

Earthquake ST W-PA3 Watsonville Rebuilding

St. Patrick's picks architect for \$2 million rebuilding job

By MAYA SURYARAMAN
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The copper-trimmed spire of St. Patrick's Church in Watsonville, removed in the wake of the Oct. 17 earthquake, is to be set back atop its tower.

The Diocese of Monterey has decided to restore the brick and terra cotta building on Main Street, which suffered severe damage during the earthquake. If all goes well, parishioners could find themselves back inside the church for 1990 Christmas mass, the Rev. Charles Fatooh, chief executive officer for the bishop of the diocese, said yesterday.

"The community wanted us to make a decision (about the building's fate). So we did," Fatooh said.

After reviewing several proposals, the diocese has decided to award the contract for restoration to R.M.O Architects, an Arroyo Grande architectural firm

which restored several historic buildings following the 1971 Whittier earthquake near Los Angeles.

The firm's first step will be to conduct seismologic studies, to ensure that the ground underneath St. Patrick's is stable. Then it will draw up project plans. The restoration is expected to cost at least \$2 million, and will include remodeling and bringing the building up to 1980s building-code standards, Fatooh said.

St. Patrick's Church, a Watsonville landmark and anchor in the life of many of its Roman Catholic parishioners, suffered severe damage during the October earthquake. Its side walls buckled and its 132-foot tower cracked. The spire which sat atop the tower was listing to one side, and had to be removed, along with its four surrounding turrets.

Inside the church, several statues and the stone canopy over the altar collapsed.

The Rev. Michael Miller, pastor of the church, said the church, built in 1903 by architect William Weeks, will be restored as much as possible to its original condition. It will also undergo some remodeling, including moving an exterior wall to expand the church's current seating capacity of roughly 500. Nearly 4,000 parishioners attend weekend services at St. Patrick's.

Until restoration is complete, services, including the upcoming Christmas Mass, will continue to be held at the Moreland/Notre Dame Elementary School gymnasium across the street.

Of the at least \$2 million necessary for the restoration, rock concert producer Bill Graham has already contributed \$100,000. And the Rev. Declan Murphy, former pastor at St. Patrick's, contributed \$25,000 raised in his new parish.

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Efforts to raise money in the congregation and the town at large will begin next year. Father Miller hopes to draw on what he said is the enormous good will towards the church building in the Watsonville community.

He recalled standing in front of the church following the earthquake. A parishioner whose home had been destroyed walked up to him and burst into tears.

"She said, 'I knew I'd lost one home. Now I've lost another one.' I guess she was wrong though. She didn't lose her church."

Valley Catholic Church is also proceeding with repairs to its earthquake-damaged building.

"We call ourselves the forgotten church," said the Rev. Laurence O'Sullivan, pastor of the church located near the end of East Lake Avenue.

Within a week, construction crews are to begin repairs to the back wall, a \$35,000 to \$40,000 endeavor which represents only the first of several improvements needed before the Roman-style church recovers its pre-Oct. 17

appearance. Father O'Sullivan said a starting date for repairs to begin on the roof, which must be replaced, is unknown since the parish is experiencing difficulty in finding a construction company to do the work.

Last Sunday marked the first time since before the earthquake that parishioners, who attended services at the adjoining Kennedy Center in the interim, celebrated mass in the church building. Services will continue in the church on Sundays, although weekday masses will be held in the chapel located on the church grounds while repairs to the main building are under way.

Valley Church, whose official name is Our Lady Help of Christians, serves more than 370 families.

A church restoration fund has been established at Pajaro Valley Bank.