



Stained-glass trio: Catholic middle school donates window to high school

By **Yadira Betances** , Staff Writer
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LAWRENCE - Robert Bohannon is not an acrobat, but yesterday at Central Catholic High School he sure acted like one as he climbed a 24-foot ladder while holding a 70-pound window.

Bohannon was installing a stained-glass window depicting the annunciation of Jesus. Bellesini Academy, an all-boys middle school housed at the former St. Francis of Assisi Lithuanian Church at 94 Bradford St., gave Central Catholic the window and two others of Jesus' birth and Mary's Assumption into heaven.

The middle school will renovate the sanctuary to be used as classrooms in the next two years, said Julie DiFilippo, executive director at Bellesini. It will have a chapel and keep some of the windows.

"Knowing that the stained-glass windows will continue to be used in a sacred space makes me happy," DiFilippo said. "A number of our alumni attend Central, and it's a nice connection to that."

DiFilippo was approached by Brother Rene Roy, president at Central Catholic, on one of his many visits to Bellesini. He was so impressed with the windows, he asked about getting them if they ever became available.

Associated Crafts of Arizona started the work this summer with a donation from Dr. Thomas Casey, a 1943 Central graduate for whom the chapel is named.

As the windows were installed in the 100-seat chapel, Roy observed as Bohannon removed the clear glass and fit the stained-glass windows into the space. Roy stood with his arms folded, or covering his mouth with one hand as he whispered, "Wow," in awe as each window went into place.

"I'm ecstatic. This is beyond my wildest expectations or dreams," he said. "As a Catholic school, we surround ourselves with religious images. The windows are an extension of that and from a physical point, the images, colors and light reflected through it are much more conducive to prayer."

The chapel is used for prayer services and religion classes.

"It's like the circle of life," said John Housianitis, social studies teacher at Central and a 1973 graduate of the former St. Francis School. "It's fabulous to see them come back."

The three windows from St. Francis complement the five others already in the chapel. Behind the altar is a window of St. Joseph receiving a crown in heaven from Jesus, which came from St. Joseph Novitiate in Tyngsboro, where men were trained for the religious life.

The chapel also has windows representing different ethnic groups in Lawrence - St. Stanislas Koska, Polish; St. Patrick, Irish; St. Anne, French Canadians; St. Anthony of Padua, Italians; and Our Lady of Guadalupe, Hispanics.

Four of these windows were from Central Catholic's building on Auburn Street and misplaced, but recovered during a renovation at the school in 2004. The fifth window from Our Lady of Guadalupe was installed recently.

As Bohannon and his wife, Diane, were busy at work, teachers and students peeked in the chapel to see their progress.

"It's gorgeous," said campus minister Betty Desjardins. "It's a nice tie-in and a reminder of the roots of the school, Lawrence and the immigrants who came here."

Not everyone is happy about the donations.

"It's a bitter happiness," said Jonas Stundza, a former St. Francis member, who said parishioners asked the Archdiocese of Boston to donate the windows to the Church of the Nation in Lithuania.

"I'm glad that our families will be remembered by the brothers at Central," Stundza said. "It's a shame that the whole circumstance has occurred and the original intent of the parishioners were not listened to."

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