


# RITTER MUSEUM

## Life and History Display Panels

### EARLY YEARS

From his Elmer Joseph Ritter's 1892 birth in New Albany to his ordination to priesthood at St. Meinrad in 1917.



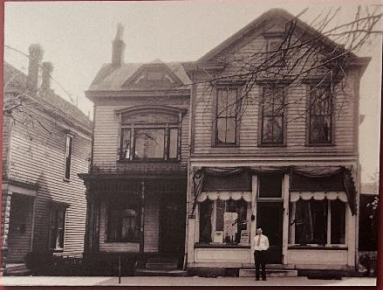
Elmer Joseph Ritter, 1907

### The Early Years


Elmer Joseph Ritter was born in this house on July 20, 1892, to Nicholas and Bertha (Luetje) Ritter. Elmer was the fourth of six children (Henry, Edmund, Frank, Elmer Joseph, Carl, and Catherine). At the age of seventeen, Nicholas started his own business at this location and opened the Ritter Bakery. The front of the house served as the storefront for sales while the baking occurred in the ovens where the museum stands today.

Elmer attended grade school here in New Albany at nearby St. Mary's parish and earned the nickname "Apple Pie Ritter" because of the family business. His education included enrolling in St. Meinrad Seminary in 1907, where he graduated summa cum laude in 1917. He was ordained a priest on May 30, 1917, at St. Meinrad Archabbey by Bishop Joseph Chartrand of Indianapolis.


According to Elmer, "There was no vision, no voice from Heaven. I simply wanted to be a priest." Father Ritter celebrated his first Mass at his home parish, Saint Mary of the Annunciation. Within a few weeks he received his first assignment to St. Patrick Church in Indianapolis.




Ritter Bakery and residence, East Oak Street near 13th Street



St. Meinrad Seminary Philosophy II class, 1912.  
Elmer Joseph Ritter, seated far right.



Nicholas and Bertha (Luetje) Ritter




St. Mary's Church Choir, 1917.  
Elmer Joseph Ritter, seated far right.

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## **EMERGING LEADERSHIP**

His Indianapolis years (1917-1946). Here he became Bishop and then Archbishop. Despite opposition from the KKK and others, he managed to desegregate Catholic school in both Indianapolis and Evansville dioceses.



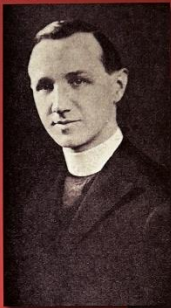
*Bishop Joseph E. Ritter, 1934*

### *Emerging Leadership*



Father Ritter was consecrated Auxiliary Bishop of Indianapolis on March 28, 1933, and thus, at the age of 40, became one of the youngest Bishops in the United States. At this time he changed his name from Elmer Joseph Ritter to Joseph Elmer Ritter. Upon the death of Bishop Chartrand in 1934, Ritter was appointed the seventh Bishop of Indianapolis.

His 1938 decision to end racial segregation in all Catholic schools in the diocese was met with opposition by the Ku Klux Klan as well as members of his own clergy. The KKK staged a cross-burning outside of SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral in Indianapolis and, according to family history, Ritter received death threats.


Ritter was installed as the first Archbishop of Indianapolis following the elevation of the Diocese of Indianapolis to the status of an archdiocese by Pope Pius XII on October 21, 1944.



*Father Ritter, 1924*



*Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral (Indianapolis, Indiana)*



*Installation of Joseph Ritter as the first Archbishop of Indianapolis, 1944*

Other significant accomplishments during his years in Indianapolis included:

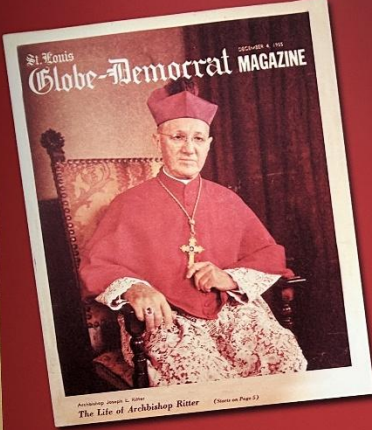
- Reorganization of the diocesan Catholic Charities
- Introduction of the Catholic Youth Organization
- Completion of the construction of the SS. Peter and Paul Cathedral
- Reduction of the diocese's debt by \$3 million

