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St. John church takes shape

ST. JOHN: New parish expected to open in '08

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Date posted online: Friday, February 16, 2007

ST. JOHN | Just seven months ago, members of St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church gathered around a dusty piece of earth as church leaders prayed over it and blessed it with holy water.

That ground is transforming into a new home for the parish, which is about a mile south of the existing church at 93rd Avenue and U.S. 41.

"For a long time, I was wondering if this was all a fantasy in my mind," said the Rev. Sammie Maletta. "I'm thrilled. I'm thrilled to death."

Construction is on target for the church, which is being built to accommodate the growing parish, Maletta said.

Although bad weather has slowed down some of the work, it has not caused too much of a delay. The steel structure is up, for the most part, and the foundation is laid.

By the end of March, the masons will start laying the stone. After it is enclosed, the plumbers and electricians can do their work, he said.

"We're pretty much where we should be," Maletta said.

Funding is ahead of schedule for the \$12.5 million building. Church officials figured about 58 percent of the pledges would be paid at this point, but 66 percent already has been paid, he said.

Maletta hopes to open the church in 2008.

The building should be finished earlier than that, but Maletta said the artisans who are crafting some of the interior adornments might need more time to finish their work.

The new church organ is being crafted in Italy, and bright stained glass windows are being made

in Texas.

A donors fair will be held in March for people who, in addition to their monetary contributions, can donate items such as windows or a chalice, in memory of a family member.

All of those little items add up to \$1 million, Maletta said.

And because the parish is going to leave its existing church open for weddings, funerals and weekday Mass, all of the little pieces need to stay there and can't be moved to the new church, Maletta said.

The new church, which will be three times as large as the existing one, will center around the altar to reflect the church's theology.

Construction continues on the new church's nearby prayer trail as well.

The trail, featuring the 14 Stations of the Cross in bronze, is expected to draw pilgrims from all over the country.

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