



DECREE

EFFECTING THE RELEGATION OF SAINT ADALBERT CHURCH (FARRELL) TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

History

Saint Adalbert parish in Farrell was established in 1912 as a personal parish for Catholics of Polish heritage. The first parish church was dedicated in 1914 but had to be replaced in 1932 after a devastating fire. While the parish grew quickly, at one time including a school and convent, by 1930 the Polish Catholic population of Farrell was already moving to Sharon. Saint Stanislaus Kostka parish was thus established in 1931 for the Polish families in Sharon, resulting in Saint Adalbert parish losing a considerable part of its membership. The parish school closed in 1959, and the last full-time pastor left in 1989. From 1989 until 2017, the parish was variably either under the care of an administrator or it shared a pastor with other parishes until finally, on February 13, 2017, it was merged by extinctive union into Saint Anthony of Padua parish, Sharon.

The current Saint Adalbert church was dedicated on April 3, 1932 by Bishop John Mark Gannon. It functioned as a parish church until the aforementioned merger in 2017, when it became a secondary church without mission status of Saint Anthony of Padua parish. Since the merger, there have been eleven funerals for former parishioners of Saint Adalbert parish, but most of those were celebrated at the Holy Cross Cemetery Chapel and not in the church. There have been no baptisms or weddings in the church since 2017 and the only scheduled Mass has been the annual Mass on the feast of St. Adalbert.

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.



From 2017 to 2019 Saint Anthony parish was responsible for the financial upkeep of three churches: the parish church of Saint Anthony of Padua as well as two secondary churches: Saint Adalbert church in Farrell and Saint Stanislaus Kostka church in Sharon. St. Stanislaus was relegated to profane use on June 9, 2019, leaving St. Anthony parish still responsible for the two remaining churches. The parish does not have the financial resources to maintain both churches in a manner suitable for the worthy celebration of the sacraments.

In the past three years the parish has seen a net loss of well over \$100,000. The fiscal year 2017-2018 saw a deficit of over \$80,000, and 2018-2019 saw a deficit of \$44,000. The closure and sale of the former St. Stanislaus Kostka church is the reason for the aforementioned reduction in the deficit, but if the annual deficit of approximately \$44,000 continues, all unrestricted parish assets will be depleted in less than four years. The annual expenses (over \$18,000) for St. Adalbert church and complex represent more than 40% of the continued annual deficit, but do little to contribute to the pastoral and faith life of the parish. Those funds could be put to much better use in religious education, youth ministry and life-long faith formation programs.

Another concern is that as an unused building, St. Adalbert church is at risk for vandalism. The former St. Ann church nearby had copper piping stolen which created water and other damages to the building. Local drug dealers are also known to use empty buildings in the area.

Both the general population and the Catholic population of the Farrell area continue to decline. As a result, there is diminished need for multiple churches. Also, declining parish membership is resulting in decreased income. That income has decreased even more due to the current pandemic, thus further endangering the parish's financial condition. Adding to this scenario is the fact that, since Saint Adalbert parish had been a personal parish, a significant number of its parishioners did not live in the area of the church. Following the merger into Saint Anthony parish, many of the former Saint Adalbert parishioners joined the territorial parishes nearer to where they actually live.

The parish finance council voted unanimously on August 15, 2019 to recommend to the pastor that he petition the Bishop to relegate Saint Adalbert church to profane but not sordid use. Members of the pastoral council unanimously did the same on August 12, 2019.

Being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, the pastor has given his consent (cf. can. 1222 §2). He attests that relegating Saint Adalbert church to profane use is not likely to result in any harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §2). All of the sacraments and devotions are available at the parish church which is only a few block away from Saint Adalbert church. The pastor is also aware of the obligation to see to it that Saint Adalbert church, if relegated, not be given over to sordid use.

This information was shared with the members of the Presbyteral Council on February 19, 2020. 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 Adalbert church in Farrell to profane but not sordid use.

All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 1222 §2 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 in Sharon, while considering that Saint Adalbert church no longer serves as a parish church, that regularly scheduled Masses ceased there in 2017; that no baptisms or weddings have been celebrated there since 2017; that most of the funerals for former parishioners since 2017 were celebrated at the cemetery chapel and not in Saint Adalbert church; that the obligation of maintaining two separate church buildings is contributing to an unsustainable financial burden on Saint Anthony of Padua parish; that the unused church is at risk for vandalism and drug use; that the funds spent on the upkeep of Saint Adalbert church could be better used for faith formation programs; that there is no pastoral need for the church edifice; that the pastor has petitioned for the relegation of the church with the unanimous support of the members of the pastoral council and the finance council; 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 Adalbert church in Farrell, being a secondary 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 on September 20, 2020, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 3rd day of September, 2020

+Lawrence T. Persico

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

Christopher J. Singer

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor