At the quarter mark of the twentieth century Catholics in the archdiocese and throughout the United States were more confident than they had been previously of their own American identity and of their ability to contribute to the growth of the country. As the nation was experiencing unprecedented economic growth and the Catholic population became increasingly affluent, Catholics generally made their way into the American middle class and helped define their place in American culture more explicitly. It was also a period of administrative reform in the American church. In 1919 U.S. bishops organized the National Catholic Welfare Council as a standing secretariat. Three years later the title changed to the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). This organization gave the Catholic hierarchy an effective agency in Washington to safeguard and advance American Catholic interests.

Social and cultural changes in the 1920s, the economic depression of the 1930s, the rise of totalitarianism in Europe, World War II, social ferment in America in the late 1950s and 1960s, and the Second Vatican Council also had an impact on the growth of the church. During this period the institutional church kept pace with the economic growth of the country. Under the leadership of Archbishops John McNicholas and Karl Alter, the local church experienced substantial growth and change. Their skills in financial management and in “brick and mortar” policies characterized the administrative style of American Catholicism in the first half of the twentieth century.

Although in May 1925 Bishop John McNicholas of Duluth, Minnesota, was named to Indianapolis to succeed Bishop Joseph Chartrand, who was to be elevated to the see of Cincinnati, McNicholas never occupied that post.
Chartrand opted to serve out his years in the Indiana capital, and the pope, uncharacteristically, reversed his decision and appointed the Irish-born McNicholas on July 8 of that year to Cincinnati. More than two hundred priests greeted McNicholas when he arrived at Eaton, Ohio, from Duluth on August 11. Together they traveled on a special train to Cincinnati. At every crossroads on the train ride groups of people gathered and waved their welcome. Upon his arrival in the Queen City, where more than ten thousand people lined the streets to greet him, McNicholas was escorted to his archiepiscopal residence. He was installed as Cincinnati’s archbishop in formal ceremonies in St. Peter in Chains Cathedral on August 12, with Cardinal George Mundelein of Chicago as the officiating prelate. The province, then embracing five states, again had a metropolitan. Like Cincinnati’s founding bishop, Edward Fenwick, McNicholas was a Dominican. But the comparison stopped there. Unlike the mild-mannered Fenwick, the new
archbishop would prove to be an outspoken, forceful, and at times controversial church leader.¹

McNicholas was born in Kiltimagh, County Mayo, Ireland, on December 15, 1877. He was the youngest of eight children. When he was three, his parents, Patrick and Mary Mullany McNicholas, emigrated to the United States, establishing a home in Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1881. After attending parochial school and a four-year preparatory course, McNicholas attended St. Joseph College in Philadelphia. He was a student at the college only a short time when he decided to become a priest. Religion seemed to run in his Irish blood as a brother and two nephews also became priests. In 1894, at the age of seventeen, he entered the Dominican Order at St. Rose Priory in Kentucky. He took his scholasticate at the Dominican Order’s house near Somerset, Ohio. On October 10, 1901, Moeller, then bishop of Columbus, ordained him a priest.²

In the same year of his ordination, McNicholas went to Rome to study at Minerva University, where in 1904 he received a doctorate in sacred theology. The following year the twenty-six-year-old McNicholas went to Washington, D.C., where he taught philosophy and theology at the Dominican’s house of studies at Catholic University. In 1909 he was appointed National Director of the Holy Name Society with headquarters in New York City, and the first editor of the *Holy Name Journal*. Through his efforts and organizational skills, the first national convention of the Holy Name Society was held in Baltimore, with representatives of more than 3,000 branches in attendance. While stationed in New York, he was put in charge of St. Catherine of Siena parish. In 1917 the Dominicans recalled him to Rome, appointing him assistant professor of theology and canon law at Angelico College and assistant to the Master General of the order. While in Rome he renewed contact with his old and influential Dominican friend, Cardinal Tommaso Boggiani, whom he had escorted a few years earlier around New York. As head of the Consistorial Congregation in Rome that controlled the nomination and appointment of bishops, Boggiani was instrumental in 1918 in persuading Pope Benedict XV, who referred to McNicholas as the “Dominicanetto,” to appoint him bishop of Duluth. In 1925 McNicholas became Cincinnati’s fifth ordinary.³

At the same time that Catholics during McNicholas’s tenure emerged from the experience of World War I filled with self-confidence and optimism about the future, and the local ethnic divisions that had persisted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries steadily diminished, American Catholicism nevertheless was a little defensive. This was partly in response to the bigotry of the Ku Klux Klan and an aggressive Protestant crusade to promote one hundred percent Americanism. It opposed African Americans,
Catholics, and Jews. In the 1920s the Ku Klux Klan burned crosses in the archdiocese in the front of churches, such as in full view of St. Aloysius Church at Shandon, and on the front lawns of some parishioners' homes. In a parade in downtown Xenia a model of St. Bridget school was set on fire to protest the existence of the school. When the Klan had planned a parade to march past the front of St. Raphael Church in Springfield, Monsignor Daniel Buckley stood in front of the church and would not let them pass. After a few tense moments the parade turned around. Overall, the struggle over prohibition, the immigration restriction quotas of the 1920s, Oregon's legislative attempt to prohibit private schools, the activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and the defeat of Alfred E. Smith in 1928, the first Catholic presidential candidate, reinforced the Catholic sense of alienation.4

Between the two world wars Catholic churchmen reiterated the more than half-century argument that moral persuasion, rather than legislation, was the most effective strategy to combat intemperance and alcoholism, and they continued to strongly oppose immigrant restriction quotas. McNicholas thought, as had previous local church leaders, that there was nothing inherently evil in the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Like Elder and Moeller before him, he expressed concern over the fanaticism associated with prohibition. When prohibition was repealed in 1933, the Catholic Telegraph editorialized that it "never should have been foisted upon the people." U.S. church leaders also opposed the immigrant restriction quotas of the 1920s on the grounds that they discriminated against southern and eastern Europeans, many of whom were Catholic. In 1922 Oregon passed a law requiring all children between the ages of eight and sixteen to attend public schools. This new legislation, which challenged the independence of the entire Catholic school system, raised the fears of Catholics across the country. Joined by Lutherans, Seventh Day Adventists, and the American Civil Liberties Union, Catholics charged that the Oregon law violated religious freedom and educational diversity. In 1925 in Pierce v. The Society of Sisters the U.S. Supreme Court handed down a landmark decision for religious liberty. Although it acknowledged the responsibility and rights of the state to oversee public education, the court protected the rights of private and parochial education.5

When Alfred E. Smith ran for the presidency his candidacy brought out into the open America's widespread anti-Catholic sentiment. It brought to the fore the whole question of double allegiance. Could a Catholic remain loyal to the church and, as president, be loyal to his country? In a radio talk, McNicholas, who resented the fact that he and other Catholics had to demonstrate their loyalty to the country, refuted the allegation that American Catholics would give their civil allegiance first to the pope and only a secondary allegiance to the United States. "We, as American Catholics," he
said, "owe no civil allegiance to the Vatican State." The Cincinnati prelate was particularly critical of those who accused the church of supporting Smith because he was Catholic. A few weeks after the presidential election, McNicholas addressed some of the charges at the annual meeting of the National Council of Catholic Men. "As an American citizen," he said, "I protest against the insinuation made that my Church, because of a Catholic candidate, . . . attempted to control my political affiliations or to give me the slightest indication as to how I or any other Catholic citizen of my jurisdiction should vote. This is not the province of the Church. It is not her affair."

