



Newsletter of the

# Committee to Save St. Brigid Church

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February 19, 1997



Peter DasSiva/San Francisco Chronicle

Louisa Stanton is one of St. Brigid's oldest parishioners, and one of its most faithful. She lives across Van Ness Avenue from the locked church.

**W**hen I go there," Louisa Stanton said of St. Brigid in a San Francisco Chronicle article at the time of the closing, "I feel like the weight of the world is lifted off my shoulders." Louisa started attending St. Brigid shortly after her arrival here from Ireland at age 18. She has been a parishioner, on and off, for 70 years. Until the closing, she attended Mass daily and moved to an apartment across the street to be nearer St. Brigid.

Nearness is particularly important for her now. She suffered a fall a few months ago, and cannot attend Mass at any of the other churches in the area.

"We are throw-away Catholics," she said in the same Chronicle article, encapsulating the feelings of many St. Brigid parishioners. At the time of the closings many parishioners were outraged by the actions of an Archdiocese riddled with scandals of misconduct and financial mismanagement. Many more faithful Catholics were disheartened by the recent discovery of a secret 1993 report compiled prior to the closings that concluded that the "highest and best use" of St. Brigid is as "maximum density [condominium] residential housing" indicating that the church closings were not motivated, as the Archdiocese said

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**"We are  
throw-away  
Catholics."**

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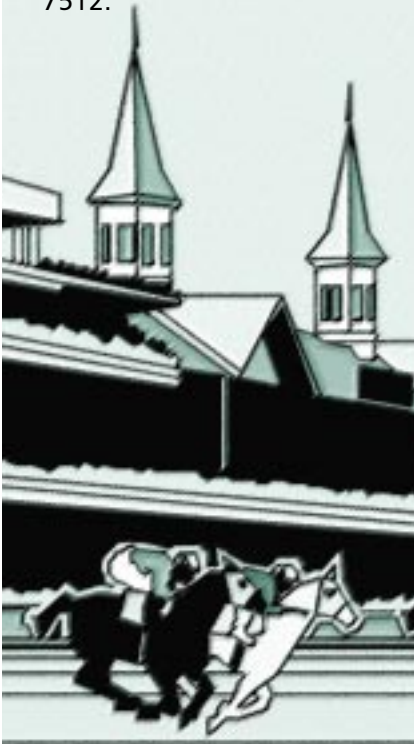
## They're Off!

The national pastime in Ireland is also the country's biggest, or most conspicuous industry. That's horses we're talking about.

In celebration of this year's St. Patrick's Day, the Committee is sponsoring an equestrian competition at the dinner. Yes, that's right, a horse race.

*Pick a winner and win a prize, it's that simple. In any case, you win because all proceeds benefit the Committee's work to save St. Brigid.*

You need not be present to win. See the ticket for details. Tickets are enclosed with all mailed copies of this newsletter. For additional tickets, please call our information line at (415) 255-7512.



## Chairman's Message

*Hope for the Future*

*Robert R. Bryan*

On Christmas Eve my wife, daughter and I attended Mass at a church that is quite old by San Francisco standards. It was a night of pleasant surprises. Celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ is always a joyous occasion. Mixed with that was a lingering sadness. The doors of St. Brigid Church remain locked to the thousands of people who need it so badly. The spiritual harm to the community continues to be substantial.

The pastor talked in the homily of the true meaning of Christmas and its relationship to what has occurred in the Archdiocese over the past year. Then he began to speak of the reopening of closed churches. We were reminded that many have suffered greatly from the closure of their places of worship. Yet, when things could not have appeared more bleak, our new Archbishop, William J. Levada, began to find innovative ways to unlock the doors of churches. The pastor then courageously expressed hope that good things will happen to the other closed churches. The message was simple but powerful: we must not lose that faith which should be at the very core of our beliefs.

Leaving that Mass after midnight, I realized that in celebrating Christmas I would also be celebrating inwardly a renewed faith—brought about by a priest who could no longer remain silent over a tragedy that has damaged so many of the faithful.

