



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I write to you today with profound joy, deep gratitude, and hearts full of hope! Our parish has officially purchased a new convent for the Leaven of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (LIHM) Sisters! This is a momentous occasion for our parish, a true sign of God's providence, and an opportunity for all of us to support the ongoing work of faith, prayer, and service in our community.

What makes this moment even more special is the story of the home itself. It once served as the convent for the Sisters of St. Francis, who dedicated themselves for many years to serving the sick and suffering at the former Mercy Hospital. From that home, the Sisters carried out years of faithful service to our community. After the Sisters of St. Francis moved on, the house was sold and served as a private residence for many years. And now, through God's grace and your generosity, it will once again be a convent—a home for women religious committed to prayer, teaching, and service in our parish.

Even more providential is its location—the new convent sits just around the corner from Notre Dame Jr./Sr. High School. This closeness will allow the LIHM Sisters to be even more present to our students, faculty, and families, enhancing their ability to teach, guide, and witness the joy of a life lived for Christ.

In a time when convents across the country are often closed or repurposed, we are among the very few parishes blessed to reclaim a former convent and restore it to its sacred purpose. This is not simply a property purchase—it is a remarkable moment of faith, a reclaiming of something holy, and a powerful investment in the future of religious life in our community.

The LIHM Sisters have already become an essential and beloved part of our parish family. Their witness of prayer, service, and joyful consecration has enriched our schools, our liturgies, and so many ministries in ways that are difficult to measure. This new convent will provide them with a home that offers stability, room for community life, and a base from which to continue their mission with renewed energy and focus.

But a house is more than walls and a roof—it must be made into a home. As the Sisters prepare to move in, we will need to furnish the convent with items that allow them to live comfortably and effectively in their ministry. Needed items include kitchenware, bedding, towels, utensils, a washer and dryer, twin-sized beds, furniture, and other household appliances and furnishings. Donations of these items can be dropped off at the parish office during regular business hours.

To help support this endeavor, we will take up a second collection at all Masses the weekend of October 18th and 19th.

Every gift, no matter the size, will make a real difference. I encourage each of you to give what you can—your generosity, combined with the prayers and contributions of many, will help ensure that the Sisters have everything they need to turn this house into a true home and spiritual center. Remember, this is more than a material investment; it is an investment in faith, in our children, in our community, and in the future of consecrated life among us.

In the months ahead, we will prepare for a very special celebration. We will be inviting Bishop Earl Fernandes to come to Portsmouth to bless and reconsecrate the house as a convent, restoring it officially as a dwelling place for women religious. A date for this joyful occasion will be determined and announced in the near future, and we hope that all parishioners will join us in celebrating this historic milestone.

My dear friends, this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. By coming together in prayer, generosity, and support, we are not only honoring the past, but also investing in a bright and fruitful future for our parish and for the Church in our area. Please continue to pray for the LIHM Sisters, and please give what you can to help furnish their new home and ease the costs of this momentous move. Every contribution, every act of support, and every prayer will help bring this house to life once again as a convent—a place of prayer, formation, and joyful mission.

May this new convent be filled with the peace of Christ, the joy of community, and the guiding presence of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And may our generosity and prayers help ensure that the Sisters' work and witness continue to flourish among us for many years to come.

With deep gratitude, excitement, and hope in Christ,

Fr. Smith