



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

Prot. N. 2022 RPU-14

DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On April 8, 2021, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Chicago, I issued a decree extinguishing St. Agnes Parish, St. Paul Parish, and St. Kieran Parish, all in Chicago Heights, Illinois, uniting them in one new territorial parish effective July 1, 2021, and called, *ad interim*, SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish. By my decree of March 21, 2022, the name of the new parish was changed to Our Lady of the Heights Parish (*Parroquia Nuestra Señora de las Alturas*).

On January 4, 2021, the Reverend Gary Graf, pastor of the then SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish, after consulting his parishioners, discerned the continued use of St. Paul Church for worship was no longer feasible for the new SS. Paul, Agnes, and Kieran Parish. Consequently, he wrote to me and the Episcopal Vicar for his region of the archdiocese, asking that St. Paul Church 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 cause 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. 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) the new parish was burdened from the beginning 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 St. Paul Church of Our Lady of the Heights Parish as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the parish from operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If kept for parish use, the St. Paul Church campus will require \$311,000.00 in capital repairs, more than \$105,000.00 for the church alone. The total capital expenses required for the new parish are nearly \$2,000,000.00

over seven years. Furthermore, the parish has the burden of the ordinary annual expenses for maintaining St. Paul Church.

(2) St. Paul Church, seating only 300 and long insufficient for the number of those worshipping there, is no longer needed for divine worship for the average of 3,115 Sunday worshippers regularly attending the churches of the three former parishes in October 2019, before the arrival of the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19. Those who worshipped at St. Paul Church are now well accommodated in 750-seat parish church of St. Kieran and the 450-seat St. Agnes Church. In October 2021, after the arrival of COVID-19 and the extinctive union, the average combined number of Sunday worshippers declined to 1,454.

(3) On December 31, 2021, the combined debt of Our Lady of the Heights Parish was \$2,495,247.00, offset by savings of \$399,588.00 on deposit.

(4) Sale or rental of St. Paul Church would benefit the mission of Our Lady of the Heights Parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings from unspent capital repairs and at least \$95,000.00 annually for regular maintenance.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at the churches of the three former parishes was 3,115 in October 2019, a 6% decrease since October 2004. Over the same 15-year period, the average combined offertory collections decreased by nearly \$270,000.00. The combined collections fell to \$791,765.00 in October 2021, a 33% decline from \$1,189,573.00 in October 2014.

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

Finally, since March 2020, the novel coronavirus pandemic of COVID-19 has diminished parts of the United States economy, materially and negatively changing the financial well-being of the archdiocese, some of our parishes, and many poor and middle-class families. There is concern for the long-term economic survival of some institutions.

It is unreasonable to expect a new parish formed from the union of three parishes to continue maintaining a church it cannot afford, does not need, and which is no longer useful for divine worship. Moreover, there are no parochial, archdiocesan, or other known sources of funds available to keep and maintain St. Paul 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 and safe course is to relegate the church to profane but not sordid use, allowing it to be sold or otherwise developed for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and the work of charity.

Decree
Prot. N. 2022 RPU-14
March 28, 2022
Page 3

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 electronically *via* the internet on January 17, 2022, and again on January 18, 2022. Hearing the council's deliberations and the council's January 18th vote of 32 for and one against the proposal to relegate St. Paul Church of Our Lady of the Heights Parish, Chicago Heights, to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that the parish church of St. Kieran and St. Agnes Church are sufficient for the needs of the parish,

I decree the following:

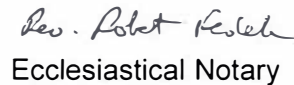
1. Effective July 1, 2022, St. Paul Church of Our Lady of the Heights Parish in Chicago Heights, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the pastor of Our Lady of the Heights Parish will assure the real property associated with St. Paul Church is secure for the benefit of Our Lady of the Heights Parish;
3. If alienated, the alienation of St. Paul Church is to provide Our Lady of the Heights Parish with the proceeds from sale of the real property or rental under lease;
4. When approved, the reports given to the Presbyteral Council on this matter, together with the minutes of the council meetings of January 17, 2022, and January 18, 2022, are to be attached to this decree and available upon request to 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 Our Lady of the Heights Parish for communication to parishioners through publication in the parish bulletin or other suitable means.

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 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.

Given this 28th day of March, A.D. 2022.
From Holy Name Cathedral,
Chicago, Illinois


Archbishop of Chicago




Ecclesiastical Notary

Attachments

**ONCE AVAILABLE, DATA PERTAINING TO THIS DECREE AND SUBMITTED TO THE
PRESBYTERAL COUNCIL OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND MINUTES OF THE
COUNCIL MEETINGS OF JANUARY 17, 2022, AND JANUARY 18, 2022, MAY BE
REQUESTED BY ELIGIBLE PARTIES FROM THE OFFICE FOR CANONICAL AFFAIRS**