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Construction to Get Underway as Catholic Diocese Resumes Plans for the Future

The Most Reverend Curtis J. Guillory, SVD, Bishop of Beaumont, announced today that work on the new Catholic Pastoral Center (Chancery) to be built near historic St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica will begin next month with tentative ground-breaking set for August. The new Center will replace a nearly 80-year-old building and house diocesan ministries under one roof. The new building, which will be funded with monies raised during the “quiet” phase of a \$25 million Capital Campaign, was put on hold because of Hurricane Ike.

The Catholic Diocese raised more than \$11.2 million in the “quiet” phase of the “Together for God’s Good Work” Capital Campaign with \$8.2 million already received in payments. The campaign, which would provide endowments for a variety of ministries as well as building projects, was put on hold following the hurricane and is scheduled to resume in January 2010 in Catholic parishes and missions in Southeast Texas.

“Since the inception of our diocese, we have housed many of our ministries in a building constructed in the 1920s and once used as a convent for the Dominican Sisters. As we have grown, the building has become inadequate and inefficient. Some of our ministries have had to be located across town with others in portable buildings.

Operations and maintenance will be more cost effective at the new building,” Bishop Guillory said in making the announcement.

The Diocese decided to move forward with its building projects because of escalating construction costs. “We believe it would not be wise stewardship to delay construction any longer since costs will most likely escalate,” said Bishop Guillory.

The Diocese is hoping the new building will be a symbol of the faith and resilience of Southeast Texans, and that the construction work will be a boost for the local economy.

“We plan to use local vendors whenever possible so that the monies raised will be put back into our Southeast Texas economy providing work for our people here,” Bishop Guillory said.

The winning bid for the new Pastoral Center was submitted by H.B. Neild and Sons General Contractors with a cost of \$6,951,387. Architectural Alliance, Inc. designed the building. Both Architectural Alliance Inc. and H.B. Neild and Sons are based in Southeast Texas and have completed local projects for the Catholic Church before. Construction is expected to take 480 days.

The new Pastoral Center will be constructed near St. Anthony Cathedral Basilica in downtown Beaumont near an area that has come to be known as Cathedral Square and will face Archie Street.

Work on a second building project, the renovation and expansion of the Catholic Student Center at Lamar University, is expected to begin next year. The Capital Campaign will also help fund ministry to youth, religious education, infirm priests, Catholic Charities of Southeast Texas as well as scholarships for Catholic Schools and

projects at the 53 Catholic parishes and missions in Southeast Texas. Funding also will be used for future development of Holy Family Retreat Center on Major Drive in Beaumont.

“Hurricane Ike stole some time from us. But he did not take our energy, our plans for the future nor our hope and trust in our Lord and Savior. It is true that Ike forced us to delay things while we recovered from the devastation. We needed to focus on the welfare of the people of Southeast Texas and the rebuilding of our parishes. But just as we have worked together these past months to recover from the storm, we will now work together with the Holy Spirit’s guidance to plan for our future. These plans are fulfilling important needs and providing for our ministries so that they can continue to serve our people. Southeast Texans are a resilient people – **a people of great faith,**” said Bishop Guillory.