

CARDINAL DONALD WUERL

ARCHBISHOP EMERITUS

Cardinal Donald Wuerl served as the sixth Archbishop of Washington from 2006-2018. On October 12, 2018, Pope Francis accepted the resignation that Cardinal Wuerl had offered on November 12, 2015, on the date of his 75th birthday.



Cardinal Wuerl was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 2010 by Pope Benedict XVI and participated in the March 2013 conclave that elected Pope Francis.

As Archbishop of Washington, Cardinal Wuerl worked to expand educational opportunities for children and services to those in need, encouraged efforts to share the faith, championed the cause of religious freedom, led an effort to plan the Church's future outreach, utilized traditional and new media to spread the Gospel, and welcomed two popes to the nation's capital, Pope Benedict XVI in April 2008 and Pope Francis in September 2015.

He established the Saint John Paul II Seminary in 2011, the first seminary in the United States named after that saint. In June 2017, Cardinal Wuerl ordained the first three priests for the archdiocese from the original class that had first studied at the seminary.

Evangelization was a key component of Cardinal Wuerl's tenure in Washington, manifest in his 2010 pastoral letter on the New Evangelization and many efforts including for example Light the City, in which young adults invited people walking in downtown Washington to come inside the Cathedral of Saint Matthew the Apostle to pray. Most recently, more than 1,300 people became members of the Church at the 2018 Easter Vigil.

In 2014, Cardinal Wuerl marked the 75th anniversary of the archdiocese by convoking its first-ever Archdiocesan Synod, with the stated goal of "building the best Church we can be." The Synod's 200 participants from different backgrounds across the archdiocese drew on a widespread consultative effort – analyzing more than 15,000 suggestions from parish and regional listening sessions and online surveys – to chart a blueprint for the local Church's future outreach in the key areas of worship, education, community, service and stewardship/administration.

Under Cardinal Wuerl's leadership, "The Light is On For You" was launched in 2007 to encourage Catholics to go to Confession during Lent. This initiative is now widespread throughout the United States. The "Find the Perfect Gift" Advent campaign was instituted in 2010 to encourage people to reflect on the real meaning of Christmas and the gift of receiving and sharing faith in Jesus Christ, and to invite those who have been away from the Church to come home.

Nationally known as a teacher of the faith, Cardinal Wuerl expanded the archdiocese's communications outreach to include blogs, e-letters and various social and multi-media platforms. He is the author of numerous articles and more than a dozen books, including the best-selling catechisms, *The Teaching of Christ* and *The Catholic Way*. His recent books include *The Church* (2013), *The Light Is On For You* (2014), *Open to the Holy Spirit: Living the Gospel with Wisdom and Power* (2014), *The Marriage God Wants for You* (2015), *To the Martyrs* (2015) and *Ways to Pray* (2015).

Led by Cardinal Wuerl, the “Monumental Scholars Fund” was created in 2015 by the Consortium of Catholic Academies to provide tuition assistance and educational aid to disadvantaged children attending six Catholic schools in low-income neighborhoods in the Washington, D.C., metro area.

Additionally, Cardinal Wuerl published many pastoral letters, the most recent including *The Challenge of Racism Today*, saying the sin of racism must be recognized, confronted and overcome. Saying the time had come to “right a wrong” in 2018 he blessed and dedicated commemorative bronze plaques honoring unknown enslaved men, women and children buried throughout the archdiocese. That spring, the plaques were installed in the archdiocese’s five major Catholic cemeteries.

Following Pope Francis’ post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Amoris Laetitia*, Cardinal Wuerl led the effort nationwide by issuing a pastoral plan, *Sharing the Joy of Love in Marriage and Family*, for parishes to expand outreach to people in different stages of married and family life.

In addition to his archdiocesan responsibilities, he serves on numerous national and international bodies and is chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. In this capacity, Cardinal Wuerl blessed and dedicated the Trinity Dome Mosaic in 2017, marking the completion of the artwork for the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the largest Catholic Church in the United States.

He serves on a number of Vatican Congregations, Councils and Commissions including those for the Doctrine of the Faith and for Bishops. Cardinal Wuerl was appointed by Pope Benedict XVI to help direct the October 2012 Synod of Bishops on The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. He was also appointed by Pope Francis as a member of both the 2014 and the 2015 Synods on the Family.

The Cardinal was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and received graduate degrees from The Catholic University of America, the Gregorian University in Rome and a doctorate in theology from the University of Saint Thomas in Rome. He was ordained a bishop by Pope John Paul II on January 6, 1986, in Saint Peter’s Basilica, Rome. He served as Auxiliary Bishop in Seattle until 1987 and then as Bishop of Pittsburgh for 18 years until his appointment to Washington. His titular church in Rome is Saint Peter in Chains.

###