

Cathedral Restoration 2000

A Newsletter of Past, Present and Future Parish Renewal

September 12, 1999 – Issue 4



Renovation Timeline Highlights Progress Of Nearly 30 Years

On your way to get a donut and coffee in Marian Hall last Sunday, you might have heard snatches of various conversations. Perhaps you heard:

“I didn’t know the Cathedral was going to be renovated.”

“What do they mean by restoration anyway?”

“Have parishioners had any input into this restoration?”

“Why are they talking about changing the Cathedral. I like it the way it is.”

On the other hand, you might have also heard:

“Now they say it will be July 2000 before they can get started on the restoration.”

“I’m so tired of hearing about restoration. I wish they would just do it and get it over!”

“Are they really going to do all the things they talked about back in 1989?”

“I don’t believe they’ll ever do it. We’ve waited so long.”

The above comments are typical of those being expressed by parishioners. The mixture of such diverse comments is due to some unusual circumstances surrounding the plans for Cathedral restoration.

The “Cathedral Restoration” process began as a Cathedral Parish/Diocesan project a number of years ago. It has had moments and even months of furious activity. It has also had months and even years of

inactivity. In order to refresh the memory of those who have been present since its beginning and in order to help new parishioners understand the process which has already taken place, we present the following timeline:

January 1971 – The Holy See established the Diocese of Memphis. The first bishop, the Most Reverend Carroll T. Dozier, was installed on January 6, 1971.

The parish of the Immaculate Conception was selected as the Cathedral for the Diocese of Memphis. Bishop Dozier, in his twelve years as the Ordinary of the Diocese, was unable to accomplish a Cathedral restoration program due to the indebtedness of the new diocese.

January 1983 – The Most Reverend V. Francis Stafford became the second bishop of Memphis. An architectural plan for renovating the site was drawn but the project was put on hold when Bishop Stafford was named the Archbishop of Denver in June, 1986.

March 1987 – The Most Reverend Daniel M. Buechlein, OSB, became the third Bishop of Memphis. He appointed the Reverend Joseph Umphries as Rector of the Cathedral. Fr. Umphries’ illness and untimely death on January 6, 1988, once again put the restoration process on hold.



July 1988 – Bishop Buechlein appointed Rev. Thomas Kirk as Rector of the Cathedral with the intention of proceeding with the Cathedral Restoration.

August 1988 – A Cathedral Restoration Committee was formed and Bishop Buechlein commissioned them to begin their work.

September 1988 – In order to include the membership of the diocese and the Cathedral parish in planning for the restoration of the Cathedral, Richard S. Vosko, a

liturgical design consultant and Catholic priest from Albany, NY, was retained to guide the community through the process.

September 27 and 29, 1988 – The members of the Memphis diocese and the Cathedral parish were invited to two illustrated lectures on the history, theology, and practical aspects of the art and environment for worship.

October 1, 1988 – During a four-hour design workshop, participants discussed various questions pertaining to an ideal worship environment. Cathedral worshipping assemblies were invited to indicate their needs and expectations on a questionnaire. Five hundred and eighty-four persons completed the questionnaire. Additional data pertaining to the worship space and other church facilities was gathered from the Cathedral pastoral staff and the music ministry. With this input, Father Vosko prepared a comprehensive restoration program which was forwarded to the architects to serve as the basis for their work.



January 1989 – Williamson and Haizlip architectural work began.

Fall 1989 – The Cathedral Capital Drive for Phase I of the Cathedral Restoration began.

May, 1990 – Construction on Phase I (exterior and lower level of the Cathedral) began.

November, 1991 - Phase I of the Cathedral Restoration was completed.

December 7, 1991 - Marian Hall was dedicated by Bishop Buechlein.

July 1992 – Bishop Buechlein was appointed Archbishop of Indianapolis. Phase II of the Cathedral Restoration was put on hold.

May 1993 – Most Reverend J. Terry Steib was installed as the fourth bishop of Memphis

1994 – Bishop Steib appointed a small committee to review the original restoration plans. The committee met several times under the leadership of Fr. Robert Ponticello, Chancellor of the Diocese, to review the plans and to make recommendations about ways in which the plans could be scaled back to a more

affordable scope.

January 1997 – Bishop Steib reviewed the work of the committee which he appointed in 1994. He also re-established the Cathedral Restoration Committee. The committee, under the direction of Fr. Bruce Cinquegrani, Director of the Department of Worship and Spiritual Life, included Cathedral parishioners, diocesan members, Fr. Stephen Kenny and Fr. Tom Kirk.

September 1998 – Deacon Chuck Wells and Fr. Bruce Cinquegrani were appointed to co-chair the Cathedral Restoration Committee.

1997-1999 – The Cathedral Restoration Committee met to accomplish the following tasks:

- prepare a definitive plan for the restoration
- present the plan to the architect
- review the financial feasibility of the plan

In addition to the formal meetings of the Cathedral Restoration Committee, Fr. Tom Kirk, Rector of the Cathedral, has been involved in numerous meetings with the co-chairs of the committee, the architect and Bishop Steib.

March 18, 1999 – Fr. Tom Kirk chaired a meeting of Cathedral representatives in order to give input to the final restoration plan. Cathedral parishioners invited to attend the meeting or to give written input were: Clare Schaedle, Tony Benson, Jerry Fleischut, Anita Scholl, Charlie Schaffler, and staff member, Sr. Maureen Griner. Parishioner Jason Hood also gave input at later meetings with diocesan personnel and Cathedral parishioners.

March 19, 1999 – Cathedral recommendations were given to Deacon Chuck Wells for incorporation into the final restoration plans.

Since March of 1999, the final design for the interior of the Cathedral has been approved, the architect has completed the schematic design phase and has begun the design development phase. The Cathedral Parish has begun its capital campaign for Phase II, “Our Cathedral for the New Millennium.” Roof repairs will begin in September 1999 and interior construction is scheduled to start in July 2000.

