



Magdalen Chapel: *A History*



LA ROCHE COLLEGE • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

“LET US GO TO THE HOUSE OF GOD,
WITH LOUD CRIES OF JOY AND THANKSGIVING ...”

(PSALMS 42:5)



Throughout its history, La Roche College in the northern suburbs of Pittsburgh has maintained a deep and abiding commitment to the belief that spirituality is central to all of life's activities. With the dedication of Magdalen Chapel in 1990, the College established a permanent site for worship and contemplation.



From the outset, the chapel was envisioned to be a place of reflection and celebration that is symbolic of spiritual inquiry and understanding. Its prominent location on the campus is indicative of the college's commitment to the spiritual values of community, worship and justice.

In the years following the Chapel's dedication, La Roche College experienced significant growth. With growth comes change. The growth and change visible within the College are also evident in its permanent worship space.



“SHE PERSISTENTLY BESEECHED GOD,
FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO MAKE HER DREAM A REALITY.”

Sister Margaret Huber, Ph.D., fifth president of La Roche College

SISTER THEA HEISEL (1903-1989)

Sister Thea devoted 73 of her 86 years to a life of ministry as a member of the Sisters of Divine Providence. La Roche alumni may remember Sister as a switchboard operator, bookstore clerk and campus ministry volunteer. Prior to coming to La Roche, however, Sister Thea (*formerly Theophane*) was an accomplished teacher and principal in schools throughout the Pittsburgh diocese. **Sister Margaret Huber, Ph.D.**, fifth president of La Roche College (*pictured in photo at far left, above*), credits Sister Thea’s passion for a permanent chapel as the impetus behind the creation of Magdalen Chapel. “She persistently beseeched God, family and friends to make her dream a reality.”



Photos: La Roche College Archives

CHRONOLOGY & PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANTS

Planning for the project began in 1982.

Groundbreaking: Sept. 5, 1989

Opening: May 5, 1990

Dedication: Sept. 23, 1990, by *Bishop Donald W. Wuerl*

Construction: Peters Building Company

Designed by: UDA Architects

Ray Gindroz, Architect

Artists: Vladislav Andreyev

Robert Lipnick

Nick Parrendo

Stuart McCausland

Liturgical Consultant: Willie Malarcher

Principal Donors: Richard Fisher and Walter Bold

Photos, top to bottom:

1. Pictured at Groundbreaking are, left to right: Members of the Bold and Fisher families and La Roche President Sister Margaret Huber, Ph.D.
2. The Bolds and Fishers at the May 5 opening.
3. Pictured with Bishop Donald Wuerl, officiating at the dedication ceremony, Sister Mary Stewart, left, and Sister Margaret Huber, Ph.D.

ABOUT OUR GENEROUS DONORS



RICHARD FISHER

Richard Fisher is executive vice president and director of Federated Investors, Inc. He became involved in the Magdalen Chapel project when he heard the college did not have a permanent worship facility. “When I learned La Roche didn’t have a chapel, it became my intention to raise sufficient money to build one,” Mr. Fisher said at the time of the chapel’s dedication in 1990. “I think every college should have a chapel. In an age when students are confronted with so many pressures, they need a place where they can seek spiritual help.”

Pictured: Barbara and Richard Fisher and family.



WALTER BOLD (1914-1990)

Walter Bold (1914-1990) was vice president of Federated Securities Company. Walter and his wife, Dolores, became interested in La Roche College when their longtime friend, Richard Fisher, presented them with the idea of partnering with him and dedicating the chapel to the memory of Mr. Bold’s mother – Magdalena Mauer Bold. **Dolores Bold** has had a longtime association with the Sisters of Divine Providence. Her father, Michael Turk, was a cabinet maker and lumber merchant. He built the steeple atop Providence Heights, the Pittsburgh mother house of the Sisters of Divine Providence, adjacent to the college.

Pictured: Walter and Dolores Bold.

THE MAGDALEN CHAPEL

**In Memory of Magdalena Mauer Bold
1878-1962**

**The La Roche College community expresses deep
gratitude to our major donors whose generosity and
commitment created this symbol of our life
together as a spiritual community.**

**Walter and Dolores Bold
The Richard B. Fisher Family**

**Accepted with thanksgiving and prayers this fifth day of
May, nineteen hundred and ninety.**

NAMING THE CHAPEL

The chapel is named for Magdalena Mauer Bold (1878-1962) and St. Mary Magdalene. **Magdalena Bold**, the beloved mother of donor Walter Bold, was a German immigrant who arrived in America at age 3 with her mother and two brothers. (*Her father became fatally ill during the voyage and was buried at sea.*) Her mother settled in Millvale, Pa., along the Allegheny River, to rear her three children. Magdalena left school at age 11 to help support her family, working for residents of Squirrel Hill. At age 17, she met and married August Bold, a baker.

