



DECREE

EFFECTING THE RELEGATION OF SAINT STANISLAUS KOSTKA CHURCH (SHARON) TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

History

The first Saint Stanislaus Kostka church in Sharon was located in an already-existing edifice which was purchased by the parish in 1931 and converted into a Catholic church. Following a fire there in 1965, the original church was torn down and subsequently replaced by the current Saint Stanislaus Kostka church, which was completed in 1966.

Recent decades have seen a steady decline in parish membership, coupled with a decline in the number of available priests and the gradual diminishing of both financial and human resources. Because of these factors, Saint Stanislaus Kostka parish and Holy Trinity parish in Sharon were merged in an extinctive union by decree of the Most Reverend Donald W. Trautman, Bishop of Erie, effective September 12, 2009, from which the new Saint Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity parish was established. Saint Stanislaus Kostka church continued to serve as the parish church.

In 2017, Saint Stanislaus Kostka-Holy Trinity parish itself, together with Saint Adalbert parish in Farrell, was merged into Saint Anthony parish, Sharon, effective February 13, 2017. By virtue of the decree effecting that merger, the Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, Bishop of Erie entrusted Saint Anthony parish with the care of three churches: Saint Anthony of Padua church which remained the parish church, and Saint Adalbert and Saint Stanislaus Kostka churches, both of which lost their status as parish churches. Sunday Masses have not been celebrated in Saint Stanislaus Kostka church since February 2017, and the church has been used since then only for personal devotion and for funerals.

Current Situation

According to the law, in order to relegate a church to profane use or even to close it permanently, it is necessary that there be some grave reason(s) suggesting that the church no longer be used for divine worship. Often the gravity of the cause becomes evident when a number of factors are considered together. Can. 1222 §2 states:



Where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the presbyteral council, can relegate it to profane but not sordid use, with the consent of those who legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church, and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby.

Since February 13, 2017, Saint Anthony parish has been burdened with the upkeep of three church edifices. Sunday Mass is celebrated only in the parish church itself. There is no longer any regularly scheduled public divine worship at Saint Stanislaus Kostka church. It has been used for numerous funerals since February 2017, but there have been no baptisms or weddings celebrated there, which helps to illustrate why the number of those who worshipped there had already been in steady decline for years.

If Saint Stanislaus Kostka church were to be relegated, Saint Anthony parish would continue to have both the parish church (Saint Anthony) and a secondary church (Saint Adalbert). They would be more than sufficient to meet the pastoral needs of the parish. In fact, the parish church itself is able to serve as the regular place of worship for all residents of the parish. Furthermore, and quite importantly, Saint Anthony parish does not have the financial resources to maintain all three churches in a manner suitable for the worthy celebration of the sacraments. The attempt to do so is depriving pastoral programs of their necessary resources and thereby harming the overall apostolate of the parish. The current rate of deficit spending will deplete the parish's non-restricted assets within five years. To be relieved of the burden of maintaining Saint Stanislaus Kostka church will reduce that deficit spending by more than 40%.

The Reverend Matthew Ruyechan, pastor, with the support of the parish pastoral and finance councils, has petitioned that Saint Stanislaus Kostka church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. Being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, the pastor has given his consent (cf. can. 1222 §2).

Relegating Saint Stanislaus Kostka church to profane use is not likely to result in any harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §). The pastor is aware of the obligation to see to it that Saint Stanislaus Kostka church, if relegated, not be given over to sordid use.

This information was shared with the members of the Presbyteral Council on March 28, 2019. Having considered the matter attentively, the members of the Council unanimously recommended to me that I grant the petition of the pastor to relegate Saint Stanislaus Kostka church to profane but not sordid use.

All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the best possible means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of Saint Anthony of Padua parish, while considering that Saint Stanislaus Kostka church no longer serves as a parish church, that it has been only

used for funerals used since February of 2017; that the obligation of maintaining three separate church buildings has placed an unsustainable financial burden on Saint Anthony of Padua parish which at the present rate of spending will deplete unrestricted parish assets in fewer than five years; that the parish therefore effectively lacks the financial means to maintain Saint Stanislaus Kostka; that the parish also lacks the ability to maintain adequate vigilance over the building which is in an area prone to vandalism, theft, and arson; that there is no pastoral need for the church edifice; that the pastor and members of the pastoral council have petitioned for the relegation of the church; and that there does not appear to be any probable detriment to the good of souls, I judge that the aforementioned reasons, when considered cumulatively, constitute the grave cause required by the law (cf. can. 1222 §2) for the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use, and I hereby decree the following:

Saint Stanislaus Kostka church of Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Sharon is relegated to profane but not sordid use, according to the norm of can. 1222 §2.

This decree is effective June 9, 2019 anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 6th day of June, 2019

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL
Bishop of Erie

Christopher J. Singer

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor