



The Basilian Fathers

Parish Est. 1767

April 6-7, 2019

Dear parishioners,

When I arrived here in Windsor back in April of 2015, I knew that one of my tasks was to help the parish realize that Holy Name of Mary church was the fifth church home of Assumption parish. After two failed fundraising campaigns, and the failure of a hoped-for \$10 million donation to materialize, it was time to accept the fact that we were here to stay. Besides, I thought that if we ever could raise the money needed to restore Assumption church, it would be sinful to spend it on a building instead of on ministry. Now, with the publication of Paul Mullins' third report to the parish, it is becoming clearer that we will indeed begin restoration work. I'd like to take this opportunity to explain how my thinking has evolved and why I support the movement in this direction.

First, there is the location. The mission of "Our Lady of the Assumption among the Hurons" was moved here around 1747, to minister to the indigenous people. Then, 20 years later, it was officially named a parish, serving both the indigenous and the French settlers. As the parish outgrew its home the present church building was built a bit further from the river, yet still in this same area. Assumption's focus grew as the area did, and ministry was expanded to the British, and then the students. There is so much history in this sector of land; it would be so very sad for the Church to abandon it. And the building itself carries so much history. Within its walls over these past over 170 years there have been thousands of Masses, baptisms, weddings, funerals. It even served as the cathedral at one point. To add to that, I think we can do more effective ministry from Assumption church. Located on the campus of the University of Windsor, Assumption makes a statement that the Church cares about students. It is located more centrally within the parish boundaries, with ample parking, and on major streets that are among the first to be cleared of snow in the winter. Given its historicity and its location next to the Ambassador Bridge and the University, a thriving parish based at Assumption church makes a bold statement to Windsor and Essex County that the Catholic Church is here to stay.

Second, I have come to believe that there is a lot of money available for restoration that would never be given for ministry. Al Quesnel, who offered to match up to \$5 million, is not from Assumption; neither are all the major donors who Paul Mullins is contacting. They would not be giving funds for us to do outreach or any other parish programs. And

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with that reality, I think that if we are able to restore the church from these contributions, we should do so.

Third, Holy Name of Mary needs quite a bit of work. While we could contest the architect's figures of \$5-9 million, the amount required is significant. None of that would come from outside sources, as they are for Assumption. It's true that we could continue as we are for the foreseeable future; at one point, though, major work needs to be done. We also need parking and easier access for people with disabilities. And if we stay where we are, sooner or later Assumption church would be sold. Although that might give the parish a large cash influx, without the income from the parking lot we would find it difficult to make ongoing repairs and maintenance. We would also need to provide a residence for the priests and parish offices.

I am quite conscious that any of you who were members of the parish before November of 2014 have experienced the loss of your church. St. Patrick, Blessed Sacrament, Holy Name of Mary, and then Assumption all closed, and that is a dying process. For you who were parishioners of Holy Name of Mary, I know that it must have been a huge relief, a great influx of life—indeed, a type of resurrection—when the parish moved to its present home. And for you who have joined the parish since then, Holy Name of Mary is the only church building you know for this parish. I am sure that a return to Assumption church will be difficult. Yet I am convinced that every death leads to a resurrection. It is the basis of the Christian story. The fact that all of us will have experienced a church closure can serve to unite us as one family. And in the future, as the Family of Parishes is activated, our proximity to university students at both Assumption and St. Alphonsus churches will enable us to reach out to them in a coordinated effort.

I am deeply grateful to Paul Mullins for his ongoing commitment to Assumption church, and I continue to ask for your prayer for guidance from the Holy Spirit for him, for us as a parish, and for me as your pastor as we embark on this journey. Be assured of my prayer for each of you. May Our Lady of the Assumption intercede for us.

Fr. Maurice