CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

Church destroyed by 2010 fire gets new cap, cross on bell tower

Above: Construction workers prepare the cap and cross to be placed atop the bell tower at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church in Lafayette on Wednesday. The church was destroyed by a fire in April 2010 and is scheduled to be completely rebuilt and upgraded by December. Top: The Rev. Hampton Davis leads parishioners in a hymn during the placement. Go to theadvertiser.com to see a photo gallery. PHOTOS

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A few dozen people gathered Wednesday morning at Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church to witness a milestone: the placement of a cap and cross on the church's first steeple.

The church, originally built in 1975, sustained major damage in a fire April 16, 2010. For 2½ years, church clergy and parishioners have worked to rebuild the church.

"Every pastor who's been here has wanted a cross on top," said the Rev. Hampton Davis, six-year pastor of Our Lady Queen of Peace. "What a journey it's been for us to come to this point."

In addition to wearing white vestments to symbolize a time of celebration and joy for the church, Davis also sported a blue hard hat at the construction scene.

Davis led the group in prayer, song and blessing before construction workers used a crane to place the aluminum cap and cross atop the church's recently constructed steeple.

The pastor plans to hold Christmas Mass inside the newly constructed church, and the project coordinator estimates the church will reopen its doors Dec. 19.

"My favorite part is the whole thing."

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Workers proceed with construction of the interior of the rebuilt Our Lady Queen of Peace Catholic Church.
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said Peter Broussard, a 36-year church member who serves as project coordinator. “How the architect was able to leave (some of) the old church and how the balcony area is the original. ...”

Although $1 million has been raised to construct the new facility, another $250,000 is needed to keep the church from going too far into debt, Broussard said.

The congregation has been holding Mass in Truman Elementary School’s un-airconditioned gym for more than two years while architect Kevin Gossen and builder J.B. Mouton construct the new church. Joseph Dugas has been a member since the church’s original construction.

“To see the cross go up, it was great because it didn’t have no cross before,” Dugas said. “Now, it’s going to look like a church. The way it was built before, it didn’t look like a church except on the inside.”

Doris Simon also remembers watching the original church’s construction more than 35 years ago. Now, she is excited to see her church reopen with a new look.

“It’s going to be beautiful,” Simon said. “We’ve waited for this for a long time. Belonging to this church is like a family.”