



CATHEDRAL PRESS CONFERENCE BACKGROUNDER

DIOCESE OF MADISON

The Diocese of Madison was established on January 9, 1946, and is one of five Roman Catholic dioceses, or geographical districts under the pastoral care of a bishop, in the state of Wisconsin. The Diocese of Madison covers 11 counties (Columbia, Dane, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Iowa, Jefferson, Lafayette, Marquette, Rock, and Sauk) across southern and southwest Wisconsin. It serves 160,000 Catholics and has 135 churches, 44 schools, and more than 120 Catholic cemeteries.

BISHOP HYING

Bishop Donald J. Hying is the fifth bishop of the Diocese of Madison. He was appointed as our bishop by Pope Francis on April 25, 2019, and installed on June 25, 2019.

CATHOLIC CATHEDRALS

A cathedral is the central “mother church” of a diocese, where the seat (in Latin, “cathedra”) of the bishop is located. It hosts important events for a diocese, such as ordinations to the priesthood and the annual Chrism Mass.

DIOCESE OF MADISON CATHEDRAL

The Diocese of Madison’s first cathedral was St. Raphael Church, located on West Main Street in downtown Madison. The church’s cornerstone was laid in 1854 and it was elevated to a cathedral when the Diocese of Madison was founded.

On March 14, 2005, St. Raphael Cathedral was destroyed in an arson fire. Since then, the future of the cathedral has been uncertain. In the absence of a cathedral, events such as ordinations have been held at other large churches in the diocese.

As part of the Diocese of Madison’s strategic plan called *Into the Deep*, the diocese set out three possibilities for the cathedral: 1) to build a brand-new church at the old St. Raphael’s site downtown, 2) to elevate an existing church to a cathedral, and 3) to go without a cathedral and continue using other churches to host important diocesan events. It was decided to petition the Vatican to name an existing church in Madison as a cathedral. St. Bernard Church in Madison was chosen and the proposal was sent to Pope Francis for his approval.

In January 2024, the Diocese of Madison announced that its proposal had been accepted and that St. Bernard Church would be elevated to a cathedral.

ST. BERNARD CHURCH

St. Bernard Church, located at 2438 Atwood Ave. in Madison, traces its foundation back to 1907, and the first church building was constructed in 1908. The current building was completed in 1927. It is notable for its construction of local sandstone and its Gothic Revival style.

Renovations to St. Bernard’s have begun and are expected to be complete by the summer or fall of 2025. The pews will be replaced and two new organs will be installed. In the meantime, Masses are being held in the parish hall.

Fr. Michael Radowicz is the pastor of St. Bernard’s Church.