



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

DECREE

OF THE RELEGATION OF

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH

FRONT AND ALLEN STREETS, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

Immaculate Conception Church at Front and Allen Streets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been designated as a church for worship by Saint Michael Parish in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania since 2011. Immaculate Conception Church is no longer needed by Saint Michael Parish, and it is believed that the continued costs of maintaining and repairing Immaculate Conception Church would significantly undermine the financial stability of Saint Michael Parish. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether sufficient grave causes exist for the relegation of Immaculate Conception Church to profane but not sordid use.

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

- 1) Immaculate Conception Church is no longer needed by Saint Michael Parish. On July 1, 2011, Immaculate Conception Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania merged into Saint Michael Parish, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Saint Michael Church was designated as the parish church, with Immaculate Conception Church being an alternate church for worship. Immaculate Conception Church has not been used as a regular church for worship for over two years. In 2017, Masses were suspended in Immaculate Conception Church during the winter due to the failure of the heating system and the costs of renting heaters for the building. Then, in August 2018, it was discovered that paint chips were falling from the ceiling, which led to the total suspension of use of the building as a church for worship by Saint Michael Parish.
- 2) Immaculate Conception Church is relatively close to Saint Michael Church, with just over one-half mile between the two buildings. There does not exist an undue burden for the faithful to come to Saint Michael Church to worship. Indeed, even prior to the paint problems, parishioners were not able to attend Immaculate Conception Church in the winter months because of the heating problems, and they attended Saint Michael Church with no known issues.
- 3) The decision to seek relegation of Immaculate Conception Church to profane but not sordid use was made known to the Saint Michael Parish community-at-large and no major objections emerged.
- 4) While Saint Michael Parish has striven to maintain Immaculate Conception Church, it has caused significant financial strain. The heating system began having trouble in 2013 and failed in 2017. A new heating system was estimated to cost from \$60,000 to \$80,000. Temporary heaters were

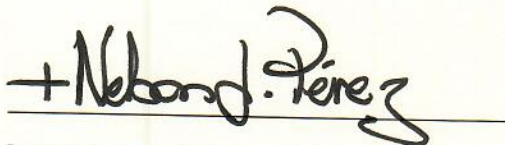
employed, which cost approximately \$12,000 to rent every three months, but even this was cost prohibitive, leading to Mass not being celebrated at Immaculate Conception Church during the winter season. In addition, the building has needed a new roof for some time, but due to the prohibitive cost, only patches were made when leaks occurred. As noted above, the interior ceiling is experiencing paint chipping. Finally, there are significant and costly capital projects associated with Saint Michael Parish that still need to be undertaken. The income of the parish is under \$1,000 per week, certainly prohibiting the parish from making even a small attempt to bring the Immaculate Conception Church building into any form of usable state, given the high cost of doing so.

- 5) The continued non-use of the Immaculate Conception church building has led to break-in attempts, creating a security problem as well as threatening the sanctity of the space.
- 6) The Immaculate Conception church building does not have any particular architectural, historical or artistic significance aside from being built in 1869.
- 7) Having all of the parishioners continue to worship at Saint Michael Parish Church will continue to enhance parish unity and help parishioners focus on the future of the parish.

Accordingly, in virtue of the precepts 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 October 15, 2020, I hereby **DECREE** that Immaculate Conception Church at Front and Allen Streets in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of January 11, 2021 and is to be communicated to the members of Saint Michael Parish and to the faithful of the Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. Recourse may be taken against this decree in accord with the norm of law. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

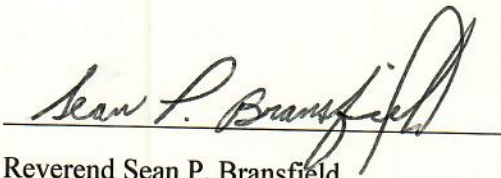
Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the 2nd day of December, 2020.



Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez

Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL



Reverend Sean P. Bransfield

Vice-Chancellor