The renewed attacks on the Catholics and the defeat of Smith reinforced the feeling of alienation among a number of church leaders. McNicholas considered the attacks to be a slander of the Catholic Church and reacted with a stirring call for Catholics to come to her defense. His understanding of the place of Catholicism in America was continually influenced by lingering anti-Catholic sentiments. Going to great lengths to defend the faith against external attacks, he also helped Catholics rise out of their nineteenth-century, second-class status. From the moment he first arrived in Cincinnati, he argued that as far as citizenship was concerned, there was no inherent conflict between being Catholic and being American. What baffled the archbishop was the fact that notwithstanding the "glorious record" of Catholic patriotism in war and in peace, many Americans still feared the Catholic Church.7

Throughout his administration McNicholas repeatedly called upon Catholics to exercise their rights as citizens to vote, especially when there was certainty or serious doubt of moral turpitude in questions. Urging his clergy to get people to vote, he reminded them never to "interfere with their liberty of action with regard to their party affiliations or the selection of candidates." Though archdiocesan officials did not allow a discussion of political issues and political candidates from the pulpit, church and school halls were used for the free discussion of all issues affecting the general interests of the community. At the same time that the Catholic Telegraph generally refrained officially from endorsing specific candidates in political campaigns, its editorials during McNicholas's episcopate generally were sympathetic to the Democratic Party.8

More than thirty years after Smith's presidential race the issue of religion and politics surfaced once again with the presidential candidacy in 1960 of Senator John F. Kennedy, a Catholic from Massachusetts. Karl Alter, then archbishop of Cincinnati, reiterated the church's position that a man's religious beliefs should not be a factor if he sought the highest public office in the nation. Like his predecessor, he felt that voters should consider only two criteria, a candidate's ability to do the job and his integrity of character. "The only interest which we as Catholics have in the question," he wrote in the fall
of 1960, "is that no disability be levied against a Catholic because of his reli-
gion." Significantly, Kennedy's victory was symbolic in the sense that as more
and more Catholics were gradually becoming more bourgeois-minded and
were moving up the economic ladder, this was another barrier that Catholics
had overcome.⁹

LAY APOSTOLIC WORK

During their terms Archbishops McNicholas and Alter thought more could
be done to awaken the laity and parishes to the needs of the local church. In
his first year as archbishop McNicholas was of the opinion that the members
of the Cincinnati Conference of the National Council of Catholic Men
(NCCM) had very little responsibility. The NCCM was a national federation
of organizations of Catholic laymen established in 1920 by the National
Catholic Welfare Conference to promote the development of the lay min-
istry. "While I am anxious to see [the Cincinnati Conference] continued," he
wrote to Archbishop Austin Dowling of St. Paul, "I do not think I should
supply it with the oxygen of authority to make it live." Generally, McNi-
cholas, like some of his episcopal colleagues, such as Archbishop Michael J.
Curley of Baltimore, was displeased with the limited achievement of the
NCCM and regarded it as impotent. From the time it was formed in 1920
some of the bishops had viewed it with suspicion and did not think the coun-
cil was necessary. Writing three years later to Bishop John Noll of Fort
Wayne, McNicholas also blamed himself for not constructing something
"very definite" for the men of the NCCM in the archdiocese. They felt
"hampered," he wrote, having "no freedom of expression." Besides, he
thought that if the priests were "not hostile" toward the lay Catholics, they
were "at least apathetic." Convinced that the lay people in the various soci-
eties were also too much "under the jurisdiction of the Church," he felt they
no longer had to "stand in awe of the Bishops and priests." He suggested to
Noll that it would be best to have the NCCM become an organization of lay
societies for which "we Bishops will not assume responsibility."¹⁰

By the fall of 1929 the Cincinnati Conference reorganized itself. Becom-
ing a federation representative of all parishes and societies in the archdiocese,
it served as an inspirational force to various Catholic societies. In October
McNicholas, who had considerable drive and flair, urged the Catholic men
at the Annual Convention of the NCCM at Fort Wayne to participate more
in community outreach programs and to take more of a leadership role in
society. "Our aloofness, our silence, our refusal to make contacts with those
who misunderstand or differ with us, when it is in our power to show the
sanctity of the Catholic position," he said, "cannot be justified." What he
proposed was “a legion of Catholics” who would be “spiritual athletes for Christ and for the Church.” Also inspired by Pius XI’s encyclical *Mens Nostra* issued in December 1929 and his program of Catholic Action, more and more lay Catholics by the 1930s became identified with the Catholic Action movements. Catholic Action generally entailed on the part of the laity a more fervent religious practice, a study of Catholic doctrine and social principles, and a fuller involvement in community organizations.\(^{11}\)

As leader of the archdiocese at midcentury Alter also urged greater lay participation in the life of the church. On June 21, 1950, Pius XII named Alter, then bishop of Toledo, archbishop of Cincinnati. The grandson of a stagecoach driver and all-around athletic star as a young man, Alter became the sixth ordinary and fifth archbishop of the Cincinnati see. He enjoyed the reputation of being a great organizer, a forceful and forthright speaker, and a national leader of the church in social welfare.\(^{12}\)

Alter was born in Toledo on August 18, 1885. After receiving his early education in the community, he completed his studies for the priesthood at St. Mary’s Seminary in Cleveland. He was ordained a priest on June 4, 1910. Between his ordination and the time he became bishop, Alter served in varied capacities. Following his parish assignments at Leipsic and Lima, Ohio, Alter, a sturdy man of about medium height, was appointed the first director of Catholic Charities in the diocese of Toledo. During the next thirty years he became keenly interested in child care and family welfare. In 1935 he became associated with the social work of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Following his election to the Administrative Board of the Conference in 1948 Alter, as chairman of the Social Action Department, lobbied in Washington for the increase of the federal minimum wage, passage of the full employment bill, and the promotion of a national health program.\(^{13}\)

Of German extraction Alter was expected to find himself at home in the Queen City. In some ways he reminded Catholics in southwest Ohio of McNicholas, particularly in his stand on social and family welfare issues. Though both were reform-minded archbishops, they differed greatly in personality and administrative style. Intimates among the clergy referred to McNicholas simply as “the Boss,” in recognition of his leadership qualities. A headstrong administrator, McNicholas may have alienated many of his clergy by his authoritarian style. He was regarded by some as an abrasive autocrat. To many, however, this lover of dogs who enjoyed collecting rare works of art had a friendly, fatherly personality. Though Alter, a diocesan priest, resembled his Dominican predecessor, Cincinnati Catholics expected him to participate more in public life than McNicholas, whose interests had been more in the intellectual realm. At the same time that he was a gentleman and a leader, Alter was also flexible and amiable. He was not a man of quick
judgments. He impressed his colleagues with his firm and questioning mind. Alter’s appointment brought to Cincinnati the dean of American archbishops, since rank in this regard dates from consecration as bishop. He had served for nineteen years as the supreme pastor of the diocese of Toledo.¹⁴

On September 26, 1950, Alter was installed archbishop of Cincinnati. Shortly after his arrival in Cincinnati’s Union Terminal, he went to the episcopal residence in College Hill where he changed from black to the red robes of his office. Then he went immediately to the chapel of the residence. After praying quietly, he turned to the archdiocesan consulsors who were present to hear the reading of the papal bulls that appointed him archbishop of Cincinnati and gave him official possession of his archdiocese. At the time St. Monica Church had replaced St. Peter in Chains as the cathedral church. Largely because of the decline of the neighborhood on Eighth and Plum Streets and the uncertainty of the future of the inner city, McNicholas reduced St. Peter in Chains in 1938 to the status of a parish church. At St. Monica’s, Cardinal Samuel A. Stritch of Chicago, Alter’s immediate predecessor as bishop of Toledo, escorted Alter in 1950 to his throne and a Solemn Pontifical Mass completed the installation ceremony. Forty-three archbishops and bishops, and hundreds of priests, religious, civic leaders, and laity crowded the cathedral to witness the formal installation of the new archbishop. Alter was the first and only prelate to be installed in St. Monica’s.¹⁵

