

ST. JAMES CATHEDRAL

March 28, 2022

Dear Friends,

I am excited to be able at last to share with you some good news for the future of our parish and our local Church. For the last two years, we, along with the Archdiocese of Seattle, have been in conversation about several Catholic-owned properties on First Hill. We have been exploring how we can make the best use of the resources which have been entrusted to us, and whether they can be maximized more effectively to serve the Church's mission. Currently, between the Chancery, the Cathedral, O'Dea, and Catholic Community Services, the Catholic presence sprawls over six city blocks and twelve buildings!

The timing couldn't be better for these conversations. During the pandemic, we've come to realize that a lot of things we accepted as certain are not so certain. We've had to rethink the way we work together, the way we pray together, and the way we gather together. The pandemic disrupted our sense of "the way we've always done it," and made it possible for us to think more broadly about our priorities and our future. And in some ways, it's made it possible for us to look at the future in a way we couldn't have dreamed of before.

After a long period of intense conversation and consultation, we have entered into a transaction with a Vancouver, B.C.-based developer, Westbank, that is already deeply invested in First Hill and Seattle. With the recommendation of our Parish Finance Council and in cooperation with Archbishop Etienne and the Archdiocese of Seattle, we will be selling the half block on which the Chancery's Pigott Building (710 Ninth Avenue) and our Pastoral Outreach Center (907 Columbia Street) sit.

Let me say a few words about the sale of our Pastoral Outreach Center. The parish built what is now the Pastoral Outreach Center as a convent for the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary back in 1965, and on the departure of the sisters from the parish in 2004, the building was converted to parish use as part of our Centennial Campaign. Many of you were generous donors toward making that project a reality, and I know most of you have attended events in the Pastoral Outreach Center in the nearly twenty years (!) since then. It's been the hub of much activity and has seen constant use over the years.

And we never would have considered parting with that building without having alternative space for parish staff and activities. Thankfully, we will have ample alternative space to move into! At the time of the sale, we will be purchasing from the

Archdiocese of Seattle new office and gathering spaces which will more than make up for the loss of the Pastoral Outreach Center. The sale price of the quarter block on which the Pastoral Outreach Center sits is \$13 million. With \$4 million of these proceeds, we will acquire the 1980s Chancery building at 910 Marion Street, including 11,000 square feet of office and gathering space, as well as two levels of parking with thirty-seven parking places (a welcome addition!). In addition, we will re-acquire from the Chancery the third and fourth floors of Cathedral Place (which we sold to them for office space back in 1990). The purchase price for those two floors, some 12,800 square feet, will be \$2.5 million. This will give us greatly expanded office and meeting space.

The Finance Council and I are enthusiastic about the possibilities this arrangement presents to us as a parish. This sale and the acquisition of new property will not only provide the parish the space to expand our offerings in the future, but will also secure a much-needed “nest egg” to ensure that our ministries of outreach, faith formation, music, and the arts, continue. In addition, the sale will provide funds to maintain and preserve our Cathedral, as well as the Cathedral Rectory and Cathedral Place, historic buildings that have significant, ongoing maintenance needs.

First Hill has seen a lot of change since I first arrived at the Cathedral in 1988. It has been experiencing an extraordinary boom in recent years, with new apartment and senior living facilities which have greatly enriched and enhanced the makeup of the parish. The advantage of partnering with a developer like Westbank is that they understand and value the importance of the presence of the Cathedral in this part of our beautiful city. Westbank sees the Cathedral not just as the crowning glory of the First Hill of bygone days, but as the heart of the First Hill of the future. I like the thought that the development of the neighborhood will not detract from the Cathedral’s presence, but will point to and enhance it.

At moments like this I can’t help but be reminded that each time we walk through the doors of St. James Cathedral, we are the beneficiaries of the foresight and generosity of the generations of parishioners that have gone before us. As pastor, I am aware of their legacy. It’s a legacy that is embodied in everything we do here – our worship, our witness, our outreach – and, of course, in the beautiful Cathedral itself and in the wonderful parish facilities that we enjoy today. We should feel very blessed, then, by this new and promising development in the life of our parish. Like those who have gone before us, we get to hand on our own legacy to generations yet to come!



Father Michael G. Ryan
Pastor