



DECREE
OF THE RELEGATION OF
IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY CHURCH, CHESTER
TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

By means of a Decree that took effect on 1 July 1993, the Parochial Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Chester, has been designated a place of worship for the faithful of St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Chester. On 22 August 2023, the Pastor of St. Katharine Drexel Parish petitioned for the relegation of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary to profane but not sordid use. Consideration, therefore, must be given as to whether there exists a sufficiently grave cause that would allow for granting the petitioned relegation. In this case, the following factors were taken into consideration:

1. Since the suppression of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in 1993, the former parishioners have been members of the new St. Katharine Drexel Parish; since 2002, when Sunday and Holy Day Masses ceased being held at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, they have grown accustomed to fulfilling their obligation to attend Mass on such days (can. 1247) at the nearby Parochial Church.
2. While Immaculate Heart of Mary Church remains open as a place of worship, individual occasions of worship have become rare, with only two Masses having been celebrated there in all of 2023; moreover, spontaneous requests from the faithful to make use of the Church for other sacred functions have sharply diminished over time; no baptisms, for example, have been celebrated there since 2017.
3. In fiscal year 2022, the Parish of St. Katharine Drexel had a total income of \$528,374. This total includes \$150,000 of subsidy income granted by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, leaving \$378,374 earned through normal parish operations. The operating expenses of the parish in the same fiscal year totaled \$613,472 with an accruing debt balance of \$356,697. During the same period, the parish's total available cash balance was \$80,364. This balance has since decreased to just over \$40,000 for the year ending June 30, 2023. The systemic financial hardship faced by the parish makes it difficult to maintain adequately the physical upkeep to the fabric of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church. Repairing recently discovered damage to the roof of the Church building lies far beyond what the Parish can realistically afford.
4. As of 30 September 2023, the complex of which Immaculate Heart of Mary Church forms a part has been vacant, due to significant mold and water damage to the other buildings on site; this

damage not only constitutes a financial liability for the Parish, but the lack of use for these buildings has brought with it the loss of rental revenue.

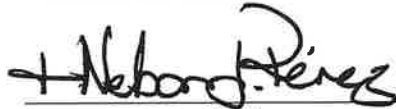
While no one factor of itself would provide sufficient grounds for granting the relegation, the gravity of the cause in this case arises from the combination of factors, which, taken together as a comprehensive whole, manifest the seriousness of the concrete situation being faced by the Parish.

Accordingly, in virtue of the precepts of canon 1212 and canon 1222 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, having consulted with the Council of Priests on 29 November 2023 and heard their unanimous opinion that these factors together constitute a sufficiently grave cause, and having ascertained that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, I hereby decree that Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Chester, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of 1 March 2024, and is to be communicated to the members of St. Katharine Drexel Parish and to the faithful of this 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 18th of January, 2024.



Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL



Reverend Richard K. McFadden, J.C.L.
Vice-Chancellor