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Prot. N. 2025 RPU-2

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On May 22, 2017, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree, effective the same day, establishing a new parish through the extinctive union of two neighboring parishes in the North suburban community of Northbrook, Illinois: St. Norbert Parish, 1809 Walters Avenue, Northbrook, Illinois 60062-4534 (established c. 1894), and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, 3700 Dundee Road, Northbrook, Illinois 60062-2200 (established 1968). The new parish was called St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, also known as the Catholic Community of Northbrook.

In July 2021, after deliberation with the Parish Finance Council, the Parish Pastoral Council, and the entire parish community, a decision to phase out the use of Our Lady of the Brook campus, including regular divine worship in the multi-purpose central space of the single structure constructed on the campus. A final Mass was celebrated on the campus on October 10, 2021.

Over the past four years the parish worked with the Archdiocese of Chicago to find an appropriate use for Our Lady of the Brook campus. A potential buyer has now been identified to purchase the campus property. A proper church was never built on the campus, and the Eucharist and other liturgical rites were always celebrated in the multi-purpose central space of the parish structure. Nonetheless, it seems proper to seek the relegation to profane use of what had been the regular space for divine worship. The pastor of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, the Reverend Christopher M. Gustafson, wrote to me, asking that the former worship space of Our Lady of the Brook campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook 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 a grave cause required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (see *Ministerium Iustitiae: Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 514-527).

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 the Brook campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish for divine worship or other parish use, imposes a financial burden on the parish due to operational and maintenance expenses associated with the campus. If maintained for parish use, the campus would require at least an estimated \$125,000.00 annually for these expenses. Indeed, in the final years of its operation as a separate parish Our Lady of the Brook Parish incurred the following operational expenses: Fiscal Year 2017, \$126,824.00; Fiscal Year 2016, \$132,945.00; and Fiscal Year 2015, \$145,972.00.

(2) Our Lady of the Brook campus is not needed for divine worship by St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish. The furnishings, sacred images, and other liturgical items used for divine worship at Our Lady of the Brook campus, all movable property, were either donated for use in other Catholic churches or transferred for use at St. Norbert Church, the parish church. The seating capacity at the St. Norbert Church, is 1,000. This is more than sufficient to accommodate the total Sunday Mass attendance of the united parish, 1,006 across four Masses in October 2024. The parish church is located approximately three miles from Our Lady of the Brook campus.

(3) Sale or rental of Our Lady of the Brook campus will benefit the mission of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish with ready cash proceeds. Furthermore, there will be immediate annual savings of at least \$125,000.00 from unspent maintenance expenses, and more from avoided capital repairs.

(4) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Norbert Church of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish was 1,006 in October 2024 (Fiscal Year 2025), up nearly 200 from October 2022. The average Sunday attendance at Our Lady of the Brook Campus declined by nearly 50% between 2009 and 2019, from 461 to 233.

(5) Preserving Our Lady of the Brook campus for divine worship or other parish use will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook 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 worship space 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 the Brook campus as a space for Catholic worship or other parish use. There is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches or worship sites in the United States of America. The reasonable course is to relegate Our Lady of the Brook Campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook 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. Giles campus of St. Catherine of Siena-St. Lucy and St. Giles Parish, Oak Park, Illinois, on September 2, 2025. Hearing the council's deliberations that day, and the council's vote of 28 for and 1 against a proposal to relegate to profane but not sordid use Our Lady of the Brook campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, invoking the Holy Spirit, and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Norbert is sufficient for the needs of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish,

I decree the following:

1. Effective immediately, Our Lady of the Brook campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, Northbrook, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of the St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish, will assure the real property associated with Our Lady of the Brook campus is secure for the benefit of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish;
3. If alienated, Our Lady of the Brook campus of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish is to provide the parish with the proceeds from sale of the property or rental under lease;
4. The reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter and the minutes of the council meeting on September 2, 2025, 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 and sent to the pastor of St. Norbert and Our Lady of the Brook Parish for communication to parishioners through the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

Given this third day of September, A.D. 2025.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago


Rev. 
Ecclesiastical Notary

Before hierarchical recourse (appeal) may be taken against this decree, a written, dated, and signed petition, asking me to revoke or amend the decree, must be sent or delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (Code of Canon Law, cc. 1734, 1735, 1737). The address is Office of the Archbishop of Chicago, Archbishop Quigley Center, 835 North Rush Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611.

THE DATA SUBMITTED TO THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MINUTES OF THE PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL MEETING OF SEPTEMBER 2, 2025, WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FOREGOING DECREE AND WILL BE AVAILABLE FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS UPON REQUEST FROM THOSE LEGITIMATELY SEEKING THEM