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Prot. N. 2024 RPU-1

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On March 28, 2008, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, my predecessor, His Eminence, the late Francis Cardinal George, OMI, issued a decree extinguishing the territorial parish of St. Bonaventure, 1641 West Diversey Parkway, Chicago, Illinois 60614-1027. The decree also assigned the territory of the former St. Bonaventure Parish to St. Alphonsus Parish, 1429 West Wellington Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60657-4121, and changed the status of St. Bonaventure Church to that of an oratory of the Archdiocese of Chicago. The decree was effective April 1, 2008.

For 15 years St. Bonaventure Oratory was used by a small community of former parishioners and others for Sunday Mass, celebrated weekly until January 2, 2023, when Mass began being offered only one weekend each month. Staff and pupils of the non-parochial Catholic School, operated by the archdiocese on the St. Bonaventure Campus, also used the oratory until 2021.

In late 2023 and January 2024, after consulting with the rector, the Reverend Peter G. Wojcik, and others, staff of the archdiocese assigned to the Department of Parish Vitality and Mission, prepared a plan for the closing of St. Bonaventure Oratory. At meetings of the Presbyteral Council held on January 22, 2024, and January 23, 2024, the proposal for the relegation of St. Bonaventure Oratory to profane but not sordid use was put before the council (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 (see Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura given May 4, 1996, *Ministerium Iustitiae: Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527).

In this case it is established that (1) Retaining St. Bonaventure Oratory as a place of divine worship entails continuing receipt of income from the renting of the former parish hall and classrooms. There is no sustainable source of funding should major repairs become necessary.

(2) St. Bonaventure Oratory is not needed for divine worship for the 16 people reported attending Sunday Mass in October 2023. There are two parish churches within a radius of less than one mile from St. Bonaventure Oratory.

(3) Sale or rental of St. Bonaventure Oratory will benefit the mission of the Archdiocese of Chicago with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate annual savings of other funds not used for regular maintenance expenses, and more from any future capital repairs.

(4) Prior to COVID-19, and after, until January 2023, there was an average attendance of less than 100 worshippers per week.

(5) Preserving St. Bonaventure Oratory for worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will hinder the ability of the archdiocesan community to serve the poor and enhance its evangelical mission.

It is unreasonable to expect the archdiocese to maintain a church it cannot afford to maintain and that is no longer needed for the divine worship of the faithful. Furthermore, there are no surplus archdiocesan funds or other known sources of funding available to keep and maintain St. Bonaventure Oratory 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 the oratory to profane but not sordid use, selling or developing the property to benefit the mission of the Archdiocese of Chicago.

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 University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, Mundelein, Illinois, on January 22, 2024, and again on January 23, 2024. Hearing the council's deliberations on the matter and the council's January 23rd vote of 28 for and 3 against the proposal to relegate St. Bonaventure Oratory to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that other churches near the oratory are sufficient for the needs of the faithful.

I decree the following:

1. Effective April 1, 2024, St. Bonaventure Oratory on the Northside of the City of Chicago, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago will assure the real property associated with the St. Bonaventure Oratory campus is secure for the benefit of the archdiocese;
3. If alienated, St. Bonaventure Oratory is to provide the Archdiocese of Chicago 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 January 22, 2024, and January 23, 2024, are confidential documents. They will be appended to this decree upon approval and made available by the Office for Canonical Affairs upon request of eligible parties; and

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5. Notification of this decree is to be made immediately through publication on the Archdiocesan Website and through other notice given at the oratory.

Given this 1st day of March, 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.