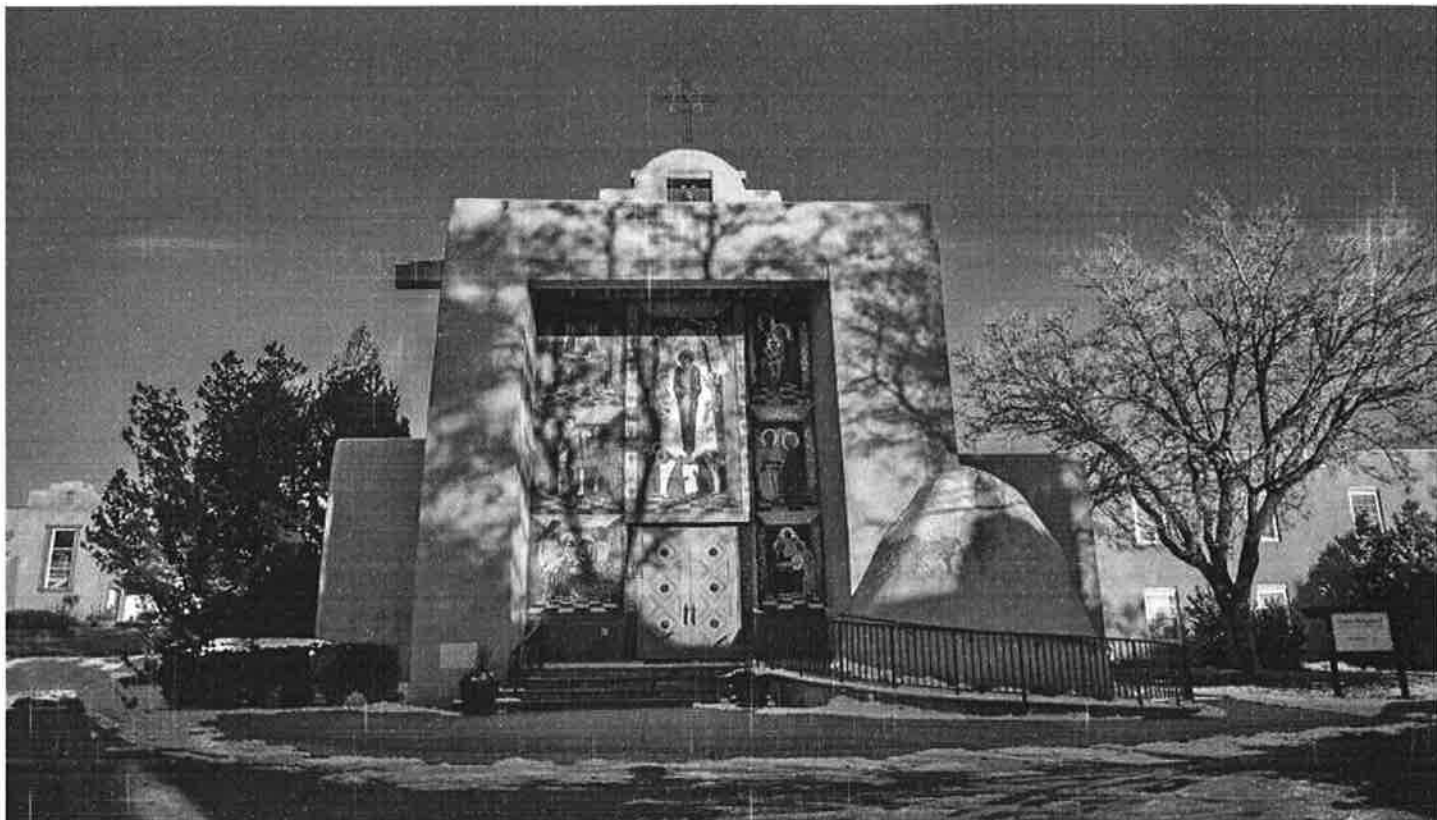


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## Two buyers express interest in archdiocese's Immaculate Heart of Mary Retreat center

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Apr 20, 2021



The Immaculate Heart of Mary Retreat and Conference Center reportedly has two buyers interested in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe property. The Catholic Church is asking \$7.8 million for the site.

Taos News file photo

Two possible buyers are lining up to buy the Immaculate Heart of Mary Retreat and Conference Center that has been put on the market by the Archdiocese of Santa Fe.

Modern Elder Academy, which recently bought a large ranch in Galisteo to house a “midlife wisdom school,” acknowledges it is one of the interested parties. A spokeswoman for the Modern Elder Academy and others have named The Mighty Union, a Texas-based hospitality company, as the other potential buyer.

The archdiocese, its bankruptcy attorney and the Immaculate Heart retreat director did not respond to *The New Mexican's* inquiries.

Joanie Griffin, a publicist speaking on behalf of Modern Elder Academy, confirmed the group's interest this week.

Modern Elder Academy in early January closed on the \$8.5 million purchase of the 2,600-acre Saddleback Ranch in Galisteo that will become a boot camp for dealing with middle age.

The Mighty Union, headquartered in Austin, Texas, converted a 1940s union building in that city into a 93-room boutique hotel called The Carpenter. The company also has properties in Oregon, Texas and Hawaii.

The Mighty Union did not respond to an email from *The New Mexican*, and no phone number was immediately available.

Immaculate Heart is between Museum Hill and St. John's College and across the street from Santa Fe Prep. The 12.42-acre property has been listed since August for \$7.8 million by Santa Fe Properties agent Philip Gudwin, and the online listing has a sale "pending."

"I cannot comment on that," Gudwin said.

Immaculate Heart has 55,882 square feet of structures, including Lourdes Hall. The New Mexico Performing Arts Society has been in residence at the property since the society's establishment in 2011. The society stages most of its performances in the retreat's chapel and also uses the dormitories for visiting performing artists and the larger meeting rooms for other events, said Linda Marianiello, executive director of New Mexico Performing Arts Society.

In a March 24 letter to the archdiocese, Performing Arts Society board member David Van Winkle spelled out its wishes for a new owner.

"It is our understanding that the Mighty Union wants to make IHM Retreat Center into a boutique hotel with a restaurant and bar," Van Winkle wrote. "Among their ideas is to present Big Name concerts in the Chapel, which would leave NMPAS and other local music organizations out of the picture. ... NMPAS believes that the second offer from Modern Elder Academy would be far better for the needs of the resident organizations at IHM, Santa Fe Prep School, St. John's College, and residents living nearby."

Van Winkle said the Performing Arts Society has communicated with Modern Elder Academy but not The Mighty Union.

Santa Fe Workshops founder and Director Reid Callanan said he has spoken with both prospective buyers.

“Both groups seem to be interested in having us stay,” Callanan said.

“We have been [at Immaculate Heart] for 30 years. I’m not quite sure what’s going on. The archdiocese and bankruptcy attorney are pretty nontransparent. We don’t get full details.”

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**Teya Vitu**

Business Editor

