

## **Canadian Martyrs Church officially blessed**

Half a country away, Midland, Ont., there is a shrine dedicated to eight Canadian Jesuit Martyrs killed between 1642 and 1649 by Iroquois natives.

Now a new church at 5771 Granville Ave. in Richmond has been dedicated to the memory of Sts. Isaac Jogues, Jean de Brebeuf, Charles Garnier, Anthony Daniel, Gabriel Lalemant, Noel Chabanel, John La Lande and Rene Goupil, Jesuit pioneering missionaries who brought the Gospel to the Huron and Iroquois in Canada and the U.S. All were priests except the Jesuit associates Rene Goupil, who was a surgeon, and John La Lande.

They were beautified by Pope Pius XI on June 21, 1925, and canonized by the same Pontiff five years later.

On March 2, nearly 1,000 jubilant parishioners crowded into the new church while an overflow audience watched the dedication Mass via a closed-circuit broadcast in the parish hall.

Archbishop Adam Exner, OMI, exhorted Canadian Martyrs' parishioners to adhere to their sainted patrons' legacy of "determination, steadfast faith, and unwavering commitment to building up the Kingdom of God here on earth."

The house, he said, is a witness of their faith to all who look upon it.

"The parishioners of this parish, most of them, have come from faraway countries and have seen the need to build a new parish. After much searching, the land and the church were bought. Many of you were here for the blessing of the first church. Soon after, it became clear that the church was simply too small and that a new and larger church and parish facilities were needed.

"Like the Jewish people returning from exile to build their temple, there was much opposition and difficulties, but in spite of it all, you had great faith in God and you prayed for help, and help came. God answered your prayers by sending a generous benefactor whose donation has made it possible for you to go ahead. Now your new church and facilities have become a reality."

Today, like the Jewish people gathered in the square before the water gate of the city, said the archbishop, "We are gathered here first of all to thank God for this beautiful new church and facilities, and to recognize and acknowledge that this is the work of the Lord."

The parish has its roots in the Cantonese and Mandarin Catholic communities who came together at the nearby St. Paul's Church under Jesuit priest Father Robert Wong and, later, another Jesuit, Father Frank Doyle.

The parish was created in 1995, when the present acreage on Granville Ave. between #2 Road and Railway Avenue was purchased. The new parish was formally established with Father Wong as pastor, and the multicultural community moved into the former Protestant church on the site, continuing there for the next few years.

In 1997, the recently ordained Father Paul Chu was appointed pastor, and it became his responsibility to shepherd the building of the new church. Archbishop Exner turned the sod on the site in 2001, and later

that year, parishioners moved out of the old church so it could be demolished to make way for construction.

Over the next 22 months, the community was welcomed at St. Joseph the Worker and St. Paul's Churches.

The new 600-seat church has a unique and beautiful north-south design with the congregation facing east to maximize the site's shape. Massive dark-stained wooden front doors lead to a huge entrance foyer flooded with light.

The center of the floor in front of the sanctuary is a jubilee logo inlaid with five different types of marble in recognition of the fact that the church is one of the first to be built in the new millennium. Five doves in different colours are linked to show how people of diverse ethnic backgrounds have come together in one parish.

A unique feature is the sanctuary wall which is canted toward the congregation with three separate "framed" sections.

The center frame contains the altar and the tabernacle; one side frame has a statue of the Blessed Virgin and room for a baptismal font, the other has a shrine dedicated to the Canadian Martyrs. The Jerusalem wooden cross underneath the altar was blessed by the archbishop, while an intricately carved tabernacle, a gift from Bishop David Monroe of Kamloops, stands directly under the crucifix.

Beneath the altar are pieces of stone from Midland, representing the five martyrs who died in Huron Territory near Georgian Bay, and pieces from Auriesville, New York, for the other three who died near there.

Natural light filters through the church from high slanted windows which rise on each side above the midpoint of the wall. As well as being aesthetically pleasing, their high placement helps shield noise from passing traffic.

Along the foyer gallery are parish offices, a parish center, and several meeting rooms and classrooms.

In brief remarks after the Mass, Father Chu welcomed everyone and thanked all those who had had a hand in the creation of the new church, especially the archbishop. The major donor who has chosen to remain anonymous, said the pastor, really made the building of the church a possibility in a relatively brief time since the parish was founded.

"No more leaking roofs!" said Father Chu with a big smile. "No more buckets on rainy days as we had in the old church. No more dashing around for Masses or meetings because now we are all united under one roof. It is our home and there is no better place than home.

"Now it is time to start a new project, but this one will not be in steel, cement, or stone. Let our faith in God be our columns. Our charity towards one another be our beams, and our hope in God be our strength. Let us build the city of God here where He is surely Our Lord."