



The following is the finding aid for the Archbishop Frederick Katzer collection located at the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives. A finding aid is a catalog tool used in archives that briefly describes the material found in a collection. These records are not available digitally unless otherwise noted.
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Frederick Xavier Katzer, 1844-1903
Papers, 1890-1986; [bulk 1890-1902]
MC 11

Access

Open/unrestricted

Scope and Content *a brief description of the types of materials in the collection.*

The leadership of Frederick Xavier Katzer, the third archbishop of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is documented by biographical information and correspondence mainly from 1890-1903. Correspondence from Cardinal James Gibbons, Archbishop Francis Satolli, and Bishop Sebastian Messmer; a scrapbook concerning conferring of the Pallium in 1891; the first pastoral letter; and material regarding the Bennett Law are included.

Biographical Note

Born on February 7, 1844, in Ebensee, Austria, Frederick Xavier Katzer came to Minnesota in 1864 as a seminarian at the request of missionary Franz Pierz. When he was informed there was no room for him there, Katzer considered joining the Jesuits before Fr. Joseph Salzmänn convinced him to come to Milwaukee.

Katzer completed his studies in Milwaukee and was ordained on December 21, 1866, at Saint Francis Seminary and soon joined the faculty there. He taught mathematics, philosophy and theology until he was transferred to the Diocese of Green Bay in 1875. There he served as rector of the cathedral, then known as St. Mary's, and vicar general. After his friend Bishop Francis X. Krautbauer's death, Katzer administered the diocese before he was appointed Bishop of Green Bay on July 13, 1886.

Katzer served as the bishop of Green Bay until he was appointed the third bishop of the Milwaukee Archdiocese on January 30, 1891. In line with his predecessors, Katzer was loyal to the German factions in the clergy and hierarchy. Reminiscent of the debates between German-speaking and English-speaking Catholics during Henni's and Heiss's time, Katzer's nomination to Milwaukee was opposed by "Americanizing" bishops. This brought Milwaukee into a larger national debate over the "Americanization" of Catholics in the United States--a view stating that Catholics should assimilate into American society, rather than maintain their distinct ethnic traditions. Pope Leo XIII condemned the heresy of "Americanism" in an 1899 encyclical and Katzer prevailed.

During his time in office, he strongly supported and promoted the growth of Catholic schools, and successfully advocated the repeal of the Bennett Law in 1890. This legislation would have mandated English instruction in all public schools and was seen as an attack on parochial schools. Katzer also furthered the growth of ethnic parishes, particularly the Polish. He also was engaged in a battle with anti-Catholic groups and opposed the socialist movement in Milwaukee. He also was responsible for bringing the Sisters of the Divine Savior to Milwaukee.

As he aged, Katzer left more of his daily duties to his protégé, Fr. Augustine Schinner, whom he hoped would be his successor. Schinner, however, was never appointed to the position. Archbishop Katzer died in Fond du Lac on July 23, 1903, the same day as Pope Leo XIII.

His motto was: Soli Deo Honor et Gloria. "Only to God, Honor, and Glory."

Box and Folder List *This is a list of folders names within the collection. The folders have been arranged alphabetically. "B" is an abbreviation for box and "F" is an abbreviation for folder. This list will help the researcher narrow down exactly what folder they want to look at.*

Box	Folder	Folder Title
B 1	F 1	Biography
B 1	F 2	Correspondence
B 1	F 3	Legal
B 1	F 4	Bennett Law Item: A Protest of the Catholic Bishops of Wisconsin Against the Bennett Law