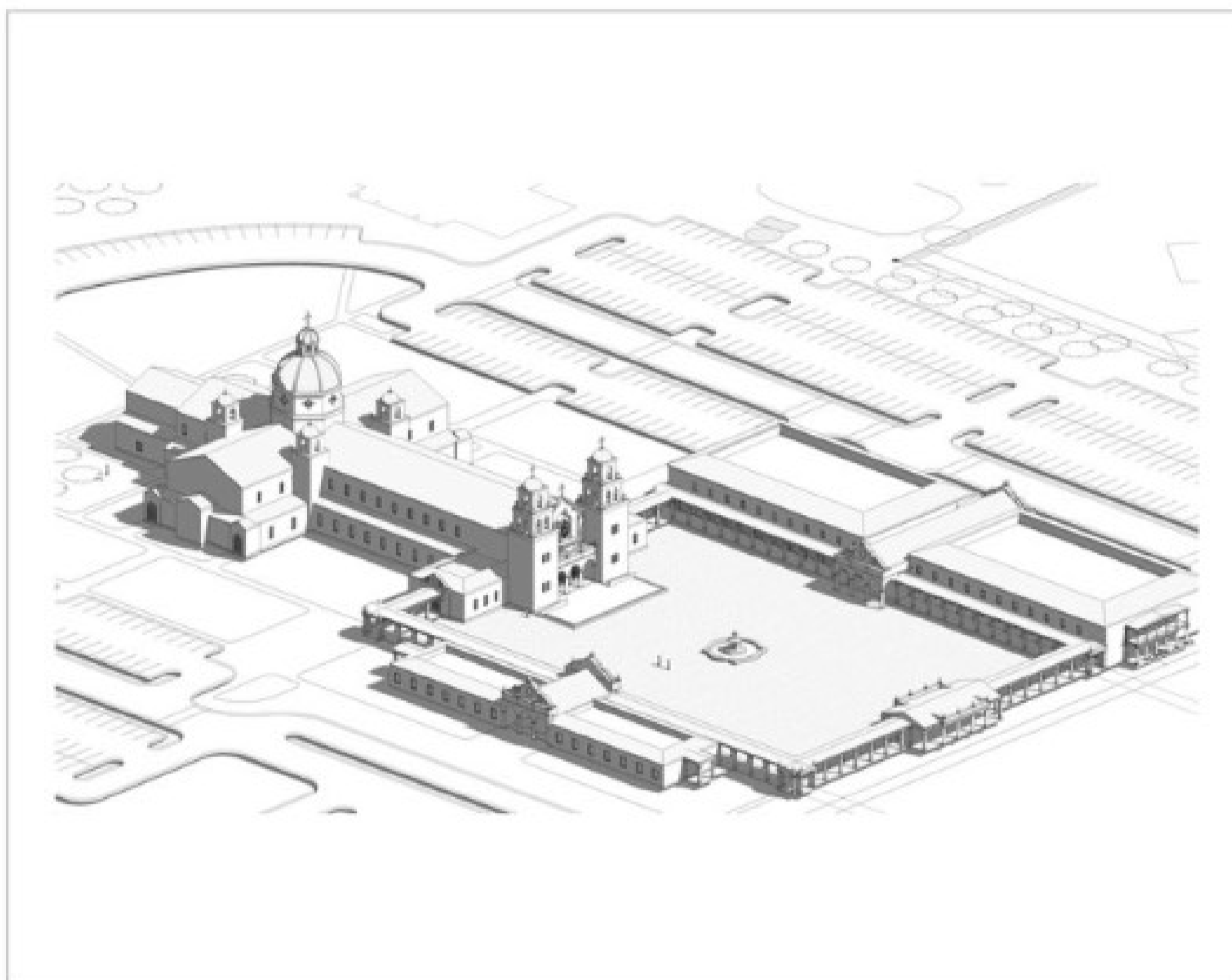


# Great expectations: Catholic archdiocese has raised more than half needed for Rother shrine



by [CARLA HINTON](#)

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A new conceptual drawing shows a Catholic church and the Rev. Stanley Rother shrine proposed for south Oklahoma City. [Image provided by Archdiocese of Oklahoma City]

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Oklahoma City has raised more than half the funds needed to build a church and Stanley Rother shrine in south Oklahoma City.

As part of its "One Church, Many Disciples" capital campaign, the archdiocese has collected total commitments for \$42 million of the \$60 million it set out to raise in July 2017, Peter de Keratry, the archdiocese's executive director of stewardship and development, said recently.

"We have raised significantly more dollars than we had planned to by now," he said.

Lay leaders Steve and Kathy King served as co-chairmen of the campaign committee at St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church.

Steve King said "enthusiasm beget enthusiasm" when it came time for volunteers to spread the word about the fundraising effort in their Enid parish. The church was part of the first "wave" or phase of the campaign, and it exceeded its fundraising goal.

"I think everybody was a little bit skeptical of it at first — anytime you're raising money, it's a little tough," King said.

"But they knew from the very beginning it was for Stanley Rother. Because of Stanley Rother's martyrdom and being from Okarche, Oklahoma, I think everybody felt we needed to get on board and make this happen."

De Keratry said the capital campaign — the archdiocese's first such effort — is being conducted in 108 archdiocesan churches over a two-year period. Those two years are to be a time of what is called "active solicitation" when the archdiocese asks families to give to the campaign. Donors are expected to donate their pledged funds within a five-year period.

De Keratry said the parishes are participating in the campaign in "waves" or phases. He said 10 parishes, including St. Gregory the Great, raised more than \$30 million in the first phase conducted from August 2017 to February 2018. Each phase includes a mix of large and small, urban and rural parishes. De Keratry said Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church in Purcell was the first to meet its goal. The second phase began in March 2018.

### **A plan in motion**

The archdiocese plans to build the Rother shrine and new 2,000-seat church on archdiocesan property at 9016 Shields Blvd. The archdiocese purchased the 53-acre Brookside Golf Club property near SW 89 and Shields Boulevard for \$2.1 million in March 2015.

A shrine is a is a holy or sacred place, or a small area or monument dedicated to someone, or a place known as the site of a religious occurrence or a historical event.

Rother, an Okarche native, was an archdiocesan priest who was killed in 1981 while serving at an Oklahoma mission parish in Santiago Atitlan, Guatemala. He was 46 years old. In December 2016, Pope Francis declared Rother a martyr for the faith. He was beatified — the last step before canonization — in a September 2017 ceremony at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City.

The Rother shrine is estimated to cost about \$30 million with \$27 million to go toward construction and infrastructure and \$3 million for an endowment fund to pay for operations, de Keratry said.

Other projects to be funded through the effort include construction of new churches in Piedmont, northeast Edmond and far southwest Oklahoma. De Keratry said the funds also will be used to create a series of four endowments, including one designed to boost the retirement fund for priests and another for religious education activities.

### **Meeting goals, expectations**

De Keratry attributed the campaign's ongoing success to the high regard and love that parishioners have for Rother. He said Archbishop Paul S. Coakley's leadership and parishioners' enthusiasm for participating in the archdiocese's first capital campaign also have played a role.

"I think God gave us the gift of Blessed Stanley Rother. I think that there's excitement around having him as one of our own," de Keratry said.

In an email, Coakley said he has been humbled by the responses of archdiocesan pastors, volunteers and families at every parish in the archdiocese.

"They are eager to hear the story of the campaign and have been very generous," Coakley wrote. "The success of the first 10 churches created great momentum, and people throughout Oklahoma and beyond have been inspired by the example of Blessed Stanley Rother to serve others and give back to their communities."

The Rev. Mark Mason, pastor of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Union City and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in El Reno, said both his parishes exceeded their fundraising goals. He said Sacred Heart's goal was \$630,000, and parishioners raised \$375,000. St. Joseph's goal was \$130,000, and parishioners raised \$290,000.

Mason agreed with de Keratry's assessment of the parishioners' motivation.

"I think the Catholic population here is very generous to the Church. They have a missionary spirit about them, and they love their Church," he said.

"Also, there is the fact that right here in the middle of our state, in the middle of the nation, we can celebrate the beatification of a man (Rother) who grew up 10 miles from here (El Reno). Some of my parishioners knew him and went to school with him."

The priest said parishes also will be able to see some of their own goals met with the capital campaign. Parishes that meet their goal will be able to use 20 percent of the money parishioners raise for their own church needs and plans. Those that exceed their goal will be able use 50 percent of the money raised above their original goal for their parish projects.

"We're all going to benefit because it's going to provide long-range programs and services that could not be supported by the annual Catholic Appeal," Mason said. He said Sacred Heart likely will install a statue of Rother on the parish grounds.

For now, the priest said he's looking forward to the eventual success of the campaign and the archdiocese meeting its \$60 million target.

"I feel confident that we'll reach that goal," he said.



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