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Diocese of Erie announces relegation of Saint Brigid Church in Meadville

The Reverend Jeffrey Lucas, pastor of The Epiphany of the Lord Parish in Meadville, announced during weekend Masses that The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, has accepted his request to relegate Saint Brigid Church to “profane but not sordid use.” The technical designation refers to the canon-law process by which a bishop removes the blessing or consecration of a church building. The building then ceases to be reserved for divine worship and therefore can be used for non-religious purposes.

The decision follows an extensive period of discernment and review that occurs whenever a pastor, with the support of the parish pastoral and finance councils, determines that a church building can no longer be responsibly maintained or used for its intended sacred purpose. Father Lucas formally petitioned the bishop on October 8, 2025, with unanimous support from both councils.

Saint Brigid Parish traces its origins to 1862, when English-speaking Catholic immigrants from Ireland established a new community separate from Saint Agatha Parish. The current church building was dedicated in 1881 and served generations of Meadville families.

In 2021, Saint Brigid Parish merged with Saint Agatha and Saint Mary parishes to form The Epiphany of the Lord Parish. Saint Agatha was designated the parish church; Saint Brigid became a secondary church without mission status.

— more —

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A 2023 facilities feasibility and sustainability study conducted by Weber Murphy Fox documented major structural issues and substantial financial challenges associated with the long-term maintenance of Saint Brigid Church. Immediate repair needs were estimated at \$549,362, with an additional \$888,362 required to bring the structure to the current building code. In 2025, a specialist recommended steeple repairs estimated at \$261,188.

Persistent water infiltration into the attached social hall, ongoing annual maintenance costs averaging \$65,765, and the risk of exhausting parish liquid assets further underscored that the parish could not sustain the building without jeopardizing its mission, ministries and school.

Father Lucas attested that the relegation of Saint Brigid Church will not detrimentally impact the spiritual needs of parishioners, citing the proximity and capacity of Saint Agatha Church—located only 750 feet away and fully equipped to serve the entire parish community. He also affirmed his commitment to ensuring the building is not used for any “sordid” purpose, as required by canon law.

After reviewing the petition and the full report, the Presbyteral Council voted to recommend that Bishop Persico grant the request.

Bishop Persico determined that the cumulative financial, structural and pastoral factors constitute the grave cause required by canon law for this action. He issued a decree formally relegating Saint Brigid Church to profane but not sordid use, effective February 2, 2026.

A complete history of the church, as well as a detailed 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 decree is effective February 2, 2026.

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