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Cathedral celebrations begin



More than 1000 Catholics fill the Cathedral of Christ the Light, Sept. 14, for the blessing of the baptistry and sacred art. GREG TARCZYNSKI PHOTO

By Voice staff

In the first of a series of events inaugurating the Cathedral of Christ the Light, more than 1000 parishioners from across the diocese gathered Sept. 14 to witness the blessing of the cathedral's cornerstones and sacred art. They were the first Catholics to gather for worship in the new sanctuary.

Bishop Allen Vigneron and Bishop Emeritus John Cummins began the festivities with prayer and song at the site of the former St. Francis de Sales Cathedral, which closed after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. "We begin the pilgrimage to our future by remembering our past," said Bishop Cummins. Participants then marched along Grand Avenue to the plaza of the new cathedral. There, the bishops blessed the St. Francis de Sales cornerstone, set on Sept. 13, 1891, and salvaged when the cathedral was razed in 1993. It is set at the entrance of the new cathedral, opposite the new cornerstone which the bishops also blessed.

Parishioners entered the cathedral by its four side doors because the front doors are closed until the cathedral dedication on Sept. 25. Once inside, they watched as representatives of the diocese's 84 parishes placed banners in ceramic holders encircling the baptismal font. "It was an exciting



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moment for me," said Tavake Moa who carried the banner for St. Benedict Parish in Oakland.

The most dramatic moment came when other parish representatives poured holy water from their churches' fonts into the cathedral's circular baptismal font. Brion Wikes, who was baptized at St. Margaret Mary Church in Oakland in 2005, said he hoped uniting the parishes with the cathedral would be a way of "bringing about God's blessing and provoking transformation and change in Oakland."

This is an "historic moment," said Gloria Dias of St. Perpetua Parish in Lafayette. Her sentiments were echoed by Karen Miller, pastoral associate at St. Augustine Parish in Oakland. "This gathering shows that the people of the diocese are taking ownership" of the cathedral, she said.

Other inaugural events, in addition to the Sept. 25 dedication, include a civic interfaith service on Sept. 26 and the dedication of the cathedral mausoleum on Nov. 2.

The first public Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. on Sept. 28.

A cathedral parishioner pours water from Lake Merritt into the baptismal font during a blessing ritual. Water from the River Jordan, St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, the shrine at Lourdes, France, and each parish in the diocese was also poured into the font.

JOSE LUIS AGUIRRE PHOTO



Aztec dancers from Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Brentwood lead nearly 1,000 marchers Sept. 14 along Grand Avenue from the site of the former St. Francis de Sales Cathedral to the new Cathedral of Christ the Light during the first of several events marking the opening of the Christ the Light Cathedral.

JOSE AGUIRRE PHOTO



ABOVE: Vietnamese drummers provide music for the procession that included young mariachis from St. Paul Parish in San Pablo and dancers from the Korean

Pastoral Center.
JOSE AGUIRRE PHOTO S

RIGHT: Parishioners carry banners along the procession route.



ABOVE: Bishop Emeritus John Cummins blesses the ambry on the wall near the baptismal font in the new cathedral. The ambry holds the sacred oils used in sacramental anointings.
RIGHT: Bishop Allen Vigneron blesses the circular baptismal font which is made of jet mist granite.
GREG TARCZYNSKI PHOTOS





Parishioners place the processional banners in ceramic pots near the cathedral entrance.

GREG TARCZYNSKI PHOTO

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