



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Vatican Names St. Peter's Catholic Church a Minor Basilica

COLUMBIA, SC – The Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and Discipline of the Sacraments recently issued a decree granting Saint Peter's Catholic Church in Columbia the title 'Minor Basilica.' This makes the church the first basilica in the Diocese of Charleston which comprises the entire state of South Carolina; it is the 85th in the United States. "We are humbled the Holy See has honored Saint Peter's with the designation of Minor Basilica. This action acknowledges the parish's historic beauty, devoutly celebrated liturgies and growing vitality. I hope we will be a place of pilgrimage that inspires the Christian faithful for years to come," said the Very Reverend Canon Gary S. Linsky, Rector/Pastor of Saint Peter's.

The 111-year-old Roman Catholic Church is now officially named "The Basilica of Saint Peter." The Most Reverend Robert E. Guglielmone, Bishop of Charleston, and Father Linsky made the announcement during today's 11:00 a.m. Mass. "We are honored to now have a minor basilica in South Carolina. We hold this parish in high esteem because of its spiritual and historical significance to the Diocese of Charleston," said Bishop Guglielmone.

Saint Peter's had its origin in 1821 when the Diocese of Charleston's first bishop, John England, sent Fr. Dennis Corkery to minister to Irish workers building a local canal. Construction of the original parish church began in 1824 and survived the burning of Columbia near the end of the Civil War. It was replaced by the current, neo-Gothic church in 1907.

The word basilica is derived from a Greek term meaning "royal house." In the Catholic world, a basilica is a church building that has been accorded special privileges by the pope. There are two kinds of basilicas. The world's four major, or papal, basilicas are St. John Lateran, St. Peter, St. Paul Outside the Walls, and St. Mary Major, all in Rome.

Minor, or lesser, basilicas are significant churches in Rome and elsewhere in the world that meet certain criteria and are given special ecclesiastical privileges. Minor basilicas are traditionally named because of their antiquity, dignity, historical value, architectural and artistic worth, and significance as centers of worship. A basilica must "stand out as a center of active and pastoral liturgy," according to the 1989 Vatican document *Domus ecclesiae*.

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Saint Peter's has the added historical significance of being the only parish church in the Diocese of Charleston, and all but Miami in the American South East, to have hosted a papal visit when then Pope now Saint John Paul II led an ecumenical prayer service on September 11, 1987, during his fourth Papal visit to the United States.

Additional information about The Basilica of Saint Peter may be found at visitstpeters.org or at [Facebook/visitstpeters](https://www.facebook.com/visitstpeters).

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