

A true Eucharistic culture is a clear awareness of gratitude

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Before we begin this Mass for Palm Sunday, I want to express my joy in being able to celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass this first Sunday in the newly-renovated Cathedral Basilica of Saint Augustine. This church, which is a historic treasure in this historic city, has been renewed and enhanced with a beauty that points all who will worship here to the glory of God and for the benefit of many generations to come from our Diocese but also from the entire state of Florida, our nation and the world as we see pilgrims constantly coming to this Basilica.

I am especially grateful to the priests and staff of the Cathedral Parish for their leadership and vision in bringing about this glorious transformation. The idea of this necessary renovation came from Father Thomas Willis. The Rector/Pastor had already built the Holy Redeemer Church and he is the one of only two priests in the entire Diocese with a master degree in Liturgy. He is also the Diocesan Director of Worship in the Diocese. Briefly he was most capable to lead this work, and he has excelled. I thank of all his collaborators who excelled in team work.

I want to extend my personal thanks to the many people of this great parish for their financial contributions and prayerful support of this endeavor. I have been told no other project in the past have received the level of financial support from the flock as this one has been graced in generosity.

Do know that practically all the parishes of the Diocese of St. Augustine have pledged their support in recognition of the Mother parish of our Diocese. I am also proud of my collaborators for they went out of their ways to support this project in more ways than one and with great enthusiasm and joy.

Special thanks are expressed to Mr. Brian Baker and his team of artists from Baker Liturgical Art who brought the expertise and professionalism in overseeing this project. Also, thanks to their artists, carpenters and painters who shared their talents in such a fitting manner so that this church could be the beneficiary of such a great beautification. Last Friday the local newspapers provided wide coverage especially interviewing Mr. Baker and Fr. Willis.

We thank one of the Cathedral's own parishioners, Bill Brennan, for designing this new lighting system, and Peter Scandone, from up in New England, who designed the new sound system.

So many local contractors were also involved with this effort:

- A.D. Davis Construction Company
- Burchfield Electric
- Ancient City Tile
- Tyler Painting
- Hester's Floor Covering

As well as many others – too many to mention. I am so glad we have played a positive role in the local economy as well.

Thanks be to God, Father Felix Varela would pray a Te Deum Laudamus in seeing this magnificent work! Gratitude, Kudos to you dear parishioners and visitors for how you generously shared your gifts and talents in the renovation of this ancient Cathedral; many have prayed steadily with fervent spiritual offerings especially from Lourdes Hall of our beloved Sisters of St. Joseph, and here it is this house of the Lord, a true House of prayer--a pride of Florida, a pride of our country!