

June 25, 2015

*A pastoral letter from the Reverend Canon Cindy Evans Voorhees*

Dear St. James the Great Family,

It is with great sadness that I write this last pastoral letter. As you may have heard, the temporary restraining order the *SaveSaintJamesTheGreat.org* association filed this week was denied in court yesterday. There, I learned we were part of another land purchase, where St. James the Great's proceeds are intended to complete another transaction. We were apparently a pawn in the bishop's "game of thrones" all along.

Please know that I was proud to stand with you in your efforts to stop the sale of our beloved St. James the Great, and with the countless other souls who generously, and often sacrificially, gave to this church in the past 70 years. Unfortunately for the greater universal church, the demolition of a 12-year-old building built to last hundreds of years will be questioned by potential donors for ages to come.

Yes, the building housed conflict, but it also housed generations of spiritual journeys that have made the world a better place. Thousands have passed into these doors through the waters of baptism, the rite of confirmation, to witness holy matrimony, and often staying until their grave with funerals and memorials—several who, in fact, are still buried on this holy ground.

We have much to be grateful for. We met the impossible odds of resurrecting a church from the ashes, and created our own phoenix with hours of blood, sweat and tears. I couldn't be more proud of the vision-driven, inclusive, relevant 21st-century church you became overnight. God sees your heart, and I am sure is saying, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

It is now time for us to scatter into the Holy Spirit's wind and plant our fertile seeds elsewhere. I have decided that I cannot lead you into a diaspora situation, not only for personal reasons but for professional reasons as well. I do not think it is healthy to have two St. James churches out on the street in Newport Beach, and I know that not having a building presents overwhelming challenges, which I have seen firsthand, unlike others in diocesan leadership, based on my 25 years of experience in church building and consulting.

This Sunday will be our last service and I hope you will all attend to show each other the love and support you have all so richly shown me these last 19 months. After the service, the Evaluation Team will be sharing their thoughts at the coffee hour.

Peace and love to all of you. My prayers are with you always.

Faithfully yours,

The Rev. Canon Cindy Evans Voorhees, *Vicar*

