The tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel enshrines the Real Presence of the Sacramental Christ. The bronze shower of manna falling around the tabernacle recalls Old Testament foreshadowing of the true Bread from Heaven which feeds us on our pilgrimage through life.

Though the 1970s saw additional construction in both the upper and crypt churches, another kind of growth began to make itself manifest. The Shrine was now attracting some of the greatest performers and composers in the musical arts. On Easter Sunday of 1970, Norman Dello Joio premiered an impressive new Mass at the Shrine. And in 1971 a concert by Oliver Messiaen marked the world premiere of his work “Meditations on the Mystery of the Holy Trinity.”

The shrine continued to be the scene of events important to American Catholics. The Most Reverend William Baum, the new Archbishop of Washington and chairman of the Shrine’s Board of Trustees, was elevated to the College of Cardinals in 1973. A mass was celebrated in the Shrine welcoming Cardinal Baum upon his return from Rome. In the same year, the Shrine was the setting of the promulgation of the United States bishops’ pastoral letter, “Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith,” promoting Marian devotion.

Pope Paul VI designated 1975 a Holy Year of Reconciliation and the National Shrine became a place of pilgrimage. As a result, many pilgrimages were made to the Shrine from dioceses throughout the country. Mother Teresa of Calcutta visited the Shrine in 1974 and again in 1975, and Cardinal Karol Wojtyla of Krakow, Poland, now Pope John Paul II, led a delegation of Polish bishops on pilgrimage to the Shrine in 1976.