
Diocese of Orange to Dedicate New Church for Santa Ana, Costa Mesa Communities

Description

SANTA ANA. Calif. (Sept. 9, 2021) — The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is pleased to announce the historic Sept. 11 dedication of Christ Our Savior Catholic Parish in Santa Ana.

The newest church of the Diocese is a striking modern edifice of 18,500 square feet that was architecturally inspired by Segerstrom Hall in Costa Mesa. It seats 1,200 parishioners, 50 musicians and is specially designed to accommodate Masses in American Sign Language. Located near South Coast Plaza at 2000 W. Alton Ave., the \$12-million church will serve a diverse parish encompassing parts of both Santa Ana and Costa Mesa. It has about 1,600 registered families.

Christ Our Savior's dedication has been anticipated for several years. Under Bishop Tod D. Brown, the Diocese took possession of the property in November 2002 after buying it from the Segerstrom family, founders of South Coast Plaza. The site was originally slated to be the home of the Diocese's first cathedral.

However, those plans changed when the Rev. Robert Schuller's Crystal Cathedral property in Garden Grove became available in 2012. The Diocese acquired it and has since renovated much of it, a process that included changing the name of Crystal Cathedral to Christ Cathedral in 2012.

Christ Our Savior, established in 2005, celebrated its first Mass on Sept. 19, 2005, under founding Pastor Monsignor J. Michael McKiernan. It was held at a nearby elementary school.

"We are proud to dedicate this beautiful new House of God in a local area of neighborhoods that urgently needs another place of Catholic worship," said Diocese of Orange Bishop Kevin Vann, who will officiate the 10 a.m. dedication. "Christ Our Savior Catholic Parish will serve an established group of multiethnic parishioners who have waited patiently for more than a decade to worship in their own dedicated church space. We especially acknowledge those first parishioners under the leadership of Msgr. J. Michael McKiernan, who began this journey of Faith some years ago."

Joining Bishop Vann for the Sept. 11 multilingual dedication ceremony will be Bishop Thanh Thai Nguyen; Bishop Timothy Freyer; Bishop Emeritus Tod D. Brown; 50 priests; and hundreds of invited guests, including parishioners and their families. Accompanied by a group of six instrumentalists, a choir featuring voices singing in several languages will perform.

The ceremony will also be celebrated in American Sign Language.

Prior to Christ Our Savior, the last new church in the Diocese of Orange was the 2017 dedication of Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Ladera Ranch.

Recently retired diocesan Director of Worship Lesa Truxaw, a member of Christ Our Savior since its inception, is planning and executing the dedication ceremony.

“My husband and I helped form the initial pastoral team who worked to establish the parish,” Truxaw said.

Truxaw explained that the Sept. 11 dedication ceremony — estimated to be three hours in length — will include blessings of the water, walls and people; the anointing of the altar; and the celebration of the Eucharist, which ultimately consecrates the altar. Before Mass is dismissed, the church’s Blessed Sacrament Chapel will also be anointed.

An evening prayer service on Friday, Sept. 10, will include installation of a relic of St. Damien at the altar. Bishop Emeritus Brown has a special devotion to the saint, Truxaw said. On Sept. 11, a public Mass at 5 p.m. is also planned.

A new place of Catholic worship has been critically needed in Santa Ana, Truxaw added, as several local parishes — including Our Lady of Guadalupe and Our Lady of the Pillar — have standing-room-only crowds at Masses. At Christ Our Savior, English, Spanish and Vietnamese Masses will be offered, as well as services in American Sign Language.

Principal architect David Pfeifer, principal of San Diego-based Domus Studio, described the new Christ Our Savior church as a contemporary design with a clean, open and bright interior. “We build churches for today and tomorrow,” he said. “Christ Our Savior has a unique, vibrant and iconic civic presence.”

The exterior of the building has three rooflines to express the Holy Trinity, Pfeifer explained, with glass between the rooflines “so that one can see, feel and sense the light that is the presence of God. We have the Father, Son and Holy Spirit connected by light.”

At some points, the church is 54 feet tall and has an 85-foot-high tower. In addition, the church was designed with specialized acoustics to accommodate an existing pipe organ, with the installation of the organ to follow once funds are raised.

At present, Christ Our Savior’s nearly 8-acre property also has parish meeting rooms, offices and a choir room. A parish hall is planned, with fundraising for it underway.

The Diocese first took possession of the Alton Avenue property in 2002, though it was larger then. A portion of it was sold in 2017, the proceeds of which were used to help pay for the church. That sold-off parcel is now a housing tract.

Andy Hoover, the diocese’s director of real estate and construction, pointed out that the coronavirus pandemic challenged the project, which started in fall 2019. Delivery of stone from Italy, which was used in the altar, was delayed and crews were affected by COVID-19.

“People are very excited and hopeful for this church, which has gone through a number of versions,” said Fr. Joe Robillard, pastor of Christ Our Savior. “It was going to be a cathedral and there is disappointment about that, but our parish is made up of a small, intimate group of parishioners who’ve come to know each other well and have overcome big challenges to build this worship space.”

Fr. Joe said he is most impressed with the internal architecture, which is modern with lots of windows and light, and with everything directed toward the altar, where the crucifix and its background emphasizes the hopefulness of the Resurrection. The artwork was designed by Poli, based in Verona, Italy. A baptismal fountain is planned to be installed by the fall.

Deacon Modesto Cordero, director of the Diocese's Office for Worship, agreed that the architecture of Christ Our Savior is liturgically significant. "The narthex, or entry of the church, which will feature a beautiful baptistry, is symbolic of how everything in our worship begins with baptism," Cordero said.

"The parish is at the crossroads of three freeways and will provide the space necessary for worship in these communities," he added. "It's a beautiful church, and the people of that area will be pleased with it. It has been in the works for many years. Finally, the community will have a beautiful place to worship together."

About the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange

With 1.3 million Catholics, 57 parishes, five Catholic Centers, and 36 schools, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is one of the largest, most diverse faith communities in the United States. The Diocese empowers Catholics across Orange County to have an active life of faith that is integrated and woven into the fabric of their daily lives through the community and sacramental life of the Church. Under the leadership of Bishop Kevin Vann, the Diocese works to establish and support dynamic, vibrant parishes and schools, and welcome all to live the Gospel with faith, joy, charity and unity. Christ Cathedral, the spiritual home of the Diocese, was dedicated in July 2019. Learn more about the Diocese of Orange at www.rcbo.org

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