SERMON BY

THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM T. MANNING, D.D.
BISHOP OF NEW YORK

at the

OPENING OF THE ENTIRE LENGTH
of the
CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE

ON ADVENT SUNDAY
NOVEMBER 30th
1941
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THE BISHOP'S OFFICE
Synod House, Cathedral Heights
New York City
"Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth."

Those words are from The Revelation of St. John the Divine, whose name this Cathedral bears, and they express the faith and the feeling that is in all our hearts as we are gathered here this morning.

We are here to give thanks for a great and notable step forward in the erection of this Cathedral.

That great vision of this Cathedral which Bishop Potter and Bishop Greer and others saw, and for which they so greatly laboured, is advancing towards its fulfilment.

We give thanks today for their faith and vision which made this Cathedral possible, and for all that was accomplished by their labour and effort.

We give thanks for the inspiration of the Architects whose genius brought forth this incomparable design. The late Dr. Alfred D. Hamlin, Professor of Architecture in Columbia University, in a carefully prepared professional judgment which he was requested to write, declared Mr. Cram's design to be "a stupendous and inspiring monument of our faith and a triumphant vindication alike of American Religion and American Art." "Nothing comparable to this superb design," Professor Hamlin wrote, "has ever been erected in America, and the Cathedrals of Europe may fairly be challenged to surpass or even to equal it." And we see today that Professor Hamlin did not exaggerate.

We give thanks for the skill of the artists and craftsmen which we see in the glorious Windows, in the Sculptures, in the great Bronze Doors, and in the other adornments.

We give thanks for the deep personal interest of the Contractors, Builders, and Workmen, and for the spirit which they have shown in all their work on this Cathedral.
And we give thanks for the help of all those, and how many there are!—who by their interest, their prayers, their work, and their gifts, have had their part, and some of them a very large part, in this noble undertaking.

The entire length of this Building, America's greatest Cathedral, the largest Gothic Cathedral in the world, now stands open for the worship of God and for the blessing and inspiration of men. At this service, for the first time, we worship in the whole length of this mighty edifice and see the vista from the West Doors to the High Altar, a vista unsurpassed, and perhaps unequalled, in any Cathedral anywhere. This is indeed an event of high importance not only to our own Diocese, and our own Church, but to the whole Cause of Religion in our land and in all lands.

This vast edifice stands now about two-thirds built. At this service, we have asked God's blessing upon the great distinct units which are included in the immense length of the Cathedral, the majestic West Front with its five Portals, the spacious and beautiful Narthex, the glorious Nave, the Crossing in its unfinished state crying out for further progress of this work, all leading up to the completed Interior of the Great Choir and Sanctuary, surrounded by the Seven Ambulatory Chapels and the beautiful Baptistry.

We have much reason for thanksgiving, but much still remains to be done. The two Towers of the West Front need to be carried up to their full height to give its true effect to this majestic Facade, the temporary Dome over the Crossing is to give place to the magnificent Central Tower, the Transepts are still wanting, though the North Transept is more than one third built, and the great Arch at the junction of the Choir and the Crossing remains unfinished because there were not funds enough to do the work on it and bring it into harmony with the rest of
the Choir and Sanctuary and the whole great Design of the Cathedral.

I wish greatly that it might be possible even in these difficult days, in the time that may yet be left for me to serve as Bishop of this Diocese, for the work on that Arch to be done and also for the work to be carried forward on the beautiful, partly built, North Transept, which is being built especially by the gifts of Women and is to be dedicated to the Blessed Mother of our Lord.

And, as soon as may be, the present Altar and Reredos must, of course, be replaced by one that is adequate in this great Gothic Cathedral. In all our Churches it is the Altar, the symbol of God's Living Presence, the place where Christ comes to us in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, which is of supreme spiritual significance and in this Cathedral everything leads up to, and centres at, the High Altar.

Here is an opportunity for some devout and generous person to offer a most noble gift or memorial!

But we give thanks today that a large part of this Cathedral is erected, and for the fact that, in spite of the times of depression through which we have been passing, the work of construction has never ceased since we took it up afresh in 1924.

It is a most significant and a most moving fact that at this time when we see in this world an outbreak of almost incredible evil, a return to sheer barbarism and to unbelievable cruelties, an assault upon the very principles of Christian and Civilized Life, we are building, here in this Metropolis of America, one of the greatest Cathedrals ever erected as a witness of our faith in God and of our certainty that the Cause of Justice, Right, and Freedom, will be upheld.

The historic Cathedrals and Churches of Great Britain stand in daily peril, many of them are injured or destroyed,
among these St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey, but so much the more the witness of this great Sister Cathedral here in our land is needed and called for.

From this Cathedral in New York we send the message to our brethren in Great Britain, and to all those who are struggling against brutal Tyranny and Aggression, that America is with them, that although, like other Nations, we have been slow to believe that such evil could be real, we are now acting, we are now taking our place, and we shall give our whole strength in this Day of Crisis for the World, for our own Land, and for Humanity.

This mighty Cathedral here in New York is a witness for God which none can overlook or fail to see. It speaks a language which all men can understand. It proclaims to all men, near and far, that God Reigns, that He is over all of us, that His Law is supreme and inescapable, and that, as individuals or as Nations, if we defy Him we perish.

This Cathedral proclaims the Sovereignty of Almighty God as He has revealed Himself to us, and to all the world, in Jesus Christ His Eternal Son. Fully and fearlessly this Cathedral stands for faith in Jesus Christ both God and man as He is declared to us by the New Testament, and by His Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church through all its life, from the day when He rose from the dead and gave to His Church His great command and promise "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature . . . and Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

This Cathedral proclaims, as all Christian Churches do, that the one power that is great enough to bring in the day of Justice and Peace and Brotherhood, the one power which can change the hearts and lives and thoughts of men, the one power which can make this a better and a happier world, is the power
of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and so this Cathedral stands with its doors open to all, offering its welcome to all, speaking to all of the help and blessing offered by Him Who died for all, and Who is the Saviour, Lord, and Friend, of all.

And, in common with the whole Christian Church throughout the World, this Cathedral proclaims that, in spite of all the wickedness and evil and wrong that we see in this world, Jesus Christ Reigns. In spite of all the evil that men can do, and are now doing, His Kingdom will come here on earth as it is in Heaven. Nothing can stop it, or prevent it. Even now, in this distracted, disordered, world, His light is shining, and is the one Hope and Guide for men. His love, and power, and truth, will triumph. His grace and glory shall be made known. All men shall see and rejoice in His Salvation. All the Nations shall bow before Him—because He is the Son of God, and He alone can make this a world of peace, and brotherhood, and love.

This is the message which this Cathedral gives today, and will give from generation to generation.

"Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his successive journeys run."

"Alleluia: for the Lord God Omnipotent Reigneth."