

# **Bishop dedicates Ave Maria Oratory at university**

NAPLES, Fla. – The towering, \$24 million Ave Maria Oratory that is the focal point of Ave Maria University and the town being built around it was dedicated March 31 as a quasi-parish to provide pastoral care for students, faculty, staff and residents.

Bishop Frank J. Dewane of Venice was main celebrant for a Mass and dedication of the 1,100-seat landmark church building that's 104 feet tall and topped with a 10-foot Celtic cross.

Ave Maria is one of the first Catholic universities to open in the United States in 40 years. Multimillionaire Tom Monaghan, who founded the Domino's Pizza chain, announced plans in 2002 for Ave Maria University and a town of the same name on 5,000 acres east of Naples, about 30 miles from the Gulf Coast. He's now university chancellor.

According to its Web site: "Ave Maria is known for faithfulness to the magisterium of the Catholic Church, a caring faculty and staff, and a unique educational philosophy that strives to develop the whole person."

Classes began on the permanent campus this past fall, and construction of the Ave Maria Oratory was completed early this year. The town's planned 11,000 homes and commercial development are expected to be built over the next decade or more.

"As the faithful of this new quasi-parish, the students, faculty and residents of the town will have a place of worship, not only to participate in the holy Eucharist, but to receive all other sacraments and enrich their spiritual life, including the moral values of faith and devotions," Bishop Dewane wrote in a statement announcing the dedication.

Father Robert Tatman, a priest of the Venice Diocese, has been named administrator of the church.

Canon law indicates "a quasi-parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful

in a particular church, entrusted to a priest as its proper pastor but not yet erected as a parish because of particular circumstances.”