

For Immediate Release

**LARGEST ARTWORK EVER COMMISSIONED FOR ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL
TO TRANSFORM INTERIOR ENTRANCE INTO A MONUMENTAL VISION
OF SACRED AND SECULAR HISTORY
CELEBRATING THE FAITH OF GENERATIONS OF IMMIGRANTS TO NEW YORK**

**Soaring Mural Painting by Artist Adam Cvijanovic,
Inspired by the Apparition at Knock, Ireland,
to be Permanently Installed at St. Patrick's**

Mural to be Dedicated in September 2025



Photo Courtesy of James Prochnik

NEW YORK, NY, August 14, 2025 — Cardinal Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York, today announced the creation of the largest permanent artwork commissioned for Saint Patrick's Cathedral in its 146-year history: a painting by American artist Adam Cvijanovic (TSVEE-ya-novich) that soars to a height of 25 feet, transforming all three walls within the cathedral's Fifth Avenue entrance vestibule into a vast, encompassing vision of sacred and secular history. The mural depicts dozens of individual figures—historic, contemporary, and eternal, many at life size or larger—in Cvijanovic's light-flooded, strikingly realistic style, honoring the sacred event known as the Apparition at Knock, celebrating the faith of generations of immigrants to New York City, and recognizing the commitment to service among the City's first responders. The mural, titled *What's So Funny About Peace, Love, and Understanding*, will be dedicated during a Mass on Sunday, September 21, 2025.

Known as “America’s Parish Church,” St. Patrick’s is the largest Gothic Revival Catholic cathedral in North America. It serves the pastoral and spiritual needs of an Archdiocese that is 2.5 million people strong and welcomes more than five million visitors each year. In its imagery, the new St. Patrick’s mural is intimately tied to the history of the cathedral, the Archdiocese, and the City of New York.

The Apparition at Knock—a vision of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Saint Joseph, Saint John the Evangelist, angels, and the Lamb of God—was witnessed by more than a dozen townspeople in County Mayo, Ireland, in 1879, the year St. Patrick’s Cathedral was consecrated. The figures of the Apparition hover in the upper band of Cvijanovic’s mural, while images of the era’s Irish immigrants to New York stream in procession across the right-hand panel as if disembarking from a ship. A parallel procession of contemporary immigrants from many nations and standing portraits of New Yorkers of varied backgrounds and eras are arrayed across the other panels.

Cardinal Dolan said, “With this mural, the archdiocese joins the Church’s long tradition of exhibiting extraordinary artworks in our places of worship. It is all the more meaningful that we do so while honoring the Apparition at Knock, which connects us profoundly to the Irish immigrants who did so much to build the Archdiocese and St. Patrick’s. The mural also recognizes the contributions of a multigenerational host of great individuals and guardians of the city and pays tribute to the immigrants of many lands who continue to bring their faith and hope to New York. I am grateful to our generous donors and to the many talented people, led by Adam Cvijanovic, who have come together to create this wonderful artwork for America’s Parish Church.”

Discussing his concept for the mural, Adam Cvijanovic said, “To realize the theme the archdiocese called for, the figures are realistic but the narrative is abstract. Everything exists at once in a heavenly realm where there is no passage of time. The different eras are unified by the sky that runs across the entire mural, and by the rays of gold leaf that illuminate the space of the sacred figures and reflect onto the realm below. Each human figure, whether historic and renowned or contemporary and anonymous, realistically portrays an individual model, in keeping with the Church’s insistence on the dignity and worth of every person. You literally look up to these dozens and dozens of people—the immigrants as well as the sacred figures—who are all depicted as seen from below. My hope is that when you view them all spread across the full span of the mural, you’ll feel how all of humanity is welcomed here.”

In addition to depictions of Irish immigrants of the 19th and 20th centuries, contemporary immigrants, and the City’s first responders, historic figures featured in *What’s So Funny About Peace, Love, and Understanding* include:

- Saint Frances Cabrini, the Italian-born founder of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, patron saint of immigrants, and the first U.S. citizen to be canonized as a saint
- Father Félix Varela, the Cuban-born priest who as Vicar General of the Diocese of New York assisted the first wave of Irish immigrants to the city
- The Venerable Pierre Toussaint, the Haitian-born philanthropist, born into slavery, who is regarded as the founder of the Catholic Charities of New York and is the only layperson who is buried in the crypt of St. Patrick's Cathedral
- Al Smith, the Manhattan-born 42nd Governor of New York State and the first Catholic to be the Presidential nominee of a major political party
- Dorothy Day, the Brooklyn-born founder of the Catholic Worker Movement and editor of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, recognized as a Servant of God
- Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, born into a Mohawk family in 1656 in what is now New York State, patron saint of Indigenous peoples, and the first Native American to be canonized as a saint
- Archbishop John Hughes, the first Archbishop of New York who initiated the construction of St. Patrick's Cathedral in 1858

Adam Cvijanovic was chosen to create the mural through a competitive process initiated by the Archdiocese of New York and managed by curator Suzanne Geiss and the advisory firm Seven Willow Collaborative. In 2023, following a review of international artists, six artists were invited to create proposals. In 2024, the archdiocese selection committee, along with an external advisory group including museum directors and prominent collectors and the curatorial group Seven Willow Collaborative, selected Cvijanovic's proposal. The mural was made possible and gifted to Cardinal Dolan through the generosity of benefactors of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

Born in Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1960 and based in Brooklyn, New York, Adam Cvijanovic is a self-taught painter best known for expansive, site-specific works that integrate art into architectural space. His paintings often depict historical and imagined landscapes, with a focus on the relationship between place, memory, and American cultural narratives. Major public commissions include *10,000 Feet*, a mural depicting the Indiana countryside for the Alexander Hotel in Indianapolis; a four-panel oil painting in the Mercedes Benz stadium in Atlanta; a 20-by-20-foot ceramic tile piece for a school in Brooklyn; and a project for the Bean Federal Center in Indianapolis, for which he has created 164 individual murals totaling more than 7,000 square feet, portraying American battlefields from the colonial period to the present. Exhibitions and commissions include a solo exhibition at The Hammer in Los Angeles and participation in *USA Today* at the Royal Academy in London and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, as

well as exhibitions at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, MASS MoCA, Tate Liverpool during the Liverpool Biennial, the Walker Arts Center, and the New Orleans Biennial.

About the Archdiocese of New York:

The Archdiocese of New York serves the pastoral, charitable, and educational needs of 2.5 million Catholics across three boroughs of the City of New York (Staten Island, Manhattan and The Bronx) and seven counties to the North (Westchester, Putnam, Orange, Rockland, Sullivan, Ulster, and Dutchess). The Archdiocese includes nearly 300 parishes, and more than 130 schools and 50,000 students. Its Catholic Charities serves over 400,000 New Yorkers each year.

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