St. Mary Magdalene is revered as a faithful disciple. All four Gospels place her at the cross, and she is the first witness to the Resurrection. The Gospels portray her as one of the women who traveled with Jesus and the apostles and provided for them out of their own resources.

DESCRIPTION OF THE SPACE

Magdalen Chapel occupies 5,000 square feet and comprises a gathering space, a worship chapel, Eucharistic chapel, reconciliation room and sacristy. The chapel was designed to be a visual focal point of the college's east campus. "Philosophically, we wanted the placement of the chapel to reflect our attitude about spirituality ... the chapel needed to be located in the mainstream of campus life because that's how we view the role of spirituality in daily life." (*Sister Margaret Huber, Ph.D., fifth president of La Roche College at the time of the dedication.*)



GATHERING PLACE

The gathering space serves as a foyer. The black marble eight-pointed star fountain at the center of the space recalls the baptism of all believers. The eight-pointed star signifies fullness and regeneration and is also a traditional Marian symbol, highlighting Mary's role in salvation. Above the fountain is a skylight cupola.



“IT IS A CONTEMPORARY PIECE SYMBOLIZING THAT IT IS THROUGH MOTHERHOOD THAT WE HAVE ACCESS TO THE SPIRIT WORLD.”

“MOTHERHOOD”

Across from the fountain is an icon titled “**Motherhood.**” Vladislav Andreyev (1938 -), master iconographer and founder of the Prosopon School of Iconology, wrote the piece in 1988 in egg tempera and gold leaf on wood. It depicts three figures – St. Ann; her daughter, Mary, the Mother of God; and the child Jesus. “It is a contemporary piece symbolizing that it is through motherhood that we have access to the Spirit World.” (Malarcher). It points to the role of motherhood in God’s salvific plan. *The icon was a gift of the Richard B. Fisher Family.*

MARY MAGDALENE

The stained glass window in the gathering space depicts **Saint Mary Magdalene**, and was crafted and signed by Stuart McCausland in 1990-91. The figure of the Magdalene is depicted with a jar. In the mythology surrounding Mary Magdalene, there is reference to an alabaster jar that contained the scented substance called *nard*, with which Mary reportedly anointed Jesus. However, there is no New Testament reference to Mary Magdalene ever anointing Jesus. In John’s Gospel, he is anointed by Mary of Bethany (12:1-8); in Matthew the woman is unidentified (26:6-13); in Luke, she is a repentant sinner (7:36-38); and in Mark, she is unidentified (14:3-9).







LITHOGRAPHS

The foyer also houses four framed embossed **lithographs** (each 31 x 24) depicting scenes from the Old Testament. The series known as the Suite Biblique II is 265/275 of a limited edition print done on Arches paper by Sunol Alvar in 1989. The individual pieces are titled:

- “THE FINDING OF MOSES,”
- “JOSEPH INTERPRETS PHARAOH’S DREAM,”
- “EXODUS” AND
- “SAMSON AND DELILAH.”

Each lithograph is hand-signed in the lower right corner.

Alvar Sunol Munoz-Ramos (1935 -), known by collectors around the world simply as “Alvar,” is a lithographer distinguished among his contemporaries because of his physical involvement in each stage of the lithograph’s production and because of the intricate complexity of the lithographic image. Alvar’s lithography superimposes textures upon images and images upon other images to create illusions of translucency and immateriality. Typically, his pieces feature figures floating through a space marked by accouterments from ordinary domestic life. These pieces also feature delicate lace patterns. The face that appears in all his art – the romantic face with streaming hair – signifies for Alvar all humanity. In the end, we are all alike, Alvar says, “with the same emotions, the same needs.”



WORSHIP CHAPEL

The 100-seat main worship space is octagonal, topped with a skylight cupola. Designed to be contemporary, versatile and interdenominational, the space is used for the celebration of the Eucharist, ecumenical worship, private meditation and selective programming. The moveable furnishings are of mahogany, oak and black lacquer.

The large east and west windows depict cherub-like figures winging their way between heaven and earth.





