

## September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, Press Conference: Steeple Completion

Welcome. Thank you for being part of this great event and celebration. I am Canon Michael Stein, a member of the Institute of Christ the King and Pastor of St. Joseph Oratory here in Detroit.

I would like to thank our clergy and volunteers, all our donors and benefactors, contractors and tradesmen who made this day possible. I would also like to recognize our invited guests and community leaders: **our friends from the Archdiocese Michael Trueman and Frank MacDonell, and our good neighbor, the President of the Eastern Market, Dan Carmody**

Today marks the completion of the full restoration of our iconic 200ft steeple and bell tower. This is a historically accurate restoration using original materials and design. No corners were cut. We installed all new slate and decorative copper and we refurbished some of the existing copper. We removed the wood underlayment and replaced it with all new wood. We also repaired the bell tower louvers and stone work.

Detroit Cornice and Slate, founded in Detroit in 1888, completed the work. They have extensive experience with historic buildings and churches and they have been working on St. Joseph Church since their 19<sup>th</sup> century founding. Atlas Cut Stone, reproduced new stone pinnacles and finials surrounding the principle spire. Both companies are represented here today and we personally renew our gratitude for their time and talent!

This is the first major project for the Phase 1, 3 Year - \$2.5 million Historic Renewal Campaign that we launched almost two years ago. It is the most significant campaign since the completion of the church in the 1800's. Other projects include the new East Parking Lot and replacing the church's electrical system, both of which are in process and are fully funded. We are currently seeking new campaign dollars to complete the church's exterior stonework restoration which entails all of the outside walls. This most urgent work of tuck-pointing, and in some areas stone replacement, is crucial to ending water penetration and to preventing further stone displacement and damage. This coming year, our fundraising effort will be the opportunity for parishioners, Detroiters, and friends from afar to be united in restoring this historic edifice, quite literally, stone by stone.

Yet, our renewal is much more than restoring a historic church and sacred building. This renewal is also a tangible sign of the Parish's commitment to its Faith, its congregation and the local community. We are witnessing, on a daily basis, the renewal and revitalization of our neighborhood and Detroit as a whole. This we believe is due, in part, to the daily presence and commitment of the Church to our city and its dear people. Throughout history, our churches have always played a role as centers for culture and family life, and this is being realized here today.

In October 2016, the Institute of Christ the King arrived at St. Joseph Church by invitation of Archbishop Vigneron. We are a traditional order known for revitalizing historic churches. And while the Archbishop cannot be with us this morning and he asked me to pass along to you his remarks, which I now quote:

"This is truly a blessed time for the St. Joseph Oratory community, united in efforts to restore this stunning temple to God's glory. I am most grateful to all who have supported the project, especially the Institute for Christ the King Sovereign Priest for its dedication to preserving this historic church building and caring for the parish community that gathers within."

Thank you, Archbishop Vigneron, for these kind words and for your continued prayerful support in our undertaking.

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You have all seen the recent slogan "Detroit is back" to which a loyal Detroiter responds "Detroit never left". The same holds true at St. Joseph with many now saying that St. Joseph is back and we respond, St. Joseph never left.

One such individual and parishioner embodies this notion that St. Joseph never left... and that individual is Mr. Patrick Degens, here present.

Patrick has tirelessly devoted his life to St. Joseph and to the parish in each of the last nine decades. His years of service began as an Altar Boy and later on as an Usher. When the parish needed an editor for the bulletin, office help, or a cook for parish events, he served.

Fifty years ago, he was active in the restoration projects leading up to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the church's consecration. For over twenty years, he worked on the stained-glass restoration project, with some of those windows, thanks to his

initiative, being completed as recent as two years ago. He took charge of the church bells maintenance and oversaw the funding and installation of the storm windows.

Whenever the parish needed funds Patrick was there (also aided by his wife Dorothy who ran a bake sale for many years). Patrick was the leader and founder of the parish's first Oktoberfest some 14 years ago in order to raise awareness and additional money for the urgent needs of the church. He conducted countless tours and is one of our treasured historians. He is well noted as being a faithful person to his many pastors over the course of numerous years.

St. Joseph, our patron Saint, is the model for those who are devoted to toil: to labor with thankfulness and joy, deeming it an honor to employ and develop, by labor, our God-given talents. Mr. Patrick Degens incarnates this model of work and dedication.

In many respects, Patrick was one of the individuals responsible for preserving St. Joseph Church: keeping the doors open, until the arrival of the Institute of Christ the King. He was tireless in devotion to preserving all of the important artifacts in the church and helping to assure that the parish remained intact through tumultuous times and church closures.

It is most fitting and symbolic that when I, the new Pastor, arrived at St. Joseph's Rectory doorstep in Mid-October 2016, who was there to hand me the keys to the parish? You guessed it, Patrick Degens!

How do you thank a zealous soul for his many years of dedicated service? A sincere and warm thank you, of course. But our debt of gratitude needs to be expressed by deeds. So another way to recognize a local hero is to take up his lasting legacy and attempt to serve as Patrick has.

Today, St. Joseph Oratory inaugurates its "Decades of Dedication Award". This award will be presented from time to time only to those who have demonstrated consistent and unselfish service to the parish as exemplified by Patrick over these many years. **Mr. Patrick Degens, as the first awardee of this honor, please come up.**

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In conclusion I would like to invite all of you back here to St. Joseph Oratory later this week for our aforementioned Oktoberfest. Come celebrate the advancement of our restoration effort. You could come to our first ever Preview Party this Saturday starting at 5pm or also to the full day Oktoberfest itself this coming Sunday. It begins at 11am with an Orchestral Mass and tribute to German Composers, then the fun-for-all-ages festivities go from 12:30pm-8:30pm.

Thank you again for joining us today. The Church is open for photos and touring; so are the grounds. We will remain available for individual interviews. Before we disperse, I would ask that Canon Sequeira, the members of our Council, and the Degens join me for a concluding group photo. Again thank you very much and may God continue to bless you all!