



The Parish of the Immaculate Conception & Assumption of Our Lady

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

As I'm sure you know, our former convent building at Immaculate Conception & Assumption of Our Lady Parish has remained empty for eight years now. For the last five years, we have considered various options for putting this valuable asset to better use, ideally in a way that would reduce the strain that maintenance and repairs place on our financial resources, and possibly even provide some welcome additional income for other uses.

I am pleased to share the exciting news that we believe we have identified a use for the convent that will fulfill all of these goals while also serving a growing need in our local community. With the blessing and encouragement of His Eminence, Timothy Cardinal Dolan, we have filed initial plans with the Town of Eastchester to repurpose the convent to create individual apartments where eight adults with autism will have the opportunity to live independently as part of a small community of peers.

The families of these individuals, some of whom will be our parishioners and neighbors, have cared for them at home for many years. Now, as these parents grow older, they are anxious to know that their children will have a safe, nurturing place where they can live and thrive with maximum independence in the community.

Autism, which is often referred to as autism spectrum disorder, is the name for a variety of conditions characterized by difficulties with social skills, speech and nonverbal communication and repetitive behaviors. An estimated 1 in 54 children in the United States has autism. Each may have unique strengths and differences, but they are children of God above all. We have a responsibility as a church to try to meet their needs, and we are blessed to have such a wonderful opportunity to do so.

We are collaborating on this effort with our archdiocesan healthcare ministry, ArchCare. Addressing the unmet and underserved health and social needs of our communities is central to ArchCare's religious mission, and this project is a prime example of the ingenuity ArchCare and the archdiocese bring to doing so. Earlier this year, ArchCare welcomed eight tenants with autism into their new apartments in a similar unused convent, on the campus of St. Teresa of the Infant Jesus on Staten Island, which includes an elementary school adjacent to the former convent. The tenants at St. Teresa have their own individual apartments with kitchen and private bath, as well as access to common areas and lounges in the building where they can socialize. One apartment is reserved for a Site Coordinator who oversees day-to-day maintenance of the property, facilitates building activities and provides support to tenants and their families as appropriate. Pending final approval of our architectural plans, which have been designed to maintain the beautiful exterior of our stately

convent, we envision very similar features for the apartment building here at Immaculate Conception & Assumption of Our Lady.

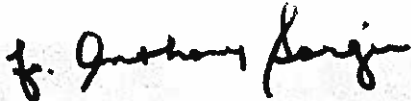
When the time comes, applications for the apartments will be reviewed and the tenants chosen by a panel of professionals who work regularly with individuals with autism and their families. Family members will join the Family Council so they can continue to play active roles in their loved ones' lives, address tenant needs collaboratively and lead and participate in holiday and other events.

To be clear, our parish will not operate these independent apartments, nor will we assume any of the costs. Quite the contrary, in fact. ArchCare will hold full legal and financial responsibility, including securing and managing the more than \$5 million needed for development and construction. Included in this amount is a \$3.6 million grant to our parish from the Mother Cabrini Health Foundation to renovate the convent and transform it into an up-to-date, up-to-code apartment building that we and our community can be proud of. Once the project is completed, ArchCare's St. Frances Cabrini Apartments at Immaculate Conception Church will generate a steady stream of rental income and relieve us of the costs of ongoing maintenance, repairs and utilities, all of which will be borne by ArchCare.

This truly is a win-win for our parish and our community. I have spoken about this opportunity with both our Parish and Finance Councils, and they are as excited as I am at the prospect of putting our resources to such a worthy use.

While we are still very much in the initial stages, I believe it's important to share this exciting news with you. You can expect to hear more in the coming weeks, and to be invited to an information session where representatives of ArchCare will share additional details and answer any questions. And should you have any questions in the meantime or know of a family that cares for an adult with autism who might benefit from our plans, please don't hesitate to let me know so we can share information regarding the project as it moves forward.

Faithfully yours,



Fr. Anthony Domenic Sorgie
Pastor