The year 1950 was the centenary of the establishment of the Cincinnati ecclesiastical province. The past one hundred years had witnessed an astounding growth of the Catholic Church everywhere in the United States. As an archdiocese Cincinnati shared second place after Baltimore with New York, St. Louis, and New Orleans. When the Cincinnati Province was established in 1850 there were two dioceses in Ohio—Cincinnati and Cleveland—and one in each of three states—Detroit in Michigan, Louisville in Kentucky, and Vincennes in Indiana. One hundred years later there were four provinces and eighteen dioceses in the same area. In 1850 there were only 160,000 Catholics in the territory; in 1950, there were more than 3,000,000 Catholics.¹⁶

As Cincinnati’s new archbishop Alter had in his charge a well-organized archdiocese with 332 priests, 219 parishes, and a Catholic population of 294,493. Fifteen months after his arrival he wrote to Cardinal Guiseppe Pizzardo in Rome and praised “the splendid work accomplished by [his] predecessor.” It was gratifying to Alter to see so many Catholics attending Mass and receiving the sacraments. A survey of all the parishes on five successive Sundays showed that almost 90 percent of Catholics in the community attended Mass regularly, and approximately thirty percent of them received Holy Communion. Though he realized there were other criteria by which to
judge "the vigor of Catholic life," he was pleased to see the faithful tapping "these two great sources of divine grace." 17

In 1952 and 1953 Alter, with the assistance of his vicar general Clarence Issenmann, a native of Hamilton, Ohio, oversaw the reorganization of the Archdiocesan Councils of Catholic Men and Women. These two organizations, along with the Knights of Columbus and Holy Name societies, among other lay groups, provided opportunities for lay people to mobilize their resources and help bring about social change consistent with Christian principles and values. When in May 1955 more than 1,200 women representing nearly every parish of the archdiocese met in Dayton for the third annual convention of the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women (ACCW), their main goal was to help "revitalize parish activities" and make the parishes "living cells of Catholic Action." It should be noted that both McNicholas and Alter focused almost exclusively on the expansion of the laity's leadership influence in society and not so much on their influence within the church. Leadership within the church itself was still essentially the realm of the clergy. The Second Vatican Council in the 1960s would help change that somewhat. 18

Working in conjunction with the clergy, lay efforts were also made in the
decades after the First World War to stimulate piety through parish missions, forty hours devotions, novenas, May crownings, Marian devotions, Eucharistic processions, Confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament and of Christian Doctrine, and public recitation of the rosary. These along with attending Mass and receiving the sacraments became more frequent and occupied a central place in the religious life of the mass of Catholics throughout the United States as well as locally. Parishes such as St. Susanna’s at Mason conducted rosary devotions and benedictions each Friday evening. In 1950 Cincinnati’s Resurrection Church in Price Hill began an around-the-clock, seven-days-a-week program of adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. During the next five years, twenty-four more churches in the archdiocese adopted the program, thirteen of them with day and night schedules, and twelve with daytime adoration. More than two million hours of adoration were offered. As a result of information supplied by promoters of the program in Cincinnati, adoration programs were initiated in more than seven hundred churches in the United States. In the early 1960s St. Bartholomew parishioners in Springfield Township in Cincinnati met one evening a week for communal prayer.19

There was throughout the archdiocese an intense effort on the part of the lay people to develop their spiritual lives. In 1931 the Legion of Mary, which had originated in Dublin ten years earlier and became one of the largest lay associations founded in the twentieth century, entered the United States. Formed to promote veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary, members often prayed the rosary at their weekly meetings and participated in special novenas. Organized on a modest scale it gradually became an effective lay organization of the local church. Charter legion groups were formed in a number of parishes. Legion members undertook various tasks assigned by their pastors. Some took the parish census, looked after the pamphlet rack in the back of the church, promoted retreats, and conducted religious classes for children attending public schools, and others visited the sick in hospitals and homes. In 1941 Cincinnati hosted the first Legion of Mary congress in the Midwest. Approximately two hundred spiritual directors and officers, representing fifty-six legion groups from Ohio, Indiana, and Kentucky, participated in the congress. In 1945 the legion established a group devoted entirely to visiting the blind and preparing braille copies of prayers and religious literature for distribution. By midcentury there were forty-two parish legion groups, consisting of 417 active members, with an enrollment of 11,210 auxiliary or “praying” members who promised to recite a rosary and the legion prayers every day.20

Pope Pius XII designated 1954 as the Marian Year, a year set aside so that people could exercise special devotions to the Blessed Mother in observance of the centennial of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception
in the Church. Alter chose St. Mary Church in Over-the-Rhine in Cincinnati, the oldest consecrated church named for the Virgin Mary under his jurisdiction, as the principal pilgrimage center in the archdiocese. On December 8, 1953, Alter opened the Marian Year by celebrating Mass, with almost two thousand people in attendance. During the year, more than fifty thousand people made pilgrimages to St. Mary’s. In the summer children from St. Clement parish at St. Bernard in Cincinnati assembled at the St. Clement Church each afternoon at 4 P.M., Monday through Friday, to pray the rosary. Laypersons throughout the archdiocese also met weekly for corporate recitation of the rosary. For an enduring memorial of Marian Year, St. Joseph parish in Hamilton erected a shrine to Our Lady of Fatima next to the church. In 1917 three children in Fatima, Portugal, claimed to have seen a vision of a woman who identified herself as “Our Lady of the Rosary.”

As novenas and Marian devotions took on new popularity in the 1930s, the Holy Name Society continued to thrive. Nearly every one of the large cities in the country witnessed Holy Name processions. Some parishes in the archdiocese, such as St. Antoninus’s in Covedale in Cincinnati, had two divisions of the Holy Name Society, one each for the married and single men. Each year McNicholas made the Holy Name parade one of the outstanding public events in Cincinnati. As many as 40,000 to 50,000 men would turn out for the annual event. Though essentially a religious organization, it doubtlessly helped create the image of Catholic political solidarity. In October 1934, 45,000 men, including thirty-five bands and drum corps, marched through the streets of Cincinnati. About one hundred parishes were represented in the procession. The demonstration culminated at the Crosley Field, the new home of the Cincinnati Reds baseball team, where Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cipogani, apostolic delegate, Alfred E. Smith, former governor of New York, and McNicholas reviewed the marching men. In the stadium, the archbishop led the huge congregation in prayer. Smith then led in the pronouncement of the antiprofanity pledge of the Holy Name Society. The Cincinnati Enquirer estimated that close to 250,000 people either witnessed or participated in the parade and in the religious exercises. During the last year of McNicholas’s administration, more than 100,000 men took part in the Holy Name public observances in seven cities in the archdiocese. All these demonstrations concluded with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The women annually on the Sunday before the Holy Name parade celebrated Marian Day for the Blessed Mother. Though crowd sizes at Holy Name rallies grew during the 1950s, by the mid-1960s their numbers declined sharply. As more and more Catholics became involved with various social issues in the sixties, they lost interest in the Holy Name processions. The last rally in downtown Cincinnati was in 1969.
For most parishes, the various parish organizations provided the principal sources of extra revenue and volunteer labor. Virtually each parish had a Holy Name Society and Rosary Society. In order to raise money for necessary expenses, the Holy Name and St. Margaret Mary Societies of All Sts Church at Kenwood in Cincinnati gave rummage sales, held card parties in the homes of some of the members, and sponsored luncheons and dances. St. Anne’s Altar Rosary Sodality at Cincinnati’s St. Bartholomew parish in Springfield township sponsored fashion shows, dinner dances, bridge games, and 500 Marathons. The additional parish revenue helped buy pews, student desks, and liturgical items. Besides sponsoring some of the more familiar activities, Our Lady of Lourdes’s St. Mary’s Ladies Sodality in Westwood in Cincinnati conducted white elephant sales, penny drills, a minstrel show, and a Christmas walk. Through the Crusaders of Mary Society, the youth of Cincinnati’s St. Antoninus parish raised money for various charities, taught Bible school, and assisted in renovating buildings in the inner city.\(^3\)

