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# **Church of Saint Agnes in Manhattan Entrusted to Opus Dei**

The Archdiocese of New York has announced that the Prelature of Opus Dei will assume responsibility for the pastoral care of Saint Agnes parish in Manhattan.

06/07/2016

Here is the text of the press release from the Archdiocese.

For Immediate Release: May 31, 2016

The Prelature of Opus Dei has accepted Cardinal Timothy Dolan's invitation to assume responsibility for the pastoral care and administration of Saint Agnes, the well-known parish serving the area around Grand Central Terminal.

Founded in 1873, and located at 143 East 43<sup>rd</sup> Street, Saint Agnes is perhaps best known as the Church where the late Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen would often celebrate Mass. The original church was destroyed in a devastating fire in 1992, and the current church building was constructed on the same site and opened in 1998.

Father Michael J. Barrett will serve as pastor of the parish, beginning on July 1. He will be joined by other Opus Dei priests who will offer Mass and the sacraments to the parishioners, who include, in

addition to the residents of the area, those who work in the area as well as many commuters who use Grand Central as their transportation hub each day. As pastor, Father Barrett will also be responsible for the temporal administration of the parish.

Father Barrett, age 63, was born in New York and grew up in the Saint Barnabas parish area in the Bronx. He graduated from Columbia University in 1974, and worked on Wall Street as an account executive for Merrill Lynch, before moving to Rome in 1983 to pursue studies in moral theology. He was ordained as a priest for Opus Dei in 1985 at St. Peter's Basilica by St. John Paul II. Father Barrett received a doctorate in moral theology in 1987 from the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Upon returning to the United States, he did pastoral work for Opus Dei in Texas, and then in 1999, at the

request of the Archbishop of Galveston-Houston, he became the director of Holy Cross Chapel and Catholic Resource Center in downtown Houston. Since 2013 he has served in Los Angeles as theological adviser to Archbishop Jose Horacio Gomez.

Opus Dei is an international Catholic organization – technically, a “personal prelature” – that helps people come closer to God in their work and everyday activities. St. John Paul II canonized its founder, St. Josemaria Escriva in 2002, calling him “the saint of everyday life.” Pope Francis described St. Josemaria as a “precursor of the Second Vatican Council” for placing emphasis on the universal call to holiness – the idea that holiness is not something just for priests and religious but for lay men and women as well. Opus Dei provides a variety of activities to help people in their efforts to live out

their faith in their everyday lives. These activities include weekend retreats, classes in Catholic teaching and spirituality, and opportunity for spiritual direction and sacramental confession. Opus Dei is headed internationally by its prelate, Bishop Javier Echevarria, who resides in Rome. Opus Dei opened its first center in New York City in 1964, with the authorization of Cardinal Francis Spellman. Members of Opus Dei, along with others, run the Rosedale Achievement Center (for girls) and Crotona Achievement Center (for boys), two educational programs for youth in the Bronx. The national offices of Opus Dei are in Manhattan, on 34<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue.

Monsignor Thomas G. Bohlin, the U.S. vicar of Opus Dei, said, "We are grateful that the Cardinal has asked us to carry out this pastoral work, and we look forward to serving the

faithful of the parish of Saint Agnes and the archdiocese of New York.”

Cardinal Dolan said, “I warmly welcome the Prelature of Opus Dei as a partner in serving the people of God of this archdiocese. The parishioners of Saint Agnes, I am sure, will quickly come to know and appreciate their apostolic zeal in preaching the Gospel, and serving the religious and sacramental needs of the people entrusted to their care.”

Father Myles Murphy, who has been serving as pastor of Saint Agnes, will become pastor of Our Lady of Victory parish in lower Manhattan on July 1, succeeding Monsignor Marc Filacchione, who is completing his 12 year term as pastor of that parish.

*Faith and the City: Opus Dei Assumes Responsibility for St. Agnes Church*

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