

St. Patrick's completes long road back

Church
By J. ALEX TARQUINIO
STAFF WRITER

The rebuilt St. Patrick's Church in downtown Watsonville will be dedicated Monday, the fifth anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake which destroyed the original church.

Bishop Sylvester Ryan of the Monterey diocese will anoint the new altar and church walls with blessed oil, and install a stone in the altar containing relics of saints. Mass will follow. The ceremony begins at 7:30 p.m.

The original church was built in 1903, but had to be razed after the earthquake. "Originally we tried to save the old structure," said the Rev. Michael Miller, pastor of St. Patrick's.

He said two years of planning went into the reconstructed church, which looks virtually identical to the old one from the outside. Work began on the new church St. Patrick's Day 1993. Doors opened in May of this year.

Tim Griffin, who has been

attending St. Patrick's since the mid-1960s, is glad the church is back. He said many Watsonville residents feel the same, regardless of whether or not they belong to the church.

"Even many local non-Catholics felt it was such a Watsonville landmark that it was important," Griffin said.

Miller said his parishioners have been through a series of traumatic ordeals, from the four years they worshipped in the parish hall while the church was being rebuilt to the modern

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organization of the new church's interior.

This interior was designed along post-Vatican II guidelines. Miller said these guidelines are meant to emphasize the community of the congregation rather than the individual preacher.

He said the addition of a large plaza out front is meant to encourage mingling as parishioners enter and leave the church.

Many people who worshipped

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elsewhere while the congregation met at the parish hall are returning to St. Patrick's, Miller said, now that the church has been rebuilt. "Some people just feel more comfortable worshipping in a church that feels like a church," he said.

But he also said some people had gotten used to worshipping in the parish hall, and they missed it when they moved back to the church. There was something very comfortable about routine, Miller said, "but God does not seem content to let this church settle into a rut."

St. Patrick's has raised almost \$3 million in donations to rebuild the church, but is still trying to raise another \$900,000 to finish the job.

Donors can sponsor a memorial, ranging from a load of bricks for \$500 to a new church tower with a price tag of \$200,000.