

Dedicating the Trinity Dome

Cardinal Wuerl dedicates the largest dome at the basilica.

By **ELIZABETH A. ELLIOTT**

Catholic Herald Staff Writer

The Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, which will mark its 100th anniversary in 2020, celebrated its patronal feast day, the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, with the dedication of the Trinity Dome Mosaic, one of the largest mosaic installations of its kind in the world.

Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl dedicated the dome Dec. 8. Arlington Bishop Michael F. Burbidge and Bishop Emeritus Paul S. Loverde concelebrated, along with several archbishops, bishops and priests. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, prefect of the Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life, represented Pope Francis as a special envoy from the Vatican for the dedication.

“It is such an honor to serve a diocese so close to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception,” said Bishop Burbidge. “The completion of the Trinity Dome is a testament to the generosity of the faithful and sponsors who contributed the funds needed to bring this beautiful mosaic to fruition, and also to the dedicated leadership of Cardinal Donald Wuerl, Msgr. Walter Rossi and all those associated with the Basilica Shrine. For countless generations, the faithful will come and pray in this beautiful space, and when they look up to God, they will be inspired by an amazing mosaic reflecting the sacredness and majesty of our faith.”

Before the dome was dedicated, Cardinal Farrell read a letter and greetings from Pope Francis for the occasion.

“In your (Cardinal Farrell’s) address, you will exhort all those present to give thanks for all the benefits received from the merciful God, and exhort them as well to the diligent observance of His commandments, most especially as regards the promotion and defense of human life and the dignity of the person,” the statement read in part.

The Trinity Dome Mosaic, which marks the completion of the basilica, covers more than 18,300 square feet of the interior surface of the central nave and is the Basilica’s largest dome. It is composed of more than 14 million pieces of Venetian glass in more than 1,000 color variations.

The mosaic work was done at the Trivisanutto Giovanni Mosaic Company in Spilimbergo, Italy. It was shipped to the shrine in more than 30,000 sections that together weighed 24 tons.

The mosaic depicts the Trinity, Mary and 13 saints associated with the United States, including Sts. Juan Diego, Kateri Tekakwitha, Teresa of Kolkata, Francis Cabrini, John Paul II and Junipero Serra. The beginning and the end of the Nicene Creed encircles the base of the dome, and the four evangelists are pictured along with angels.

Cardinal Wuerl said the mosaic reflects the diversity of Catholics in the pews. “All we have to do is look out across the thousands of people gathered for Mass and we see the face of the world,” he said.

Elliott can be reached at eelliott@catholicherald.com.



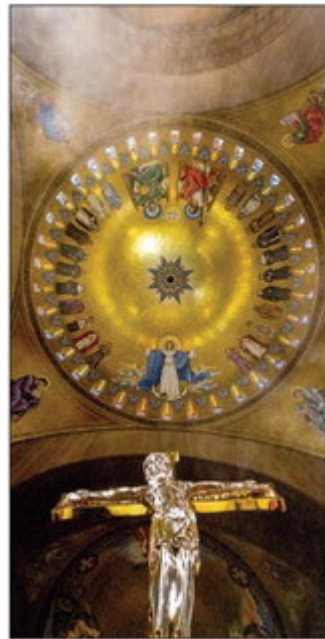
Washington Cardinal Donald W. Wuerl (center) imposes incense to bless the Trinity Dome at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Dec. 8.

Matthew Barrick | Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception



The Trinity Dome is the largest dome in the shrine. The mosaic covers more than 18,300 square feet and is composed of more than 14 million pieces of Venetian glass.

ELIZABETH A. ELLIOTT | CATHOLIC HERALD



Incense rises to bless the Trinity Dome during the dedication.

Matthew Barrick | Basilica