



SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH

146 Rector Street, Philadelphia, PA 19127
Phone: 215-482-4600 www.stjohnmanayunk.org

October 29, 2016

Dear Parishioners,

Several weeks ago as part of the annual parish financial report, I updated you on some recent and various activities focused on the Saint Mary of the Assumption property on Conarroe Street, namely, the sale of the sanctuary marble to a church in the Rockville Center Diocese, New York, where it will be put to sacred use again, and the disinterment and transfer of the remains of several priests from the small cemetery adjacent to the church, to the Saint Mary of the Assumption Cemetery on Cinnaminson Street.

I also wrote that the buyer with whom the parish has an agreement of sale for the same property was granted a second extension and further “due diligence” period. Because of this, the buyer agreed to pay the parish a monthly carrying cost on the property which helps to partially maintain the property and cover utility expenses.

Throughout meetings negotiating the terms of the sale of the property and due diligence extensions, I have had the opportunity to meet with the buyer/developer and discuss the recent history of the Catholic community in the Manayunk, Roxborough and Wissahickon areas of the City. I have shared with him that Catholic parishioners and members of the larger community have had to deal with the tremendously painful issues of school closures, the suppression and merger of parishes and the loss of fellow parishioners. In particular, we have had lengthy discussions on the relegation and disposition of the Saint Mary of the Assumption property on Conarroe Street.

As a result of these discussions, I do believe that the buyer shares an overarching desire that any redevelopment plan must be in the best interests of not only the parish, but the neighborhood community as well. For example, the buyer is adamant that the church, school and rectory architecture will be preserved, and that a sensitive adaptive reuse of these buildings is the goal. He has also employed an architect who is highly regarded in the Philadelphia historical preservation community and has demonstrated a philosophy that emphasizes community engagement. Throughout the past year, the developer has also met with several community groups who have expressed legitimate concerns as well as strong interest in the development of the property. Moving forward, it is expected that there will be further community meetings to formally discuss the project.

Before that occurs, however, as a courtesy to the parish and especially to those parishioners who are former members of Saint Mary of the Assumption Church, I have asked the developer and his team to make a presentation to the parishioners of Saint John the Baptist.

This meeting will take place this Wednesday, November 2, 2016, at 7:00PM in the parish social hall. Again, this meeting is offered in the spirit of transparency and is primarily informative and for parishioners. As pastor, I am very aware that matters such as this are sensitive and even difficult especially for our parishioners who have roots at Saint Mary. Therefore, as always, I ask you to keep all this in your prayers.

Sincerely,

Monsignor Kevin C. Lawrence