

SAVE OUR CHURCHES ASSOCIATION – December 19, 2020

Day 3,426 (9 years 4 months and 19 days) since the closure of St. Patrick's Church

To: All SOCA Members and friends

I think it is over a year since I last sent out an Update to you. The reason is simple: there was nothing to report. There was a brief moment early this year when I thought the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura was going to make a decision on our appeal. Then the Coronavirus hit Europe with full fury and Italy was the hardest hit of all European countries. Then, when things seemed to be easing, along came the second spike. Italy has a population of **60 million** and has had **1,870,576** total cases, with **65,857** deaths. Compare that with Canada with a total population of **38 million** with **495,346** total cases and **14,040** deaths. No wonder Italy is reeling after the double whammy. Let us keep the people of Italy and the Vatican, especially our Holy Father, Pope Francis, in our prayers and hope that now that vaccines have become available, we can look forward to life returning to something like normal, we hope, in the not too distant future.

Nine years is a long time to keep the people of God in a state of indecision. Time does not stand still and not a month has gone by without a member of SOCA being called to his or her eternal rest. I was deeply saddened to learn that we had lost yet another SOCA stalwart in Helen George, a longtime active parishioner of St. Basil's Church to which she gave so much of herself. May she and all the other members of SOCA who have died since the closure rest in peace. Let us pray that their efforts and support will not have been in vain. In Psalm 13, the opening words are "How long. O Lord", words that are echoed no less than four times in the first two verses. Nine years is a long time and we may well cry out, "How long, O Lord?" Let us, however, like David, have faith in the Lord and pray that the Vatican will soon make a decision on our plea for justice.

This is a bad time to be taken ill and to be in hospital or at home where even family members are advised not to visit you. I would ask you to pray for all those who are ill at this time. In particular, please pray for our members Cathy McGinty, Barb Lea, Joe Kelenc, Math Harty, Cinette Kado, George and Maria Siegl and any others in need of our prayers that I may have omitted inadvertently. May they feel the comforting and healing presence of the Lord at this difficult time.

I would like to end with a poem that speaks more eloquently than I can of the strange time in which we find ourselves. This is a poem that was sent to me by SOCA member **James Murphy** who has kindly given me permission to include it in this Update:

Church in the Pandemic Age

By James Murphy

*We go to church as we did before
But enter now by a different door.
Masked, we register, then cleanse our hands
And sit apart like dislocated clans.
No choir. "Safety for all" is in compliance.
The wisdom of our priests' fills the silence.
Thus fight we the virus that plagues the earth
Begging the question, what living like this is really worth?
Mass over, pews disinfected while the house clears
All this work accomplished by our volunteers.
Thanks to them. Were the choir to sing a hymn,
it should be "Thank God for them."
This is all I have to say
But wear a mask to church and pray.*

Thank you, James.

SOCA Chairman Joe Kelenc and the members of the SOCA Executive wish all of you a peaceful and joyful Christmas. Keep safe and avoid gatherings where safe procedures are not being practised because we want all of you to be well and able to enjoy happier days when they arrive, as surely they will. This is what Brother Richard Hendrick, a Capuchin Franciscan monk living in Ireland, wrote in Facebook on March 13 even before the full impact of Covid 19 became apparent:

"All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way. All over the world people are waking to a new reality - To how big we really are. To how little control we really have. To what really matters. To Love."

In his poem "Lockdown", Brother Richard ends with this inspiring message of hope:

"Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love."

"How long , Lord?" We have waited long for the Lord's coming. We can wait a little longer for the Vatican's decision.

A happy and blessed Christmas to all!

Francis, Secretary of SOCA

cc The Very Rev Kevin Tumback, Pastor of All Saints parish; Rev. Derek Remus, Associate Pastor of All Saints Parish; Andrea Errera; Philip Gray.