There is every reason to believe that Saint Brigid Church will be saved. Our appeal is still pending in the Vatican. It is extremely powerful on the merits, for there was no logical or fair basis for closing the Church. If relief were nevertheless denied, Archbishop Levada would still have the option of opening the Church. On March 14, 1996, a group

of us representing the parishioners met with him. Since that time I have maintained regular contact. On February 11, 1997, I again suggested we would drop the appeal if the Church could, in some manner, be reopened.

Three years ago all appeared lost for the nine churches closed in San Francisco. That is no longer so. All Hallows in the Bayview area has reopened as a second church to Our Lady of Lourdes. St. Thomas More is back in active use as a chaplaincy to San Francisco State University. Plans are underway for St. Francis of Assisi in North Beach to become a national shrine, staffed by the Conventual Franciscan Fathers. Even the grounds of St. Joseph's, South of Market, are to be utilized in conjunction with Catholic Charities as shelter for homeless families and pregnant women.

The negativism that shrouded the Archdiocese of San Francisco since the closure decisions is slowly dissipating thanks to new and creative leadership. The focus is back on what the Roman Catholic Church is about: leading people in the steps of Jesus Christ, and helping the needy.

St. Brigid's 133<sup>rd</sup> Annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner will be held on Friday evening, March 14, 1997. This year it will be in the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club, so we can accommodate more people. Please bring your family members and friends for an exciting evening. Children are especially welcome.

Two days after the dinner, St. Brigid will again be in the St. Patrick's Day Parade. Leading us will be a mounted contingent of riders from Golden Gate Park Stables. Last year they won first prize! All are invited to participate. We will have a motorized cable car for those who prefer not to walk.



## "I'm Still Waiting"

(from page 1)

at the time, by declining attendance or apparent structural problems, but rather by an eye towards the potential values of the property underneath them. The same report found that the land under St. Brigid, and its adjoining school, had a value of some \$16.6 million, provided that the church were demolished.

Ironically, the same report concluded that the cost of demolishing St. Brigid would be in the range of \$700 thousand, just about the same amount our engineers have determined would be required to bring the building into compliance with current San Francisco building codes.

With the appointment of Archbishop William J. Levada, San Francisco Catholics have reason to hope for improvement. Archbishop Levada has already opened two of the closed churches, St. Thomas More and All Hallows. His leadership style is much more open than that of his predecessor, and he seems to have a genuine concern for the spiritual well-being of the individuals in his care.

Louisa Stanton is not unique among St. Brigid Parishioners. While her situation may exemplify the needs of many, she like the other parishioners of St. Brigid, hopes that the changes in the attitude and actions of the Archdiocese will soon find their way to St. Brigid. She is still waiting, as are we all, for the day, when with the doors of St. Brigid open again, we can truly put this dark period in the history of the Archdiocese behind us and spend our energies on the true purposes of Catholicism and not in the vortices of conflict.



## A Cross for St. Brigid

The Committee has presented St. Brigid School with two new crucifixes. One hangs in the auditorium where the school holds Mass during the closure. The other overlooks the playground. Until now, there had been no symbols of the school's Catholic core in the room which serves as a temporary chapel during the closure.

By any measure, the school has been doing well academically. Half of the students achieved honors status in the second semester and seventy-five percent of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders were invited to take the standard achievement test with college bound seniors. Athletically, the students do very well also, fielding a championship volleyball team along with basketball, soccer, tennis, and track & field. The Committee hopes this contribution will help temporarily fill the spiritual void which has been in existence since the closure of the church.



St. Brigid School children with the new cross in the auditorium

## How to Help

The Committee, as always, needs the support of parishioners and friends in our effort to save St. Brigid.

There are any number of ways parishioners can help in the work to save the Church: writing letters, attending meetings, coming to Committee events and continuing the work of the Parish. The simplest, however, and one of the most helpful, is to continue your generous financial support of the Committee. Many parishioners have made additional contributions, frequently in conjunction with one of our events. These contributions make the work of the Committee possible.

