Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception

The largest Roman Catholic church in the United States and one of the 10 largest churches in the world

- The basilica is the nation’s preeminent Marian shrine, dedicated to the patroness of the United States, the Blessed Virgin Mary, under her title of the Immaculate Conception.

- In 1913, Pope Pius X approved plans for the building of a national shrine in the United States, and its cornerstone was laid in 1920. The first Mass there was celebrated in 1924. The shrine’s Crypt Church was completed two years later, and its Great Upper Church superstructure, delayed by the Depression and World War II, was dedicated in 1959.

- Over 70 chapels and oratories – including to Our Lady of Guadalupe, Our Mother of Africa, and Our Lady of Vietnam – have been added to the National Shrine, dedicated by various ethnic groups and religious communities, showing the devotion that American Catholics from different cultures, traditions and ethnic backgrounds have to Mary.

- On Oct. 7, 1979, Pope John Paul II became the first-ever reigning pope to visit the National Shrine, and eleven years later, he elevated it to the status of a minor basilica.

- On April 16, 2008, Pope Benedict XVI visited the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on the first full day of his apostolic journey to the United States. He presided over solemn vespers and addressed the bishops of the United States in the Crypt Church.

- Open 365 days a year, the Basilica of the National Shrine receives an estimated one million visitors annually.

- The basilica’s exterior includes its Great Dome, which towers over the skyline of northeast Washington, D.C., along with its 329-feet-tall Knights Tower, a gift of the Knights of Columbus.

- Junipero Serra, who will be canonized at the Basilica by Pope Francis on September 23, 2015, has long been represented in the National Shrine. The soon-to-be saint is represented in stained glass in the Great Upper Church Sacristy, where Pope Francis will vest before the Canonization Mass. Junipero Serra is also represented in mosaic on the East Portico of the Basilica, where Pope Francis will canonize the 18th-century Franciscan missionary.

The Basilica is located at 400 Michigan Ave, NE, Washington, D.C.
For more information on the Basilica of the National Shrine, go to www.nationalshrine.com.