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## OUTREACH AND REFORM

Ritter's St. Louis years (1946-1967) were against all odds. He desegregated the Catholic schools throughout the archdiocese, strongly espoused ecumenism and religious freedom, and was elevated to the rank of Cardinal by Saint Pope John XXIII.



St. Louis  
Globe-Democrat MAGAZINE  
DECEMBER 4, 1958  
The Life of Archbishop Ritter  
Cover on Page 12

### Outreach and Reform

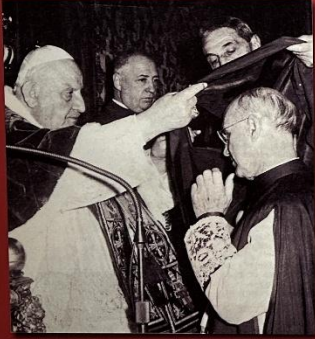

When he was appointed the fourth Archbishop of St. Louis, Missouri, in 1946, Ritter immediately continued his legacy of outreach and reform.

In 1947 he announced a plan to end to racial segregation in all Catholic schools. He declared, "The cross on top of our schools must mean something," and he believed in "the equality of every soul before Almighty God." Numerous Catholics threatened to sue Ritter for violation of state law. Leaders of the suit eventually dropped their grievances under threat of excommunication from the church. Ritter then desegregated all Catholic schools and hospitals in the archdiocese.

Additional accomplishments in St. Louis included:

- Building 42 parishes, 16 high schools, and a children's hospital
- Sending Archdiocesan priests as missionaries to South America
- Providing housing for low income elderly in Missouri
- Initiating ecumenical outreach; for example, being the first to deliver a major address at an American Protestant seminary

Archbishop Ritter was elevated to the role of Cardinal on January 16, 1961, by Pope John XXIII. He became the first and only Cardinal from the State of Indiana.



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## THE WORLD STAGE

During his “cardinal” years (1961-1967) he attended the Second Vatican Council where he encouraged evaluating the relationship of the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world. His support of liturgical reforms led to him orchestrate the first four official celebrations of the Mass in English in August 1964. The transition from Latin was launched throughout in the United States on November 29, 1964, the first Sunday in Advent.

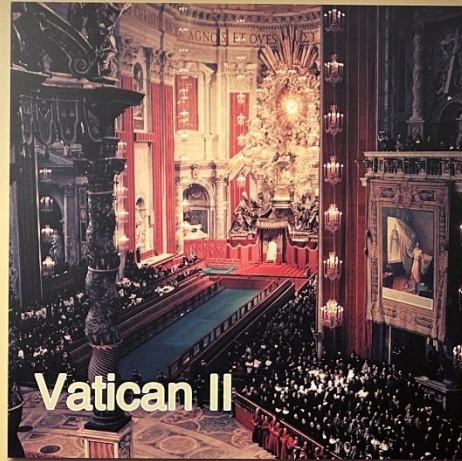
### The World Stage

A rarely held ecumenical council of the church was called by Pope John XXIII in 1959, shocking the world with the creation of the Second Vatican Council (a.k.a., Vatican II). Such an assembly of Roman Catholic religious leaders had not been called since 1868. Cardinal Ritter was one of 2,500 bishops and church leaders called to Rome to review cultural changes following the effects of World War II and the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world.

Ritter biographer, Monsignor Nicholas A. Schneider states, “He was a forward thinking individual who helped formulate and bring the second Vatican council’s changes into every day Catholic and liturgical celebrations.” Ritter participated in the creation of 16 documents that redefined the Catholic Church as we know it today. Vatican II is considered by many the most important Catholic event of the 20th century.



