

**The New York Public Library
Humanities and Social Sciences Library
Manuscripts and Archives Division**

**Old Catholic Church Records
1960-1981**

**Valerie Wingfield
October 1999**

Summary

Title: The Old Catholic Church Records

Dates: 1960-1981 (bulk 1960-1969)

Size: 1.3 linear ft. (3 boxes)

Source: Gift of Armand Constantine Whitehead, 1997.

Historical Note

The Old Catholic Church evolved from a group of former Roman Catholics who refused, in the late 19th century, to accept the doctrine of the infallibility of the Pope. According to a brief history of the Church by The Most Rev. Francis P. Facione, following the Vatican Council I in 1870, “a considerable dissent among Catholics in parts of Germany, Austria and Switzerland arose over the issue of the definition of papal infallibility as a dogma of the Church. Many of these Catholics formed independent communities that came to be known as Old Catholic because they sought to adhere to the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church of the post-apostolic era. These communities appealed to the Archbishop of Utrecht who consecrated the first bishops for these groups. Eventually under the leadership of the Church of Holland, the Old Catholic communities joined together to form the Utrecht Union of Churches.”¹ One of the notable characteristics of the 20th century Old Catholic Church in the United States was that it was particularly welcoming to gay clergy and congregants.

Scope and Content Note

The records contain general correspondence, 1960-1981, and related documents on liturgical matters and lay issues. The bulk of the correspondence is directed to the Most Reverend Armand Constantine Whitehead, a priest and subsequently a bishop who was affiliated with several congregations of the Old Catholic Church in America. Correspondents were mainly other clergy and church officials in the United States, primarily on the east and west coasts. A few letters are from abroad. The remainder of the material is printed matter, miscellaneous church newsletters, pamphlets and related published and near-print material.

¹ <http://listserv.american.edu/catholic/other/history1.html> as of August 2000.

Container List

Box

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 | General Correspondence 1960-1981 |
| 2 | General Correspondence A-Z |
| 3 | Printed Matter |