



New beginning: An underground crypt is being built during renovation work on St Mary's Cathedral. Pictures Steve Ferrer



Repairs: The cathedral's original facades have been retained and repaired.



Holy site: A chapel awaits renovation.

# Cathedral born again for 21st century

JOSEPH CATANZARO

The \$25 million refurbishment of St Mary's Catholic Cathedral is beginning to take shape, with construction of the new parish centre beneath the building completed.

Appeals manager for the refurbishment project Brett Mendez said yesterday the new underground centre contained a mausoleum for archbishops, a function area for 350 people, choir rooms, office space, upgraded toilets and parking.

"We're bringing the cathedral into the 21st century," Mr Mendez said. "It's a renovation, a conservation and completion."

Built in 1865, the iconic cathedral remained in a state of disrepair since the 1930s when a refurbishment was halted after money ran out due to the Great Depression.

In February last year, Perth Archbishop Barry Hickey said the refurbishment would go ahead, with the city centre cathedral due to reopen to the public late next year.

Mr Mendez said the altar would be moved to the centre of the building and the cathedral's capacity would increase from 800 to 1600 people.

He said the cathedral's new spire

was expected to be installed in October.

Over the next 12 months, builders would continue to merge old and new sections as the cathedral's new superstructure was erected. Rising damp and structural weaknesses would be repaired.

"They've retained the original 1865 front and the 1930s back third," he said. "Basically they've removed the centre of the cathedral which was damaged structurally."

**'We're bringing the cathedral into the 21st century. It's a renovation and a conservation.'**

BRETT MENDEZ, APPEALS MANAGER

Mr Mendez said \$23.5 million of the \$25 million target for the cathedral refurbishment had been raised.

He said almost half of that came from parishioners, school groups and Perth residents keen to see the building preserved.

Donors who contribute \$10,000 or more will be given space for a memorial inscription.