

SAINT ADALBERT

Founded: 1910 | First Mass: October 16, 1910 | Present church built: 1923-1926

Patron Profile:

Saint Adalbert of Prague (956-997)

Feast Day: April 23

The son of nobility, Adalbert was born in 956 in the region of Bohemia. His given name was Wojtech, but he later adopted the name Adalbert after his mentor and teacher, Archbishop Adalbert of Magdeburg, (d. 981). Ordained a priest at 27 in 983, within months he was named Bishop of Prague. During his tenure, Adalbert reformed diocesan finances to minimize the funds used for his expenses, preached regularly, and frequently visited the poor and imprisoned.

Despite his zealous service, Adalbert encountered intense opposition and hostility among his flock throughout his time as Bishop of Prague. He ultimately held the office twice over the course of his life and both times he resigned with papal permission due to the resistance he experienced in the diocese. Adalbert attempted to return to Prague for a third time, but he was met with threats to his safety and did not resume his duties as Bishop. In between and after his service in Prague, Adalbert was a member of a Roman monastery as well as a missionary, first in Hungary, and later in Poland and Germany.

Although he experienced turmoil in Prague, Adalbert succeeded in spreading Christianity throughout central Europe. However, his mission in Poland and Germany abruptly ended when a pagan priest abducted Adalbert along with two companions; in the spring of 997, he was martyred by his captors.



PARISH HISTORY

Saint Adalbert Parish traces its roots to 1905 when a group of dedicated volunteers formed the Saint Adalbert Fraternal Aid Society to collect funds in order to purchase property for a new church and school. By 1907, enough money had been collected to purchase land on Olive Street and the foundations of the building were laid in 1909. In 1910, Bishop Alderling appointed Father John Kubacki as the first pastor of Saint Adalbert, officially establishing the parish. It is the fourth Catholic parish founded by Polish immigrants in South Bend. Construction on the church-school building progressed with the dedication of the cornerstone on September 4, 1910. The parish celebrated its first Mass in the open air within the partially finished church on October 16, 1910; the building was dedicated in September 1911.

Under the leadership of Father John Osadnik, who served as pastor from 1920 to 1940, the parish started to plan for a new church as it had outgrown the original church-school facility. Construction on the new church officially commenced on July 29, 1923, with the laying of the cornerstone. Work continued for nearly three years and the grand Gothic Revival church was completed and blessed in the spring of 1926.

In more recent years, the parish has seen significant shifts in its ethnic composition as a result of Latino families settling in the surrounding neighborhood. This trend, however, continues Saint Adalbert's tradition of serving immigrant communities. The parish has also experienced many organizational changes. In 2003, it not only merged with Saint Stephen of Hungary (which then closed), but it also was entrusted to the Congregation of Holy Cross and paired with Saint Casimir Parish. The current pastor, Father Peter Pacini, C.S.C., began his ministry in 2010.



Architectural Glossary

- **Bas-reliefs:** A low relief sculptural technique that gives the impression that the sculpture has been raised above the background plane, but has actually been created by carving away the background material.
- **Clerestory:** The upper part of a church, containing a series of windows. It is clear of the roofs of the aisles and admits light to the central parts of the building.
- **Frieze:** A broad horizontal band of sculpted or painted decoration, especially on a wall near the ceiling.

Photography: Bartholomew J. Timm
Text & Layout: Andrew J. Remick

Sources: "St. Adalbert of Prague" Catholic News Agency, catholicnewsagency.com; St. Adalbert Parish, "History of St. Adalbert," www.stadalbertparish.org, accessed May 6, 2015; Saint Adalbert's Parish, *Fifty Years at Saint Adalbert's Parish, South Bend, Indiana, 1960*; Denis R. McNamara, *Heavenly City: The Architectural Tradition of Catholic Chicago*, Chicago: Liturgy Training Publications, 2005.

ART & ARCHITECTURE

Built between 1923 and 1926, Saint Adalbert's present church is a magnificent Gothic Revival structure. It exemplifies of the great tradition among Polish congregations of building monumental churches. The use of the Gothic style for the design of Saint Adalbert distinguishes it from many of the other grand Polish churches both in South Bend and elsewhere in the country which tended to draw on the Renaissance and Baroque architecture seen in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Poland.

The design of the church employs a cruciform plan composed of a central nave, flanked by aisles and intersected by transepts. The chancel features a large central apse in which the main altar is located; the side altars honor the Blessed Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph. The niche above the tabernacle in the high altar can contain either an image of Saint Adalbert or Our Lady. The entire interior is sumptuously decorated. Bas-reliefs of angels above the arches, niches with sculptures of Saints, and ornamental friezes below the clerestory windows, are among the many features contributing to the beauty of this church.

The vibrant stained glass windows throughout the nave, transepts, and clerestory depict a variety of Saints, scenes from the Bible, and traditional Christian iconography. The two large windows in the transepts show the Wedding Feast at Cana and Christ with children. The windows in the sanctuary above the main altar represent the seven Sacraments of the Church.

Murals in the sanctuary and in the transepts also add to Saint Adalbert's rich environment. Within the sanctuary, to either side of the high altar, are portraits of Saints. Saint Hedwig and Saint John Cantius, both important figures in Polish tradition, appear to be among the individuals featured in the paintings.

The South transept contains a mural of the Holy Family accompanied by the family of John the Baptist. In the North transept is the most iconic piece of art in the church. Painted by John A. Mallin in 1941, the mural celebrates the humble, yet steadfast, origins of the parish. Polish immigrants are depicted building a church while others are beating their swords into plowshares. Industrial development, which drew many of the original parishioners to South Bend, is represented by factories in the background. A priest is shown pointing to a cloud which contains an image of Christ fallen under the weight of his Cross. The Polish inscription surrounding Jesus translates into English as "By the sweat of your brow you have received the Bread of Life." This image is meant to connect Christ's struggle to the challenges endured by the founders of Saint Adalbert.