

Bishop to dedicate new statue at St. Mary

FROM STAFF REPORTS



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■ Blessed Mother Mary of the Springs, a new statue that is located in the grotto at St. Mary of the Springs Catholic Church, will be dedicated in a ceremony following the celebration of noon mass Friday at the church. Bishop Anthony B. Taylor will be celebrating mass along with clergy from three area Catholic churches.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor will celebrate mass Friday at noon at St. Mary of the Springs Catholic Church before a dedication of a new statue in honor of the parish's first deacon.

The new statue, named Blessed Mother Mary of the Springs, replaces Our Lady of Grace, which has been relocated to the entrance of the local Knights of Columbus Hall. Our Lady of Grace was dedicated on Nov. 21, 1956.

The new statue, a 72-inch Italian white marble statue sculpted by Wan Xi, will be dedicated in honor of the Rev. Joe and Betty Harrison, "who have given decades of time, talent and treasure to both St. Mary's and St. John's Catholic churches," a news release said.

"We are honored and humbled to be a small part of spreading the Word of Christ," the deacon said in the release.

The funds for the new statue were donated by the Harrisons' children in their parents' honor, and members of the parish contributed to the revitalized grotto. The grotto features a lapis blue mosaic and highlights a small spring flowing at the base of the statue.

Damages to the old statue were unable to be repaired, leading to the desire for a new statue.

"Both locals and visitors call on the grotto day and night to pray and find peace," Betty Harrison said in the release. "The previous statue had been touched so many times, Mary's fingers began to crumble."

St. Mary's pastor, the Rev. Ravi Gudipalli; St. John the Baptist Catholic Church pastor, the Rev. George Sanders, and associate pastor, the Rev. Eliseo Noel; and Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church pastor, the Rev. Bill Elser, will join with the bishop to celebrate mass as well as the dedication.

The community is welcome to attend mass and the dedication following the service at 100 Central Ave. Following the dedication at the grotto, a light lunch will be served.

St. Mary of the Springs was the first Catholic parish in Hot Springs, dedicated on May 9, 1869, and it was the sixth parish in the state. The church was originally a 50-by-30-foot wooden church that has been rebuilt twice, and the current building was dedicated on May 18, 1924.