

# Archbishop O'Brien Celebrates Mass to Commemorate Cardinal James Gibbons' 175th Birthday

Archbishop Edwin F. O'Brien will celebrate a Mass to honor the 175<sup>th</sup> birthday of Baltimore's ninth archbishop, Cardinal James Gibbons, on **July 23 at 12:10 p.m.** at the Baltimore Basilica. Cardinal Gibbons was the longest serving Archbishop of the nation's first diocese, serving for 44 years from 1877-1921.

According to Thomas W. Spalding, author of *The Premier See*, from 1884 until 1921, "Cardinal Gibbons would be the unchallenged spokesman of the Catholic Church in the United States." President Theodore Roosevelt referred to the Cardinal as "the most respected and venerated and useful citizen of our country."

Cardinal Gibbons studied for the priesthood at St. Mary's Seminary and was ordained on June 30, 1861. During the Civil War, he served as chaplain at Fort McHenry and pastor of St. Brigid Catholic Church in Canton.

More than 30 parishes were established during his 44-year tenure and in 1884 he presided over the Third Plenary Council which led to the establishment of the Catholic school system in the United States. Cardinal Gibbons was also known for advocating for the assimilation of Catholic immigrants into American society and for combating anti-Catholic sentiment around the turn of the century.

Cardinal Gibbons, whose galero hangs near a portrait of him in the sanctuary of the Basilica, died on March 24, 1921. Over 200,000 people came to the wake and Maryland Governor Albert Ritchie ordered all activity in the state suspended for a full minute at the start of the funeral. Cardinal Gibbons is interred in the crypt in the Basilica's undercroft.