



# Basilica Facts— Did You Know???

- The Basilica was built between 1806 and 1821.
- It was the first Cathedral in the United States and the center of the first Diocese and then Archdiocese of the United States.
- It was designed by Benjamin Henry Latrobe under the leadership of John Carroll, the first Archbishop in the United States.
- It was designed to be a symbol of the new America—modern like the new city of Washington, D.C., rather than built in the traditional style of Europe's cathedrals.
- The Basilica was a symbol to Catholics of the separation of church and state that was guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States.
- Benjamin Henry Latrobe volunteered to design the Basilica.
- The funeral of Charles Carroll of Carrollton (the only Catholic signer of the *Declaration of Independence*) was held in the Basilica.
- The Basilica is considered to be one of the finest examples of 19<sup>th</sup>-century architecture.
- It was the site of three Plenary Councils (important Church meetings) that:
  - Decided to extend the Church as the population moved westward.
  - Dealt with civil rights issues after the Civil War.
  - Developed the Baltimore Catechism - the major document for the teachings of the basics of faith for generations of Americans until the 1960's.
- Pope John Paul II and Mother Theresa have visited the Basilica.
- The Basilica was declared a Minor Basilica in 1937, a National Landmark in 1972, and a National Shrine in 1993.