STATIONS OF THE CROSS

The **14 Stations of the Cross** were added to the main worship space in April 1996. They were designed and crafted by Robert Lipnick of Davenport, Iowa. Ordinarily, Lipnick's pieces are used in Jewish ceremonial traditions. These stations were crafted of wood and ceramic and, according to the artist, "echo the design of the chapel." The Jesus of these stations is deliberately portrayed from the perspective of his "Jewish-ness." A recurring motif throughout is the "tallit" or prayer shawl. The stations seek to give expression to Mr. Lipnick's conviction that our life's purpose is discovered through "tikun olam," that is, healing the world. Much of his inspiration was drawn from studying Teresa of Calcutta.

The stations were a gift of Richard and Barbara Fisher.





THE CROSS

The **cross** was designed and crafted by Nick Parrendo of Hunt Studios of Pittsburgh. Mr. Parrendo notes that the piece depicts the redemption of humanity through knowledge, wisdom and unconditional love. Light and water, symbols of the Christian life, are evident in the cross beams. Of particular significance is the lamb – the symbol of both Passover and Jesus, the Lamb of God. Baptized into His death, we share also His eternal life. The cross is in seven pieces highlighting the seven-week journey of Lent.



STAINED GLASS WINDOWS

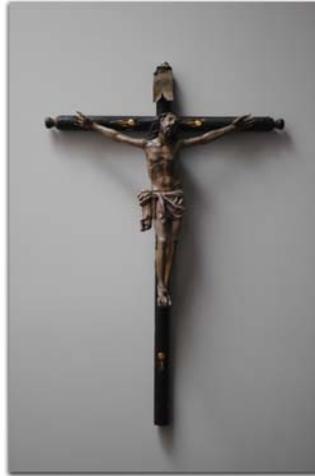
Six new **stained glass windows**, designed by Nick Parrendo and fashioned by Hunt Studio of Pittsburgh, were installed in July 2003. The two half-circle windows represent Providence by day and by night. The window above the entrance to the worship chapel represents Providence at dawn; the window above the cross represents the guiding presence of Providence through the night. Bishop Donald W. Wuerl prayed at the dedication of the windows: “As the light of day shines through these windows to reveal the saving events of your Divine Providence, so may the light of your love be bright in the lives of your people so that your church might be blessed with continued growth throughout the world.”

Four circular windows highlight significant people and events in the mission of the College and its relationship to the founding and sponsoring Congregation, the Sisters of Divine Providence. The windows are a memorial to Catherine B. Flynn, maternal aunt of Joan Bruce and Sister Mary Joan Coultas, fourth president of La Roche College.

*The circular windows represent important parts of the College's mission and history, including, top to bottom: the *Pacem In Terris* the acclaimed international student program; the fleur de lis, found in Mother Marie de la Roche's family coat of arms; the journey from Germany of the Sisters of Divine Providence, the College's founding congregation; and Bishop Wilhelm von Ketteler, the founder of the Congregation of Divine Providence in Germany in 1851.*







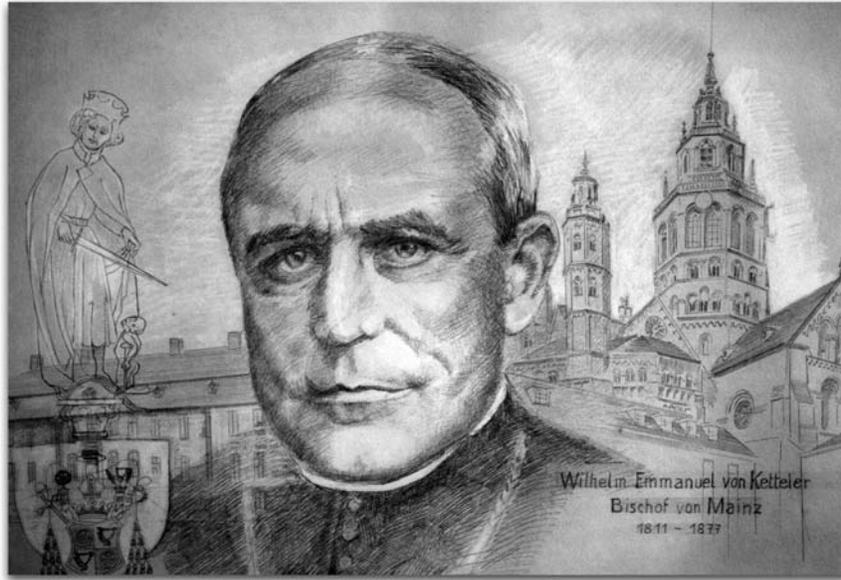
EUCHARISTIC CHAPEL

The **Eucharistic Chapel** seats 18 people. Here, the reserved Eucharist in the tabernacle is the focal point. Before the tabernacle are a kneeler and a bible. On the wall to the right is a crucifix from Spain (*circa 17th Century*). Three paneled stained glass windows in the small chapel feature images of wheat and grapes, traditional symbols for the Eucharist.

