



ARCHDIOCESE OF WASHINGTON

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

April 4, 1997

Mr. John O'Brien
Chairman of the Community Council
Mother of God Community
P.O. Box 2206
Gaithersburg, Maryland 20886

To the members of the Mother of God Community:

During the past year and a half, the Mother of God Community has diligently and prayerfully addressed the challenges which I outlined in my address to the Community on September 25, 1995. I know this has been a painful yet grace-filled time as you sought understanding, reform, reconciliation and healing. I commend you for the progress you have made and assure you of my prayers as you look toward the future.

Integral to that process was the work of drawing up new Statutes for the Mother of God Community. The writing of these Statutes has occasioned serious community discussions and broad consultation. Along the way, you have graciously responded to my concerns and suggested emendations. Now, it is my understanding that you have voted to approve these Statutes.

Accordingly, I am pleased in turn officially to approve these Statutes and to recognize your institute as a private association of the faithful in accordance with Canon Law (Book II, Title V, Canons 298-329).

After living these Statutes for a few years, you may well desire to make some adjustments and/or changes. I recommend, indeed urge you, to review these Statutes within the next three years in order to ascertain if the Community would like to make some changes. It is imperative that leadership roles in the Community be well understood and that respect for the dignity and freedom of each member be maintained. In accordance with the Statutes, the Community must be constantly concerned to prepare members for leadership roles, thus preserving the vitality of the Community. The Statutes wisely provide that leaders be appropriately accountable to the entire membership and

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that temporal goods and Community property be administered in accordance with standard practices and procedures. Regular audits by a qualified firm are vitally important.

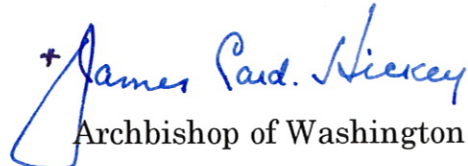
I would ask that the Community, through the Chair of the Community Council, maintain regular contact with the Archdiocese through the Vicar General in Curia, Most Reverend William E. Lori. I also ask that the Community foster good and open relations with the neighboring parishes. Whenever possible, please continue to seek reconciliation with former members of the Community.

As always, your life must be based on the authentic teaching of the Church and the sacraments. To ensure that your Community is rooted in the Church's sacramental life, it is necessary and appropriate for you to deepen your appreciation of the sacraments, especially Baptism and Confirmation. "Baptism in the Spirit" must be seen as a revivification of these two sacraments, not a totally separate reality.

Let me commend to you a warm and loving devotion to Mary, the Mother of God, your patronness. Sinless and completely open to the Holy Spirit, she became the Mother of the Word Incarnate. Under her loving protection, may your Community continue to deepen its union with the whole Church, especially the people of this Archdiocese, and thus to grow in the life of the Spirit.

Wishing you a joyous Eastertide and assuring you of my prayers, I remain

Sincerely in Christ,

+ James Card. Hickey
Archbishop of Washington