8-18-2015

Beautiful Surroundings

University of Dayton

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While the renewal of the Immaculate Conception Chapel is taking center stage this fall, other improvements surrounding the chapel will bring opportunities for outdoor prayer, improve pedestrian safety and enhance the beauty of campus.

Beth Keyes, vice president for facilities and campus operations, said the improvements complete a long-awaited phase of the University's master plan for the historic center of campus.
The improvements open up a new space encircled by the chapel, St. Mary’s Hall and Chaminade Hall creating a broad, landscaped courtyard. Gardens and walkways create better pedestrian flow to the chapel and St. Joseph Hall, she said.

The space is well-suited for outdoor classrooms and gatherings of all kinds, including special liturgies such as during the Easter Vigil, when a new fire is kindled to mark the coming light of Christ.

A circular sculpture by Hamilton Dixon, the metal sculptor who work is in Serenity Pines, serves two purposes: It honors donors whose gifts made the $12 million chapel renovation possible and honors the Marianist tradition of "The Three O’Clock Prayer."

On the sculpture, bands of bright steel mark the position of a clock's hands when Marianists around the world gather daily to pause and pray. Handed down from Marianist founder Blessed William Joseph Chaminade, the tradition began as a daily spiritual reunion for dispersed members of the Sodality, and today it is still considered a spiritual reunion of all members of the Family of Mary, according to the Marian Library.

Another completed part of the master plan closed the top of University Circle to vehicles, creating a safer, greener pathway for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as creating a more cohesive historic campus.

The green space between St. Mary's and Albert Emanuel halls, criss-crossed by walkways, will also become a sculpture garden. An installation commemorating the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King’s 1964 speech on campus is currently under construction.

"The master plan envisioned green spaces that welcomed pedestrians and cyclists, along with gathering spaces that invited contemplation, prayer and learning," Keyes said. "We're happy that this has all come together with the chapel renovation."

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