



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

# **DECREE**

## **OF THE RELEGATION OF**

### **HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

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

Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been designated as a church for worship by Old Saint Mary Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania since July 1, 2009. Holy Trinity Church is no longer needed by Old Saint Mary Parish, and it is believed that the continued costs of maintaining and repairing Holy Trinity Church would significantly prevent and weaken the financial stability of Old Saint Mary Parish. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether sufficient grave causes exist for the relegation of Holy Trinity Church to profane but not sordid use.

The following grave causes suggest that Holy Trinity Church be so relegated and no longer be used for divine worship:

- 1) Holy Trinity Church is no longer needed by Old Saint Mary Parish. On July 1, 2009, Holy Trinity Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania merged with Old Saint Mary Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Between 2009 and 2017, non-solemnity holy day Masses were celebrated in Holy Trinity Church. It also served as a location for Masses in the extraordinary form between July 2013 and May 2015. In the spring of 2017, the parishioners of Old Saint Mary Parish asked for Mass not to be celebrated in Holy Trinity Church due to the deteriorating flooring. No religious services have been held there since;
- 2) Holy Trinity Church is located two city blocks from Old Saint Mary Church. There does not exist an undue burden for the faithful to come to Old Saint Mary Church to worship;
- 3) The decision to seek relegation of Holy Trinity Church to profane but not sordid use was made known to the Old Saint Mary Parish community-at-large and no major objections emerged;
- 4) Old Saint Mary Parish has striven to maintain Holy Trinity Church in good repair. However, the costs of repairing Holy Trinity Church would place a significant financial strain upon Old Saint Mary Parish and is not conducive to the parish's financial solvency. The cost for regular maintenance of Holy Trinity Church ranges between \$10,000 and \$14,000 per year. To this one must add the costs related to the removal and replacement of the current floors, estimated to total \$53,000, and the replacement of the deteriorating roof, estimated to cost \$238,000. In addition, the entire heating system, and not just a boiler, needs to be replaced. Furthermore, the church is not air conditioned. Initial estimated costs for the undertaking of a complete HVAC installation have ranged between \$500,000 and \$800,000. While Old Saint Mary Parish could cover all of these costs at this time, it seems very unreasonable to do so when the building is not used now and would not be used very often in the future should the repairs take place. Further, these expenditures would

deplete parish savings and could lead to future financial instability in the parish, especially as the Old Saint Mary Church building itself will soon require repairs to elements such as the roof and air-conditioning system;

- 5) Having all of the parishioners continue to worship at Old Saint Mary Church will continue to enhance parish unity and help parishioners focus on the future of the parish.

On the other hand, the Holy Trinity Church building has significant historical value, as it is the third Catholic church built in the City of Philadelphia, and was the church of the first national parish in the country, serving the Germans. Its exterior is historically designated and cannot be altered without the approval of the historical commission of the City of Philadelphia.

Nevertheless, because of the severe financial strain that would be placed upon Old Saint Mary Parish if the required repairs were to be completed at Holy Trinity Church, 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 February 21, 2019, I hereby **DECREE** that Holy Trinity Church, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of September 3, 2019 and is to be communicated to the members of Old Saint Mary Parish and to the faithful of the Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. Canonical recourse to this Decree is to be sought according to the norms of canon law. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

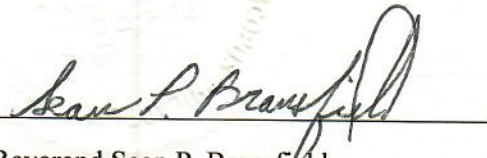
Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the 25th day of July, 2019.



Most Reverend Charles J. Chaput, O.F.M. Cap.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL



Reverend Sean P. Bransfield

Vice-Chancellor