

SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church, in Huntington, will conclude a year-long celebration of its 175th anniversary with several events later this month, including a Celebration Concert on Sunday, June 23, that will offer the public not only an afternoon of music but also a chance to see the newly redecorated church interior.

The concert begins at 2 p.m. at the church, located at 860 Cherry St. It will feature the church's Van Dinter tracker pipe organ, a grand piano recently donated by a parishioner, the church choir, vocal ensembles and soloists, flute, trumpet and violin.

The European style organ was built at the church in 1894 by Louis H. Van Dinter, a native of the Netherlands who learned the trade from his father and set up shop first in Detroit and then in Mishawaka after coming to America in 1871. He and his sons built organs throughout the Midwest, and the instrument at SS. Peter and Paul — which is regularly maintained and is in constant use — is one of the few that remain playable today.

The concert is free and open to the public. Guests will also be able to view the three original altars that have been renewed with elaborate ornamentation that recalls their “original beauty and luster,” says Rev. Tony Steinacker, the 14th pastor in the church's 175-year history.

Originally made of stained pine, the altars were whitewashed and decorated in 24 karat gold in 1903. The altars were again whitewashed and regilded in 1953, when faux marble accents were also added. All of the ornamentation disappeared in 1973 when the altars were painted solid white.

The altars now feature a white base along with wood graining and faux marble, with accents of gold and other colors. A crucifix has been restored to the top of the main altar.

“What you see up there is honoring our past,” Steinacker says.

Many of the statues throughout the church have been repainted to bring out their original colors.

Parishioners of SS. Peter and Paul will join with the congregation of neighboring St. Mary Catholic Church earlier that day for a procession from St. Mary to SS. Peter and Paul in honor of the Feast of Corpus Christi — a celebration of the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

Members of the two churches will join for prayer at SS. Peter and Paul after the procession.

A new altar will be consecrated during the church's 175th anniversary Mass on Saturday, June 29, at 10 a.m. with Bishop Kevin Rhoades as the main celebrant. Other priests associated with SS. Peter and Paul and neighboring parishes will be concelebrants. The day will conclude with a dinner and reception, for which tickets are required.

SS. Peter and Paul began the year-long anniversary celebration with a picnic for the Catholic community last August and will hold a similar picnic this August.

The church's official founding date is Aug. 15, 1843, when Mass was celebrated for the first time in a newly-built log church near the location of the current church. It was the first church of any denomination in Huntington.

The anniversary Mass on June 29 coincides with the Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul, the apostles who are the church's namesakes.