

New Baltimore Catholic school to be named in honor of Mother Lange

The proposed new Catholic elementary school in Baltimore City will honor the name of Mother Mary Elizabeth Lange, the foundress of both the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first religious community of women of African descent, and the first Catholic school in the United States for black children.

The announcement of the selection of “Mother Mary Lange Catholic School” was made by Archbishop William E. Lori Sept. 4, the first day of the 2018-19 school year in the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

In April, he announced plans for the first new K-8 school in the city in nearly six decades. With plans to open in downtown Baltimore in 2020, its students will include those currently attending Holy Angels Catholic School, on the campus of the former Seton Keough High School in Southwest Baltimore, and Ss. James and John Catholic School, in the Johnston Square neighborhood.

The new school will honor a woman being considered for canonization, one who was born in 1784 in the Caribbean, emigrated to Baltimore and opened, in her home in East Baltimore, a school for black children, what would become St. Frances Academy.

“The Oblate Sisters of Providence considers it a great honor and tribute to have this new city Catholic School named in honor of Mother Mary Lange,” said Sister Rita Michelle Proctor, superior general of the order founded by Mother Lange, in a news release from the archdiocese. “She herself valued Catholic education as she established the first Catholic school for ‘children of color’ in 1828, St. Frances Academy, which still exists today.”

The new school will be built on a tract of city-owned land along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, between Lexington and Saratoga Streets. According to the news release, the final \$2 million of a goal of \$18.6 million must be raised before construction begins.

It will not be the first school in the archdiocese to bear her name, as the consolidation of the parish schools at St. Dominic, Shrine of the Little Flower and St. Anthony of Padua, on the campus of the latter, opened in 2005 as Mother Mary Lange Catholic School. It closed in 2010.

Dr. Camille Brown, associate superintendent of schools, and Monsignor Richard J. Bozzelli, pastor of St. Bernardine, led a consultation on the matter of naming the new school, which included a petition with 359 signatures promoting the name of Mother Lange that was forwarded to Archbishop Lori.

“One can’t tell the history of the Catholic school system in this country without mentioning Mother Mary Lange,” Archbishop Lori said. “She was a visionary woman of deep faith and recognized the life-changing role of education in the lives of children, most especially those living on society’s margins.

“Please God, Mother Lange’s name on our new school will be a beacon that shines brightly for the children of Baltimore and a reminder to all that every child of God deserves a good education and the hope and opportunity that comes with it.”

The Vatican is reviewing Mother Lange’s cause for canonization, which requires confirmation of two miracles attributed to her intercession.