All members and officers of the Committee serve without compensation. Nearly all of our expenses are directly related to our appeal in Rome. Your contributions to the Committee are tax deductible and can be sent to:

Committee to Save St. Brigid Church  
P.O. Box 641318  
San Francisco 94164-1318.

Thank you.

*The goal of the Committee to Save St. Brigid Church is to continue the work of Jesus Christ in this community. We represent the parishioners and thousand of others who believe that the closure of St. Brigid was wrong and contrary to the very essence of Christianity and the Roman Catholic Church. Our appeal is now before the Cardinals of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura—the Vatican's high court. We present this newsletter so you may be better informed of our efforts.*

The Committee can be reached either at P.O. Box 641318, San Francisco 94164-1318 or at (415) 255-7512.

### Officers & Subcommittees

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Patron .....	Gregory Peck
In Memoriam .....	Jean Arnstein
.....	Richard L. Carico, Esq.
.....	Renato D. Gallina, M.D.

## I Don't Care for Corned Beef and Cabbage

St. Patrick's Day has always been an excellent excuse for a celebration among St. Brigid parishioners. Always is a long time, but for 133 years, with time off for good behavior, as we understand it, there has been some sort of parish affair surrounding this most Irish of holidays.

This year's event, chaired by Gina Delle Sedie and Siu-Mei Wong, will improve the disposition, tickle the palate and light a little twinkle in even an honorary Irishman's eye. The seemingly improbable venue is the San Francisco Italian Athletic Club in the heart of North Beach on Washington Square. The secret is that the Club has offered, for its part, some of the best food in North Beach and, in exchange, the genuine Dubliners amongst the Committee have offered to cast a blind eye, as they occasionally do, to the obvious nomenclatural problems and suffer the consequences of Mediterranean hospitality.

For those who shun the gastronomical obeisances of turkey at Thanksgiving and CB&C for St. Pat's, the Club will prepare some slightly less timely, but equally delicious house specialties.

Parking is not a problem. As at our last event there, Committee member Robert Puccinelli has arranged parking in the Francisco Middle School parking lot at the corner of Powell & Francisco. It's just \$5, and we will have shuttles for those who care to use them.

To arrange a shuttle or for further information about the dinner please call our information line at (415) 255-7512.

Dancing shoes optional, but highly recommended.

## We're marching (and riding)

*St. Pat's Parade contingent will include mounted unit.*

Last year the Committee's mounted unit from Golden Gate Park Stables won first prize for a mounted division. This year we will represent St. Brigid in the parade with the horses and a motorized "cable car." All parishioners and friends of St. Brigid are invited to participate.

The notion of marching in a parade would never have occurred to us, as perhaps to many people, before the closure of St. Brigid, but we have discovered it is a nice opportunity to socialize with friends and participate in a fun event. Waving nonchalantly at cheering spectators is not, at least on St. Patrick's Day, an avocation reserved for the mayor and triumphant sports heroes. The whole event, and our participation in it, makes San Francisco seem a bit more like the small town, or many small towns, it is at heart.

Because St. Brigid has so much support from the San Francisco community, we are invariably greeted with cheers and good wishes from the spectators. Last year the horses and the cable car were decorated with "Save St. Brigid" blankets and banners, so it is a good opportunity to keep the plight of St. Brigid in the public eye.

We'll make it easy on the feet by picking up participants at the church at 11:45 AM, sharp. From there, we'll ride on the cable car to the parade's assembly point at 7<sup>th</sup> and Market. If you wish, you can join us there, although parking is much easier around St. Brigid.

At the end of the parade, the cable car will return, with whomever wants to ride, to the church.

Please *do* let us know if you are thinking of attending the parade by using the enclosed card. Doing so will allow us to better plan our transportation arrangements.

## The Parade

**Sunday, March 16,  
11:45 AM, at St. Brigid**

## The Dinner

*When:*

**Friday, March 14**

Cocktails	6 p.m.
Dinner	7 p.m.

*Where:*

San Francisco Italian Athletic Club,  
1630 Stockton Street,  
between Filbert and Union,  
overlooking Washington Square.

Parking is available at Francisco Middle School, Francisco & Powell. Please use the Francisco Street entrance.

