

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_, 2016

His Eminence Timothy Cardinal Dolan  
Office of the Cardinal  
1011 First Avenue  
New York, New York 10022

Re: Parish and Church of Our Lady of Peace

Your Eminence:

We write as concerned parishioners, neighbors, and business people in the area, to request that the Archdiocese of New York suspend negotiations to sell the Church of Our Lady of Peace while petitioners have made recourse to the Vatican and for the duration of their appeals process.

Although the decree of November 2, 2014 has been revoked, and a second decree of merger was published on April 29, 2016, several parishioners of Our Lady of Peace appealed for reconsideration, but their requests were rejected by Your Eminence. Accordingly, those parishioners have sent recourse to the Congregation for the Clergy for the second time, and have notified Your Eminence of the same.

We have since been informed Your Eminence authorized a meeting that was subsequently held on June 17, 2016 in the Church of Saint John the Evangelist in the chancery building. The meeting was presented by Bishop John O'Hara, Vicar for Parish Planning; Eileen Mulcahy, Director of Parish Planning; and Father James Loughran, OFM, who served as a priest at Our Lady of Peace for 20 years. The meeting was attended by Msgr. Douglas Mathers, vice-chancellor, pastor of Saint John the Evangelist, JCD, JD; his staff assistant; seven parishioners and the former church organist of Our Lady of Peace.

At this meeting, it was announced that the archdiocese is in negotiations with Bishop David of the Coptic Orthodox Church, a Christian faith with its own pope in Alexandria, Egypt, that does not answer to Rome. It was also stated at this meeting that when and if Coptic Orthodox Bishop David obtained title to the property, he might consider allowing one Roman Catholic Mass per week. It was presented that Your Eminence would not only condone this, but would allow Father Loughran to celebrate said Mass. If Your Eminence would agree to permit Sunday Mass in the church in the future, why not permit one Sunday Mass in the church now?

The sale of Our Lady of Peace to the Coptic Orthodox Church does not guarantee the *minimal right of entry* as decreed by the Congregation for Clergy to other merged and closed churches: That the church is open for public and private prayer, open for the celebration of the patronal feast and the solemnity of

the anniversary of its dedication, and open for other sacraments. The conditions under discussion with the Coptic Orthodox Church are not in congruence with the decree of merger issued by Your Eminence on April 29, 2016, nor could they be placed as conditions on a deed in perpetuity.

We ask Your Eminence, has a decree of *deconsecration* been issued?

We ask this in light of the procedures defined by Cardinal Piacenza as in Protocol Number 20131348, which Your Eminence forwarded to all bishops in your role of President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2013:

“Another specific issue which calls forth discussion today is the Circular Letter from the Congregation for the Clergy *Providing Procedural Guidelines Related to Parish Restructuring* (Protocol Number 20131348).

“This Circular Letter which was forwarded to Bishops by Timothy Cardinal Dolan, President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, addresses an issue which has caused some consternation both within Dioceses and between Diocesan Bishops and Roman Dicasteries. The Circular Letter from the Congregation addresses “Procedural Guidelines for the Modification of Parishes, the closure or regulation of Churches to profane but not sordid use, and the alienation of same.” The Congregation emphasizes that in dealing with Parishes, as each Diocese must in our day, it is important to distinguish clearly between three separate and distinct Canonical processes as mentioned in the title. Each process has its own procedures and each must be followed carefully and correctly. Cardinal Piacenza, then Prefect, points out that to determine whether or not the required just cause is present in the case of a proposed modification (cf Canon 515 §2) or the required grave cause in the case of Church closure and relegation (cf Canon 1222 §2) each case must be considered separately. Each case must have a cause which is specific to that case. And each administrative decision must be enacted by a separate written Decree, issued and lawfully communicated at the time that the decision is given. The document goes on to make specific observations and draws specific Canons to the attention of Diocesan Bishops and those who assist in reaching the decision. Also, the decree must provide for the disposition of temporal goods in accord with Law, and must respect the intentions of donors (cf Canons 121, 122 and 123). It also points out that jurisprudence has clearly established that when Parishes are modified, the temporal goods are to follow the people! In fact, this is very difficult to ascertain in many if not most instances, since people tend to migrate from one Parish to another for personal reasons. Perhaps this topic would benefit from further exploration and study.” – **Most Reverend Archbishop John J. Myers, Archbishop of Newark**, *Address at the Convention of The Canon Law Society of America, Sacramento, California, October 14, 2013*

Our Lady of Peace was solvent and growing: a beautiful house of worship, the legacy of Italian immigrants, and a landmark in one of the first historic districts of New York City. As such, it should be reopened to allow its devoted community to continue their mission.

There are far too many vacant and deconsecrated churches that have remained fallow on the streets of New York City for many years. It makes more sense to sell one of those churches, not the Church of Our Lady of Peace. The parishioners who made recourse against the decree of merger have done so with the full support of the undersigned.

Respectfully yours,

---

CC: Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Cardinal Beniamino Stella