

A Rededicated Church Begins its Second Century

St. Anne Parish began its second century on Sunday, December 14, 2008, with a joyous dedication of its newly renovated church. Several hundred parishioners gathered with Archbishop Alex Brunett for the Dedication Mass. A winter storm—the first of several that would shut down the city that month—prevented many others from attending.

“This is a phenomenal achievement,” said the Archbishop in his opening remarks. “One hundred years of faith, 100 years of families growing up in their faith, 100 years of young people who have married and moved on to raise their own families, 100 years of people who have tried to live their faith, profess it and proclaim it. This is a marvelous thing.”

The clergy for the Mass of Dedication and Centennial Celebration included the Archbishop, Fr. Paul Magnano, the Archbishop’s Vicar for Clergy and native son of St. Anne Parish; and Fr. Steve Sallis, St. Anne Priest Moderator. St. Anne Pastoral Coordinator, Ron Ryan, also participated in the Rite of Dedication.

Ironically, Fr. John Bowman, Parochial Vicar, was unable to attend due to the icy streets. He came in for some gentle teasing by the Archbishop. “I grew up in Detroit and if you couldn’t drive on snow and ice, you wouldn’t survive!”

A significant moment

In his homily the Archbishop explained the significance of the rite that was to follow, first pointing out that a church must be rededicated whenever the altar is moved.

The liturgy began with the assembly gathered in the south entrance to the church. There Norman Shaffer, Building Committee chairman, presented the church blueprints the Archbishop, and Ron Ryan presented the keys to the church.



*Archbishop Brunett dedicates altar
with sacred chrism*

These symbolic actions, the Archbishop noted, remind us that this church and community are connected to the Christian community throughout the world and throughout time. “This church does not stand in isolation,” he said. “It is part of the apostolic tradition that we have had since the time of Peter and Paul. In giving the keys to the archbishop, we acknowledge that he is one of the successors of the apostle Peter.”

The assembly then moved into the church itself, and gathered around the new baptismal font. There, one of the parishioners who had made the Centennial Holy Land Pilgrimage poured a pitcher of water brought from the Jordan River into the baptismal font. Archbishop Brunett then blessed the font.

Drawing water from it, he processed throughout the whole church, sprinkling its walls with holy water, and then the people assembled.

“It’s like saying we’re all baptized; we’ve been renewed in Christ. This is a new community. There is a new sense of our identity with Christ. We celebrate it. We celebrate our own life because we have been washed in the waters of baptism which are signs of life. Water is always a sign of life.”

Gospel roots us in faith

After the blessing with holy water, the assembly moved to the pews. The Book of the Gospels was then brought to the Archbishop, who raised it above his head, and turning to each side of the church, displayed it to the congregation, praying, “May the word of God always be heard in this place, as it unfolds the mystery of Christ before you and achieves your salvation within the Church.”

He later emphasized the vital role the proclamation of the Gospel plays in the life of a Catholic parish. “I took the Gospel book and raised it in your presence because it is the Gospel that roots us in our faith; we are formed by the Gospel message. So every time the Gospel is proclaimed, it is rooting us further into the meaning of Christ’s life.”

The first Scripture reading, from the book of Nehemiah, was reminiscent of what had just taken place in the liturgy. “They called upon Ezra the scribe to bring forth the book of the law of Moses...Ezra opened the scroll so that all the people might see it; and, as he opened it, all the people rose. Ezra blessed the Lord, and all the people, their hands raised high, answered, “Amen, amen!”

After the Gospel and homily, the Archbishop led the assembly in praying the Litany of Saints. “In the Litany of Saints we are saying we are a church whose history goes back to the time of Christ.



Incense, symbolizing the prayers of the community rising to God, is placed on the newly consecrated altar

“In the Litany of Saints we are saying we have all kinds of people who have lived this faith and are heroes to us. They are people who have given their lives as victims of persecution and stood against secular worlds who wanted to destroy them.

“We call upon those saints to be with us today. We are part of that history, we celebrate it and we call upon them to be with us as we continue that great tradition. And at the same time we remember all the people from this parish community who in the 100 years have done so many things. People who by their faith and by their love for this community have made it happen, made it grow and helped us discover the love of God in our lives.”

Dedicating the altar

Following the litany, the Archbishop prayed the prayer of Dedication, solemnly consecrating the building as a place of sacred worship. “Lord, send your Spirit from heaven to make this church an ever-holy place, and this altar a ready table for the sacrifice of Christ.”

Then, putting on a “gremial,” a special liturgical garment to protect his vestments, the Archbishop poured sacred oil over the top of the altar and slowly and deliberately rubbed it into the marble. “I dedicate the altar with an oil called chrism, which is blessed by me in the cathedral once a year,” the Archbishop explained. “That oil is used to dedicate things that are being set aside, that are sacred. And here it is the altar; it is a symbol of Christ.

“You notice that when the priest comes to say Mass he always goes up to the altar and kisses it. It is a sign of respect. This altar symbolizes the life of Christ given for us. That is what we celebrate in the Mass so we can



“It’s time to celebrate,” said the Archbishop, “and you notice that when we celebrate in the church we gather around the altar. That’s the main symbol of our faith, because here we celebrate Eucharist.” Fr. Steve Sallis, center, and Fr. Paul Magnano help prepare the Eucharist banquet.

actualize that event in our lives. We make that commitment in our lives so we can be rooted in our faith.”

Ron Ryan then led Archbishop Brunett to the north, south, east and west walls of the church. On each, the Archbishop traced a large cross, anointing the church building itself as a sacred place and symbol of the presence of God.

When he had returned to the altar, the Archbishop was given a bowl of burning embers, to which he added incense. The bowl was placed in the middle of the altar, while the Archbishop took a censor and incensed the altar itself.

“Incense is a very ancient symbol, a sign of our prayers rising like incense, as the scripture says, to the house of God. That reminds us that we have to lift up our spirits like incense, and constantly raise the awareness of God’s presence in our lives. Incense was a part of the early church and even the odor itself gives us some idea that this is a spiritual, sacred place.”

Receiving the light of Christ

Following this, the Archbishop blessed a lit candle, which Fr. Paul Magnano used to light the Paschal Candle, the symbol of the presence of the risen Christ. Pastoral Coordinator Ron Ryan then took it and lit four candles at each of the four side walls of the church.

“We light candles at all four walls of the church, the Archbishop said, to symbolize that we receive the light of Christ when the church is blessed. And that is what we’re called to be, light to the world. That’s what Christ called himself. So when the candles are lit we’re saying that we see this symbol as important in our lives. That’s how we’re rooted.

“That’s what this dedication is all about,” the Archbishop continued, “to remind us again in the next hun-

dred years that we’re rooted in this reality, in this faith. It’s not some vague understanding of life, it’s not some message that’s good for a week or two; it’s a message that fills us in every phase of our life. If that’s true, then we are called to be evangelizers, to talk freely about our faith. We don’t have to be embarrassed that we have religion, that we believe in God.

Because we have faith, our lives are given over to doing things that are significant. Meaning is found in the mystery of God’s presence in our lives.”

Candles were then processed to the altar, and parishioners brought in the altar cloths and vessels to

prepare the altar for the celebration of the Eucharist.

Mark it on your calendar

After communion and the closing prayer, the Archbishop said, “It’s a very nice thing, this 100th anniversary. It’s a very important thing. It’s exciting, isn’t it? You should go home and mark it down on your calendar and say, ‘I was here for the 100th Anniversary Celebration of our parish community!’

“We’ve honored the great people who have gone before us and done so much, but we remind ourselves that we have to carry on this tradition. We have to be rooted in our faith. We have to be the evangelizers. We have to be those who celebrate and understand it so that we can pass on this great faith of Jesus Christ.

“My dear friends, it’s been a joy to be with you today and I hope that the rest of the day will be as blessed as this time together. May we be enriched by it, may we find great joy in what we’re doing and may we always live with a future full of hope.

“God bless you.”

As the liturgy ended, parishioners donned coats, hats and scarves, ready to brave the icy roads, ready to begin a new century of St. Anne’s history.

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The newly remodeled—and rededicated—St. Anne Church

The Prayer of Dedication

*Father in heaven,
source of holiness and true purpose,
it is right that we praise and glorify your name.*

*For today we come before you,
to dedicate to your lasting service
this house of prayer, this temple of worship,
this home in which we are nourished
by your word and your sacraments.*

Here is reflected the mystery of the Church.

*The Church is fruitful,
made holy by the blood of Christ:
a bride made radiant with his glory,
a virgin splendid in the wholeness of her faith,
a mother blessed through the power of the spirit.*

*The church is holy,
your chosen vineyard:
its branches envelop the world,
its tendrils, carried on the tree of the cross,
reach up to the kingdom of heaven.*

*The church is favored,
the dwelling place of God on earth:
a temple built of living stones,
founded on the apostles with
Jesus Christ its corner stone.*

*The church is exalted,
a city set on a mountain:
beacon to the whole world,
bright with the glory of the Lamb,
and echoing the prayers of her saints.*

*Lord,
send your Spirit from heaven
to make this church an every-holy place,
and this altar a ready table
for the sacrifice of Christ.
here may the waters of baptism
overwhelm the shame of sin
and live again through grace as your children.*

*Here may your children,
gathered around your altar,
celebrate the memorial of the Paschal Lamb.
and be fed at the table
of Christ's word and Christ's body.*

*Here may prayer, the Church's banquet,
resound through heaven and earth
as a plea for the world's salvation.*

*Here may the poor find justice,
the victims of oppression, true freedom.*

*From here may the whole world,
clothed in the dignity of the children of God,
enter with gladness your city of peace.*

*We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.*

Amen.