Perhaps the most lucrative source of extra parish revenue in the second quarter of the twentieth century was the introduction of the weekly bingo game. The games were almost always initiated to pay debts, which were especially difficult to liquidate during the hard times of the depression. St. Mary parish in Springfield held its first bingo in 1936 and netted two hundred dollars. Impressed by the financial success of bingo at St. Bonaventure Church at Fairmount in Cincinnati, St. William parishioners at Price Hill inaugurated a weekly bingo in the mid-1930s in order to liquidate a mortgage. It was an instant success. “The crowds,” the pastor wrote, “come over by the hundreds.” One night it had close to two thousand people. It was reported that buses came down from Indianapolis and that the city railway company had to put on ten to fifteen extra streetcars on bingo night. At St. Joseph Church in Hamilton, bingo drew patrons from as far north as Piqua and Toledo in Ohio and as far west as Fort Wayne in Indiana.\(^3\)

The weekly bingos, however, were controversial. When St. Lawrence parish in Mason introduced the game in the town hall in January 1940, the following month *The Warren County News* printed criticisms from citizens. They objected to using public property for such an activity. A local Baptist pastor also criticized the game by citing the evils of gambling. Believing that no harm was done, the Mason officials allowed the games to continue. When in 1943 there were movements by Cincinnati officials to ban church bingo, McNicholas in his August pastoral defended with some frustration the right of people to play bingo. “As the public official moral teacher of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati,” he wrote, “I deem it my duty to assure priests and people that an innocent game of chance doing an injustice to no one is not morally wrong in itself.” Pointing out that there was gambling that was sinful and
criminal and that all Catholics were bound in conscience to avoid it, he argued that no reasonable person could possibly misconstrue an innocent game of amusement "in which there happens to be an element of chance" with gambling. Bishop James Hartley of Columbus commended McNicholas on his "good judgment and common sense" in his defense of bingo. In the face of possible legislation, parishes that held bingo games helped bear the expenses incurred in the legal battle for the right of the people to continue to play them. Bingo games have continued in the archdiocese to the present.

Though it encouraged various parish programs and activities, the local church—in keeping with the teachings of the church—affirmed the sanctity of the family and the home. When in December 1930 the Cincinnati Enquirer published statements that appeared to ridicule the Catholic position on the indissolubility of the institution of marriage, McNicholas reacted. In an official letter to his clergy, published in the Catholic Telegraph, McNicholas criticized the article and its publication. Though he acknowledged that the views expressed were not necessarily those of the editor, in his judgment that fact could not "excuse a reputable paper for giving space in its columns to a most vicious attack upon what Catholics accept as belonging to the very substance of their religion." McNicholas further argued that the article could not be justified on the plea of liberty of the press. "Would the business interests of this community and the property owners of our city tolerate the publication of . . . a series of articles . . . advocating the abolition of the rights of private property . . . ? Would they," he continued, "allow papers printing such articles to come into their homes?"

Throughout their years of leadership McNicholas and Alter contended that the degradation of the home and the family in the United States threatened the very existence of society. In an address at the National Convention of Catholic Women at Fort Wayne in 1935, McNicholas stressed the importance of family life. "The measure of the strength of any country," he said, "is the strength of its homes." Local church leaders maintained that divorce, birth control, and abortion threatened the unity and stability of marriage and social life. Many Catholics in the archdiocese participated in the Christian Family Movement (CFM), a group for men that started in Chicago, South Bend, and New York in the early 1940s and was transformed into an organization that included women four years later. Condemning in the 1950s the increasing social acceptance of divorce, CFM argued that broken homes and multiple parents were fertile sources of juvenile delinquency. Although Alter generally applauded the work of diagnostic clinics and social workers, they failed, he suggested, to come to grips with the underlying causes. He always believed that the chief cause for juvenile delinquency was found in the home. "To prescribe remedies is good," he wrote, "but to remove the cause of evil is better."
During this period lay Catholics also protested against the Planned Parenthood Associations or maternal health societies and clinics that promoted artificial birth control or abortion. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s the archdiocese also lobbied in Columbus against sterilization bills. “The basic trouble with the confused world of our day,” McNicholas wrote to his clergy on January 11, 1949, “is the ever-increasing determination to reject fixed principles of morality in every sphere of human activity.” When in the late 1950s the Planned Parenthood Association and other groups accelerated their campaign for artificial birth control, Alter joined U.S. Catholic bishops in the fall of 1959 in issuing a statement in opposition to it. When six years later the Ohio Legislature held hearings on a bill to liberalize the state’s abortion law, Alter spoke out against it. “At a time when oppressed minorities in the United States are finding the courage and the resources to protest their lot,” Alter wrote in 1965, “the most helpless minority of all is facing more serious threats than ever. The members of this group are the thousands of unborn children who each year are killed before they can draw a single breath.” The archbishop supported the efforts of local Catholic leaders in their antiabortion campaign. “I send you my blessing,” he wrote in 1967, “with the hope that you will continue to do good work for the higher moral education of our young people as well as for their parents.” The following year Alter endorsed Pope Paul’s encyclical on birth control. Like most of his episcopal colleagues he issued a pastoral letter reaffirming the church’s traditional teaching that there was a birth control, namely conjugal abstinence, that was virtuous, and there was a birth control that was sinful.28

In the 1930s and 1940s, young men and women through the Catholic Students’ Mission Crusade (CSMC), a national federation of mission societies founded in 1918 to acquaint Catholic students with the work of the Missionary Church in the United States and in foreign countries, also became engaged in missionary work. The CSMC, which made annual contributions to the Pontifical Society for the Propagation of the Faith, grew throughout McNicholas’s tenure. Cincinnati became the national center for the Crusade. On May 29, 1927, fifty thousand adults and students participated in the first annual rally and Mass of the CSMC at Corcoran Field, the athletic stadium of St. Xavier College. McNicholas, as national president of CSMC, which at its peak claimed approximately one million student members, often raised students’ consciousness to national issues. After fifty-two years of stimulating thousands of vocations to the priesthood, the religious life, and special service to the church, in the fall of 1970 the CSMC went out of existence.29

Like his predecessor Alter continually emphasized the importance of the laity of the church. He felt it was impossible for a bishop to do all that was required to meet the problems confronting society without help from the lay
people. In his first sermon in Cincinnati Alter acknowledged “that no prelate of the Church has ever stood alone when the cause of religion has made progress. He is merely the sentinel on the mountain-top—the captain who devises the strategy or organizes their advance. The unsung heroes of the army of the Church,” he said, “are the zealous priests, the devoted religious, and the faithful members of the laity. Without their devoted efforts and unselfish sacrifices, the Church would be poor [or inadequate] indeed.”

A year after his ordination as auxiliary bishop to Alter in 1958, Paul F. Leibold delivered the same message at the first convention of the Dayton Deanery Council of Catholic Men. He argued that every Catholic had a moral obligation to take part in Catholic Action. “Individual action by itself,” he said, “cannot reform the social habits of men in the world. Organized united action is necessary.” Leibold, who eleven years later would succeed Alter as archbishop of Cincinnati, made it clear that this united effort was to begin at the grassroots level with the individual parishioner. Though he praised Catholics for their generosity with money, he felt they should also be motivated to attend a parish meeting one evening a month. Whereas at the beginning of the twentieth century a parish was not considered active unless a different society met every night of the week, the parish itself now became the center of the organized lay apostolate. The plan of the archdiocesan councils was essentially a parish plan of action so that a deanery council of Catholic men “is totally ineffective as the Bishop’s arm of Catholic Action,” Leibold wrote, “unless it is rooted in the parish unit.”

