



A Romanesque transformation: The renovation of St. Francis Catholic Church

BY BETH SIMKANIN

Two months ago, after five months of renovation, Bishop David P. Talley presided over the Dedication Mass to consecrate the altar of the newly renovated Sanctuary of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Cordova.

A project six years in the making, the main goals of the recent renovation were to make the tabernacle more prominent in the Sanctuary to emphasize the Eucharist, to create beauty inside the church that is rooted in the history and tradition of the Catholic Church and to place Franciscan elements in the Sanctuary.

"After 25 years, updates were needed to restore and beautify the Sanctuary and to reorient our attention to what is most important – placing Christ at the center of our community of faith," said Father Carl Hood, Pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church. "It was providential that this happened during the Church's Eucharistic Revival. The Eucharist is the source and summit of our Christian life, and this renovation aims to highlight that."

The project, which was funded by private donations and from a small portion of the church's United in Faith Campaign, was designed by Hord Architects in Memphis.

According to Father Hood, the church building committee worked hard to incorporate a Romanesque design inside the church, which is an architectural design associated with the Basilica of San Francesco in Assisi, Italy, where St. Francis of Assisi was born. In order to do this, a reredos, which is an

affixed partition that is behind the altar, was created to accentuate the Romanesque Tabernacle, which was moved to the center of the Sanctuary.

The reredos is covered in lapis lazuli tile, which is a purplish-blue color that represents the Blessed Mother. The Latin inscription over the reredos, *Aedificate Ecclesiam Meam*, means "Rebuild My Church," which are the words Jesus said to St. Francis at the Church of San Damiano in Italy in the 13th Century. In front of the reredos is another Romanesque element – the Giotto Crucifix, which was inspired by the Franciscan school of spirituality. It is a reproduction of the original crucifix in the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella in Florence, Italy.

Additionally, new marble and tile that matched existing colors in the church were added to the Sanctuary, new candlesticks and chairs for the altar were purchased, the interior of the church was painted, church pews were refurbished and LED lighting upgrades were made.

"This beautiful renovation will last for many years to come and accentuates our commitment to making the Presence of Christ the center of our lives and spreading the Good News of the Gospel to the world," Father Hood said. †

Before renovation