

Our Lady of Peace Rosary
c/o Melisande Valdes
220 East 63rd Street
Apartment 7-D
New York, NY 10065-7650

Reverend Monsignor Douglas Mathers, Pastor
Saint John the Evangelist - Our Lady of Peace
348 East 55th Street
New York, NY 10022

November 18, 2015

RE: Immaculate Conception as a "Special Occasion"

Very Reverend Monsignor:

We are in receipt of a letter addressed to Ms. Valdes by Timothy Cardinal Dolan, in which His Eminence clarifies that you, as pastor/administrator, in accordance with the implementation of Making All Things New, have discretion to allow the Church of Our Lady of Peace to be open for "special occasions" as so designated:

*A special occasion means that Masses and sacraments will be celebrated at the discretion of the pastor/administrator on specific occasions, such as funerals of long-time parishioners; asignificant anniversary of the former parish; **the feast day of the former parish**; and weddings that were scheduled prior to the date of the canonical decree, November 2, 2014, and to becelebrated prior to August 1, 2016, one full year after the implementation of the merger. [Emphasis added]*

His Eminence further states that you have determined that the Feast of the Immaculate Conception is not a "special occasion," as it is not the patronal feast of the parish, and that in your judgment, "not every Marian feast is a 'special occasion.'" We respectfully disagree. As His Eminence has suggested in his letter enclosed herewith, we therefore respectfully appeal to you for reconsideration.

There is but one Blessed Mother, one Virgin Mary. She has as many appellations descriptive of the locations where she appeared that are recognized by the Church as legitimate apparitions. She has many titles such as those in litany that we pray daily at the steps of the church. But she is neither the *location* of her apparition, nor her *job title*. The Blessed Mother is the patron of our parish, not her title. And while the portrait that hangs over the altar is entitled, "Our Lady of Peace," there are numerous devotions to her including two chapels dedicated to the Madonna di Romitello and the Madonna di San Marco, as well as the statue of Our Lady of Fatima. In fact, the Church of Our Lady of Peace has more devotions to the Blessed Virgin Mary than most churches in New York.

The Immaculate Conception is the Feast Day for the United States, in addition to being a Holy Day of Obligation, which is not the case for all Marian feast days. As the Blessed Mother is the patron saint of

the United States and important to the people of Our Lady of Peace, we believe that, especially in light of current world events, there is a significant need to pray for peace in our time in a beautiful sanctuary dedicated for peace: The parishioners of the Church of Our Lady of Peace consider themselves devoted to Our Lady, and as it is written in the *Magnificat* referenced in Luke 1:6-55 deserving of "His promise of mercy, made to our ancestors, ...and their descendants forever."

Our Holy Father has called for the Year of Mercy to begin on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception - yet another reason for the doors of the Church Our Lady of Peace to be open.

We respectfully request that you reconsider opening the Church of Our Lady of Peace on December 8th for the Feast of Immaculate Conception. This would be an opportunity to bring the parishes together in a joint celebration. We could distribute Miraculous Medals to everyone with blue ribbons. We would even suggest a candlelit "Procession for Peace and Mercy" from Saint John the Evangelist to the Church of Our Lady of Peace to show the community our shared reverence for the Blessed Virgin Mary on this day, and most importantly, that this year is dedicated to mercy, compassion, and world peace.

We thank you for your deepest consideration of this request. Be assured of our prayers for you and all your work for the church.

Asking your blessings, we are respectfully yours in Christ,

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