



BETWEEN HEAVEN AND HARLEM

The vast Indiana limestone church stands atop Morningside Heights, symbolically between the wealth and power of Columbia University above, and the pain and poverty of Harlem below. But if any spiritual institution can bridge that gap, it is the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine.

It has been described as the largest Gothic style cathedral in the world, and a visitor has little reason to doubt that claim.

It overwhelms the 13 acres of church grounds on 112th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. The front entrance — "The Portals of Paradise" — is a masterpiece of Gothic stone tracery and sculpture, even as sculptors and stonecutters add contemporary statues.

But it's inside that St. John truly inspires. In the echoing gloom, eyes strain across the 600-foot length from the vestibule to the altar, and upward, the vaulted nave soars 150 feet above the floor. One sees the magnificent rose window, made from 10,000 pieces of glass, 40 feet across, with a life-size Christ in the center. But from the floor, even His image seems tiny.



"This Cathedral," says Dean James Parks Morton, "sits on a hinge between Columbia University and the grinding poverty of Harlem. And we face, as does the whole religious community, a major challenge: the exponentially growing underclass, particularly the urban young."

St. John's ministers to the poor and to the victims of AIDS now ravaging the black and Hispanic communities. It serves as a base for a range of environmental programs. The church maintains a Crisis Intervention and Counseling Center, the Manhattan Valley Youth Program, a Senior Outreach, and the Assembly on the Homeless. Some 240 students attend the famed non-denominational Cathedral School.

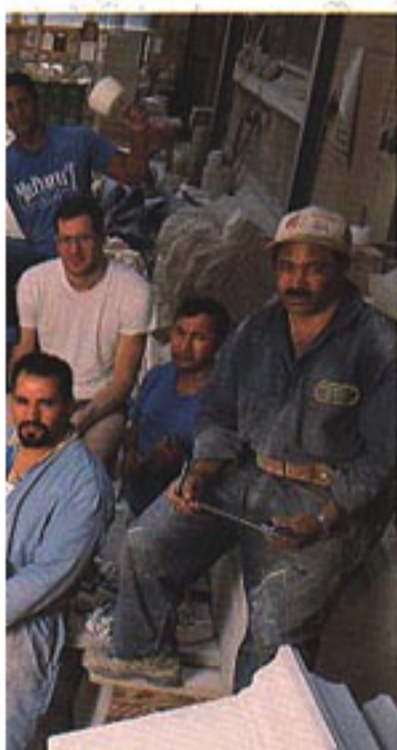
This was a church conceived on a grand scale, both socially and physically, and it has been a century in the making. Its construction began on St. John's Day, December 27, 1892, and has proceeded in stages. It took 19 years just to complete the choir and the dome's spire arches.

The nave, the largest section, was begun in 1916 and work on that continued for 25 years. Funding shortages caused construction to all but cease between 1941 and 1972.

Like society's increasing problems, the church remains unfinished. And, in typical fashion, St. John — through the work of Dean Morton — has conceived a way to



Cathedral Stoneworks, a public/private venture headed by David Teitelbaum pictured (far left), is teaching stonecutting to a whole new generation of craftsmen pictured here, and using their skills to rebuild the Cathedral St. John the Divine (above).



complete the building of the church and, at the same time, to involve the less fortunate of the community in its construction.

The project is called **Cathedral Stoneworks**. The program trains the unskilled to become stonecutters, and then uses their new capabilities to build the Cathedral.

The Stoneworks is a 50/50 for-profit partnership between the church and Developer David Teitelbaum, with half the profits going into the church's fund for finishing the Cathedral.

Teitelbaum, a preservation developer, was approached by Dean Morton with an unusual proposal: build a cathedral while training young stonemasons.



For the past two years, Teitelbaum has been plunging ahead. "We're spending money on R&D," he said, "We're investing in new processes such as imaging cameras and computer assisted design. Even robotics."

The church has backed the Stoneworks, and its \$9 million investment, because it is so natural a part of the church's own vision of community involvement. "We're not just a business," said Teitelbaum. "We're dealing with urban poverty, job development and affirmative action."

Working with master cutters and masons, the newly trained have added some 600 stones a year to the South Tower, as well as carving new capitals and finishing the Portals of Paradise. But more than that, Stoneworks has revived a dying craft.

"In 1979," said Morton, "there were four stonecutters in New York, all in their 80s. We brought practiced stonecutters from England and have been training apprentices since then. Today, we're the center of the stone trade and we're looking to expand from 65 to 200. And from New York to other cities."

Given that New York's urban poverty problems are hardly unique, there is no reason why such a program could not succeed elsewhere.

Today, while carvers and cutters from Cathedral Stoneworks are continuing to build, the church's 100 staff members and 400 volunteers attend to the needs of the congregation and the community.

But then, solving the problems of humankind have always required two elements — faith and good works. And that's what is dramatically evident every day of the week at the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine.