

June 22, 2006

Edward Cardinal Egan
Archbishop of New York
1011 First Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear Eminence:

For many years the AOH National President has attended the beautiful mass at St Patrick's Cathedral to celebrate the gift of St Patrick to the people of Ireland, to the great Irish-Catholic Diaspora, and to the world. It is, as you know, a kind of homecoming for any Hibernian leader because it was in New York City at St James Church that the Hibernians were founded 170 years ago.

Many of the same Irish men and women who built St. Brigid's Church in 1848, during the Irish Famine exodus, no doubt were part of the formation of the Hibernians only twelve years earlier. We have been following closely the Diocesan review which resulted in a recommendation to destroy St Brigid's for newer development. We appreciate that the sale of St Brigid's would yield resources that are no doubt needed for worthwhile programs. We fully understand that there are church resources nearby that will welcome the St Brigid's parishioners, but this building is unique.

We ask if it is possible to consider those needs without destroying a structure for so long associated with the Irish poor? We would like to be sure that every alternative has been explored to find alternative funding which would permit the preservation of St. Brigid's if not as a church than as a cultural facility. Is there a plan in place to insure that the history, artifacts and religious objects associated with St Brigid's will be available to future generations of Catholics who may one day want to see and touch the items that reflect the dedication and sacrifice of so many Irish for their Catholic church?

This is no small part of our concern. Many of our own efforts to preserve our heritage has been lost because of poor record keeping, little preservation planning and a general insensitivity to the sacrifices which produced many gifts. In the past 6 years we have documented 265 stained glass windows that were given to Catholic churches across the nation by our Order. These and many other gifts gifted to churches have been lost and many others are threatened with destruction. It is my fervent hope and that of the State and local Hibernian leaders in New York that St Brigid's will live on---even if no structural alternatives emerge---in a way and that will permit Catholic New Yorkers to see and hear the story of St. Brigid's and not have to do so by sorting through a basement in Dunwoodie in Yonkers.

Would you please consider our plea and so many others and review the situation again along with all options? We would appreciate the favor of a reply.

Sincerely,

Ned McGinley (National President)
John Hennessey (NY State President)
A.J. Smith (NY County President)
Michael Cummings (National Archivist)

Cc: Ms Peg Breen, President
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