



File photo

The altar at Sacred Heart Cathedral.

Cathedral renovation moves ahead

By Jennifer Ficaglia
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The Diocese of Rochester is one step closer to renovating Sacred Heart Cathedral after releasing on Feb. 20 plans for changes to the church's interior.

The changes include removing the altar currently used for Eucharistic celebrations, the rear altar on which the tabernacle rests and the canopy that overhangs them. Plans call for the design and construction of a new altar, which will be located in the nave of the church — the main part of the cathedral where worshippers assemble — and placed on a raised platform near the crossing between the transepts, or side seating areas.

The tabernacle will be moved to a new

Eucharistic chapel that will be visible from the nave. It will be placed above the alcove where the old baptismal font currently sits, to the left of the sanctuary. It will have a canopy above it and will incorporate parts of the tabernacle from the former St. Patrick's Cathedral, possibly the doors. The chapel will be enlarged by incorporating the space now used for a Marian shrine. It will be well lit and enclosed with glass to keep the area quiet for private Eucharistic devotion.

Although renovation opponents have criticized these plans, Father John M. Mulligan, diocesan vicar general and pastor of Sacred Heart, says that the changes are not arbitrary; they have a theological and liturgical basis, and comply with the wishes of the Catholic Church.

According to Father Mulligan, the altars are being removed because the Catholic Church says "you're only supposed to have one altar in the church. These have been norms for quite a while."

Since Sacred Heart is the mother church for the entire diocese, Father Mulligan said it should comply with the church's liturgical directives and serve as a model for other diocesan churches.

As far as moving the tabernacle is concerned, "there's a theological reason for all this," Father Mulligan said. He said the Ceremonial of Bishops recommends that the tabernacle be separated from the main body of the church, and noted that cathedrals such as St. Patrick's in New York City have already complied with this

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The value of the Catholic press

The Catholic press is but one component in a vast array of media options. So what should, or could, lead people to favor this form of journalism?

There's one simple reason, says Karen Franz, general manager of the *Catholic Courier*: The Catholic press provides news content not found anywhere else.

"Look at what you see (about the church) on the evening news. What have you seen of late? Certainly, it's been all the sex scandals in New England," Franz remarked.

"You're not getting anything else," she added. Although such stories deserve coverage by television networks and other secular-media outlets, Franz observed that reporting on scandals and the

occasional papal trip does not give a full picture of the church.

"The day-to-day life of the Catholic Church does not get on the evening news," continued Franz, who also currently serves as president of the Catholic Press Association of the United States and Canada. "Features on how people are helping in the soup kitchens, homeless shelters, hospitals — you're not going to get those anywhere but in the Catholic press."

"In many cases, the Catholic newspaper is the only publication that comes into the home. It is the only contact that many Catholics have with the church on the national, and international level," Owen McGovern, the CPA's executive director, wrote in the August 2001 edition of *The Catholic Journalist*, the association's monthly newspaper. "It is also the primary means of communication that the bishop has at his disposal to communicate with members of his diocese."

Yet because of the many media options today, "The reality is, people are more selective in their reading," McGovern said in a telephone interview. Therefore, Franz said, the challenge is to convince people that the Catholic press is worth their time.

"At least a large percentage of Catholics today do not feel that they need Catholic media of any kind — whether they're too busy, or feel they can get their information on the nightly news," Franz said, observing that such Catholics will not take the initiative to seek Catholic literature on their own.

A new-look *Courier*

In an effort to put the *Catholic Courier* directly into the hands of these and other nonreaders, the newspaper is expected to undergo a major transformation, with changes possibly taking effect within a year. Among the highlights of the strategic plan: to transform the diocesan newspaper from a weekly into a larger monthly magazine-style publication; to add weekly news inserts in parish bulletins; and to greatly expand the *Courier's* Web site.

These changes are designed to fulfill Bishop Matthew H. Clark's goal of getting the *Courier* "on the kitchen table of every household in the diocese," Franz said.

Established in 1889, the *Catholic Courier* would experience arguably the largest format change in its history. Franz said that the 10-person strategic planning committee — of which she is a member — hopes that the plan will take effect during the Lenten or Easter season of 2003.

Franz said *Catholic Courier Monthly* would be at least 48 pages in length and would be sent to all Catholic households listed in the diocesan database — about 120,000 in all. The *Courier's* current circulation is approximately 43,500.

Coverage in the monthly publication would consist primarily of feature material as well as in-depth analysis pieces similar to front-page stories under the *Courier's* current format, Franz said.

Catholic Courier Weekly, a four-page publication, would be inserted into bulletins at all diocesan parishes. The weekly would put more emphasis on breaking news and other time-sensitive material. It also will include Bishop Clark's "Along the Way" column. Although still under negotiation, the plan calls for three geographically distinct versions of the weekly — one each for Monroe and

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