

1818-2018: Bicentennial Events in Context  
Mr. Eric Fair  
Archives of the St. Louis Archdiocese

On **January 5, 1818**, Bishop William Valentine DuBourg arrived in St. Louis to a crowd of 2,500 cheering residents, both Catholics and Protestants. DuBourg was installed in his episcopal chair by Bishop Joseph Flaget of the Diocese of Bardstown, KY. Rev. Felix De Andreis becomes the first pastor in St. Louis and the first resident priest in 10 years.

DuBourg had previously been appointed the Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Louisiana and the Floridas. Originally from France, he returned there after his appointment to seek funds and missionaries for what was essentially a missionary territory (St. Louis and New Orleans being the only large towns in the entire diocese). In 1815, while in Europe, he is consecrated bishop by Pope Pius VII. It is from DuBourg's efforts that most of the 1818-2018 anniversary events flow:

- DuBourg struggled with corruption and competing personalities while serving as the Apostolic Administrator in New Orleans. While traveling in Europe to raise support for the diocese, he sought and received permission to move his seat from New Orleans to St. Louis. After he arrives in St. Louis, he finds the church building there is inadequate and in disrepair. On **March 29, 1818**, DuBourg lays the cornerstone for the first cathedral here.
- DuBourg and the Vatican reach out to the Vincentian community for missionary volunteers. They quickly agree, and Frs. Felix De Andreis and Joseph Rosati leave immediately for their new assignments. DuBourg asks them to establish a new seminary in the diocese. They arrive in Perryville, MO to start their work on **October 1, 1818**. They found St. Mary of the Barrens, the first seminary within the future boundaries of the Diocese/Archdiocese of St. Louis. Kenrick-Glennon Seminary can trace its roots directly from this. Also, one of the Vincentian missionaries, Fr. Rosati, is eventually consecrated the first Bishop of St. Louis in 1826.
- While in France, DuBourg makes contact with the Society of the Sacred Heart. Mother Rose Philippine Duchesne volunteers to go to the diocese with a group of sisters to begin missionary work. They arrive in St. Louis on **August 21, 1818** and go to their assigned location in St. Charles on September 7, 1818. There they establish the first convent in the U.S. on **September 7, 1818**, and on **September 14, 1818** they establish the Academy of the Sacred Heart, the first free school west of the Mississippi and the first Catholic school within the boundaries of the future diocese/archdiocese. Duchesne would remain in the U.S. for the next 34 years, continuing her missionary work, leading to her eventual canonization.
- DuBourg wanted his new cathedral city to be a center of education. As such, on **November 16, 1818** he rents space in the home of Madame Alvarez for a Latin school for boys under the direction of Fr. Francois Neal and three other priests. The rich tradition of Catholic education in St. Louis begins with Saint Louis Academy. Eventually the Society of Jesus takes over operations of the school and it evolves into Saint Louis University.