NEWS RELEASE *for Immediate Release*

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St. Clement's Island Museum Returns Historic Communion Rail to its Original Home at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Compton, MD in Preparation for New Museum Building

Leonardtown, MD – St. Clement's Island Museum, a historic site overseen by the St. Mary's County Museum Division, recently worked with staff, clergy and parishioners as St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in nearby Compton, MD returned the historic communion rail back to its original home at the church building. St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church is known as "the oldest Catholic Church in the Original Thirteen Colonies" and is located near the entrance of Newtowne Neck State Park, which was once composed of land owned by the Jesuits for hundreds of years since the founding of Maryland.

The communion rail, built by Ted Neskovich, the brother-in-law of a parishioner, was donated by the builder as a gift to St. Francis Xavier Parish sometime between 1961 and 1964. Around 1984, the communion rail was given to St. Clement's Island Museum when the parish completed a restoration project for the church building. Since then, it has remained a prominent exhibit piece under the care of interpretive staff at St. Clement's Island Museum. Now, it has returned home to the church for which it was made - even perfectly matching the kneelers, which were also constructed by the same craftsman.

The museum building at St. Clement's Island Museum, which is over 30 years old, is set to be replaced by a brand-new modern facility and contemporary exhibits in the next few years. Knowing the interior of the new museum building would be completely redone sparked the idea to return the artifact to its original home. "It was an honor for the museum to be able to care for and display this beautiful piece of history to visitors and locals alike for so many decades," stated Karen Stone, Manager of the St. Mary's County Museum Division. "We're pleased that the folks at St. Francis Xavier Church - an incredible piece of Maryland's, and America's, historic and religious story - were so genuinely excited and joyful to have such an amazing, and important, part of their church back."

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As thanks for over 30 years of caretaking, the parish and its pastor, Reverend Robert G. Maro, extended their gratitude by graciously donating $350 to the museum at a ceremony on September 8, 2019. Karen Stone, Tim Stork (a parishioner at St. Francis Xavier and Treasurer of the St. Clement's Hundred), and three family members of the original craftsman - Delores Lynch (sister-in-law), Maria (daughter) and Brad (son of Maria and grandson of builder) - were all on hand at the ceremony to witness the rail back in its original setting.

About the St. Mary's County Museum Division

The St. Mary's County Museum Division was established by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County to collect, preserve, research and interpret the historic sites and artifacts which illustrate the natural and cultural histories of St. Mary's County and the Potomac River. With this as its charter, the Museum Division serves as a resource, liaison and community advocate for all St. Mary's County public and private cultural assets. For more information regarding hours of operation, programs, events, admission prices and more, visit the St. Mary's County Museum Division's social media pages on Facebook at Facebook.com/SCIMuseum or Facebook.com/1836Light, or on Twitter at @StClemIsMuseum or @PineyPtLHMuseum, or at Museums.StMarysMD.com.