



DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On November 20, 2024, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Joliet, I issued a decree extinguishing St. Bernard Parish. The decree extinguished this parish as a separate juridic person, and it was united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish, St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish. The union of this new juridic person was effective from December 12, 2024.

The parishioners of the aforementioned parish were consulted in two different sessions so that all could be heard. In these meetings, parishioners were informed that the church building could be reduced to profane but not sordid use. Moreover, Rev. John Hornicak, Parochial Administrator and representative of the new juridic person, supports the relegation of St. Bernard Church to profane but not sordid use. **Consequently, I, in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, have decided to relegate St. Bernard Church to profane but not sordid use (CIC/83, can. 1222).**

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. Christ’s 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 the case of St. Bernard Church, it is established that: 1) the church building would impose an intolerable burden on St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish from a financial point of view; 2) due to the decrease in the overall Catholic population of Joliet, within its small geographical boundaries, the church is no longer of service to the current parishioners of the new parish; 3) the new parish has taken on an overall large debt by sustaining three church buildings; 4) the sale of the church building will help keep the new parish out of debt; 5) there has been a significant decrease of parishioners in this church, Sunday Mass attendance averaging only 63 persons of the 129 registered families; the remaining church building of the new parish will provide more than enough space for all the faithful to receive the sacraments and participate in divine worship; 6) preserving this sacred building would prevent the new parish from providing charity and alms giving to those most in need.

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. Furthermore, there are no diocesan, parochial or other funds available to keep and maintain St. Bernard Church as a place of Catholic worship. Additionally, there is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of America.

The most reasonable and prudent decision 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 works of charity.

THEREFORE, I, the Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks, Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois, in accord with the norms of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Joliet on November 20, 2024 at the Blanchette Catholic Center in Crest Hill Illinois. Having heard the Presbyteral Council at the same meeting, which voted unanimously in favor of relegating St. Bernard Church to profane but not sordid use I, after invoking the Holy Spirit,

hereby decree the following:

1. Effective immediately, St. Bernard Church, Joliet, of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Diocese of Joliet, cooperating with the pastor of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish will ensure that the real property associated with St. Bernard Church is secure for the benefit of St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish;
3. If the church of St. Bernard is alienated, the alienation is to provide St. Mary Magdalene, St. Bernard and St. Anthony Parish with the proceeds from the sale of the real property or rental under lease;
4. The minutes of the Presbyteral Council meeting are to be included with this decree;
5. The notification of this decree will be given through the official website of the Diocese of Joliet.

Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent or delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC '83 cc. 1734; 1735; 1737) at the Blanchette Catholic Center, 16555 Weber Rd., Crest Hill, IL 60403.

Given on this 21st day of January 2025
Blanchette Catholic Center
Crest Hill, IL



Ronald A. Hicks

Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks
Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois

David Salvato

David Salvato, JCD
Chancellor