



Office of the Archbishop
835 North Rush Street
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312.534.8230
archchicago.org

Prot. N. 2024 RPU-2

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On May 29, 2020, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of four neighboring parishes on the Southside of the City of Chicago: St. Bride Parish, St. Philip Neri Parish, Our Lady of Peace Parish, and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish. Extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church, these four parishes were united under the *ad interim* name of Our Lady and SS. Bride and Philip Neri Parish. By decrees dated September 22, 2020, the churches of the extinguished St. Bride Parish and Our Lady Gate of Heaven Parish were relegated to profane but not sordid use, effective October 1, 2020 (CIC c. 1222 §2). The new parish was renamed St. Josephine Bakhita Parish on February 4, 2021.

On February 22, 2024, after consulting with the parish finance council and others, the Reverend Thomas G. Belanger, pastor of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish, came to the opinion that continued use of Our Lady of Peace Church for divine worship was no longer feasible. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar of his region of the archdiocese, asking that Our Lady of Peace Church of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

A church may be relegated to profane but not sordid use when, after hearing the presbyteral council, the diocesan bishop determines there is a "grave cause" indicating a church should no longer be used for divine worship and that the good of souls suffers no detriment from the relegation. A Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura given May 4, 1996, considered what constituted the grave causes required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (Ministerium Iustitiae: *Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527).

As related in the Definitive Sentence, a new parish formed from the extinctive union of five parishes sought to relegate three of its five churches to profane but not sordid use. The faithful who worshipped at one of these churches took recourse against the relegation of their church. The Supreme Tribunal found that the following conditions together constituted the grave cause required for relegation: (1) preservation of all the churches would impose an intolerable burden on the new parish; (2) the church in question was no longer of service to the pastoral care of the faithful due to changed circumstances; (3) from the beginning, the new parish was burdened by a huge debt; (4) sale of the church would offer ready and effective assistance, otherwise lacking, to the urgent needs of the new parish; (5) the number of faithful

contributing to the support of the parish was diminishing; and (6) charity and other assistance to the poor should not be neglected to preserve a sacred building.

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining Our Lady of Peace Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the new St. Josephine Bakhita Parish due to operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the Our Lady of Peace Church campus will require \$1,381,950.00 in capital repairs, \$379,700.00 for the church alone. This is in addition to the \$1,333,911.00 required for capital repairs at the campus of the parish Church, St. Philip Neri, including \$270,050.00 for the parish church alone.

(2) Our Lady of Peace Church is not needed by St. Josephine Bakhita Parish for divine worship. The church has not been regularly used for divine worship since March 2020, when all worship activities ceased due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since then, the church has not reopened for regularly scheduled Sunday liturgy, all parishioners have been accommodated at the 1,600-seat parish church of St. Philip Neri, located approximately 1.1 miles from Our Lady of Peace Church, a five-minute drive.

(3) When St. Josephine Bakhita Parish was formed four years ago from the union of four parishes, the combined debt of the four parishes was \$9,434,270.00. Historic levels of the regular Sunday and Holy Day collections at the former Our Lady of Peace Parish were between \$80,000.00 and \$110,000.00 during the last five fiscal years of its operations (2015-2020). Income at these levels was insufficient to support the now extinguished parish for years. During the past four years the new parish has accumulated \$1,400,000.00 in operating deficits.

(4) Sale or rental of Our Lady of Peace Church will benefit the mission of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate annual savings of at least \$180,000.00 to \$225,000.00 from unspent regular maintenance expenses, and more from the unspent capital repairs once the church campus is sold or leased.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at Our Lady of Peace Church was 131 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), more than a 50% decrease from the 239 regular worshippers in October 2014 (Fiscal Year 2015).

(6) Preserving Our Lady of Peace Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of new St. Josephine Bakhita Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the extinctive union of four parishes to maintain the churches it cannot afford and that are no longer needed for the divine worship of the new parish. Furthermore, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to keep and maintain Our Lady of Peace Church as a place of Catholic worship. There is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of America. The reasonable course is to relegate Our Lady of Peace Church of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish to profane but not sordid use, selling or developing the property for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and charity.

THEREFORE, know that I, Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, Archbishop of Chicago, according to the norms of the Code of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago at the St. Bernardine campus of St. Luke and St. Bernardine Parish, Forest Park, Illinois, on March 5, 2024. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's vote of 23 yes and one against the proposal to relegate to profane but not sordid use Our Lady of Peace Church of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish in Chicago; invoking the Holy Spirit; and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Philip Neri is sufficient for the needs of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish.

I decree the following:

1. Effective immediately Our Lady of Peace Church of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish on the Southside of the City of Chicago is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of the St. Josephine Bakhita Parish, will assure the real property associated with the Our Lady of Peace Church campus is secure for the benefit of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish;
3. If alienated, Our Lady of Peace Church is to provide St. Josephine Bakhita Parish with proceeds from sale of the property or rental under lease;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meeting on March 5, 2024, are confidential documents and will be appended to this decree upon approval and made available upon the request of eligible parties; and
5. Notification of this decree is to be made immediately through publication on the Archdiocesan Website. It is then to be sent to the pastor of St. Josephine Bakhita Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 11th day of April, A.D. 2024.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, signed, and dated petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent by mail or delivered to the Archbishop of Chicago within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop, Archdiocese of Chicago, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

ONCE APPROVED, CONFIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING OF MARCH 5, 2024, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON THE REQUEST OF ELIGIBLE PARTIES TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS