

St. John the Evangelist Church reopens in Frederick

St. John the Evangelist Church in Frederick opened again for Mass Sept. 25 once the parish got the go-ahead that it was safe to return to the church following problems with falling crown molding.

Mike Walkley, a structural engineer recommended by Tom Alban of the Archdiocesan Risk Management office and a representative from the Baltimore-based restoration company Worcester Eisenbrandt Inc. inspected the areas where crown molding fell from the ceiling and deemed the church safe, according to Bob Fitzsimmons, executive director of operations for the parish.

Weekend Masses were moved to the school hall for the only one weekend after two chunks of plaster crown molding **crashed into the sanctuary** over the presider and cantor chairs the afternoon of Sept. 16. No one was in the building at the time.

It was determined the damage to the crown molding above the St. Joseph Altar was likely caused by water infiltration over the past 30 years, Father Farmer said. He said the remaining molding has been inspected and found to be safe though repairs to cracks will have to be prepared. No repairs are expected to be completed until after Christmas — and subject to the wedding schedule, he added.

Father J. Kevin Farmer, pastor, noted that the pastor of the nearby United Church of Christ called to offer use of their church and parishioners and other members of the Frederick community have expressed interest in helping to pay for the repairs.

“It will be both expensive and time-consuming,” he added. The plaster molding will have to be hand crafted. The parishes still in the midst of a capital campaign for its bell tower work, he noted. Areas where water may have infiltrated the roof have already been sealed as part of the renovation.

After Christmas some scaffolding may have to go up during the crown molding restoration. “Thankfully we won’t have to put scaffolding all around the church,” Father Farmer said.