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Churches 1990-

✓ Watsonville church plans rebirth

By JAMIE MARKS

Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — The landmark St. Patrick's Church is on its way to a rebirth.

Plans to repair the Gothic-style Catholic church, which was severely damaged in the Oct. 17 earthquake, have been approved by the Monterey Diocese and are ready for city review, said the Rev. Mike Miller on Thursday.

"I think the reconstruction of St. Patrick's is important for the people of Watsonville," Miller said. "People identify with it so strongly."

Since the earthquake rendered the sanctuary unsafe, parishioners have been attending Mass at the

gym of Notre Dame school, across the street from the church. Miller said attendance has dropped from 4,200 to 3,400 or so on a weekend.

"Not everyone can find us," he said.

Miller said the renovation project is expected to cost at least \$2.5 million. Of that, the church has collected \$500,000, and spent about \$170,000, leaving \$330,000 as seed money for the massive project.

"A committee will begin a major fund-raising in Watsonville within three weeks," Miller said. Another group of parishioners will approach foundations and private groups for grants to make up the remainder, he said.

The plans call for expanding the church to accommodate more peo-

ple. Some 150 new seats will be added to the 540 available under the present configuration in the sanctuary, Miller said.

The slate roof, which was unscathed by the earthquake, will remain but will be supported inside by steel. The exterior brick walls will be rebuilt and reinforced as needed.

The firm of RMO Architects of Grover City, completed the blueprints after guidelines were established by the local parishioners and diocese.

The three main concerns of the parish were to preserve the architectural style of the 1903-era St. Patrick's, bring the church up to modern-day liturgical standards by moving the altar closer to the peo-

ple, and increase the seating capacity.

Miller said he thinks the goals have been accomplished with the design.

"It will end up being stronger than the day it was built," Miller said.



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