



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

DECREE

OF THE RELEGATION OF

SACRED HEART CHURCH, PHOENIXVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA

TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

Sacred Heart Church in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania has been designated as a church for worship by Saint Ann Parish in Phoenixville, Pennsylvania since 2012. Saint Ann Parish has not found it necessary to use Sacred Heart Church, and it is believed that the costs of maintaining and repairing Sacred Heart Church would significantly impact the financial and overall stability of Saint Ann Parish. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether sufficient grave causes exist for the relegation of Sacred Heart Church to profane but not sordid use.

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

- 1) On July 1, 2012, Sacred Heart Parish, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania merged with Saint Ann Parish, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania. At that time, Saint Ann Parish took ownership of Sacred Heart Church, which was then designated by Saint Ann Parish as an alternate church for worship. In 2018, the regularly scheduled weekend parish Mass and weekly confessions ceased taking place at Sacred Heart Church, but the celebration of weddings and funerals in the church continued. In March 2020, with the beginning of the Covid-19 public health restrictions, all liturgies were discontinued at Sacred Heart Church. Since that time, no worship services have taken place at Sacred Heart Church, with all religious celebrations taking place in "Saint Ann Chapel" (604 S. Main Street), which is located on the original Saint Ann Parish property. On this same property also sits "Saint Ann Memorial Church" (500 S Main Street), but all parish liturgies since March 2020 have taken place at Saint Ann Chapel. No religious services have been held in Sacred Heart Church since March 2020, and no situation in the parish has arisen during the intervening period that would have required the use of this Church;
- 2) Sacred Heart Church is located relatively close to Saint Ann Chapel, with less than one mile separating the two buildings. There does not exist an undue burden for the faithful to come to Saint Ann Chapel to worship;

- 3) The decision to seek relegation of Sacred Heart Church to profane but not sordid use was made known to the Saint Ann Parish community-at-large, and no major objections emerged;
- 4) The costs of maintaining the property that comprised the former Sacred Heart Parish continue to impact the financial vitality and well-being of Saint Ann Parish. On the property of the former Sacred Heart Parish are found Sacred Heart Church, the former parish rectory, the former parish convent, and a school building. During the fiscal year ending in June 2021, Saint Ann Parish spent just under \$40,000 to maintain this property, though these costs were somewhat offset by tenants' reimbursements. In addition, in the past year Saint Ann Parish spent just under \$90,000 for Archdiocesan mandated concrete and brick repairs to Sacred Heart Church. In addition, Sacred Heart Church needs a new roof, with estimated quotes in 2021 indicating that this project could cost as much as \$106,000; however, with the passage of time and inflation those cost estimates would now be higher. Other necessary church building repairs, though individually less costly in nature, would in the aggregate further financially impact Saint Ann Parish. While Saint Ann Parish completed fiscal year 2021-2022 with a very small surplus from operating revenue, the parish overall experienced a deficit exceeding \$130,000. It is also important to note that Saint Ann Parish currently has the financial responsibility of maintaining twelve buildings on two campuses, four of which are located on the campus of the former Sacred Heart Parish. The combined, regular maintenance costs to these two campuses continue to significantly impact the financial stability of Saint Ann Parish;
- 5) Since Saint Ann Parish and Sacred Heart Parish merged in 2012, the buildings on the former Sacred Heart Parish campus have been rented to various non-profit agencies that work to serve those in need of basic human services. Currently, the former convent, the former rectory, the school building, and the basement level of the church building are being rented and are being used to serve those in need. It is foreseen that with the relegation of Sacred Heart Church, the entire real estate parcel consisting of the four buildings that comprise the "Sacred Heart Campus" can possibly be sold in such a way that will allow for the continuation of social service work already begun. Not relegating and selling the church while selling the rest of the property is unfeasible, as it would require a costly subdivision of the property;
- 6) Since 1900 Sacred Heart Parish played a critical role in serving Slovak speaking immigrants. That said, the Church building itself does not fall under the understanding of "artistic or historical significance" as specifically applicable in canon law. While individual pieces of the religious art inside the building (e.g., statues, stained glass windows, etc.) bear personal significance for some former Sacred Heart parishioners, these can be removed and repurposed for use in another appropriate location;

- 7) Having all of the parishioners continue to worship at the Saint Ann Chapel on the Saint Ann campus will continue to 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 September 8, 2022, I hereby **DECREE** that Sacred Heart Church, Phoenixville, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of January 23, 2023 and is to be communicated to the members of Saint Ann Parish and to the faithful of the Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. Recourse may be taken against this decree in accord with the norms of canon law. All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

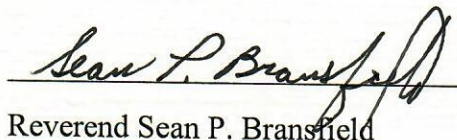
Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the 9th day of December, in the Year of Our Lord 2022.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nelson J. Pérez", written over a horizontal line.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.

Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Sean P. Bransfield", written over a horizontal line.

Reverend Sean P. Bransfield

Chancellor