



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE of ORANGE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

From Crystal Cathedral to Christ Cathedral: Diocese of Orange completes cathedral transformation with new St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts

The stunning Romano-Byzantine chapel marks the end of a years-long effort to transform the Protestant megachurch into a major center of Catholic worship, while also paying an ecumenical tribute to Crystal Cathedral founders Dr. Robert and Arvella Schuller.

[Click here for the Spanish translation of this press release. Haga clic aquí para Español.](#)

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. (Oct. 2, 2024) — The Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange is pleased to announce the opening and public dedication of Christ Cathedral's St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts, a milestone moment in the history of the Diocese that marks the completion of the cathedral campus transformation from the Crystal Cathedral Protestant megachurch to a major center of Catholic worship for the West Coast.

The chapel and crypts, located in the lower level of Christ Cathedral, will serve as new worship space for the bustling 34-acre property, with the crypts section used as the final resting place for generations of Diocese of Orange bishops. The sanctuary was designed in a classic Romano-Byzantine style of festal colors, a contrast that complements the modernity of Christ Cathedral's main floor above.

Bishop Kevin Vann will lead a special Mass for the chapel at 3:30 p.m. on Oct. 14 to officially bless and dedicate it. Given the extremely limited space inside the worship area, the dedication Mass is by invitation only but will be livestreamed to the public on the Diocese's YouTube account (@DioceseOrange).

Media are invited to attend a special press preview on Oct. 14 in the hours before the dedication Mass, from 10 a.m. to noon. Bishops and other stakeholders involved in the years-long project will be available for interviews. Please RSVP by emailing Bradley Zint at bzint@rcbo.org or calling (714) 282-6052.

With the completion of the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts, the Diocese has achieved all the major components of the original vision to transform the Crystal Cathedral into Christ Cathedral, spiritual home of the Bishop of Orange. That process began in 2012, when the cathedral sale was finalized, and has finally come to fruition more than five years after the July 17, 2019, dedication of the cathedral itself. The components include renovating the cathedral, Arboretum and Tower of Hope; expanding the Cathedral Memorial Gardens cemetery; building the Our Lady of La Vang Shrine and Marian Gardens; and restoring the Hazel Wright Organ.

“It was a long path to reach this moment,” said Bishop Vann, “but the Lord gets us to where we need to be. I hope all feel a great sense of gratitude, and I’m particularly thankful for everybody who participated in this, from beginning to end.

“When the faithful enter the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts, we pray they will feel a sense of history and faith. Art reflects worship, and may all understand the beautiful heritage that we have here in the Diocese of Orange.”

The chapel is named after St. Callistus Catholic Church, a parish in Garden Grove that closed in 2013 as part of the Crystal Cathedral sale negotiations. St. Callistus’ parishioners became the initial congregation of the cathedral campus that year. That was when, to recognize their sacrifice and trust after losing their church, Bishop Vann promised the St. Callistus faithful that the cathedral undercroft chapel would be named in their honor.

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Details of the chapel

The approximately 11,000-square-foot chapel features a stunning, custom-made collection of mosaics, paintings, statues and other design touches, as well as a refurbished pipe organ. The new sacred art was made in Madrid, Spain, by the skilled craftspeople of *Talleres de Granda*. Design work was done by Johnson Fain, a Los Angeles architectural firm that also designed the Christ Cathedral transformation more than five years ago.

The St. Callistus chapel, which broke ground in July 2023, is abound with symbolism that pays homages to important elements of the Catholic faith and tradition, as well as the history of the Diocese of Orange. Additionally, in a significant ecumenical tribute, the chapel prominently features Dr. Robert Schuller, founder of the Crystal Cathedral, and his wife Arvella. The Schullers — who were members of the Reformed Church in America, a Protestant denomination — were key supporters in the sale of their iconic glass church and its environs to the Diocese of Orange in 2012, after the Crystal Cathedral ministry fell into bankruptcy.

A major focal point of the St. Callistus chapel is an elaborate tabernacle inspired by 12-century masterpieces of medieval goldsmithing. It is made of gold-plated brass, copper and vitreous (porcelain) enamel, all held together by more than 800 tiny nuts and screws.

Music for the chapel will be provided by a refurbished pipe organ that was originally in a private home in Southern California. It has 405 pipes and was made by Schoenstein & Co., based in Benicia, Calif. It is the campus’ fourth pipe organ, further establishing Christ Cathedral as a central hub of music for the region.

The sanctuary also pays tribute to the old St. Callistus parish, originally founded in 1961. The church’s cornerstone plaque from October 2000 has been placed just outside the new chapel entrance. Etched glass panels that were part of the Eucharistic chapel of

the parish church are now on display. The people in the arms of the guardian angel mosaic, located behind the altar, also represent the diverse congregation of St. Callistus.

Importantly, St. Callistus parish's original relic of Pope St. Callistus I, who reigned circa 218 to 222, will be placed inside the new chapel's reliquary, located inside the altar pedestal. The relic was brought to the United States from Rome several years ago.

Starting on Oct. 15, the St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts will regularly host Masses, weddings, funerals, lectures, guided tours and other gatherings. The space can accommodate approximately 220 people.

[To learn more about the chapel, including its many pieces of sacred art and symbolic design choices, please click here for a four-page graphic that delves into aspects of this new sanctuary.](#)

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St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts Media Preview Day

Where: Christ Cathedral campus, 13280 Chapman Ave., Garden Grove, CA 92840. The St. Callistus Chapel and Crypts are located under the cathedral. [Click here for a campus map.](#)

When: 10 a.m. to noon, Oct. 14, 2024

RSVP: Email Bradley Zint at bzint@rcbo.org or call (714) 282-6052

Parking: Media parking will be available in La Vang Lot (P2). [Click here for a campus map.](#)

On-site contacts: Jarryd Gonzales (714) 282-3075 or Bradley Zint (657) 390-3914

Interviews and visuals: The entire chapel and crypts space will be exclusively open for photographers, reporters and videographers during this special dedicated media preview day. Bishops of Orange, as well as other stakeholders, will be present for on-camera interviews and will also be giving prepared remarks.

Special notes: Because of the limited capacity of the chapel and high expected attendance numbers for the dedication Mass itself, the ceremony is being planned as a private event by invitation only. Media will not be permitted access. Given the restrictions, the Diocese is granting special private media access beforehand to facilitate newsgathering, photography, videography and interviews.

However, the dedication Mass will be livestreamed to the public, which news media can use. Outlets that wish to use Diocese-provided photographs of the dedication Mass can contact the Office of Communications for photos starting on Oct. 15. To photograph future events on Oct. 15 and beyond in the chapel, please contact the Office of Communications.

Press handout photos: [Click here for photos. Please credit to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange. Refer to the graphic for detailed caption information on elements of the chapel and their artistic and religious significance.](#)

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About the Roman Catholic Diocese of Orange

With 1.3 million Catholics, 58 parishes, five Catholic centers and 36 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 www.rcbo.org