Though parish missions were popular during McNicholas’s and Alter’s administrations, another pastoral technique, the retreat, was also developed in the archdiocese in these years. Developed in the nineteenth century and designed, like the eucharistic movement, to revitalize the religious fervor of the laity, the national retreat movement, an idea that originated among the laity in New York in 1911, was another significant religious revival in the first half of the twentieth century. Promoted by Pius XI in his encyclical *Mens Nostra*, the retreat movement was defined as the “soul of Catholic Action.” On December 7, 1926, McNicholas initiated the laymen’s retreat movement. He was hopeful that the weekend retreats would “do an immeasurable amount of good in making all our laymen Catholic-minded and Catholic-spirited,” he wrote to William Albers, the first president of the retreat movement in Cincinnati. McNicholas thought that the lay retreats, rooted in the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, would contribute to each retreatant’s “own personal sanctification” as well as get the men interested in the affairs of the diocese. Every group of laymen that he spoke to “seemed uninterested in diocesan matters,” he wrote to Archbishop Austin Dowling of St. Paul in 1926, “but wholly taken up with the affairs of the
Jesuits.” Jesuit retreat ministry had begun in the archdiocese a few years earlier. Believing that building lay support “was never more urgent,” McNicholas was convinced that the diocesan retreats would help “intensify” the interest of laymen in local parish work and deflect their interest away from the Jesuits. “Every bishop realizes,” he wrote, “what a force for good he would have in his diocese if a group of staunch laymen, Catholic in every sentiment, earnestly strove to further his plans for the extension and preservation of the Church.” The first diocesan retreat was held at Crusade Castle in Cincinnati on January 21 to 23, 1927. There were five retreats that first year and McNicholas preached them all. From that point on the retreats constantly gained in popularity. By the 1930s attendance ranged from 225 to 250 retreatants annually. Though the Jesuits were the main promoters of the retreat movement in the country, the Passionists, Franciscans, and the priests of the Society of Mary also conducted retreats for men.12

In the 1950s Alter regarded the retreat movement among the laity as “one of the most significant religious developments in modern times.” Half a century earlier it would have been regarded as some sort of “devotional vagary,” he wrote, for lay people to retire from the activities of the world and seek seclusion for a number of days in order to meditate on the spiritual truths of faith. Like his predecessor, Alter believed the retreats benefited the retreatant as well as the whole church. “It is,” he thought, “like leaven in a parish. It gives vitality and purpose where before there was spiritual inertia.” When in 1955 the Society of Mary established a men’s retreat house at Mount St. John’s in Dayton and the Jesuits a new retreat house in Milford, Ohio, it brought to eight the total number of retreat houses in the Cincinnati archdiocese. In January 1950, at the request of McNicholas, a community of sisters of the Society of Mary Reparatrix from New York established a convent in Clifton. They promoted retreats and days of recollection for women. By the end of Alter’s term there were four major retreat houses for women in the archdiocese, namely the Convent of Mary Reparatrix and Friarhurst at Cincinnati, Dominican Retreat House at Dayton, and Maria Stein Retreat House at Maria Stein. The close cooperation between laity, religious orders, priests, and ordinaries helped foster the growth of the retreat movement, locally as well as nationally, and reflected a growing stability and maturity in the Catholic community.13

During their administrations McNicholas and Alter also helped promote the religious education of the laity by supporting the work of the Catholic Telegraph. A few months into his term, McNicholas asked the clergy to help increase the number of subscribers. “It is our obvious duty,” he wrote, “to cultivate . . . a taste for the reading of Catholic newspapers.” In his May 1929 address at the Convention of the Catholic Press Association, McNi-
cholas also pointed out that to make the Catholic people an interested body of readers, the strongest hope lay, he thought, in the youth. “We must cultivate in them,” he said, “a taste for everything that is worthwhile in our Catholic papers and periodicals.”

In the summer of 1937 arrangements were made for the archdiocese to take over the Catholic Telegraph. Dr. Thomas Hart, who had published the paper for nearly forty years and had made many personal sacrifices, turned the paper over as a gift to the archdiocese. During Hart’s tenure, the paper had proven to be a conservative organ, generally supporting the ordinaries on their political, economic, and theological views. Praising his dedication and great abilities, McNicholas appointed Hart editor emeritus. To the time of Hart’s death in 1947, the archdiocese “carried him on a little pension,” McNicholas wrote, “for he had nothing on which to live.” The paper now came under direct control of the archbishop and its direction was again committed to diocesan priests. McNicholas thought “the interest of religion” demanded that “the priesthood of the Diocese take up the Apostolate of the Press.” The work of printing it was transferred to the Register publishing house in Denver, Colorado. The paper, under the editorship of Father Edward A. Freking, was now called The Catholic Telegraph-Register. The first issue appeared on September 16, 1937.

In January 1967 the diocesan paper ended its nearly thirty-year tie with the Register. For more than a decade the Executive Board of the Catholic Telegraph had been considering severance and giving the paper the independence it had lacked. “Primary reasons that move us to a local operation,” Monsignor Lawrence C. Walter, business manager, said, “are problems of distance and control that have been with us for some years.” The Catholic Telegraph had experienced a number of delayed deliveries brought on by accident of inclement weather between Colorado and Ohio. Moreover, the Executive Board was displeased with the increasing errors with news and advertising copy. Though similar errors could be made in Cincinnati, the chances seemed smaller. Throughout his administration Alter and his staff also explored ways to increase circulation of the Catholic Telegraph. “[I]t is my conviction that our Catholic paper,” he wrote to the clergy, “belongs in every home in our jurisdiction.” He welcomed the initiative taken by some pastors who placed the diocesan paper in every home in their parish.

LEGION OF DECENCY

In the early 1930s some of the energies of archdiocesan officials were directed toward implementing papal teachings on social issues. McNicholas took an aggressive stance on morally suspect motion pictures and helped launch a
national crusade to clean up the cinema. Viewing themselves as part of the moral conscience of the nation, American bishops and priests not only condemned birth control and abortion but also indecency and immorality in the entertainment industry. As the majority of American Catholics became more and more part of mainstream America, the archdiocese, part of the official church, increasingly presented itself as the true conservator of American moral values. Building upon the tradition of Archbishops Elder and Moeller, McNicholas warned people, especially parents, to be aware of the dangers of film. His campaign led quickly to the formation of the Catholic Legion of Decency, a national organization aimed to raise the standards of public entertainment.

Part of the impetus for this crusade was supplied by remarks of the newly appointed apostolic delegate to the United States, Archbishop Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, to the National Conference of Catholic Charities held in New York in October 1933. He called for a movement to counteract the evil influence of “salacious cinema.” McNicholas interpreted Cicognani’s words as a “clarion call” to concerted action. The following month Bishop John Cantwell of Los Angeles and San Diego, whose diocese included Hollywood, urged his colleagues at the annual bishops’ meeting to start a crusade. The Administrative Board of the NCWC formed the Episcopal Committee on Motion Pictures (ECMP), with McNicholas at its head, to help improve the tone of the movies. Bishops Cantwell, John Noll of Fort Wayne, and Hugh Boyle of Pittsburgh joined McNicholas on the committee. Together they helped coordinate the Legion of Decency.17

In March 1934 the archdiocese of Cincinnati launched its first Legion of Decency pledge campaign. Catholics were urged to stay away from all movies that offended “decency and Christian morality.” McNicholas drew up a written pledge that was printed in duplicate and distributed in the parishes with one copy to be returned to the chancery. The signer kept the original as a reminder of his or her obligation. The following month the ECMP, at its first official meeting in Washington, D.C., approved of its distribution nationwide. Legion members protested against those producers and actors who allegedly promoted the belief that marriage, the purity of women, and the sanctity of the home were “out-moded [sic] sentimentalities.” Perceiving certain movies as corrupting society, McNicholas unhesitatingly undertook the duty of urging all church members to sign the pledge and send it to local theatres. A number of parishes formed committees to ascertain and make known the character of movies in their respective areas. As head of the Legion of Decency, McNicholas also threatened a boycott of Hollywood in order to safeguard the moral standards of society. The archbishop’s language was strong, blunt, and uncompromising, reminding
Catholics that such aggressive action was only taken after years of false hope that Hollywood would correct itself on its own.\textsuperscript{38}

