



On the front of the altar, between St. Paul and St. Peter there is an image of Christ who will come to build the New Kingdom. Pulpits –on the right side (lectern) we can see the Law tablets, the burning bush and the scroll of the Scripture while on the left hand side the four symbols of the evangelists: Mathew –angel, Mark –lion, Luke –winged ox and John an eagle.



In the side altars statues of Mary, our lady of sorrows, and Joseph with the Child. Above St. Paul, originally behind the main altar, and the Image of the Divine Mercy, a gift from Polish parishioners. In the side altar reliquaries –St. John Paul II and St. Faustina; the relics came to our parish in the Year of Divine Mercy.



The Way of the Cross, Munich 1907, typical early 20th century fashion. Organ –a Canadian Casavant instrument from 1919, with 40 registers. Stained glass – early 20th century from the workshop of Franz Xavier Zettler in Munich. In the main altar the three round windows at the top present the Holy Trinity: Crucified Child, the Holy Spirit Dove, and the Blessing finger of God. Below on the left side Christ with Chalice and Host and on the right hand side the Old Testament king and priest Melchisedech bringing Bread and Wine. Stained glass above the side doors –on the left Mary and Joseph, and on the right St. Paul and St. Sunniva.



## Holy mass in St.Paul's church is celebrated in many languages:

- Norwegian
- English
- Polish
- Tamil
- Vietnamese
- Tagalog
- Eritrean
- Lithuanian
- Spanish
- French
- Latin

Details to be found on parish website:

**[www. bergen.katolsk.no](http://www.bergen.katolsk.no)** 

or in Polish

**[www. bergenpol.com](http://www.bergenpol.com)** 

The parish today (2017) covers two counties –Hordaland and Sogn og Fjordane and has over 19 thousand faithful from over 120 countries, including about 10 thousand from Poland and Lithuania.



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# St.Paul's Church Bergen





## Christianity in Norway

 Christianity in Norway goes back over a thousand years to the times of Saint Olav, whose tomb in Nidaros Cathedral (today Trondheim) was one of the main pilgrim destinations in medieval Europe.

In 1536 the Catholic Church was abolished in Norway when the Danish King Christian III introduced the Lutheran form of the Reformation. The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 stated that faithful of other religions than the Lutheran were not welcome in the Kingdom. The situation changed in 1843 when the first Catholic parish after the Reformation was allowed in Christiania (today Oslo), and in 1845 an amendment allowing for other confessions was introduced to the Constitution.

**St. Olav** – King of Norway, Olav Haraldsson (995-1030) continued the Baptism of Norway and introduced Christian law, abolishing polygamy and infant homicide. Because of his attempts to limit the power of the Jarls, he was forced to leave the country by the opposition which was supported by the Danish King Canute the Great. He came back in 1030 only to die as a martyr at the battle of Stiklestad on 29 July 1030.



## History of St. Paul parish

The first Catholic mass after the reformation was celebrated in Bergen at Christmas in 1857 when Father Christopher Holfeldt-Houen received permission to organize a parish in this city. The parish was to receive the patronage of St. Paul. Father Christopher reported that only 15 – 20 persons attended the mass celebrated in the private flat of a Bavarian tailor.

Already in 1864 a site for building a church was bought, a church which could accommodate 10 times more people. At the time Catholics in Bergen were of immigrant origin - from Germany, France, Belgium or the Netherlands – who came to Bergen to work in the newly developing industries. The foundation stone was laid in 1865. The parish priest at the time, Father Daniel Stub, received a building plan from his Italian friend, amateur architect Edordo Arborio Mella from Vercelli. Building work took a long time due to lack of funds. Father Stub raised funds in Italy, Germany, France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands to make completion possible in 1876. Father Stub's memorial is to be found in the church.



The church is built in a neo-romanesque style inspired by the architecture of Northern Italy. Local hard stone – quartzite – was used in the construction. On the front facade are statues of St. Paul and St. Sunniva, patron of Bergen, produced by the Polish sculptor Bogusław Popowicz.



Looking from outside one can think that this is a one-nave church with a chancel in the apse. However after entering the church we realize that this is a three-nave basilica where the ceiling of the main nave is lifted. Rounded romanesque arcades are supported by rectangular columns decorated with a cross in the capitals. Statues of the apostles are placed at the top of the columns around the church.

The decoration of the interior has undergone several changes since the church was built. In the 1970s, in accordance with liturgical changes introduced by the Second Vatican Council the original altar was removed, as well as the pulpit, altar rails, a big crucifix hanging from the ceiling and the Tabernacle which was placed in the side wall. A new cross was placed above the altar, painted by the Norwegian modern painter, Jacob Weidemann.



In the 1990s it was decided to go back to more traditional forms which coexist better with the neo-romanesque architecture and the stained glass in the back wall behind the main altar. A Byzantine style icon crucifix, altar front plate and pulpit decorations were made by an icon painter, Solrun Ness. The Christ presented on the cross is not dead, but alive, full of peace, dignity and humanity. On the left side we see Mary, symbolizing the Church, collecting blood and water springing from Christ's side. On the other side is John the Evangelist.

