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## HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD

Historic Landmark Case Nos. 19-04

### Holy Redeemer College

3112 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE

Square 3645, Lots 828 and 829

Meeting Date: March 28, 2019  
Applicants: The Redemptorists  
Affected ANC: 5E

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The Historic Preservation Office recommends that the Board designate Holy Redeemer College (Square 3645, Lots 828 and 829) a historic landmark in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Sites, and that a nomination be forwarded to the National Register of Historic Places for listing at the local significance.

Holy Redeemer College, located at 3112 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE, was built in 1933 in proximity to The Catholic University of America, to accommodate members of the Catholic religious order known as the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer as they pursued graduate studies at the University. The building is a robust three-story stone edifice designed in a Lombardy Romanesque Revival style. This late Romanesque Revival sub-style remained in use, largely for religious institutions between 1920 and 1940, even as the more broadly defined Romanesque Revival style had fallen out of favor after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Holy Redeemer College is notable for its expression of this style and for its associations and contributions to the rise and growth of “Little Rome,” a center of Catholic scholarship and life in proximity to the Catholic University of America.

### History and Architecture

The Most Holy Redeemer Order, established in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century in Italy and traditionally dedicated to missionary work, came to the United States in 1832. Commonly referred to as the Redemptorists or Redemptorist Fathers, the Order did not establish a presence in Washington area until 1930 when members of the Order first enrolled at Catholic University. To begin with, the Redemptorists housed its students in a dwelling that stood at 3512 Ninth Street NE before it constructed its own building—Holy Redeemer College—in 1933. The Redemptorists built the college building on a four-acre tract of land just east of 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE between Hamlin and Jackson streets NE which it purchased from the Paulists, which had built its own college building almost twenty years earlier. (St. Paul’s College was designated a DC landmark in 2018.)

Holy Redeemer College was one of many Catholic institutions that grew up in proximity to The Catholic University of America (CUA), established in 1888. Shortly after it opened on part of the former Middleton estate in rural Washington County, CUA extended an invitation to Catholic religious congregations to establish houses of study at or in proximity to it. Between 1900 and 1940, more than fifty Catholic institutions rented or purchased property in the vicinity, including the Paulists, the Marists, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, the Redemptorists and others. In addition, several other Catholic universities were established there, including Trinity College, a

women's college; and Theological College. As the number of Catholic institutions and people in the area grew, the neighborhood was dubbed, "Little Rome." With all its institutions, the former rural lands now part of the Brookland and Edgewood neighborhoods truly became a true center of Catholic life and education in the District.

Holy Redeemer College consists of the college building itself, designed in the Lombardy Romanesque Revival style by New York architect Anthony A. M. Schmitt and built in 1933; and a contemporaneous and contributing one-story garage. The three-story stone college building dominates a flattened site on a slight rise of land at the southeast corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Jackson streets NE. The building faces east and has a U-shaped plan with a central courtyard formed between the main block on the east and wings to its north and south. A covered and arcaded walkway spans these wings at the west (rear) side, enclosing the courtyard area. The building is characterized by its robust Romanesque styling with rusticated stone walls, arched window and door openings, arched corbelling below the cornice line and stone battlements atop it. A square belfry tower dominates the east front of the building, rising a full story above the roofline at the center bay of the building, reaching a height of 77 feet. Historically, the arched openings of the top floor of the tower, currently glazed, were open. The center bay of the building is further accentuated as it projects forward slightly from the bays to either side and features a prominent entrance sheltered by a colonnade portico, set above-grade and reached by a long lead walk with stairs from 7<sup>th</sup> Street NE.



The one-story, two-bay stone garage is located at the west (rear) of the building, historically accessible both from a driveway that angled off of Jackson Street across the north side lawn of the college property to the garage building and from a driveway that leads from 7<sup>th</sup> Street south of the building and that curves around the college building to a parking lot and garage at the rear. Presently, the garage appears unoccupied and is cut off on its north side from the driveway that leads to it from Jackson Street by a chain link fence. Materialistically and stylistically, the garage building with its rusticated and irregularly coursed granite and crenellated roofline, matches the college building and was likely constructed contemporaneously, though no date is attributed to it.

In 1964, the Redemptorists sold an approximately 1.2-acre section of its four-acre lot at 7<sup>th</sup> and Hamlin Streets NE. Three years later an apartment building was constructed on the site. In July 2017, the Redemptorists divided its remaining acreage. The northern section, comprising two lots (Lot 828 and 829), retains approximately 1.6 acres of land, the college building, garage and grounds. These grounds feature a broad lawn with mature shade trees on the front and sides of the building and a parking area and the garage at the rear. The southern portion, consisting of approximately 1.2 acres, includes open lawn, mature shade trees, the historic driveway leading from 7<sup>th</sup> Street to the parking lot at the rear of the college building, and a historic stone retaining wall along the 7<sup>th</sup> Street side of the property. This area has been divided into multiple lots (Lots 805-826 and Lot 830) and is currently under development review for a Planned Unit Development of townhouses.

### **Evaluation**

Holy Redeemer College meets D.C. Designation Criteria B (History) and D (Architecture and Urbanism) and the corresponding National Register Criteria A and C at the local level of significance. Under D.C. Designation Criterion B, Holy Redeemer College is significant for its association with “patterns of growth and change that contributed significant to the heritage, culture or development of the District of Columbia.” In particular, Holy Redeemer College contributed to the rise and development of Catholic institutions in the vicinity of the Catholic University of America.

Under Criterion D, Holy Redeemer College “embodies the distinguishing characteristics of notable styles, building types or methods of construction” and is “an expression of urban planning, landscape architecture, siting and design significant to the appearance of the development of the District of Columbia.” Most notably, Holy Redeemer College is an excellent example of the Lombardy Romanesque Revival style—a style relatively uncommon in the District. Named for the northern Italian region of Lombardy where this particular derivation of the style emerged and thrived during the ninth to twelfth centuries, the style is characterized by heavy masonry, arched openings, arched and corbelled cornices, and projecting towers (generally square in form). The sub-style features a certain regularity in plan and fenestration patterns that is not characteristic of the broader Romanesque Revival style made popular in America by architect Henry Hobson Richardson. The landmark places Holy Redeemer College in its context of similarly styled institutions from the same period, both nationally and in D.C. Although the style persisted after the Romanesque Revival style fell out of favor, only two other expressions of the style are identified in D.C.—Ward Hall at CUA (1930) and St. Anthony’s Catholic Church at 12<sup>th</sup> and Monroe Streets, NE (1939). Although there may be other examples in the city, the style was relatively uncommon and Holy Redeemer College survives as an excellent representation of it.

### **Boundaries**

The proposed boundary for the landmark property is consistent with the lot lines of Lot 828 and 829 in Square 3645. The proposed boundaries include the college building and garage, its landscaped site and setting on the north, east and west sides. On the south side, the lot lines exclude the historic driveway as well as the stone retaining wall along 7<sup>th</sup> Street and the lawn with trees to the south. While the inclusion of the drive, in particular, within the boundaries of the landmark lots would have been more historically appropriate, the boundary as proposed and defined by the current lot lines provides an adequate visual context for Holy Redeemer College.



**Period of significance**

The proposed period of significance extends from 1933 to 1937 from construction of the college building itself to the installation of the stained-glass windows in the chapel of the building’s north wing.

**Integrity**

Holy Redeemer College retains high integrity of design, materials, and workmanship along with a palpable sense of time, place and association.