



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, NEWPORT

*Rhode Island's First Roman Catholic Parish, 1828
A National Historic Place, 2008*

For Immediate Release
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St. Mary's Church "Festival of Pipes" Celebration Premieres the First Public Performance of its Refurbished 1,900-Pipe Organ, June 3-4

Weekend events feature a lecture-recital, reception and a concert performance by nationally acclaimed musicians and members of the American Guild of Organists

Newport, RI – May 19, 2017 – The glorious sound of St. Mary's Church 1,900-pipe organ, the Casavant Op.2463, will be unveiled on Saturday, June 3, 2017 at the "Festival of Pipes" celebration, beginning at 2 p.m. The occasion marks the premiere performance of the massive newly refurbished pipe organ for the public. The event includes a lecture-recital by Simone Couture, vice president at the Casavant Frères Company of Quebec, and vocalist and organist Cody Mead, who is the director of liturgical music at St. Mary's Church.

"The Art of Organ Restoration and the Role of the Pipe Organ in the Catholic Church" will be presented by Mr. Couture. His remarks will include an overview of the craftsmanship required to restore the St. Mary's pipe organ and the instrument's historical significance to pipe organs worldwide. Mr. Mead's performance on the pipe organ will follow. This recital will mark the first time the newly restored pipe organ will be played for the public. The community is invited to attend a courtyard reception after the lecture-recital to help celebrate the instrument's return to St. Mary's and attend a 5:15 p.m. Mass, which will feature the St. Mary's Parish Choir and Youth Choir, as well as guest singers.

"People from all over have been calling to find out when they can hear the newly refurbished organ play," said St. Mary's Pastor Rev. Kris von Maluski. "We can finally tell them that it will be ready for its first recital on June 3, and they are all invited!"

On Sunday, June 4, 2017, at 4 p.m., nationally acclaimed organists, Gigi Mitchell Velasco, Roger Castellani and Peter Krasinski will join Mr. Mead for a free one-hour concert. Prior to the 4 p.m. concert, the public is welcome to attend St. Mary's 9:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. Masses featuring the Youth Choir and Parish Choir, respectively.

The 1,900 massive pipe organ was dismantled eight months ago and shipped for restoration by the Casavant Frères Company in Quebec, Canada. The company is the original builder of the instrument in 1958 when it was installed in St. Mary's choir loft. It arrived back to the Church in 30,000 pieces and was reassembled over the last several weeks by the Casavant craftsmen. Refurbishing the organ was performed by hand, using historic techniques at the Canadian company's facility. In its absence, St. Mary's rebuilt the choir loft space to ensure that upon the pipe organ's return, the environment is safe, structurally sound, aesthetically pleasing and perfectly matched with the Church's remarkable and historic 188-year-old Gothic Revival architectural style and now reveals stunning stained glass windows crafted in Austria that had been partially obscured for nearly 60 years.

The preservation and restoration project is part of the ongoing St. Mary's Church *Souls In Harmony* campaign to raise \$1.2 million to cover the cost of the refurbishment of the organ, reconstruction of the choir loft space and expansion of the music program in the community. Members of the campaign leadership committee include parishioners Christopher Boyle, Frank Furtado John Hirschboeck, Mark Horan, David Kerins, David Leys, Mary Beth MacBain, Maureen Maurer, Timothy O'Reilly and Robert Russell.

"We are so grateful for the extraordinary work of the Casavant craftsmen who have delivered a spectacular piece of art with magnificent sound more splendid than ever before, and extremely thankful to the distinguished members of our *Souls In Harmony* leadership committee for sharing their time and talent to see that this important project is completed," said Rev. von Maluski. "St. Mary's is a national treasure and landmark structure that is internationally recognized for its historic significance and stunning beauty. This preservation and restoration campaign is conducted with deep gratitude to generations of Rhode Islanders and Newport residents who have helped St. Mary's Church maintain its buildings and property for nearly two centuries and become known as among the most beautiful churches in the world."

According to Jonathan Ambrosino, one of the world's leading authorities on the history and art of organ building and design, the St. Mary's pipe organ, which has a tonal quality that dates back to the

19th century, “should be considered one of historic merit. In its physical manufacture, and in the construction and voicing of its pipes, Casavant Op. 2462...is an instrument demanding respect, pride, and best treatment.” The restoration of the pipe organ is the first time it will have been refurbished in its six decades of serving our community.

For more information about the St. Mary’s Church *Souls In Harmony* campaign events, giving levels and to donate online, visit www.stmarynewport.org, or contact Father von Maluski at 401-847-0475 or stmarynewport@aol.com, or Cody Mead, Director of Liturgical Music, at 401-239-8239 or cw.mead@yahoo.com.

ABOUT ST. MARY’S CHURCH: St. Mary’s Church was built in 1848. For two centuries, it has held a prominent place in Rhode Island’s history as the state’s first Roman Catholic Parish, and in American military history as the Church that served as the U.S. Navy Academy’s chapel during the Civil War (1861-1865). The Church has gained international acclaim as the location where President John F. Kennedy (then Senator) married Jacqueline Lee Bouvier on September 12, 1953.

In 2008, it was named to the National Register of Historical Places. With its majestic landmark steeple and presence in Newport – a worldwide tourist destination – St. Mary’s Church is an important part of our nation’s heritage and the City of Newport’s illustrious culture. Thousands of visitors come to St. Mary’s throughout the year for liturgical services, and to admire its stunning architecture and 42 breathtaking stained glass windows or to attend special music events and performances by its choirs and guest musicians.