



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

Prot. N. 2024 RPU-3

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On March 18, 2021, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of two neighboring parishes on the Northside of the City of Chicago: Our Lady of Lourdes Parish and Saint Mary of the Lake Parish. Extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church, these two parishes were united under the *ad interim* name of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

On February 20, 2024, after consulting with the parish staff and parishioners, the pastor of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, the Reverend Manuel Dorantes, came to the opinion that continued use of Our Lady of Lourdes 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 Lourdes Church of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish be relegated to profane but not sordid use (CIC c. 1222 §2).

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 Lourdes Church as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes

Parish due to operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the Our Lady of Lourdes Church campus would require \$1,415,400.00 in capital repairs, \$1,137,650.00 for the church alone, based on a facility assessment conducted in 2018 by a third-party engineering firm. The actual costs to complete necessary repairs have undoubtedly risen since 2018. This is in addition to the \$1,035,450.00 required for capital repairs at the campus of the parish church, Saint Mary of the Lake, including \$381,450.00 for the parish church alone, based on an assessment conducted in 2017 by the same third-party engineering firm.

(2) Our Lady of Lourdes Church is not needed for divine worship by Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. Seating capacity at the parish church, Saint Mary of the Lake, is 720, 1.3 miles from Our Lady of Lourdes Church, and sufficient to accommodate the total weekend Mass attendance of the united parish, which was 1,223 across six Masses in October 2023.

(3) When the new parish was formed three years ago from the union of two parishes, it acquired more than \$1,000,000.00 in debt. The debt was based primarily upon six successive years of operating deficits at the former Our Lady of Lourdes Parish. In Fiscal Year 2023 the combined operating deficit of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish was \$85,308.00, the result of a surplus of \$131,968.00 from Saint Mary of the Lake Church and a deficit of \$217,276.00 from Our Lady of Lourdes Church. For Fiscal Year 2024 the combined parish has budgeted for an expected deficit of more than \$100,000.00.

(4) Sale or rental of Our Lady of Lourdes Church will benefit the mission of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate annual savings of more than \$200,000.00 from unspent regular maintenance expenses, and more from the unspent capital repairs once the church is sold or leased.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at Our Lady of Lourdes Church was 437 in October 2023 (Fiscal Year 2024), a 45% decline from the from the last pre-COVID-19 count of 975 regular worshippers in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), and a near 65% decline from a count of 1,275 in October 2014 (Fiscal Year 2015)

(6) Preserving Our Lady of Lourdes Church for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes 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 two parishes to maintain a church it cannot afford and that is 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 Lourdes 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 Lourdes Church of Saint. Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish to profane but not sordid use, selling or developing the property for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and charity.

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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, and again at the St. Giles campus of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy and St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on May 7, 2024. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's May 7<sup>th</sup> vote of 33 yes and none against the proposal to relegate to profane but not sordid use Our Lady of Lourdes Church of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes 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 Saint Mary of the Lake is sufficient for the needs of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective today, May 20, 2024, Our Lady of Lourdes Church of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish on the Northside 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 Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, will assure the real property associated with the Our Lady of Lourdes Church campus is secure for the benefit of Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish;
3. If alienated, Our Lady of Lourdes Church is to provide Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes 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 meetings on March 5, 2024, and May 7, 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 Saint Mary of the Lake and Our Lady of Lourdes Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this 20<sup>th</sup> day of May, 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 MEETINGS OF MARCH 5, 2024, AND MAY 7, 2024, WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE UPON THE REQUEST OF ELIGIBLE PARTIES TO THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS