

# The Portico Project

*Re-envisioning the Cathedral's Terry and Marion Entrance*

**F**ather Ryan has had a dream for many years of improving the Terry and Marion entrance to the Cathedral to make it more welcoming for parishioners and visitors alike. This dream is about to become a reality.

## Origin of the project

For decades, the Cathedral had the use of two parking lots directly across from the Cathedral at Ninth and Columbia. The two lots were owned by the Chancery, but Cathedral parishioners parked there evenings and weekends. In the last fifteen years or so, that has changed. Skyline at First Hill, built in 2007-2008, is on the site of one of these lots, while Ozanam House, opened by Catholic Community Services in 2009, occupies the other.

Both of these institutions are wonderful additions to the neighborhood! But the unintended consequence of losing these two parking lots was that more and more of our parishioners park at O'Dea High School and Cabrini Garage. Over the years, this has meant that the majority of parishioners no longer enter the Cathedral through the main west doors. Instead, they enter through the "back door," the Terry and Marion entrance.

"We use the west entrance for ceremonial occasions, and for processions, but they are not where the folks come in anymore," Father Ryan said at a recent gathering about the Portico Project. "Most use the Terry and Marion doors. And it's not a wonderful way to be greeted when you're coming into this beautiful building! But we could make it beautiful: we could make it more welcoming to people, and more worthy of the Cathedral. I'd like for people coming in to know they are coming into an important place, a holy place."

At last year's Annual Catholic Appeal, Father Ryan first announced this idea as the designated project for the rebate. At the time, he had no idea exactly what the improvements would look like, nor what they would cost. But parishioners expressed enthusiasm for the idea, and gave generously. The Portico Project was underway.

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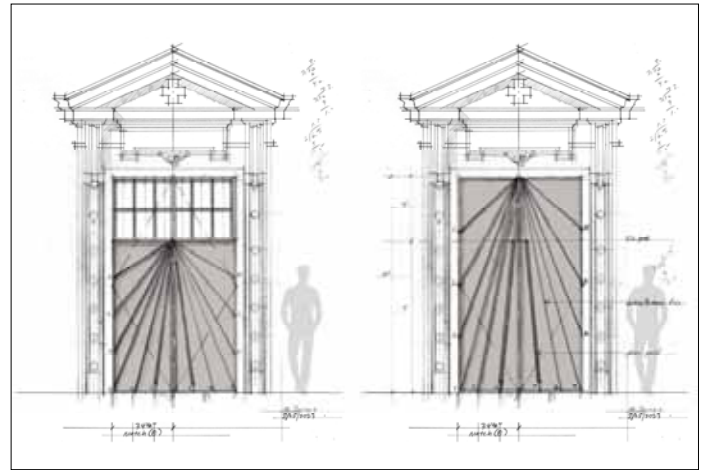
## Enter Chris and Misun Gerrick

Chris and Misun Gerrick heard Father Ryan's presentation and came forward with more than enthusiasm. Architects, they loved the idea, and they wanted to do some pro-bono work for the Cathedral.

Chris and Misun met while working at Olson Kundig, a well-known design firm in Pioneer Square. In 2022, they established their own architectural firm, Gerrick Office. With nearly forty years of collective design experience, Misun and Chris strive to create beautiful, functional, and enduring spaces with a keen sensitivity to materials and detail. They are deeply involved in all aspects of the creative process, from concept design through construction, and seek to leverage traditional craft and emerging technology to deliver projects at high efficiency and value.

The Gerricks have been parishioners at St. James Cathedral for many years, and have brought up their two children, Isaac and Isabel, in the parish. Isaac was confirmed this past May.

"We are so joyful to be able to share in this project," Chris notes. "When Father Ryan mentioned it, we had just been to the Easter Vigil Mass for the first time. It was a new experience for us. What resonated so strongly was that it happens in the night, the bonfire roaring, and you go from the outdoors with the great



Above left: An early inspiration board for the Portico Project including classic and contemporary images. Above right: an early design for the new doors keeping the transom window, and the final design filling the whole space. Below, renderings of the doors as they will appear when closed (left) and open (right). The Seattle Landmarks Board, in giving unanimous approval for the project, appreciated the effort made to preserve the original entry to the Cathedral while making it clear which elements were a contemporary intervention.

fire, to the pitch-black Cathedral. The light is passed from one person to another, until the entire Cathedral is filled with candlelight. Light takes on a new meaning.”

Chris and Misun dreamed of transforming the Terry and Marion vestibule into a place of light. In two other places in the Cathedral, natural light comes in strongly: over the altar is the oculus, and in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel a skylight lets in filtered daylight. They asked, how might we do something unique and special for this vestibule to illuminate it, both by day and by night?

### The Inspiration for the Portico

A conversation began, and soon it became clear that the project would take the stories of the Apostle James as its inspiration.

“Aside from the Gospel references to the Apostle James, there is the legend of James,” Father Ryan notes. “Back in the 8th-9th century, his tomb was discovered in Spain, where he had preached the Gospel. When people couldn’t get to Rome across the Alps, or to the

Holy Land during the Crusades, they would go to Santiago de Compostela, the site of his tomb. It became a great attraction, and the pilgrimage continues to this day.”

From the earliest days, pilgrims would receive a scallop shell as a sign that they had completed the pilgrimage (Santiago is near the sea). They would wear the shell proudly, and often would be buried with this symbol of the pilgrimage. The Apostle James for this reason is nearly always portrayed in Christian iconography as a pilgrim with a scallop shell. Today, a stylized scallop shell serves as a way finder for pilgrims on the Camino.

The main entrance of the Cathedral in Santiago is called the Portico della Gloria, and that is where this project gets its name.

### In Search of the Right Inscription

“We have many important inscriptions in the Cathedral,” Father Ryan notes. “Over the altar, the Last Supper words of Jesus, *I am in your midst as one who serves*, have become a kind of parish motto. Around the



Left: the entry as it currently appears. Right: a rendering of the entry as it will appear in early evening, with the “light monitor” above the entrance and the doors standing open. One goal of the project is to make it clear to visitors that this is a substantial entry point for the Cathedral.

baptismal font, we have the text from the first letter of St. Peter, *you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood*. In the floor of the west vestibule are the words from Genesis, *house of God, gate of heaven*.”

Father Ryan wanted to the right text for this project. The idea of the *camino*, the way, was important. “People make a pilgrimage to come to St. James, and they go out of this place to carry the Gospel into the world. We are all on pilgrimage, with Jesus as our companion. And that brought the wonderful story in Luke’s Gospel of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, to mind. The text *Were not our hearts burning within us as he spoke to us along the way and opened the scriptures to us* speaks to the journey, but it also describes in a wonderfully simple way what happens in the Cathedral whenever we gather for worship. The text is especially appropriate given that we are in the midst of the Synod on Synodality, which explores the question of how the church journeys together.”

### Major Elements of the Project

The project has three main elements: a beautiful set of doors, a “light monitor” or beacon, and an interior holy water stoup.

**The doors.** The existing doors and transom window will be removed and new doors in “naval brass” will fill the entire frame, while preserving the beautiful pediment and exterior lighting. The radiating lines are the most striking element of the new doors. They suggest not only rays of light streaming down, but also the convergence of many paths leading to this holy place. In addition, the lines echo the stylized scallop shell seen on the Camino. The door pulls will be made of wood, and are an allusion to the walking staff of St. James, the pilgrim.

**The light monitor.** Whereas a skylight brings light straight down into a space, a light monitor brings it in from the sides. The new light monitor will be about six feet square. A sleeve of naval brass will drop down into the vestibule. When you walk through and look up, you will see a 30-foot high vision in gold and glass.

**The holy water stoup.** Instead of the small stoup in the vestibule today, a large Carrara marble stoup will run along the right-hand side of the space as you enter. “That connection to baptism really needs to be celebrated,” Chris notes. “It’s how you became part of the faith, and symbolically, you are renewing that every time you enter the Cathedral. It enables this



Above left: the entry as it will appear looking west, toward the Holy Water stoup and above it, the inscription. Right: a sample of sculpted text by artist Robbie Schneider. This was created in bronze and is a text in French by Albert Camus.

ritual to be a collective, communal experience, with several people blessing themselves at the same time.”

Above the stoup will be the inscription from Luke’s Gospel. A noted Scottish sculptor, Robbie Schneider, who specializes in text sculptures, has been commissioned to create the artwork, which will anchor the entire space in a wonderful way.

In addition to all this, a significant upgrade of the hallway and bathrooms, under the direction of Cathedral architect Stephen Lee, is part of the project. The long hallway to the restrooms will receive new terrazzo tile flooring to echo what is seen in the Cathedral. New lighting and ventilation will be installed, and the bathrooms will be thoroughly refurbished and improved. If funds allow, some long-needed upgrades to the north sacristy will be completed as well.

### Timeline, Costs, and Fundraising

The project is estimated to take about two months to complete, and could be underway as early as August and September of this year. During construction, the Terry and Marion entrance will be closed, and portable toilets will be brought on campus.

The total cost estimated for the entire project is \$1.7 million. Incredibly, \$1.4 million has already been committed to the project, including last year’s Annual Catholic Appeal rebate of \$203,400, and two generous bequests totaling \$135,000. In addition, 73 donors have already stepped forward with support. While the project is expected to be completed before the end of the year, pledges may be paid out over the next 18 months (through 2025).

### Here’s where you come in!

One generous donor has offered a challenge grant to help us reach the project goal. Every gift that comes in will be matched, up to \$100,000 total. In light of this, would you consider making a gift to make the Portico a reality? A gift of any size is welcome.

“I like to say that cathedrals are ‘unfinished symphonies,’” Father Ryan says. “That has certainly been true of St. James Cathedral during the thirty-six years I have been privileged to serve here. Our Cathedral community is always looking for new ways to reach out to the city, to grow, to welcome, to do better, and to be more. I think this Portico project is one more opportunity to do all those things.” ♦

## HELP MAKE THE PORTICO PROJECT A REALITY!

The giving levels below correspond to miles along the Camino to Santiago de Compostela. How far can you go?