Shortly after the first ECMP meeting, Martin Quigley of \textit{The Motion Picture Herald} from New York, a Catholic who worked for the motion picture industry, informed McNicholas that any effort to curb the production of objectionable movies must include New York to be effective. Most movies were distributed through New York rather than Hollywood. By June producers themselves, concerned that a major grassroots campaign was under way, were contacting various bishops asking to participate in the upcoming ECMP meeting in Cincinnati on June 20 and 21, 1934. The national character of the Legion of Decency movement was having an immediate impact at the box office as revenues declined. The meeting in Cincinnati proved to be pivotal. Two representatives of the movie industry met with the four bishops on the porch of McNicholas's residence in Norwood and offered the producers' plan for self-regulation of the moral content of the movies.\textsuperscript{39}

Though McNicholas and his colleagues were hopeful that this new plan of self-regulation would work, they decided not to leave matters entirely in the hands of the movie industry. In the August issue of \textit{Ecclesiastical Review}, McNicholas continued to stress the need for aggressive campaigning to arouse the public to make their ire felt publicly. Because Hollywood had previously broken its promises, the ECMP felt it was important to sustain public interest in the cause. In addition to editorials and articles in diocesan newspapers there were addresses on local radio stations. McNicholas also directed Auxiliary Bishop Bernard Sheil of Chicago to arrange with NBC a hookup on national radio for four allotments of time for the Legion of Decency. On September 21, McNicholas gave one of the radio addresses. He emphasized the church as "the relentless foe" of those who corrupt morality and innocence, especially that of children.\textsuperscript{40}

The Legion of Decency took off quickly. It had a branch in every diocese. Though the response in the archdiocese of Cincinnati may not have been all that McNicholas had hoped for, it was nevertheless substantial. Of the 84,150 pledges sent out to city parishes in the spring of 1934, 23,408 were returned; of the 113,300 to parishes outside Cincinnati, 26,083 were returned. It is estimated that by the fall of 1934 more than seven million pledges were received nationally, and there was "activity," McNicholas wrote to Cardinal Patrick Hayes of New York, "in 80 or more dioceses." Members took the pledge each year during a Sunday liturgy. For some Catholics the pledge became morally binding in conscience. The Legion of Decency, furthermore, gained support from other faiths. "The fact that all groups, Protestants, Catholics and especially the parents of children, have entered into a crusade for a clean screen," McNicholas said approvingly, "is proof that the rank and file of
Americans stand for decency." Many rabbis also approved of the work of the Legion of Decency. Though the bishops were gratified by and accepted this support, they chose to retain their independence rather than collaborate with non-Catholic groups on the matter.⁴¹

By the summer of 1935 the results of the agreement with the movie producers proved encouraging. Only three or four movies during the past year had been condemned. Notwithstanding the marked improvement, the bishops continued to call for constant vigilance. Denying the implication of censorship made by some critics, McNicholas repeatedly argued that the Legion of Decency was not a censoring organization. He pointed out that the Legion was only interested in monitoring the morality of films after they had been made. The success of the campaign, he felt, stemmed not from reliance on legislative restriction or censorship but by making the movie industry realize its responsibility to produce wholesome films. From McNicholas’s perspective, movies presented or implied “a moral thesis,” and it was his duty as a religious leader to protest immoral or corrupt theses presented in movies. As a consequence of the Legion’s pressure on the film industry, filmmakers changed dialogue, cut scenes, and there were topics and scenes that Hollywood never filmed in order to avoid problems with the Catholic Church.⁴²

McNicholas’s action against Hollywood stemmed largely from his concern over the morality of children and the powerful effect movies had on them. What the American bishops found particularly objectionable was the way that many movies tended to glamorize sin and crime. Because McNicholas feared movies would influence people to accept more immorality in life, he insisted that a loss of morality in one area of life meant a loss of morality as a whole. On matters of morality McNicholas was unbending. He was never reluctant in taking a resolute moral stance against immorality. “He is as uncompromising in his condemnation of what he considers the pagan tendency of modern movies,” an interviewer wrote in 1934, “as he is when denouncing divorce, birth control, or unscrupulous business ethics.”⁴³

McNicholas always stressed that public opinion was the most effective means of combating immorality in movies. In the fall of 1936 the ECMP published an eight-page guidebook on “How to Judge the Morality of Motion Pictures.” Distributed to dioceses all over the country, it provided a practical guide for Legion of Decency use in discerning the quality of the moral content of movies. Though McNicholas was eventually relieved of the burdens of the chairmanship of ECMP in 1939, throughout the remainder of his term he remained vigilant on the subject. In the late 1940s he continued to urge the faithful to show their power by staying away from all motion pictures condemned by the Legion of Decency. Warnings about the immoral nature of films were found in the Catholic Telegraph each week, a practice
that has continued to the present. From the time of its establishment in 1934 to the early 1950s, the Legion had been remarkably successful in achieving its goals, as only a few films produced by major Hollywood studios had been condemned. In the mid-1950s, however, during Alter's tenure, there were efforts made to renew the Legion of Decency pledge. In 1955 the Legion had seen the largest percentage of morally objectionable films in two decades. Though the Cincinnati Chancery Office directed that the Legion of Decency program be reactivated in every parish of the archdiocese and, in 1964, prepared a new pledge, the movement did not get the popular support nor attain the results of earlier years.  

In the fall of 1953 parish units of the Cincinnati Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Men (ACCM) also promoted good reading. Two years later the Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women at its third annual convention in Dayton pledged full cooperation with the ACCM in the formation of a decent literature committee in each parish. By 1960 the group, headed by Charles H. Keating, Jr., a local Catholic attorney, emerged as a nonsectarian national organization with its headquarters in Cincinnati. In the spring of that year four hundred delegates from all parts of the country participated in the two-day National Conference of Citizens for Decent Literature in Cincinnati. Addressing an audience of six hundred persons at the Netherland Hilton Hotel, Archbishop Alter called pornography "a serious moral problem" that attacked "the home, the family, and . . . the well-being of the entire community."  

HOME MISSIONS AND RURAL LIFE

Within a year of McNicholas's installation in 1925 the archdiocese hosted the fourth National Catholic Rural Life Conference. As the main speaker, McNicholas expressed concern that there were too few Catholic rural parishes and schools. Since his days as bishop of Duluth, McNicholas had come to believe that the American church's "greatest problems" were in the "rural parishes." It was at the first Catholic Rural Life Conference in St. Louis in 1923 that McNicholas first proposed the establishment of a society of diocesan priests and women religious dedicated to the rural missions. Like many political and social reformers during the economic depression of the 1930s, the Cincinnati ordinary attempted to arouse bishops, priests, religious, and lay people to America's rural problems.  

With the assistance of Father Peter J. O'Callaghan, head of the Catholic Home Mission Society of America, McNicholas in the 1930s began making plans to establish a foundation in the archdiocese. By 1937 he secured the services of Father Howard Bishop from the Baltimore archdiocese to lay the
groundwork for the establishment of the Catholic Home Missioners of America. Bishop had been a visionary and activist in rural ministry since 1920 and had started a community for that purpose. Because Bishop was not allowed to establish his home mission society in Baltimore, McNicholas invited him to come to Cincinnati. Bishop referred to his generous host “as the soul of kindness” who had “deep, constructive interest in my plans.” The Society, whose purpose was to seek converts and to serve the rural areas that were without priests or were very much undermanned as far as priestly min-istration and the teaching of religion were concerned, was formally estab-lished on property in Glendale in the summer of 1939. It seemed appropriate that it would start in the archdiocese of Cincinnati. It was to Kentucky and Ohio that the first Catholic pioneers came to settle and began to spread the Catholic faith westward. A philanthropic family in Dayton gave Howard Bishop a trailer for mission work. Within ten years of its founding the Home Missioners of America, named Glenmary Missioners by McNicholas, con-sisted of nineteen priests and twenty-two seminarians who dedicated their labors to poor mission localities in six dioceses. By the early 1940s some Glenmary Sisters approached Howard Bishop with their offer to render social service in caring for the needs of the rural areas. They became catechists in the mission field and teachers in the mission schools.47

