



Restoring the Chapel of the Holy Spirit

by Fr. Ronald E. Wozniak, SJ

In the fall of 1968, I came to Campion Center — then known as Weston College — for philosophy studies following my novitiate at Colombiere Center in Michigan. I remember thinking how tired the chapel of the Holy Spirit appeared. It was not a place where I felt drawn for prayer and it didn't seem a very fitting place to be the Lord's house.

Shortly before I returned to assume the job as minister at Campion Center in 1998, the then rector, Fr. Ron Amiot, SJ, had made some improvements — the stained glass windows were repaired and releaded, the candleholders and altar crucifixes in the main chapel were replated and seat cushions had been installed on the pews.

Still, when I entered the main chapel I found myself thinking that this sacred space where so many men worshipped God, received orders and ordination and indeed their final commendation to the Lord at their funeral liturgy needed some care. I wanted to do something about refinishing the water-stained wooden Stations of the Cross, getting more light into the sanctuary and finding a solution for the pews, which bled old lemon oil and oak stain onto the shirt of anyone who dared to lean back against them on a hot, humid day. As minister, I was making changes throughout the house and around the



grounds, why not in the main chapel as well.

The cost to redo the chapel in its entirety was a staggering, amazing amount. The company that drew up a proposal had small sections of the stone wall of the main altar and of the arch of the sanctuary repainted along with two squares filled with acoustical tile repainted with gold-colored trim to demonstrate the restoration. I spoke with the new rector, Fr. Paul Holland, SJ, and the Provincial, Fr. Thomas Regan, SJ, about the project and received support for the idea, but I was aware that the money needed just wasn't available for a project of this magnitude.

Over time, I broke the project up into smaller, more manageable parts. With money available from our operating budget and using our maintenance staff, as available, we were able to make some of the needed improvements. The tabernacle door was sent out to be resilvered. The Stations of the Cross were removed

and cleaned, restained and polyurethaned and Bob Fay, our carpenter, with the help of Bill Hay, Adam Negron and Willie James, refinished the doors. All the lights throughout the body of the chapel were replaced and new, high-powered lights were added over the main altar area. Our in-house master electrician, Jim Mueller, rewired them. The maintenance department also refinished the



The worker used gold-colored paint to do the trim on the acoustic squares and rectangles surrounding the sanctuary.

pews — a big, time-consuming job. Doing so much of the work in-house saved a lot of money.

Over the years this project has slowly evolved, we have had the support of the sacristan every step of the way. He has cheerfully assisted when needed and has good-naturedly taken the dirt and dust in stride and helped in the final cleanup.

A lot of credit deservedly belongs to our Director of Environmental Services, Gorden Simmons, who is creative, insightful and knowledgeable. He gets things done without drawing attention to himself, but his handiwork is evident in hands-on ways and through directing his staff.

Finally, the Provincial, who was supportive all along, told me we could do the sanctuary area as I had asked. It took over a year to assemble the companies that would do the work. Scaffolding was set up and soon the masonry cleaning staff worked hard, even using toothbrushes in small spaces to remove all the dirt and built-up soot. As the cleaners finished, the artists came in, often preferring to work late into the evening. They first repaired many cracks in the ceiling around the angels, then tackled the water-damaged plaster on the left side of the ceiling. They then cleaned the painted areas and the images of the angels, touching them up as needed.

The gold band surrounding the image of the Holy Spirit was repainted. In the process, workers discovered that the original flame-like extensions dipping between the angels had been painted out. They restored these extensions and repainted the gold squares of the arch. The beauty is that the restoration blended into the original work so well that it doesn't look new as much as clean and fresh.



Willie James surveying the sanding job he's doing on the floor of the second-floor balcony. He also did the repainting of the walls and trim.

The housekeeping staff, especially Victor Lugo, the sacristan, and the maintenance crew worked together to get the chapel ready for our Easter 2009 service. The community and visitors expressed their delight with the outcome.

More work remains to be done — gold paint applied to the rest of the many squares of the ceiling, plaster repair and touch-up painting where water seepage has caused damage and washing of the

sooty walls — but we're happy with all that has been accomplished over the past 12 or 13 years. We owe thanks to the many who have worked to achieve this goal and whose support sustained us with their kind words, prayers and financial resources. We are all pleased with our efforts to make this prayer space a brighter, more liturgically magnificent setting for our religious community's prayerful worship of the Lord.



Fr. Ronald E. Wozniak, SJ, is the minister, Campion Jesuit Community. He is also a talented photographer who has taken a chronological history of the chapel renovations. Fr. Wozniak says, "We're also thankful to the BC community, through the minister, Fr. Michael Ford, SJ, for the replating of the sanctuary lamp and a set of vestments."

If you are interested in contributing to the renovations of this holy place, please contact Grace Cotter Regan, executive director of advancement, at gregan@sjnen.org or call 617-607-2891.