



## **Knoxville Bishop Leads Ceremony; Church's \$1.26M First Phase Begins**

*By Rich Jones, Assistant Managing Editor*

Bishop Richard F. Stika of the Diocese of Knoxville joined members of Notre Dame Catholic Church on Friday morning in a Mass of celebration and a ceremonial groundbreaking for a major expansion of the church.

The two-phase building project will include 13,000 square feet and adjoin the existing church off Mt. Bethel Road, which was built in 1955.

The \$1.26 million first phase of the project, already under way, is the culmination of a four-year fundraising campaign by Notre Dame, a parish with 446 registered families.

The first phase will include a narthex across the front of the existing church that connects to a new 7,800-square-foot, multi-purpose wing to be used primarily as a parish center for religious education, meetings and events.

The second phase of the project will be a 5,200 -square-foot parish hall and kitchen.

The builder is Burke-Ailey Construction Company, of Morristown. The architect is Johnson Architecture, of Knoxville. "We are so happy to have Bishop Stika come and share this happy and beautiful day with us," said the Rev. John Appiah, pastor of Notre Dame.

A 10 a.m. Mass was celebrated by Bishop Stika, and concelebrated by the Rev. Appiah and the Rev. William Casey, retired pastor of Notre Dame.

Following the Mass, parishioners and celebrants walked outside to what was until recently the front lawn of the church, where Bishop Stika led in prayer at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new project.

Also in attendance were Bud Noe, chairman of the parish building committee, and the Knights of Columbus.

### **BISHOP COMMENTS**

In an interview with The Greeneville Sun following the groundbreaking, Bishop Stika said that the new buildings would be used primarily for teaching Christian values and as a parish center.

"Father Appiah and the parish have done a great job in raising the funds for this," he said.

"Greeneville is a beautiful place," Bishop Stika added. "The fall foliage this time of year is just wonderful."

Bishop Stika, 51, was named bishop of the Diocese of Knoxville by Pope Benedict XVI in January 2009. He was ordained a bishop in March 2009.

He is a native of St. Louis and was ordained a priest in 1985.

Bishop Stika said the Greeneville expansion project is typical of growth that the Catholic Diocese of Knoxville has experienced in recent years.

The diocese was founded in 1988. Its largest cities are Chattanooga, Knoxville and the Tri-Cities.

"In 1988, we had 25,000 members," he said. "Now, we have at least 62,000 members and likely many more with the Hispanic community that we minister to."

The Rev. Appiah summed up by saying, "I would like to thank those who contributed their time, talent and financial resources for this project. Thank you for your great sacrifice."