Even though by 1944 the archdiocese had built about sixteen rural chapels, McNicholas saw the need “for a hundred chapels” to help seek converts and lay the foundations of religion. There were five counties in the archdiocese in which there were no Catholic schools. A survey revealed that in Adams County alone, which had a population of more than twenty thou-sand, there were approximately fifteen persons who were Catholic. “The hatred of everything Catholic in this county,” McNicholas wrote to the apostolic delegate in December 1945, “is almost incredible.” When the Glenmary Missioners first began their endeavors there, a man shot at one of the priests.48

In addition to the work of the Home Missioners of America, McNicholas praised the accomplishments of the Workers of the Grail, an important lay woman movement for rural reform. Founded by a Dutch Jesuit in 1921, the Grail came to the United States in 1940. The first center was in a Chicago suburb. Not able to remain profitably in the archdiocese of Chicago, Lydwine van Kersbergen, founder of the Grail “novitiate” in the United States and a spokesperson for the group, approached McNicholas as a likely patron. In January 1944 McNicholas, who was very much interested in the work of the Grail, invited the movement to establish its national center in his diocese. That spring, with considerable financial assistance from the Cincinnati ordinary, it moved to a 183-acre farm in Loveland, Ohio, about thirty miles northeast of downtown Cincinnati, and established a school to train Catholic
young women for their apostolic work in the church. McNicholas called the new headquarters "Grailville." The Grail was devoted to attracting women to the land. "We can and we must through the Workers of the Grail," McNicholas wrote, "convince our young American women that it is natural and wholesome, noble and supernatural, to live on the land where we can have the highest expression of Christian living and of happy, blessed homes." In the late 1940s McNicholas helped dedicate a new Center of Womanly Arts at Grailville as well as establish an agricultural school in Mercer County to help prepare individuals for rural leadership. McNicholas's commitment to rural reform was unwavering. He had "neither peer nor rival when it comes to charity," Bishop William T. Mulloy of Covington and president of the National Rural Life Conference wrote. "I have never met a man more charitable." 49

A good example of the growth of the church in the rural areas was at Millville in Butler County. In 1940 Millville was a village of approximately three hundred residents, and three Protestant churches served the overwhelmingly Protestant population. In spite of the non-Catholic atmosphere of the village, some of the Catholics felt that there were enough Catholic families for a parish. They took a census of the area and discovered forty Catholic families. With the aid of a priest in a neighboring town, they asked McNicholas to consider the establishment of a parish. McNicholas granted their request and appointed Father Joseph V. Urbain, a teacher at St. Gregory Seminary, to organize the Queen of Peace parish. Released from his teaching duties, Urbain took up residence at Mercy Hospital in Hamilton. As soon as the needs of a chapel were made known, people began donating equipment and supplies. One woman farmer from a neighboring parish sold enough eggs to buy a chalice and an organ. In a short time the parishioners also built Urbain a home adjoining the chapel and parish hall. To encourage Catholics to find the social stability and economic independence that came with home ownership in a rural community, the Queen of Peace parish laid out a 140-acre tract of land near the church in acre and half-acre plots. Parishioners then developed the plots into small farms. McNicholas hoped that these lots would entice more Catholic families to move to the land. By midcentury Millville had a Catholic church, eighty families in the parish, and 105 children enrolled in the parish school, which had been opened in the fall of 1946. "We cannot urge Catholic families to found homes in the country," McNicholas wrote, "if their children are to be deprived of a Catholic education." Two Sisters of the Precious Blood were engaged as teachers. The children as well as the adults took part in the parish's work program. Crews of school children were appointed each evening to clean up the classrooms under the direction of the sisters. 50
Activities at the Queen of Peace parish were designed to strengthen parish solidarity. One of the most colorful of these activities was the observance of the Rogation days, commonly prescribed in Western Christendom as days of prayer and fasting to implore God’s blessing on farm crops. These days were celebrated at the farm of a different member of the Queen of Peace parish every year. On Rural Life Sunday, observed on the Feast of Christ the King, the children marched in a procession before the Mass and the pastor blessed symbols of the harvest. The church was decorated with rural symbols, emphasizing the relation of rural life to the liturgical life of the church. Frequently, a social program that featured a covered-dish dinner and folk dancing in the parish hall followed Mass. It was often mentioned that one of the admirable qualities of the rural parish was the spirit of cooperation usually found there. When a fire razed the home of a parishioner of St. Bernadette’s parish at Amelia in November 1950, the parish responded with contributions for the fire victims. “The people don’t regard this as something extraordinary or heroic,” Father Bernard Pieing, pastor of St. Bernadette, said. “To them it’s just the decent, neighborly, Christian thing to do.”

In early 1952 the archdiocese, with Alter’s approval, helped organize the Catholic Rural Youth Organization (CRYO). It was designed to provide for Catholic rural youth opportunities for religious, cultural, and social activities similar to those offered through the Catholic Youth Organization. Father Urbain of Queen of Peace parish was named director. CRYO had existed in limited form in the archdiocese under Urbain’s direction since the late 1940s but had been localized to half a dozen rural parishes in the southern part of the archdiocese. In the 1950s the archdiocese also established a Rural Life Conference for priests. It provided the clergy in rural areas with a means of discussing their common problems and fostering greater understanding of the problems of rural people. The Conference paid special attention to the liturgical movement, the development of credit unions, and the promotion of health programs.

**dioecesan changes**

During the McNicholas and Alter years seventy-four new parishes were formed in the archdiocese, bringing the number of parishes to 262. Within two years of McNicholas’s installation, five new parishes were opened in Cincinnati alone. One of the parishes, St. Thomas’s in Avondale, brought the Dominican Fathers in 1927 back into the archdiocese from which they had been absent since Bishop Fenwick’s time. That same year the white-robed friars took charge of St. Gertrude’s, founded four years earlier, in Madeira. By 1943 they also oversaw St. Andrew parish in Avondale. Besides the formation
of new parishes, the archdiocese in 1947 opened the 240-acre Gate of Heaven cemetery in Cincinnati.35

When McNicholas laid the cornerstone of St. Monica Church on West McMillan Street in Cincinnati on August 22, 1926, he did not know the special role the church would eventually play in the history of the archdiocese. At the time he expressed sorrow at the passing of some inner-city churches due to business growth and people moving to the suburbs. “A great change is coming over our city so far as many of our Catholic churches are concerned,” he wrote in 1926. “Not a few of our old parishes, with their splendid temples, have, in the natural growth of the city, lost their people and are no longer the great centers of religious activity they once were. It is not, indeed, that the membership of the church has decreased,” he explained, “but rather that the faithful have been driven by the encroachments of business to less congested portions of Cincinnati.” Largely because of these changes, on Sunday, September 18, 1938, St. Monica Church replaced St. Peter in Chains Cathedral as the cathedral church. St. Peter in Chains was reduced to the status of a parish church.34

Among the sixteen churches that closed during this period were three religious landmarks in Cincinnati. Once-thriving parishes in the inner city now found themselves with smaller and poorer congregations. In 1958 Holy Trinity parish in the west end, the second oldest parish in Cincinnati, was discontinued. Five years later the church was torn down. In 1962 St. Joseph Church on Lincoln Park Drive and Linn Street was taken down to permit the widening of Linn Street by the city. St. Edward Church, three blocks away, served St. Joseph parishioners until a new church was completed in 1965. In 1963 St. Anthony Church was the third church of the old west end in ten years to be torn down. German parishes had built all three churches a century earlier.35

