



# ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

320 Cathedral Street • Baltimore, Maryland 21201 • 410-547-5437 • FAX: 410-727-8234

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

February 5-6, 2011

Dear Catholic Faithful of East Baltimore,

The Catholic Church in the City of Baltimore has undergone many changes since it began serving its citizens over 200 years ago. From Baltimore's earliest days as a port town through the immigration-led population explosion and on through suburban flight to revitalization, the Church has adapted to reflect the changing needs of the city's residents in an effort to better serve the people of God who call Baltimore home.

This remains true today, just as our city is undergoing another period of dynamic change, most notably in East Baltimore where a large and growing population of Spanish-speaking people now resides. Neighborhoods established by throngs of European immigrants in the last century are now home to people who arrived more recently as part of a new wave of immigration. People from nations in Central and South America, not unlike those who came from European countries before them, have come to Baltimore seeking similar dreams of opportunity, prosperity and peace for themselves and their families. And, they too find comfort among unfamiliar surroundings in the traditions and people who make up the Catholic Church.

Working side by side with the Archdiocese for much of this long and changing history in Baltimore have been our ministerial partners, the Redemptorist Fathers. The Redemptorists arrived in Baltimore in 1840 to work with the German immigrant community and over the years would establish seven parishes in Baltimore and operate an additional two. More recently, the Redemptorists have shifted their focus to serve the growing Hispanic community in Baltimore, which has a significant presence in several parish communities in East Baltimore.

For the past several months, the Archdiocese and Redemptorists have been working to create a comprehensive plan for ministry in East Baltimore. After months of discussions, consultations with parish leaders, and analysis of resources, parish physical plants and demographic data, a plan has been developed to expand Sacred Heart of Jesus Church into a new a bi-cultural parish community, making this the center of the Church's Hispanic ministry in Baltimore. After discussing the plan with the involved parish communities, a decision to retain

the name of Sacred Heart of Jesus-- Sagrado Corazón de Jesús--which holds significant meaning for the current parish community as well as many in the Latino community--has been made.

Sacred Heart of Jesus, since its founding in 1873, has always been a place of warm welcome. The German immigrants who settled in Highlandtown built a community that embraced newcomers and treated everyone like a member of the family. We are grateful to the people of Sacred Heart for carrying on that welcoming tradition and for reminding us of the unity we are all called to through our celebration of the Eucharist.

The Redemptorists would administer the new parish and a transitional pastoral council made up of members from the parishes of Sacred Heart of Jesus, St. Michael, St. Patrick and the Hispanic community at Our Lady of Pompei would be formed to help lead the parish for the first two years.

In addition, Archbishop Borders School would be relocated five blocks from its current location at Our Lady of Pompei Church to the former Sacred Heart of Jesus School. It would remain in its current location for the 2011-12 school year and reopen under the same name at its new location in September 2012. Last year, the school was chosen by the Archdiocese to begin offering the first local Catholic dual language program, which began serving students this year. The program seeks to produce graduates with fluency in both English and Spanish. Presently, 55 percent of students at Archbishop Borders School are Spanish-speaking.

Neither the Redemptorists, which founded the parish in 1852 and own the building, nor the Archdiocese of Baltimore, have the clergy or financial resources (the church needs \$9 million in urgent repairs) to allow St. Michael's to continue fulfilling its ministerial mission. Sadly, this means that the parish of St. Michael's in Fells Point will no longer be able to remain open and necessitates moving the focal point of Hispanic ministry to Sacred Heart of Jesus. Under the plan, all worship, programs, and activities would be transferred from St. Michael's to Sacred Heart of Jesus when the new parish officially begins serving the people of East Baltimore the weekend of August 6-7, 2011, the Feast of the Transfiguration. An appropriate number of Masses in both English and Spanish will be offered at the new parish

The decision also means the parish of St. Patrick would become a mission of the newly formed parish. It would offer one Mass each weekend and would be administered by the pastor of the new parish. As well, all Spanish-speaking Masses and all programs and activities for Spanish speaking parishioners at Our Lady of Pompei would be moved to the new bi-cultural parish at Sacred Heart of Jesus. A meeting with the Priests Council of the Archdiocese will take place next week where approval of revised parish boundaries, recognizing the proposed mergers discussed previously, will be discussed.

We recognize this plan evokes mixed emotions for the parish communities in the area. We also realize you will have many questions about how this plan affects you and your family. The transitional pastoral council, with representatives from each affected parish, will begin meeting later this month to plan for the many tasks ahead in order to provide a smooth transition. Fr. Bill Rickle, S.J. will moderate these meetings and parishioners will be kept informed as the transition proceeds during the coming months.

The Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Redemptorists are committed to serving the people of God in East Baltimore and look forward to continuing to build a vibrant Catholic community that serves the spiritual needs of the people and builds a community reflective of God's love for each of us, His children. We look forward to working with you as we enter this new period of growth in our Church's and our City's history, and offer our prayers for you and your families during this period of transition.

Together in Christ,

Edwin F. O'Brien  
Archbishop of Baltimore

Rev. Kevin Moley, C.Ss.R.  
Provincial Superior  
Redemptorist Fathers