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Making space

Bishop Jugis blesses new parish activity center

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WAYNESVILLE — When the new St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church was consecrated Sept. 30, 2007, parishioners gathered to celebrate in the unfinished parish center just below the church.

One day soon, they had hoped, the rudimentary room would be finished.

Those hopes, fleshed out by hard work, were realized June 12. Some 150 parishioners feasted on a barbecue dinner celebrating the dedication of their newly completed parish activity center.

Bishop Peter J. Jugis blessed the facility with holy water during the ceremony. In his remarks, the bishop said that the eucharistic celebration, in the church “just above you,” is the center of parish life.

The Eucharist is to be lived in fellowship in the center and in the wider world, he said.

The bishop then headed up the sidewalk to meet with the 13 young people about to be confirmed that day. Parishioners celebrated, complete with cake, in the center after the confirmation Mass.

Work on the 4,000-square-foot parish center began about three months after the church was dedicated, as money became available to complete the project. It includes a gathering space for 250 to 300 people, a kitchen, conference room and two classrooms.

Parishioners did much of the work, installing dry wall and flooring, and painting the rooms. They made two trips to pick up a conference table and 10 upholstered high-backed swivel chairs that the Catholic Conference Center near Hickory donated.

The parish’s Women’s Circle held several fundraising events to provide kitchen equipment.

Father Larry LoMonaco, pastor, said later that he was “very relieved” that the center is finished.

“It turned out even better than I expected,” he said.

St. John the Evangelist Church’s next construction phase will involve the building of a bell tower containing an elevator, thus allowing inside access between the church and parish center.

A parishioner who is an architect has agreed to design the bell tower free of charge.

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