During this period of overall growth in the archdiocese, church officials reopened St. Gregory Seminary in Mount Washington. Shortly after McNicholas came to Cincinnati, he decided to continue the work of his predecessor in arranging to have the preparatory seminary reopened in order to help improve priestly vocations in the diocese. In September 1928 the preparatory seminary became a unit of the newly incorporated Athenaeum of Ohio. Graduates of the college program could now be awarded the bachelor of arts degree. Realizing the need of enlarged accommodations for the work of the seminary, the archdiocese secured approximately twenty-eight additional acres of land, immediately adjoining the seminary property. Constructed of stone in a Lombard style of architecture, the new building, erected at a cost of $1,200,000, contained classrooms, laboratories, student dormitories, and apartments for some members of the faculty. Writing to William Albers,
who proved to be the biggest lay benefactor of the seminary since its conception almost a century earlier, McNicholas pointed out that the preparatory seminary had been a "great burden" to him. Not merely because he held "every string in [his] hand during its construction," he wrote, "but chiefly because of my grave anxiety lest I might be imposing too great a tax upon the people. This has worried me more than any one knows." The new St. Gregory Seminary was dedicated on October 6, 1929, the centennial year of the seminary. Approximately ten thousand priests, religious, and lay people from all parts of the archdiocese attended the ceremony.\textsuperscript{66}

At the time approximately five hundred students were enrolled at the Mount St. Mary's of the West and St. Gregory Seminaries, with 230 of them, representing thirteen dioceses, at Mount St. Mary's in Norwood. In the first fifteen years of McNicholas's term, approximately eight hundred students entered St. Gregory's. One hundred and fifty of these were ordained. During the Depression years the enrollment slowly declined to 222 students in 1941 from a high of 260 a decade earlier. During the war years enrollment declined to slightly under 200. After the war the trend was reversed and by midcentury the enrollment had grown to more than 300 students.\textsuperscript{57}

Seminary life in the pre–Vatican II church was a matter of total involvement and total commitment on the part of the seminarians. Both Mount St. Mary's of the West and St. Gregory Seminaries were committed to tight clerical education and socialization. The young men were separated from the laity and general population. Wanting his priests to be trained well in scholasticism, McNicholas sent a record number to Thomistic centers in Europe. At the local seminary he helped establish a specialized course in the Summa Theologica, wanting his priests to become highly skilled in the Summa itself. He was "convinced," he wrote to Archbishop Edward Mooney of Detroit, "there is no training superior to this in developing an analytical mind."\textsuperscript{58}

Within months of his installation in 1950, Alter launched a project to renovate and enlarge the historic St. Peter in Chains Church as well as restore it to its cathedral status. At the time the former cathedral was in a state of neglect. Alter wished to "return home," he said. In accordance with the Cincinnati Metropolitan Master Plan of 1948, urban renewal now ensured that the old cathedral neighborhood would be restored. Local Catholics in 1952 received with enthusiasm and approval his announcement. In his pastoral letter to the clergy and the faithful, Alter also announced a campaign for funds to resume the building operations at St. Gregory Seminary. "In justice to our need for more priests and in justice to the students themselves," he said, "we must provide more ample facilities for their care and ecclesiastical training." Though Alter may have thought as had McNicholas that a bishop had "no more disagreeable duty than that of constantly asking for funds to sustain the
many works of religion and charity,” he strongly promoted both projects. On August 31, 1952, posters and cards were distributed in the 235 parish churches of the archdiocese in the month-long Cathedral-Seminary drive. From 1955 to 1963 St. Gregory’s was expanded at a cost in excess of $5 million.90

The renovation of St. Peter in Chains Cathedral was completed in 1957 at a cost of $5 million. The parishes of the archdiocese contributed a proportionate share of the cost. According to Alter, the canonical reestablishment of the stately, Greek Revival church was “an event of major significance in the history and religious life of the archdiocese.” Three years later on Alter’s golden anniversary as a priest, Cardinal Richard Cushing of Boston complimented the archbishop on his perseverance to restore the historic cathedral church. “It is rather easy for a bishop of the present day to be persuaded,” he said, “that a cathedral is a medieval luxury, and that the greatest need of the church is for schools and centers of social action.” In the judgment of the leading authority on Greek Revival architecture, Talbot Hamlin, the cathedral with its great square tower, surrounded on three sides by a Corinthian colonnade of twelve columns, was “the handsomest and most monumental of Greek Revival churches.”90a

Throughout his tenure Archbishop Alter also expressed concern over the growing shortage of religious and priests. In the fall of 1959 he focused on the clergy, pointing out that there was a “threatening shortage of priests for the immediate future.” At the time there were forty-two priests of the archdiocese who were well over seventy years of age. Because past experience indicated that the number of deaths among priests under seventy averaged four to five each year, it was anticipated that the next ten years would require a replacement of ninety-two priests to maintain the existing number. Since 1950 there had been an increase in the Catholic population of approximately 150,000. Thus, by looking ahead ten years, it was estimated that the archdiocese would need a minimum of one hundred newly ordained priests for replacement alone; “but to meet expanding growth,” Alter wrote, “the number should be nearer 150 priests, or a rate of 15 ordained each year.” Unless something was done to increase the number of vocations, he anticipated that the enrollment of seminarians in the ecclesiastical college and major seminary would provide little more than one hundred priests over the next ten years.61

Because of the increasing Catholic population there was also need for more religious sisters and brothers. In the 1950s the Vocations office sponsored Vocation Day Programs both in Cincinnati and Dayton, making it possible for the young people to talk to representatives of the various religious groups. During the 1951 school year alone, the office visited 208 schools and gave 408 talks on religious vocations. In 1962 Alter asked Father John P. Boyle, then the Vocation Director, that something be done about the vocation
problem for the religious communities of sisters. In turn, Boyle asked three sisters to draw up a plan, which was eventually sent to each of the major superiors of the thirty-three communities in the archdiocese, requesting them to send two representatives to a meeting in the spring. Out of this meeting grew the Archdiocesan Vocation Endeavor (AVE), a cooperative enterprise of the religious communities of women in the Cincinnati archdiocese. Through this organization, sisters encouraged religious vocations and enhanced their communities’ understanding of the various ministries of the religious sisters.\textsuperscript{62}

To address some of the changes in the local church since the 1920s, the archdiocese on December 14, 1954, sponsored its fifth synod. More than three decades had passed since the last diocesan synod was held. Though new diocesan decrees had been issued to meet emergency situations, Alter thought that the time had come for a general review and the enactment of permanent synodal statutes. Preparation for the recodification of the diocesan statutes took about three years. During this period, six commissions met regularly for several months. The regulations of the archdiocese were amended, and new legislation was proposed. Copies were distributed to all the priests of the diocese, who met in a series of regional meetings to make their suggestions.\textsuperscript{63}

Besides changes in diocesan statutes, the archdiocese underwent territorial and administrative changes. When Detroit became an archdiocese in June 1937, with Edward A. Mooney as the first archbishop of the created see, Detroit and Grand Rapids were severed from the Province of Cincinnati. That reduced the province from eleven to nine dioceses—four in Ohio, two in Indiana, two in Kentucky, and one in Tennessee. To help streamline the administrative and ecclesiastical divisions of the archdiocese, seven new deaneries were added during McNicholas’s and Alter’s administrations, bringing the number to ten.\textsuperscript{64}

In the 1940s two new dioceses were established in Ohio. The diocese of Youngstown, formed in 1943, also embraced former Cleveland territory. The diocese of Steubenville, the last of the Ohio dioceses, was formed in 1944 of thirteen counties cut from the Columbus diocese. In the fall of 1944 Pope Pius XII also transferred five counties and portions of four others that were formerly in the Cincinnati archdiocese to the Columbus diocese, thus reducing the archdiocese to its present area of nineteen counties in southwestern Ohio. At the same time the pontiff erected the new ecclesiastical Province of Indianapolis, thereby reducing the Cincinnati province to the confines of the state of Ohio. In 1946 the bishops of Ohio formed the Ohio Catholic Welfare Conference, designed in part to deal with urgent matters in Ohio and to help develop and clarify their ideas in preparation for the national conference of bishops.\textsuperscript{65}