RECONCILIATION ROOM

The **Reconciliation Room** is designed in soft earth tones. The stained glass window is a representation of a Celtic cross, signed Stuart McCausland, 90-91.





BISHOP WILHELM EMMANUEL VON KETTLER (1811-1877)

Bishop Wilhelm Emmanuel von Ketteler (1811-1877) founded the Sisters of Divine Providence in Mainz, Germany, in 1851. He was known as the “social justice bishop” because of his tireless work in helping oppressed, unskilled German laborers in their efforts to unionize for just wages and decent working conditions. Today, *Workers Day* is celebrated in his honor in Mainz.

This rendering hangs prominently in the hallway leading to the Magdalen Chapel.



STEPHANIE AMELIA STARKENFELS DE LA ROCHE (1812-1857)

Stephanie Amelia Starkenfels de la Roche (1812-1857), a French noblewoman, was given the title “*Mother Marie*” as the first leader of the Sisters of Divine Providence. She was a woman of exceptional qualities. At a time when the Sisters were experiencing much discouragement, she wrote “the darkest paths lead to light through love.” To Light through Love, (in Latin, *Ad Lucem per Amorem*) is the motto of La Roche College – founded in her name.

This rendering hangs prominently in the hallway leading to the Magdalen Chapel.



THE SIX SISTERS OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE

To meet the needs of the time, **six young Sisters of Divine Providence** set sail from Germany for the United States in 1876 to teach the German immigrants who had settled in the Pittsburgh area. They were Sister Xavier Schneider, Sister Francis Borgia Schroeck, Sister Lucy Weber, Sister Michael Kindhauser, Sister Hedwig Beckhaus and Sister Mathilda Gebhardt.

In time, these women were joined by many others who ministered to the people of God throughout the United States and the Caribbean in areas of education and health care. It was with the same adventuresome spirit and trust in the Providence of God that the Sisters of Divine Providence founded La Roche College in 1963.

The College's **Pacem In Terris** program was initiated in 1993 to provide scholarship assistance to students from developing and post-conflict countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East. The program was intended to help students return to their homelands and apply what they had learned to improve conditions and, thereby, create a more just society. Since its inception, the Pacem In Terris program has enrolled more than 400 students from 27 countries. The goals of the program are directly related to the charism of the founding Congregation, the Sisters of Divine Providence, to make God's Providence more visible in the world.



LA ROCHE COLLEGE CHAPEL HISTORY

1963-66

During the first years of the college, the chapel of the Congregation of Divine Providence located in Providence Heights was used by the College Community.

1966-76

A college chapel was built in Kearns Hall, the first residence hall, (*now Kearns Spirituality Center*). The chapel was contemporary, integrated into a lounge, which placed the celebration of the liturgy at the “center of life” for the students.

1977-81

When the use of Kearns Hall was returned to the Sisters of Divine Providence, the college designated the former Marycrest Chapel in what is now Providence Hall (*West Campus*) as its center for worship. The space was renovated to include a sanctuary and lounge area.

1982-88

In 1982, the sanctuary was refurbished as a semi-permanent Eucharistic and celebration chapel, providing liturgical worship space for about 40 people. It was during this time that building a new chapel began to be discussed.

1988-90

With the completion of the College Center in 1987, student life shifted to the College’s East Campus – site of its residence halls and the majority of its classrooms. At the request of Campus Ministry, the college designated a classroom in the Palumbo Science Center as an interim worship space.

1990 –

Magdalen Chapel became the permanent worship space for the La Roche College Community. Eight liturgies now are celebrated each week in the chapel, with a Sunday evening service that is especially popular with students. Daily Mass is celebrated Monday through Friday at 12:10 p.m. The chapel seats 140; it is filled almost to capacity at each liturgy on Sunday. The chapel offers special celebrations annually during Holy Week and for Christmas services.

SOURCES:

La Roche College Archives
Sisters of Divine Providence Archives
The Pittsburgh Press
The Pittsburgh Catholic

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Research and Text: Sister Michele Bisbey, Ph.D., CDP
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LA ROCHE COLLEGE
9000 BABCOCK BOULEVARD
PITTSBURGH, PA 15237