



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE of ORANGE



FOUNDATION

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Christ Cathedral to build new chapel and crypts

The new worship space will be located in the cathedral undercroft and will have burial spaces for 40 bishops.

[Click here to download conceptual photos of the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts.](#)

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. (January 25, 2023) — The Diocese of Orange and Christ Cathedral will soon be breaking ground on the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts, a new worship space underneath Christ Cathedral that will serve generations of parishioners throughout Orange County.

The \$13-million project is named after the St. Callistus parish and school in Garden Grove, which closed in 2013 as part of a land swap deal when the Diocese completed its \$57.5-million purchase of the Crystal Cathedral campus. Since then, the 34-acre property has been extensively refurbished and the cathedral rededicated as Christ Cathedral.

The Diocese plans to begin construction in March and finish as early as December.

The St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts will be more intimate than the main sanctuary above and contain new sacred artwork and burial spaces for bishops. Within approximately 11,500 square feet, it will accommodate approximately 250 people and have a complete altar area for Masses.

“I did not forget the sacrifice of the St. Callistus parishioners when they left their church, and I am pleased to name the chapel for the old parish,” said Bishop Kevin Vann. “We are excited and blessed to add another location on campus to worship our Lord and pay respect to the founding members of the St. Callistus parish. As the focal hub for our Orange County Catholic community, having this new chapel makes us an even stronger beacon.”

The St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts’ architectural style is modern Byzantine, with gold colors akin to what one sees in a European church. The architectural firm is Los Angeles-based Johnson Fain, with sacred art from Granda of Madrid, Spain.

“Christ Cathedral’s design is very modern, so the chapel, with its classic Byzantine style, will be a nice addition architecturally to our campus,” said Elysabeth Nguyen, CEO of the St. Callistus Chapel Campaign, whose parent organization, the OLLV Foundation, is managing the project’s construction and fundraising.

In addition to 1,054 niches for all the faithful, the crypts will set aside 40 burial spaces for generations of bishops. In that respect, Christ Cathedral will replicate what many cathedrals around the world already have.

“It’s a Catholic tradition that bishops are buried in the cathedral,” explained Fr. Angelos Sebastian, vicar general and moderator of the curia for the Diocese and an OLLV Foundation board member. “It’s certainly important for us, at our cathedral, to have crypts for our bishops who have labored for our Diocese and are very loved in our Diocese.”

For music, St. Callistus is designed to accommodate a choir and instruments, such as a piano or electronic organ.

It will have a marble altar and enough room for 10 to 15 concelebrants, including the bishop.

On either side of the chapel will be devotional shrines. One, dubbed a “legacy chapel,” will detail the history of the Diocese of Orange and how it came to be. The second will focus on St. Callistus the person, who served as pope from approximately 218 to 223 A.D.

Fr. Angelos noted that given the sizable population the Christ Cathedral campus regularly serves — some 12,000 people are celebrating Mass in multiple languages on any given weekend — the chapel is needed as an additional worship space.

“We have such a huge community here,” Fr. Angelos said. “This will be able to meet the spiritual needs of people. For example, we can celebrate Mass simultaneously in two different places in the cathedral.”

Much of the sacred artwork is still being finalized and will be completed and installed in phases, even after the chapel opens to the public. Different mediums are planned: statues, mosaics, paintings and tapestry.

St. Callistus parish and school families made significant sacrifices under the Crystal Cathedral land swap deal, losing their church (which was founded in 1961) to become the initial congregation of the Christ Cathedral campus.

“Though we gained a beautiful new campus in the end, losing St. Callistus was not easy,” said Fr. Tuyen Nguyen, the last pastor of St. Callistus. He is now the pastor of Blessed Sacrament parish in Westminster and an OLLV Foundation board member. “For generations, our St. Callistus families worshipped, learned and shared so many moments of great joy at the church. That’s why, to honor them, we named the chapel after St. Callistus, paying tribute to the memory of both the parish and its parishioners.”

Fr. Bao Thai, Christ Cathedral’s rector, said he hopes “that our parishioners will enjoy the chapel and make a prayer for the repose of all the faithful departed who will be soon buried under the cathedral.”

The Diocese and Orange County community are encouraged to visit www.stcallistuschapel.org to learn more and donate.

“Your donations will help build not only a new chapel to connect ourselves with God,” added Fr. Bao, “but also a resting home for our bishops, family members, relatives, friends and ourselves.”

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Media Day for the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts

What: The media is invited to hear a presentation about the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts project and see the site where it will be located in the cathedral undercroft. Q&A opportunities with Diocese leaders will be offered.

When: 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., February 1, 2023

Where: St. Callistus Chapel, Christ Cathedral, 13280 Chapman Ave., Garden Grove.

Visuals: Construction site of underground chapel, Diocese leaders, Christ Cathedral. Conceptual drawings will be provided electronically and at the site in person.

Parking: Park in lots P1/P2 near the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine and follow directional signage to the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts meeting area. [Click here for a Christ Cathedral campus map.](#)

RSVPs: Please contact Assistant Director of Communications Bradley Zint, bzint@rcbo.org, (714) 282-6052

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About the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange

With 1.3 million Catholics, 57 parishes, five Catholic centers and 35 schools, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is one of the largest and 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 welcoming all to live the Gospel with faith, joy, charity and unity. Christ Cathedral, the spiritual home of the Bishop of Orange, was dedicated in July 2019. Learn more about the Diocese of Orange at rcbo.org.