

An invitation to join in renovation process

At our Rite of Election last night I asked the people — as I often do at ordinations, the Chrism Mass and other diocesan celebrations — how many were at Sacred Heart Cathedral for the first time. A great number raised their hands. That was not surprising since so many of them are, by definition, new to our faith community. As always, I reminded them that the cathedral is the church of the bishop, a sign of our unity and, therefore, a home for everyone in our diocese. I invited them to come often, not as guests but as members of our diocesan family.

This morning's snowy quiet offers occasion to connect the experience of asking that question over many years with a significant meeting we had at Sacred Heart last Wednesday. That was the first meeting of the committee we have established to lead us through the renovation of Sacred Heart Cathedral. I am not on the committee, but I have looked forward to the beginning of its work and was happy to join them and our project consultant, Father Richard Vosko, in this initial session.

As you might expect, this first meeting established a basic orientation for participants. Father Vosko invited members to introduce themselves. In so doing, he asked members to include in their comments responses to two questions: What most excites you about this project? What is your main concern as we begin?

I summarize those responses of the committee members, fairly I hope, in this way: 1) We are happy to give our time and energy to a project that will provide a cathedral that is more accommodating, more apt and more beautiful for the public worship of our faith community and more in keeping with what the church is asking of us in its liturgical norms; and 2) We want the process to be as fair and open as possible so that all can participate in this important endeavor.

What I heard and saw interested me deeply. I heard, even in this moment of introduction, some good ideas about renewing our cathedral. But I

along the way



By BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

also heard the energy and enthusiasm that participants brought to the table. What I saw was the careful attention and openness the group offered to each member as each had a chance to speak. The group modeled for me what I hope will be among the hallmarks of the whole renovation experience — a willingness to share our own ideas and a willingness to hear the ideas of others.

I have known our consultant, Dick Vosko, a priest of the Diocese of Albany, for years and am delighted that he will be involved in the renewal of our cathedral. His resume includes work on a great number of churches and cathedrals all over our country. His work has earned him a reputation for respect for our tradition; broad knowledge in art, architecture and liturgy; and the ability to work with experts in those and other areas that are so important in such projects.

Among his achievements is the renovation of St. James Cathedral for the Archdiocese of Seattle. I have seen the renewed St. James. Although I seldom use the word awesome, I use it to describe St. James. It is beautiful, truly beautiful, and enhances the worship of that community in wonderful ways.

Current projects of Father Vosko are the cathedrals of the archdioceses of Los Angeles and Milwaukee, and the Diocese of Memphis. Such

samples of his background, I hope, give you confidence that his work is well respected across the country, especially in those dioceses that enjoy the fruits of his labor.

You'll be reading much more about this project in the months to come — here and elsewhere. I just wanted to bring it to your attention in *Along the Way* on the occasion of the committee's first meeting and its attendant publicity.

As I often do, I want to leave you with a few questions and a request or two to stimulate your thinking and elicit your input:

1) What is your understanding of the cathedral church in the life of a diocese? When you think of cathedrals you have known or visited, what images or associations come to mind? What more would you like to know or understand better about the significance of a cathedral church?

2) Have you ever been to Sacred Heart Cathedral? What brought you here? When you remember your visit(s) what stands out as your strongest memories, impressions? If you have never visited Sacred Heart Cathedral, why is that so? If invited or encouraged, would you make such a visit?

3) If you were a member of the planning committee, how would you answer the two questions Father Vosko asked them?

4) As we begin this work and seek the input of the community, I also ask you to think about such questions as these: What about Sacred Heart would you most like to see upgraded, renewed, changed? What should we be most careful to preserve and honor? What reasons support your recommendations?

As I conclude, let me add a request for your prayer that God will bless this effort from beginning to end and that, in addition to the blessing of a renewed cathedral building, we will know the even greater blessing of a community renewed in faith and concern for others.

Peace to all.

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