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Parishioners of **Our Lady of Peace Church** on East 62nd Street in Manhattan, who rallied with the **New York City Mass Mob** in January and whose appeal to the **Vatican** to save the church is now under review, want to celebrate their parish centennial in 2018. But while the church remains on the list that the Archdiocese of New York intends to close by August 2015, they are not waiting.

Instead, parishioners are gaining support from Italian American leaders and searching for descendants of the original benefactors, whose names and the amounts they gave are carved in marble in the vestibule - immigrants who donated to build the church and intended it to last for posterity and future generations.

On Sunday, April 26, starting at 11:30 a.m., parishioners will hold a procession accompanied by the FDNY EMS Pipes and Drums, FDNY Columbia Association, and the Patriot Brass Ensemble, through the landmarked Treadwell Farm Historic District where the church is located. A Founders' Day Mass and Italian Heritage Celebration to honor the first families of Italian immigrants will immediately follow.

"Our Lady of Peace is the jewel of this neighborhood -- an historic building that anchors the Treadwell Farm Historic District," said Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer. "Designated as a landmark in just the second year after the Landmarks Law's passage, it's fitting that we're honoring this church and its

historically Italian-American community just days after the fiftieth anniversary of the Landmark Law itself."

"In learning of the impending decision to close the Church of Our Lady of Peace, this causes great sadness to many and, in particular, to the families of the early Italians who immigrated from their homeland, and to the many Italian Americans who continued over the years to attend, sustain and support the parish," said **Joseph Sciame**, Chair of the **Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations**. Mr. Sciame's maternal grandparents, the Pintacuda family, were early parishioners of Our Lady of Peace.

"The parish today, built by immigrants and supported by them, and in many cases by their now families, can make it," Sciame continued. "It is financially strong and willing to take on the challenge of increasing parish attendance, if that be the issue. The Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations looks forward to the continued existence of the parish."

Italians immigrants overcame discrimination, relegated to worship in the basements of other churches in New York City in the early 20th Century. Italians in the Upper East Side enclave were treated no differently, until Father Philip Leone raised the necessary funds from the first Italian parishioners and his Irish American friends to purchase the church. Originally called *Madonna della Pace*, it was named in honor of the peace that ended the First World War.

"The anniversary of Our Lady of Peace give us reason to reflect on a legacy worth preserving," said **John Calvelli**, Executive Vice President and Chair of the **National Italian American Foundation (NIAF)** Leadership Council. "Italian Americans and their community-oriented approach to religion laid the foundation for a very special house of worship. The church fosters a unique commitment and cohesiveness among its parishioners. They are uniquely dedicated to their faith, good works, and to Our Lady of Peace as a source of inspiration."

"I am proud to be part of the team researching the founders, benefactors, and first families of Our Lady of Peace," said **Tami Ellen McLaughlin**, Friends of OLP Special Events Chair. "I have met descendants who are just heartbroken about the future of the church that their ancestors founded almost 100 years ago. I have a whole new appreciation for and devotion to my church because of this."

The church was dedicated in April 1919, in a ceremony that included a similar procession through the neighborhood. On April 26, parishioners will walk in their ancestors' footsteps, carrying their images through the streets where they lived and played, worked and worshipped, and hoping to save their church.

"The Founders Day Celebration planned for Our Lady of Peace Parish is a wonderful community action that brings the Catholic faith community and their

friends together in solidarity to proclaim the vital place Our Lady of Peace is for the Archdiocese and the neighborhood,” said **Sister Kate Kuenstler** of Canon Law Ministries. “Our Lady of Peace Parish is built upon the faith of so many generations of immigrants who have made New York City and Our Lady of Peace Parish what it is today. This is a way to remember, celebrate, and believe in the value of a future for this beloved parish.” Kuenstler represented the parishioners of Our Lady of Peace in their appeal to the Vatican.

The Church of Our Lady of Peace, located at 239 East 62nd Street, Manhattan, New York, built in 1887, is the architectural anchor of the Treadwell Farm Historic District, designated by the New York City Landmarks Commission in 1967, and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

- **Procession:** Line up **11:30 a.m.** in front of the church. Procession will move east on 62nd Street to the corner of 2nd Avenue, turn south on 2nd Avenue, then west on East 61st Street, turn right on 3rd Avenue, cross the street at East 62nd Street, continue east on East 62nd Street into the church.
Participating: NYC Councilmember Dan Garodnick
- **Press Conference:** Invited Guests at **12:00 noon** on the church steps:
Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer;
Deputy Consul of Italy, Ms. Isabella Periotto;
Joseph Sciamè, Chair, Conference of Presidents of Major Italian American Organizations;
Parishioners and Descendants of the Founders of Our Lady of Peace who participated in the Vatican appeal
- **Founders Mass:** Celebrated at 12:30 in the afternoon immediately following the Procession.
- **Celebration of Italian Heritage:** Immediately following the Mass in the Church Hall.

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Commemorative postcard designed by Joseph Leone with photographs courtesy of the Merlini-Chaplin, Guatelli-Dooner, Giacomino-Landells, Nicolazzi-Ponzini Families. ®