Cardinals in Rome for Part One of the Second Vatican Council, 1962.  
(Cardinal Ritter second from the right)



Cardinal Ritter (left) at the Vatican Council

A major step into the modern world for Catholics in the United States occurred on August 25, 1964, when Cardinal Ritter, at the invitation of Pope Paul VI, celebrated the first public Mass in English in America. More than 12,000 attended at Kiel Auditorium in St. Louis, Missouri – a direct result of the Second Vatican Council and its goal of updating the Catholic Church. Churches across the country implemented the Mass in English on November 29, 1964.

#### Catholics Celebrate First Mass in English

St. Louis, Mo. (UPI) — Cardinal Ritter, president of the American Bishops' Conference, celebrated the first public Mass in English in America today at the Kiel Auditorium. The Mass, which drew more than 12,000 people, was the first of four such services planned by the American Bishops' Conference for August 1964. The Mass was celebrated in English for the first time since the Second Vatican Council opened in 1962. The council's goal of updating the Catholic Church was a direct result of the Second Vatican Council and its goal of updating the Catholic Church. Churches across the country implemented the Mass in English on November 29, 1964.



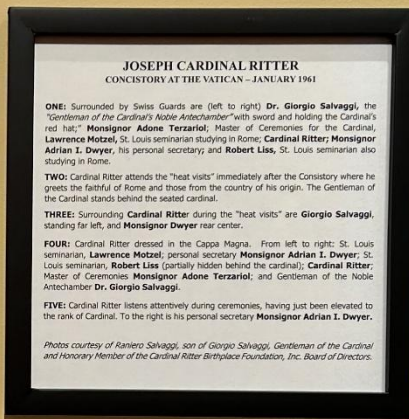
Cardinal Ritter (center) presides at the first Mass in English

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## CARDINAL RITTER'S CONSISTORY OF JANUARY 1961 – VATICAN CITY

Photos 1-4 include Dr. Giorgio Salvaggi, *Gentleman of the Cardinal's Noble Antechamber*. Compliments of Dr. Salvaggi's son, Raniero Salvaggi.



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## CARDINAL RITTER'S HOME PARISH CELEBRATION – NEW ALBANY, INDIANA

On April 30, 1961, the cardinal returned to St. Mary of the Annunciation Catholic Church to celebrate Mass and receive congratulations from his former parish community.



**HOMETOWN CARDINAL**  
ST. MARY'S CHURCH HONORS FAMOUS PARISHIONER

On Sunday, April 30, 1961, hundreds gather to welcome the most famous son of the parish who became a Cardinal in the Roman Catholic Church.

**ONE:** Following the High Mass celebrated by the only Indiana-born Catholic priest to be named a cardinal, members of the Knights of Columbus Council 1221 Honor Guard exited the church enroute to the parish school gymnasium for a public reception.

**TWO:** A throng of parishioners eagerly welcomed the Cardinal as he exited the church. He was accompanied by many local and visiting clergy. Ritter had served as Archbishop of Indiana and was currently Archbishop of St. Louis.

**THREE:** Many members of the cardinal's First Communion and the 1906 eighth-grade graduation class gathered for a photo. Pictured (but unfortunately not in order) are Carl Muller, Joseph Steinert, Michael Steinert, Urban Leist, Sr., John Hoffman, Edward Julius, Will Soergel, Julius Moser, Frank Fell, Sr., and Albert Smith.

**FOUR:** Cardinal Ritter posed with two Sisters of St. Francis from Oldenburg, Indiana, teachers at the school, and Monsignor James Jansen, pastor of St. Mary's Parish.

**FIVE:** To the delight of all in attendance, Tim Naville, a young parishioner dressed in cardinal red from head to toe, offers a gift to the newest member of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Standing left of the Cardinal is Tim's proud father, Herb Naville.

*Photos, a gift to the Cardinal Ritter Birthplace Foundation, Inc. from the Archdiocese of Indianapolis Archive.*



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