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# Steeplechase at Holy Cross

## Earthquake repairs go slowly

By ROBERT MITTENDORF  
Sentinel staff writer

**F**ROM ITS PERCH atop Mission Hill, Holy Cross Catholic Church keeps a silent vigil over its namesake city.

For more than 100 years, the Gothic-revival structure has been a familiar symbol of comfort and stability. Now, its battered steeple is a constant reminder of the 7.1 earthquake that struck Oct. 17.

But plans are underway to reconstruct the steeple — which was heavily damaged in the quake and later removed — and to reinforce the stately white-brick structure so that it can withstand even greater shaking.

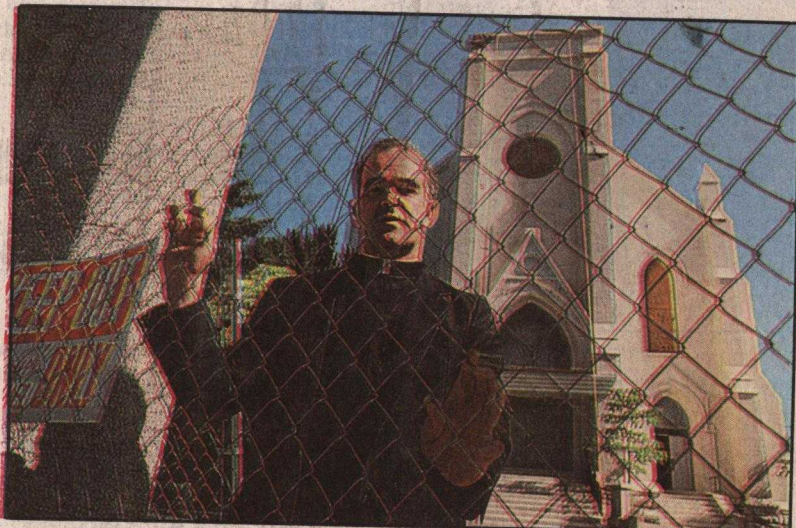
"The main problem is not the last earthquake, but the next one," said the Rev. James Henry. Father Jim, as he is called, is pastor of the Holy Cross parish.

"There was never a question of whether we would rebuild," Father Jim said. "It's a question of how or when."

Several plans are being considered.

One proposal would combine the repairs and the structural reinforcement, or "retrofit," into a single operation. Under another plan, the retrofit and the repairs would be done separately. The retrofit itself could be handled in one of two ways, Father Jim said. Steel reinforcing beams can be inserted inside the church, or — in a less aesthetically pleasing arrangement — they can be mounted outside the church, parallel to the flying buttresses.

## Religion



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

### Rev. Jim Henry: Even non-Catholics offer help.

ing the ferocity of October's natural disaster.

"I went outside the rectory and the first thing I noticed was the steeple," he said. "My first thought was 'Gosh, it's going to come down.' It was frightening."

The steeple did not fall. Severed at its roof line, it was dismantled and now sits in the parking lot between the church and the convent. The church itself is surrounded by a 10-foot chain-link fence, inaccessible to the general public.

To the casual eye, the church building appears sound. But closer scrutiny reveals a handful of hairline cracks that indicate substantial structural damage.

"There doesn't seem to be a lot of visual damage," Father Jim said as he swung open the back door and entered the sanctuary. "It's only if you go up close that you see the damage."

To illustrate, he pointed out a crack that runs several feet along the west interior wall and

decorated with handmade white origami paper cranes, the Japanese symbol for peace. Remnants of markings that designate a basketball court are visible on the wooden floor, a testimony to the hall's multiple uses. The rectory's garage serves as a sacristy, where the clerical vestments hang unceremoniously from the rafters next to a parked car.

Despite the adversity, attendance at Mass has remained more or less constant, Father Jim said.

"People have adjusted well and they have been very patient," he said. "Initially, it was a very emotional time, but people have settled in. Right now, we're functioning pretty much as normal."

"Life continues."



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Cracks web through the walls of the



ued in one of two ways, Father Jim said. Steel reinforcing beams can be inserted inside the church, or — in a less aesthetically pleasing arrangement — they can be mounted outside the church, parallel to the flying buttresses.

Cost and time frame of repairs remain uncertain, according to the pastor. An unofficial estimate put the entire cost at \$600,000 over a period of six months, he said. In any case, both the city and the Monterey Bay Diocese must approve any proposal before work can begin.

About \$300,000 has been raised so far, mostly in contributions from parish members. When a decision on a reconstruction plan is reached, renewed fundraising efforts will target the Santa Cruz community at large.

"(Holy Cross) is the church on the hill that gave its name to the city," Father Jim said. "It's like the home of the parish. People long for that. Even a lot of non-Catholics miss (the steeple). I've had people say, 'I'm not Catholic, but I'd like to contribute.'

"When you come down from Highway 17 and the steeple is not there ... " Father Jim's voice trails off and he dabs at a watery eye. Perhaps he misses the way things were before the quake; perhaps he's remember-

ed the damage. Father Jim said as he swung open the back door and entered the sanctuary. "It's only if you go up close that you see the damage."

To illustrate, he pointed out a crack that runs several feet along the west interior wall and seems to end at a doorway. But when the door is opened, the crack continues outside, as if the church has been snapped off at eye level. Similar damage is visible elsewhere. It seems a miracle the building did not collapse.

The sanctuary is silent, dimly lit by the multicolored light that filters through the undamaged stained-glass windows. A figure of the dying Jesus hangs on a cross above the altar, flanked by angels. Plastic sheeting protects the carpet. Rows of empty pews seem to wait patiently for Mass to begin.

"I'm kind of used to it now," Father Jim said. "The first days after the quake it was kind of eerie to be in here. There was a lot of dust."

For now, however, the congregation must endure a litany of inconveniences that continually test their faith.

Masses, baptisms, weddings, social events and other church functions are held in the parish hall next to the rectory. Simple chairs flank a makeshift altar

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"Life continues."



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Cracks web through the walls of the historic church which was renovated not long before the earthquake.

For more than 100 years, the Gothic-revival style church has dominated Mission Hill; now the steeple, temporarily, is down.