



Archdiocese of Philadelphia  
Office of the Archbishop  
222 North 17th Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19103-1299

## **DECREE**

### **OF THE RELEGATION OF**

### **MATER DOLOROSA CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

### **TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE**

Mater Dolorosa Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has served as a worship site of Holy Innocents Parish, Philadelphia since 2013. The church, however, is no longer needed by the parish and the parish lacks the staff and funding necessary to maintain Mater Dolorosa Church without seriously impeding the future ministry of the parish. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether sufficient grave causes exist for the relegation of Mater Dolorosa Church to profane but not sordid use.

The following grave causes suggest that the church be so relegated and no longer be used for divine worship:

- 1) Mater Dolorosa Church is no longer needed by Holy Innocents Parish. There have been few requests to use Mater Dolorosa Church for public worship. In addition it is located in close proximity to Holy Innocents Church, so it is not a burden for the faithful to come to the parish church to worship;
- 2) In addition to Mater Dolorosa Church, Holy Innocents Parish has responsibility for Holy Innocents Church (the parish church), Saint Joan of Arc Church, Saint Joachim Church and a mission center for Hispanic Catholics. The parish does not have enough clergy to provide services at all of these locations. Administering them all is also burdensome and is detrimental to the pastoral work of the parish.
- 3) Holy Innocents Parish has endeavored to keep Mater Dolorosa Church in good repair. The former rectory, however, is attached to the church and so it also must be maintained by the parish so long as the church is in use. The annual costs of maintaining the entire property is approximately \$45,200. In addition, needed repairs would cost approximately \$55,000. While Holy Innocents Parish has approximately \$2.5 million in savings, they also have almost \$500,000 of debt. Notably, the parish is unable to meet its regular operating expenses and has been forced to draw upon

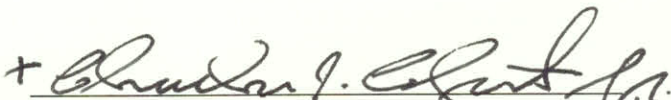
parish savings to pay these regular expenses. It is a financial hardship to continue to repair and to maintain Mater Dolorosa Church property and it could negatively impact the ministries of the parish, such as the parish school;

- 4) there is no other source of funding for the costs of repairing and maintaining the church and the archdiocese cannot supply additional clergy;
- 5) the church building does not have any particular architectural, historical, or artistic significance; and,
- 6) having the parishioners worship at the parish church will enhance parish unity and help parishioners focus on the future of the parish.

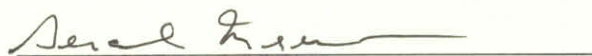
Accordingly, in virtue of the prescripts of canon 1212 and canon 1222, §2 of the Code of Canon Law, having judged that sufficient grave causes are present and that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired and having consulted with the Council of Priests on June 24, 2016, I hereby **DECREE** that Mater Dolorosa Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This decree is effective as of September 16, 2016, and is to be communicated to the members of Holy Innocents Parish and to the faithful of the Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the 12th day of August, in the Year of Our Lord 2016.

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Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.  
Archbishop of Philadelphia

**SEAL**

  
Reverend Monsignor Gerard C. Mesure  
Chancellor