By Terry McGuire

A decade ago, newly arrived pastor Father Patrick Ritter could glance east from the Sacred Heart Parish campus and see 17 construction cranes reshaping the downtown Bellevue skyline just four blocks away.

When the current recession is over, those new condos, hotels and office developments should be filled. And with the recent completion of the first phase of a capital campaign, Father Ritter and his faith community of 1,800 households will be ready to better serve them and others moving into the area.

The parish last Sunday gathered in celebration as Archbishop Alex J. Brunett blessed new and re-modeled areas of the school and parish center — 39 rooms in all, including additions of approximately 7,600 square feet to the school and approximately 3,100 square feet to the parish center.

Designed with security and safety in mind, the $8.7-million project included relocating the school administrative offices to a new addition so that the staff could monitor and control access to the building. Other improvements resulted in a new science lab and art studio, new multipurpose synthetic rubber flooring for the gym and a parish center addition to bring all the pastoral services together.

In addition, a new preschool has been launched and is expected to involve new families in parish life.

Everyone is “so proud” of the project, said Father Ritter, who is beginning his 11th year as pastor. “And we all did it together,” he said, recalling the listening sessions and surveys that were held with parishioners over the past decade to prioritize goals.

“It’s very interesting to see. We have some of the richest people in the state of Washington and some of the poorest,” Powers said. “So I see that diversity. And it’s becoming more and more so each day.”

Judy Barnes, who with her husband, Chuck, has been a parishioner since 1972, said the parish strives hard to be welcoming to newcomers.

“We really want to reach out to people that are just coming in [and] make them feel comfortable,” she said.

Father Ritter said his parishioners have a strong Catholic faith and strong generational ties to their parish. He said they are generous with their gifts, financially and through their leadership skills.

Sacred Heart has been the largest parish contributor to Catholic Community Services' past five years, and the second largest to the Annual Catholic Appeal, he said.

The recently completed school and parish center campaign was an example of their willingness to share their gifts. The $8.7-million project was completed despite the ongoing recession that took hold two years ago.

“People have said outside and inside the parish how much they’ve been impressed by the fact that we were able to raise the money,” Father Ritter said.

**Sacred Heart Parish, Bellevue**

**Founded:** Mission, 1910; parish, 1946

**Households:** 1,800

**Address:** 9460 N.E. 14th St., Bellevue, WA 98004

**Phone:** 425-454-9536

**Website:** www.sacredheart.org

**Pastors:**

- Father Patrick R. Donnelly, 1946
- Father Gerald T. Moore, 1949
- Father William E. Gallagher, 1971
- Father James E. Mallahan, 1974
- Father Harold F. Quigg, 1981
- Father Marlin J. Connole, 1988
- Father Patrick J. Ritter, 2000

**Blessed new and renovated facilities were a day for celebration at Sacred Heart Parish in Bellevue. Flanking Archbishop Alex J. Brunett and Pastor Father Patrick Ritter are, from left: capital campaign chairs Greg and Tracy Russell; honorary chairs Rhoady and Jeanne Marie Lee; school Principal David Burroughs; parishioner Larry Fleshman, designer of the stained glass window of the Sacred Heart of Jesus behind them; and Vice Principal Connie Gray.**

**The new school addition relocated administrative offices to a place where access can be better controlled.**

**Located on Main Street, the second Sacred Heart Church was succeeded in 1959 by the current church.**

**Staffed by the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Newark, Sacred Heart School opened in 1952.**