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An update from Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M. on the fire at St. Catherine of Siena Church in Petersburg

On Thursday, July 6, 2023, a fire broke out in the church building of Saint Catherine of Siena parish in Petersburg. The fire happened towards the end of daily Mass at about 12:20 p.m. Father Jose Thomas and parishioners attending Mass evacuated safely. Father Jose was able to remove the Blessed Sacrament, and a parishioner saved the Tabernacle. The cause of the fire is under investigation. The fire chief sustained an injury to one of his hands, requiring him to be medevacked to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle. Thankfully, there are no other injuries, and everyone is safe.

I want to thank the brave firefighters of Petersburg for bravely protecting lives and property. We pray for the fire chief's quick recovery.

Father Jose and I celebrated Masses for the parish at St. Andrew Episcopal Church this past weekend. We are grateful to the leadership of the Episcopal Church in Petersburg for their kind and generous offer of their facility for our use at this time.

Although professionals will need to make their determination, the building that comprises the church, rectory, and hall is badly damaged and unusable. The parish sacramental and other records were in a fireproof safe and were recovered undamaged.

Father Jose is currently staying at a local hotel. Father Jose will look at some offers for housing this week. Hopefully, he will find a suitable residence soon.

I want to thank Father Jose for his pastoral leadership. I want to thank all the Saint Catherine of Siena parishioners for supporting one another. And I want to thank the people of Petersburg for offering prayers, assistance, and many expressions of sympathy.

Let us continue our prayers and support for the parishioners of Saint Catherine of Siena Parish. Even amid the tragic loss of the church building, we remember that the Church is the People of God in communion together. We remain grateful for all of our brothers and sisters in Christ and for the many blessings God has bestowed upon us.

Archbishop Andrew Bellisario, C.M.