



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

Prot. N. 2022 RPU-10

## DECREE

### IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On December 10, 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 three South Suburban parishes: St. John the Baptist Parish and Ascension-St. Susanna Parish both in Harvey, Illinois, and St. Gerard Majella Parish in Markham, Illinois. The union forming the new parish was effective April 5, 2020, and the new parish was called, *ad interim*, Ascension and SS. John the Baptist, Susanna, and Gerard Majella Parish. Hierarchical recourse was rejected before the Congregation for the Clergy on June 16, 2021 (Prot. N. 2021 1343). By decree dated February 14, 2022, the new parish was given the permanent name of Lord of Mercy Parish (*Parroquia Señor de Piedad*).

On January 5, 2022, the Most Reverend Joseph Perry, episcopal vicar of the region in which the new parish is located, together with the administrator of the parish, the Reverend Gary Graf, after consulting lay leadership of the parish, discerned the continued use of St. Gerard Majella Church for worship was no longer feasible for the new Lord of Mercy Parish. Consequently, Bishop Perry wrote to me asking that St. Gerard Majella 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. Gerard Majella Church of Lord of Mercy Parish as a place of divine worship, imposes a financial burden on the parish from operational and maintenance expenses associated with the church. If maintained for parish use, the St. Gerard Majella Church campus will require \$1,509,855.00 in capital repairs, \$199,300.00 for the church alone. Moreover, Lord of Mercy Parish will have the burden of unnecessary costs for maintaining a church it does not need.

(2) St. Gerard Majella Church is not needed for divine worship for the average of 384 Sunday worshippers regularly attending there in FY 2020 (before COVID-19). This number of worshippers is well accommodated in the 850 seat St. John the Baptist Church, the parish church of Lord of Mercy Parish.

(3) On December 31, 2021, the combined debt of the new Lord of Mercy Parish was \$2,998,239.00, \$1,455,018.00 associated with the former St. Gerard Majella Parish, partially offset by cash assets of \$1,723,454.00 on deposit, of which \$17,805.00 was associated with the former St. Gerard Majella Parish.

(4) Sale or rental of St. Gerard Majella Church would benefit the mission of Lord of Mercy Parish with ready cash proceeds. There will be immediate additional savings of at least \$50,000.00 annually, based on maintenance expenditures in recent years, and more from the \$1,509,855.00 in unspent capital repairs.

(5) The total number of faithful regularly worshipping on Sundays at St. Gerard Majella Parish was 384 in October 2019 (Fiscal Year 2020), a more than 16% decline from the recent highest attendance of 458 in October 2015 (Fiscal Year 2016).

(6) Over the last 15 years the annual Sunday offertory collections at St. Gerard Majella Church fluctuated between a low of \$64,585.00 in Fiscal Year 2021 and the high of \$96,566.00 in Fiscal Year 2018, yielding operating deficits of at least \$40,000.00 annually since Fiscal Year 2013.

(7) Preserving St. Gerard Majella Church for divine worship will result in continued and unnecessary operational and maintenance costs that will cripple the ability of Lord of Mercy Parish to serve the poor, enhance its evangelical mission, and remain viable.

It is unreasonable to expect a new parish formed from the union of three parishes to maintain 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. Gerard Majella 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.

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 18<sup>th</sup> vote of 31 for and two against the proposal to relegate St. Gerard Majella Church of Lord of Mercy Parish to profane but not sordid use; invoking the Holy Spirit; satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, and that St. John the Baptist Church, the parish church, is sufficient for the needs of the faithful,

***I decree the following:***

1. Effective immediately, St. Gerard Majella Church of Lord of Mercy Parish in Markham, Illinois, is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Archdiocese of Chicago, cooperating with the administrator of Lord of Mercy Parish, will assure the real property associated with St. Gerard Majella Church is secure for the benefit of the parish;
3. If alienated, the alienation of St. Gerard Majella Church is to provide the 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 administrator of Lord of Mercy 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 14<sup>th</sup> day of February, 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**