

Come let us adore him

Bishop blesses new adoration chapel at Belmont Abbey College

Administrators aim to keep campus life centered around Eucharist

by KATIE MOORE

staff writer

BELMONT — The student population at Belmont Abbey College has doubled during the past four years. Plans for the expansion of the campus include the renovation of Sacred Heart College and the building of a new dormitory, more classroom space and a new dining hall.

However, before blueprints for any of these projects could be drawn or fundraising could commence, there was a more important matter topping the agenda.

When William Thierfelder, president, and Abbot Placid Solari, chancellor, formulated the overall strategic plan for the college's growth, the first item on the list was the construction of a new adoration chapel — the first new building on campus in almost 20 years.

“The first line of our mission statement says ‘Belmont Abbey College finds its center in Jesus Christ,’” said Thierfelder. “Out of everything that we were going to build, I wanted this to be the first thing that we broke ground on because I thought that it communicated, more powerfully than I possible could, what we actually value and what we think is at the core and route of Belmont Abbey College.”

“My hope is that by having the Blessed Sacrament here in adoration, we will attract vocations to the monastic community and good, solid, holy students to Belmont Abbey College,” he said.

Work on the chapel began a little more than two years ago with a groundbreaking Aug. 22, 2006. The completed St. Joseph Adoration Chapel was blessed by Bishop Peter J. Jugis Nov. 7.

“It is a very visible symbol that Belmont Abbey is a Catholic college,” said Abbot Solari. Nestled in the woods near the campus dormitories, the chapel is designed to accommodate approximately 40 people.

“It's right here for the students,” he said referring to the chapel's location at the center of campus.

It contains a marble altar with a built-in tabernacle, originally from Mercy Hospital in Charlotte, and a wooden altar for the celebration of the Eucharist, originally from Sacred Heart Convent in Belmont — both donated by the Sisters of Mercy in Belmont.

“This was quite a vision,” said Rep. Patrick McHenry, of North Carolina's 10th Congressional District, Belmont Abbey College alumnus.

“Abbot Placid and Dr. Thierfelder have been focused on growing Belmont Abbey and this is where they wanted to start,” he said.

The chapel was completely funded by donations, according to Kenneth Davison, vice president of college relations, and more than 80 percent of the people who made donations for the chapel were first time donors to the college.

“Some of the most powerful messages are so simple,” said McHenry. “This is a simple chapel, but it represents something amazing.”

The original adoration chapel at Belmont Abbey College was a converted office located behind the monastery. It was inaugurated in 1995 by then-Bishop William G. Curlin.

Begun under Abbot Oscar Burnett, the chapel was a cooperative effort of Belmont Abbey College, Queen of the Apostles Church in Belmont, St. Michael the Archangel Church in Gastonia and Holy Spirit Church in Denver.

It was the first perpetual adoration chapel in the diocese, according to Davison, but over the years the hours were cut back because there weren’t enough participants.

In the new chapel, the Blessed Sacrament is exposed for approximately 16 hours a day, but the chapel is always open.

In his homily during the Mass for the blessing of the St. Joseph Adoration Chapel, Bishop Jugis mentioned his wish that it again become a place of perpetual adoration.

“The love of Jesus remains at the very heart of the (Catholic) Church’s life,” said Bishop Jugis in a 2005 article in The Catholic News & Herald. “Eucharistic worship gives life to all the ministries of the parish ... (and) to our Christian life in our homes and in our places of work.”

“I myself spend time each day in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament,” said the bishop. “It is the real presence of Christ which makes the difference, adding a richness to the prayer as opposed to praying elsewhere.”

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