

MEDIA ADVISORY: Our Lady of Peace to celebrate 98th Anniversary Mass on Sunday, May 7 in church leased to Coptic congregation

Date: Sunday, May 7, 2017

Location: Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Peace, 239-241 East 62nd Street, New York City

Schedule

4:00 PM - Holy Procession through Treadwell Farm Historic District

5:00 PM - Anniversary Mass honoring the Founders, Benefactors and Dedication of the Church

6:00 PM - Sacrament of the Anointing, Rosary Novena

Background

In 2015, after learning their parish was decreed to be merged with Saint John the Evangelist in the chancery building of the Archdiocese of New York and their church closed and used only on special occasions, parishioners of Our Lady of Peace on Manhattan's Upper East Side gave it their all and more than one Hail Mary pass to save their church: They appealed to the Vatican.

They campaigned and won, with more than 440 votes, the opportunity to host the New York City Mass Mob IV. They celebrated their centennial four years early with a Founders Day Mass that brought out the Vice-Consul of Italy Isabella Periotta, Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer, New York City Council Member Dan Garodnick, and Chairman of the Presidents of the Italian American Organizations Joseph Sciamè in support.

When the church closed on July 31, 2015, parishioners held an All-Night Vigil with four Masses, including one in Latin, celebrated by supporters from the Church of the Holy Innocents. The next day, parishioners started a Rosary Novena at the steps of the church, and kept that prayer vigil going through snow, sleet, rain and heat for more 645 days. During the two-year period since the church was closed, parishioners gained more than 14,000 followers world-wide on Facebook. One wedding and three funerals were allowed inside the church. Other requests to open the church for a patronal feast celebration and last year's anniversary of the dedication were denied.

In February 2017, parishioners learned that the Archdiocese had brokered a lease with the Coptic Orthodox church of St. Mary and St. Mark, a congregation of 200 members, half the size of Our Lady of Peace. Press releases issued by the Archdiocese have been ambiguous as to the ownership of the church building. The Vatican appeal by the parishioners of Our Lady of Peace is ongoing and has advanced to the Apostolic Signatura, the Supreme Court of the Vatican.

Nevertheless, Cardinal Dolan and Monsignor Mathers, pastor of Saint John the Evangelist and Our Lady of Peace, agreed to tomorrow's celebration of the Roman Catholic Mass honoring the original dedication of the church, which took place on April 13, 1919.

"We're preparing for Sunday's celebration with the same excitement our great-grandparents had in 1919 - with anxiety and joy," said Jessica Bede, rosary captain and one of three event organizers.

The celebration will begin at 4:00 P.M. with a Holy Procession from the church around the Treadwell Farm Neighborhood. Led by the Patriot Brass Ensemble, parishioners will process into the church for the Mass at 5:00 P.M. The celebrant will be Father James Loughran, assisted by Lectors and Eucharistic Ministers who served at Our Lady of Peace. The names of the founders and benefactors, as well as those who departed since the church was closed, will be read. Catholics attendees will renew their Baptismal vows, and after the Mass, the sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick will be offered. The rosary novena will conclude the events inside the church.

Reminiscent of the 2015 Founders Day Mass, the 98th Anniversary reflects the solemnity of the occasion and honors the dedication of a Roman Catholic Church created for an Italian immigrant population, and a parish struggling to maintain its community in a sea of change.

Additional Facts about the Parish and Church of Our Lady of Peace

1. The Church of Our Lady of Peace remains a consecrated Roman Catholic Church, under Vatican Canon Law. The legal name of the church stands as the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Peace. The parish had approximately 443 on its rolls at closure and was growing at a rate of seven percent a year. The parish was solvent and contributed more than twice its annual requirement to the Cardinal's Appeal.
2. The canonic merger of Our Lady of Peace with Saint John the Evangelist (located in the first floor of the 20-story building at 1011 First Avenue) has not been resolved, as the first decision reached by the administrative body, the Congregation for the Clergy at the Vatican, was subsequently appealed by parishioners of Our Lady of Peace.
3. The appeal by parishioners of Our Lady of Peace has advanced to the Apostolic Signatura, the Supreme Court of the Vatican. The case is now the purview of the Vatican Supreme Court.
4. Confirmation has been received from the Congregation for the Clergy, the administrative body that handled the first stage of the appeal, that the complete file of the administrative recourse has been moved to the Apostolic Signatura for their review.
5. Canon Law has several procedures regarding the alienation or sale of church property. The matter of the parish merger must first be resolved; there cannot be a contract for sale or lease with an option to purchase the property prior to the resolution of the case.
7. The Church of Our Lady of Peace has been leased and is currently in use by the Coptic Orthodox congregation of St. Mary and St. Mark for the period of one year.
8. New York State Religious Corporations Law requires that the Court is petitioned for the sale of religious property, transfer of title, long term lease, or financing, between parties (including other

religious entities). Petitions can be found on the NY State Unified Court System online; there is no current petition listed that involves the property listed below.

9. The property is recorded as the Roman Catholic Church of Our Lady of Peace on tax records; on ACRIS the last filing was the 1968 determination of the NYC Landmark Historic District for BLOCK 1417, lots 16 and 17, respectively the rectory and the church of Our Lady of Peace. The online status remains unchanged.

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Jessica Bede, Anniversary Mass Co-Chair: 917-754-2100

Janice Dooner Lynch, Vatican Contact Person: 646-244-9670