



# History of the Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul

*From the website of the "Prince of Peace" Parish on line:*

*<https://princeofpeace.me/history-of-the-basilica-of-saints-peter-and-paul>*

**1850** - In the late 1850's French speaking Canadians arrived daily into Lewiston

**1857** - Diocese of Portland sent a French speaking priest to serve the French Catholics in the basement of Saint Joseph's church.

**1869** - Basement of Saint Joseph's church unable to accommodate the 1000 Canadians.

**1870** - French congregation moved from the basement of Saint Joseph's church to Saint John, a storefront chapel. The first mass of the new French parish at Saint John's was celebrated on July 2nd.

**1871** - Saint Joseph's Chapel overcrowded.

**1872** - Cornerstone of Saint Peter's church was laid.

**1873** - Dedication mass for Saint Peter's church.

**1881** - Dominican Fathers of Lille, France and the Province of Canada took over the administration of the parish. Headed by Very Rev. Alexandre L. Mothon, O. P. Dominican Prior, St. Peter's Church, Lewiston, Me.

**1899** - The Dominicans published their Album Historique in which they referred to the parish as S. Pierre S. Paul de Lewiston, Maine.

**1902** - Saints Peter and Paul parish subdivided to form Saint Louis parish in Auburn.

**1905** - The first Saint Peter's church was demolished. The structure was too small to accommodate the nearly 10,000 parishioners.

**1906** - The basement of the new church completed in December 1906. (From 1906-1930, worship services were conducted in the basement because funding to complete the building was slow in coming).

**1907** - The parish growth was so rapid the Diocese of Portland asked the parish to subdivide the formation of Saint Mary's parish and again in 1923 for the formation of Holy Cross and Holy Family parishes. Each time, Saints Peter and Paul's building fund was also split.

**1933** - Diocese of Portland give permission to finish the Upper church.

**1936** - The Upper church of Saints Peter and Paul was completed on July 18th, 1936. (by now there are well over 20,000 Franco American church goers in the LA area)

**1938** - Dedication of the Saints Peter and Paul church on October 23, 1938.

**1983** - Saints Peter and Paul church placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the Federal Department of the Interior on July 14th, 1983. Second largest church in New England.

**1986** - The Dominicans left after 105 years of service. Administration of the parish returned to the Diocese of Portland.

**1991** - Restoration of the upper church started. Completed in 2002.

**2002** - Dedication of the new altar, June 9th, 2002. Campaign for renovations of the lower church started.

**2004** - Title of Minor Basilica conferred by Holy See on October 4, 2004

#### **Holy See Elevates Saints Peter and Paul Church to Status of Basilica**

The Vatican has raised Saints Peter and Paul Church to the Status of Basilica. This honor is bestowed upon specific churches throughout the world because of their historical importance or significance as a place of worship within the diocese, their artistic value, and the quality of the liturgical prayer, educational initiatives, and service which take place there. There are approximately fifty-four churches in the United States that enjoy this distinction.

**2005** - Official celebration of the conferral of the title of Basilica on May 22, 2005. (Basilica Celebration Events included concerts, festive liturgies and other special events, May 18 – May 22, 2005)

**2007** - On Tuesday, February 20 – Mardi Gras – the first Mass in the new Lower Chapel was celebrated at 7 p.m. An “Open House” and celebration on the occasion of the return of the lower church to parish use was held. It made 100 years from the time the first Mass in the lower church was celebrated.