J. Cunningham**

May 18, 2004 – April 21, 2009

Former Vicar General of Buffalo

Born – Buffalo, NY 1943

Appointed Bishop of Syracuse, NY

***Bishop Cunningham** was particularly devoted to Catholic education, Catholic Charities and strong parish life. He focused many of his efforts on ensuring that the church had the financial resources it needed and, under his leadership, the Bishop's Fund Appeal surpassed \$1 million for the first time and the Foundation of the Diocese of Ogdensburg was established.*