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legacy than he could have imagined. "We know that we will have shortcomings. Not all the chapels were systematically scanned. There are still areas of doubt," Fromont said.

In the aftermath of the fire, private individuals and above all rich French cooperations rushed to pledge hundreds of millions for the rebuilding of the cathedral. There were concerns whether this funding would ever be realized. But France's richest man Bernard Arnault in September signed a formal accord over his pledge of 200 million euros (\$220 million), as did the Pinault family for their promised 100 million euros.

A signing on another 100 million promised by the oil giant Total is awaited in October. The consortium of fundraising groups behind the drive believes that 800 million euros (\$890,000) can be raised in total, with over 616 million euros now either transferred or pledged. But lovers of the historic masterpiece, be they tourists, architecture buffs or worshippers, may have to wait some time before Notre-Dame becomes theirs again.

"I have felt myself orphaned, it is like being in mourning," said Michele Chevalier, 70, a regular at Notre-Dame who was at the service when the first evacuation took place. "I still manage to pray, but it's not the same."—AFP



This file photo shows the altar surrounded by charred debris inside the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris in the aftermath of a fire that devastated the cathedral.



This file photo shows damage on the nave and rubble during preliminary work in the Notre-Dame de Paris Cathedral three months after a major fire.



This file photo shows parts of a destroyed ribbed vault and scaffolding.



In this file photo people kneel on the pavement as they pray outside watching flames engulf Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.



A picture shows the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris.