Furnishings crafted for cathedral

Jennifer Burke/Catholic Courier

When Rochester's Sacred Heart Cathedral is fully renovated, it will house eight new pieces of furniture.

third in a series
Cathedral Renaissance

John Dodd, an artist from South Bristol, has been hired to design and construct a bishop's chair (also known by the Latin term *cathedra*), two presider's chairs, two cantor's chairs, a cantor's stand, a credence table and a gift table for the newly renovated cathedral.

Dodd and a number of other artists were asked to submit a portfolio and proposed designs to the cathedral renovation arts and furnishings committee, and Dodd was chosen for the job based on the quality of his portfolio and proposals, according to Father John Mulligan, pastor of Sacred Heart and a diocesan vicar general.

Previously, Dodd has done work for St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Mendon and St. Louis Parish in Pittsford.

The craftsman spent months

Mike Crupi/Catholic Courier

Artist and furniture designer John Dodd holds wooden models representing the chairs that are among the pieces of furniture he will build for Sacred Heart Cathedral. Dodd, seen May 5 in his South Bristol studio, will build a bishop's chair (right), two presider's chairs and two cantor's chairs.

meeting with the arts and furnishings committee and Father Richard S. Vosko — an Albany priest who is serving as the liturgical design consultant for the cathedral renovation — before submitting final designs for approval. By the time they were approved, each piece of furniture reflected "a design that was specifically evolved to be placed in this cathedral," Dodd said.

Dodd said he took into account the cathedral's Gothic structure, as well as the look and structure of the cathedral's historic ambo (commonly known as a pulpit or lectern), which is in the process of being refurbished. He will construct the furniture out of white oak, because that species will best match and complement the ambo and the cathedral's

architectural detail, he said.

Dodd began purchasing materials for the project in mid-May. He estimates it will take between five and seven months to complete the eight pieces, although he said he couldn't be sure how long they will take until he is further along in the construction.

The bishop's chair will be a 25th anniversary gift to Bishop Matthew H. Clark.

In 1893, the priests of the diocese had paid off the remaining debt on St. Bernard's Seminary as a gift for Rochester's first bishop — Bernard J. McQuaid — in honor of his 25th anniversary as bishop, according to Father Charles Latus, pastor of St. Rita's Parish in Webster and chairman of the diocesan Priests' Council. For

Bishop Clark's anniversary, the Priests' Council wanted to do something similar and decided the cathedra — the chair in which the bishop sits — would be an appropriate gift. Cathedra is the root of the word "cathedral," the church in which a bishop presides.

"(The Priests' Council) thought it was an appropriate gift and so we invited the rest of the priests to participate, and a very large number have participated in a very generous fashion," Father Latus said.

Although the actual cathedra won't be completed yet, Father Latus planned to present a sketch or model of the cathedra to Bishop Clark at a dinner after his May 23 anniversary Mass at St. John of Rochester in Fairport.