

Reconstruction Refurbishing

This page is an overview of the work of reconstruction and refurbishing that the Holy Cross Church building has been undergoing since winter.

The word "reconstruction" is used here to denote structural strengthening to protect against possible damage by future earthquakes, as well as denoting repairs to the church of damages resulting from age as well as from the October 1989 quake. "Refurbishing" is a word that means "to brighten or freshen up; renovate." Although the reconstruction will certainly be the core of this renewal, the surfaces of Holy Cross will be made smooth and clean and pleasant to the eye as a result of the more meticulous work of refurbishing. So between being, essentially, re-engineered, or having its structure strengthened, and being cleaned up artistically on its surfaces, Holy Cross Church is undergoing a complete renewal.

Of course, for over two years since the '89 quake, thousands of hours of executive labor went into the gathering of funds, the meetings with government officials for plan approvals, and sessions with contractors, engineers and architects. But finally this winter the dust began to fly and noise of change and improvements have been heard on High Street as the actual work has begun.

One of the first workers to move onto the site was Andrzej Bossak, who has an

MA in fine arts and is from Poland where he worked restoring art for the Church there. In Krakow he worked for the Pope, when the Pope was archbishop. Bossak also restored the art in St. Joseph's Cathedral in San Jose, and, perhaps most important, worked on the art in Holy Cross in 1984. His current work here, the first stage of which was completed two weeks ago, was the exacting mapping of all damage to the interior walls of the church. All of these surfaces are fine or decorative paintings, all old, and some as old as the church itself. For those who have never seen the interior of the church, or for those who have forgotten, Holy Cross is filled with truly beautiful works of art, the ceilings paneled with gorgeous portraits of saints. These are done in a variety of pigments and styles that must be replicated to bring them to full life again. Also, the cracks in the paintings must be repaired in partnership with the structural work by other contractors. So the very detailed mapping and description that Bossak has done is essential both structurally and artistically.

A large portion of the work that has gone on since February has been site preparation and the erection of scaffolding in the church interior. Chandeliers have been lowered, rewired and stored. The pews, floor and organ have been covered in protective materials so as not to be ruined during the massive changes to walls and ceilings. Impressive amounts and configurations of scaffolding have been constructed in the church. Scaffolding is sort of the skeleton of a construction job, establishing strength and support for all the other

types of work that will go on. The interior of the church is 100 feet long, 50 feet wide, and 48 feet high.

The scaffolding is designed so that every inch of wall and ceiling can be got to by the variously skilled workers and technicians.

A mile-long walk!

There are over 5,415 feet of plank, so that one could walk for over a mile in the church without touching the floor.

Soon scaffolding will be going up around the exterior of the church. This is for roof and tower demolition and rebuilding access, as well as for platforms from which to drill into the buttresses. These holes to be drilled through the height of the buttresses, are for cables that, when anchored will comprise half of the quake retrofitting of the church. The other half of this structural strengthening is the work that has now been going on for several weeks. This is the tying together of roof and wall members. Thousands of pieces of wood and hardware are being put in place to brace and connect original walls and rafters so that the church will indeed be stronger than ever.

