

Catholics and the Presidency

The inauguration of the second Catholic to the Presidency of the United States of America provides an opportunity to recall other moments in history when Catholics in the United States played important roles in the presidency.

The first Catholics who played important roles in the first government of the United States were members of the Carroll family who resided in the state of Maryland. Daniel Carroll served as a Representative in the first United States Congress from Maryland and was the younger brother of John Carroll, the first Catholic bishop in the United States. He was one of only five men to sign **both** the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution. Daniel's cousin, Charles Carroll, was also one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence and also served as one of first United States senators from the state of Maryland.

When John Carroll was elected to be the first Catholic bishop in the United States at what is now Sacred Heart Church in Bowie, Maryland, George Washington, our first president, wrote to John Carroll upon learning of his nomination as bishop.

Another Maryland Catholic then became the next important presidential appointment. This occurred when President Andrew Jackson appointed Roger Brooke Taney of Maryland to United States Attorney General, later Secretary of the Treasury and finally as the infamous U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice involved in the infamous Dred Scott decision.

As large numbers of Catholics immigrated to the United States and became citizens, they began to play an important voting role in presidential elections. Their increasing role in the Democratic party culminated in 1928, when Alfred Smith (governor of New York) was nominated to be the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. He lost!

Then, in 1947, President Truman appointed Myron Taylor as the first US representative to the Vatican. Thereafter, Catholics played an increasingly significant role at the Presidential level, climaxing in the election of the first Catholic (John F. Kennedy) to be the President of the United States.

Catholics continue to play an important role in the national government -- executive, legislative and judicial. Daniel, Charles and John Carroll would be amazed to see how far things have come since their days of political involvement at the national level.

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