



11.2.19

Status of St. Elizabeth Church in Corry changes

Rev. D. G. “Skip” Davis, pastor of the partnered parishes of St. Thomas in Corry and St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Union City, announced on Nov. 2, 2019, that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the priest council, has relegated St. Thomas Parish’s secondary church, St. Elizabeth, to “profane but not sordid use,” effective Dec. 1, 2019.

The technical designation refers to the canon law process by which a bishop removes the blessing or consecration of a church building. Through that process, the building ceases to be reserved for divine worship, and therefore, can be used for non-religious purposes. The same process is described in England as “reducing a church to secular but not unbecoming use.” This language helps clarify that the term “profane” means secular or non-religious, while “sordid” means unbecoming or inappropriate.

The designation is the result of a process that occurs when a pastor, with the support of the parish finance council and the parish pastoral council, determines a church building no longer can be maintained for any of a variety of reasons. A complete history of the church, as well as a detailed

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narrative of the current situation, is described in the decree announcing the bishop's decision, now available at www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html.

The most recent change for the building occurred in Feb. 2017, when the Diocese of Erie implemented a series of parish mergers and partnerships across the diocese as a result of a pastoral planning initiative. At that time, St. Elizabeth Parish was merged into St. Thomas Parish. Sunday Masses have not been celebrated at St. Elizabeth since that time; the church has been used only for funerals and one wedding. The sacrament of reconciliation and stations of the cross also periodically have been held there, but now will be held at St. Thomas Parish, located a few blocks away.

St. Thomas also was partnered with St. Teresa Parish, Union City, effective January 3, 2019.

The pastoral planning process involving parishes that was completed in 2017 was designed to allow parishes to evaluate their own situations going forward, and to make recommendations at the local level.

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