



DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS

NEWS RELEASE

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DIOCESE OF GRAND RAPIDS UNVEILS CATHEDRAL SQUARE'S PIAZZA

West Michigan's first piazza to serve as park-like setting for religious celebrations and events

Grand Rapids, Mich. June 3, 2008 – During a special preview of Cathedral Square attended by over 200 people today, the Catholic Diocese of Grand Rapids announced a \$2 million gift from Joan Secchia to the Cathedral Square project. Located in the area between the Cathedral of Saint Andrew and Saint Andrew's School, the piazza will serve as a gathering space for outdoor religious celebrations and other events. Modeled after Michelangelo's Piazza del Campidoglio in Rome, the piazza expansive plaza will be 150 ft. long and 90 ft. wide and will feature an oval design constructed of charcoal-tinted pavers contrasted by light marble. The oval will be approximately 110 ft. by 85 ft.

"The piazza is a wonderful addition to our Cathedral Square. We are grateful to Joan Secchia for her generous gift," Bishop Hurley said. "The piazza will be a special place where we will gather, worship and celebrate with people throughout the diocese and the community for generations to come."

As a special expression of gratitude for Joan Secchia's gift, the unveiling of the piazza included a performance of the *Ave Maria* by the Catholic Central High School choir. The Italian-themed event also featured a strolling accordion player, and carts offering gelato, cappuccino, espresso, baked cookies and flowers.

"It is my wish that the diocese and the people of West Michigan can experience - today and for generations to come - the camaraderie and sense of community that a piazza generates," Joan Secchia said. "I believe there is no better location for the piazza than here in front of our beautiful Cathedral of Saint Andrew – the Mother Church of the Diocese."

An additional highlight of the event was Bishop Hurley's blessing of the cornerstone for the new state-of-the-art diocesan pastoral center located at the corner of Wealthy Street and Division Avenue.

“The blessing of the cornerstone marks a new chapter in the history of the diocese,” said Bishop Hurley. “From this place, we will continue to further the mission of Our Lord’s Church as we care for the spiritual, educational and physical needs of all people.”

The diocese is set to move its offices from the St. Joseph Diocesan Center on Burton Street and other locations throughout the city, to Cathedral Square’s four-story, 100,000 square-foot pastoral center in mid-July. Saint Mary’s Health Care Pharmacy plans to take occupancy of the first floor of the center in June. Part of the growing downtown Heartside Neighborhood, Cathedral Square further enhances the vibrancy of the area by bringing the services provided by Catholic Charities West Michigan, Saint Mary’s Health Care, and God’s Kitchen into one geographic area.

The Diocese of Grand Rapids encompasses an 11-county area with 103 parishes and missions and more than 175,000 Catholics.

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