

✓ Repairing quake-damaged churches will be priority for new bishop

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SANTA CRUZ — Newly appointed Bishop Sylvester D. Ryan has already visited the county's two earthquake-damaged Catholic churches.

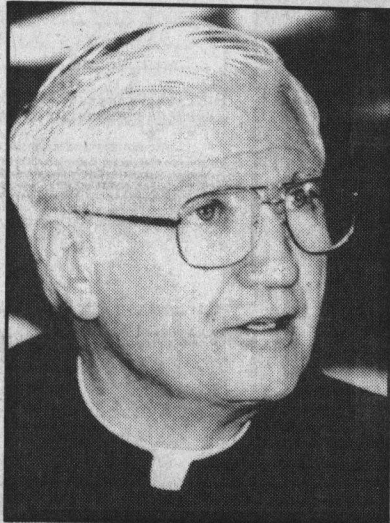
Ryan was named bishop Tuesday for the Diocese of Monterey, which includes Santa Cruz County. That same day he visited Holy Cross Church in Santa Cruz and St. Patrick's in Watsonville.

"He seems very youthful and very energetic," the Rev. Mike Miller of St. Patrick's said. "He laughed a lot, which is always a welcome thing in people connected with the church."

Ryan does not take his new post officially until March 19. He will remain in the Los Angeles area until then. Ryan is an auxiliary bishop in the Los Angeles diocese.

"He has so much interest in the area that he came to work early," Miller said.

St. Patrick's and Holy Cross have struggled to raise money for



Bishop Sylvester Ryan
Came for an early inspection.

repairs since the quake hit two years ago.

The bishop usually gives final approval for spending for churches within the diocese, but the dioc-

san administrators will give the final approval for church repairs until the new bishop assumes his new role, the Rev. Charles Fatooh at the diocese said. Fatooh has been serving as administrator of the diocese since shortly after Bishop Thaddeus Shubsda's death in April.

"He's very affable, very interested in what's going on," the Rev. Mike Marini at Holy Cross said of Ryan. "He's enthusiastic about how far along we were in the process."

While Marini said a contract is close to being signed for Holy Cross repairs, pastors at St. Patrick's and other parishes in the diocese are still deciding how to approach the damage at the Watsonville church.

Miller said possible ways of fixing St. Patrick's are being narrowed down by an administrative team at the diocese.

Depending on how much the church is willing to spend in restoring and expanding St. Pat-

rick's, the price tag ranges from \$2.3 million to \$3.86 million, Miller said.

The \$2.3 million alternative would rip down the existing structure and construct a larger replica, Miller said.

The other two options would preserve the existing church and expand its capacity, Miller said. How much the church should be expanded is still being debated, he said.

St. Patrick's has raised \$1.8 million for the renovation project, Miller said, and construction plans may be approved as early as Feb. 15.

"It takes such great delicacy to decide what to do with a local church. It will be good to have someone away from it to look at the problem with objectivity," Miller said of the new bishop.

Holy Cross has collected \$850,000 in donations for repairs, said Marini, and the church is still seeking \$500,000 to make cosmetic improvements.

"The church needs paint, a new

sprinkler system, and we have to start looking ahead to replace the hall that burned down," Marini said. "We have to restore a landmark — that's very difficult."

The cost of repair for Holy Cross includes the refitting of the steeple on the building, Marini said.

Residents who have never attended the church have called Holy Cross asking when the steeple will be put back, Marini said.

Besides helping local churches with earthquake recovery, the new bishop will have other issues to handle, Miller said.

Communicating with immigrants and diverse parishioners, working to solve the problem of a declining number of priests and the need to revitalize the laity will have to be attended to by Ryan, Miller said.

Miller said the new Spanish-speaking bishop addressed a small group while visiting St. Patrick's Church, where the majority of parishioners are Latino.

Ryan was unavailable for comment.