



DECREE

EFFECTING THE RELEGATION OF HOLY FAMILY CHURCH (ERIE) TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

History

Holy Family Parish was divided from Saint Stanislaus Parish in 1907 to serve Slovak families living in the lower east side of Erie. The current church, the second one built for the parish, was completed in 1942. In 1990, Holy Family was partnered with the neighboring eastside parishes of Saint Ann and Saint Casimir. This partnership remained until 2009, when the three parishes were merged to form Our Mother of Sorrows Parish. In 2017, as part of diocesan-wide parish restructuring, Saint Casimir was named the parish church of Our Mother of Sorrows. Holy Family church was named a secondary church without mission status, meaning that Mass was no longer celebrated there on Sundays and other holy days of obligation.

Current Situation

In July of 2024, Our Mother of Sorrows Parish was partnered with Saint Stanislaus Parish in Erie. On November 10, 2025, the Reverend Jason A. Glover, pastor of both Our Mother of Sorrows and Saint Stanislaus parishes, wrote to Bishop Persico requesting the relegation of the Holy Family church building in Erie to profane but not sordid use.

On November 9, 2025, the members of Our Mother of Sorrows Parish finance and pastoral councils, in a joint meeting, unanimously expressed their support for Father Glover's petition to the Bishop to relegate the Holy Family church building.

According to the law, in order to relegate a church to profane use or even to close it permanently, it is necessary that there be some grave reason(s) suggesting that the church no longer be used for divine worship. Often the gravity of the cause becomes evident when a number of factors are considered together. Can. 1222 §2 states:

Where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the presbyteral council, can relegate it to profane but not sordid use, with the consent of those who legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church, and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby.



Holy Family church is in very poor physical condition. Every part of the building is in need of repairs. Russ Rydczewski, director of facilities and risk management for the Diocese of Erie, evaluated the building and determined that there were too many deficiencies for a list to be practical. The pastor reported that some people are unwilling to enter the building due to the risk of structural collapse.

Due in part to its poor condition, Holy Family church has been very lightly utilized over the past several years. Since 2022 there have been five funerals (the last one in 2024), zero baptisms (the last one was in 2021), zero first communions, zero confirmations and one wedding (in 2022). The only scheduled Mass has been the annual celebration of its titular feast. The other buildings associated with the former Holy Family parish, including the former school and convent and the attached rectory, have also been sitting unused for eight years. The cluster of empty buildings is attracting vandalism. Both the school and the convent buildings are regularly broken into, although thus far the church itself has been spared. This situation is not beneficial for either the parish or the neighborhood.

Our Mother of Sorrows Parish is currently responsible for the financial upkeep of three church buildings (Holy Family church, Saint Ann church, and Saint Casimir church) along with seven other buildings and properties, which is creating a financial burden on the parish. The cost to maintain Holy Family church was \$10,660 in the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

These costs are particularly concerning because Our Mother of Sorrows Parish is not fiscally solvent. Their expenses have exceeded their revenue for eleven of the sixteen years since they were founded. They continue to accrue more debt each year. As of August 31, 2025, Our Mother of Sorrows Parish owed \$643,000 in past due assessments to the diocese. Considering that the reported parish annual income has declined from \$293,000 in 2016 to \$114,000 in 2024, their financial status is unlikely to improve.

There is currently an offer to purchase the entire Holy Family complex. Our Mother of Sorrows has been in negotiations with the R.B. Wiley Charter School for several years. They intended to subdivide the parcel and sell the former school and convent buildings without the church. However, the property was subdivided incorrectly and so they have been unable to complete the sale. The charter school is interested in purchasing the church together with the other properties. This is currently the only founded hope that these buildings will be rehabilitated and used, rather than continuing to sit abandoned.

Thus, the pastor, being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, has given his consent. (cf. can. 1222 §2). He attests that relegating Holy Family church to profane use is not likely to result in any harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §2). All of the sacraments and devotions are readily available at the parish church of Saint Casimir (0.3 miles away), the partnered parish church of Saint Stanislaus (1 mile away) and many other churches in Erie and the surrounding area. The pastor is also aware of the obligation to see to it that Holy Family church, if relegated, not be given over to sordid use.

This information was shared with the members of the Presbyteral Council on November 19, 2025. Having considered the matter attentively, the members of the Council unanimously recommended to me that I grant the petition of the pastor to relegate the Holy Family church building to profane but not sordid use.

All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the best possible means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of Our Mother of Sorrows Parish, while considering that regularly scheduled Masses ceased there in July of 2017; that only five funerals, one wedding and no baptisms have been celebrated there in the past four years, and there is no request from the faithful to use the church; the dilapidated state of the church building and the costly repairs needed to completely renovate it; the fiscal insolvency of the parish; that there is no pastoral need for the church edifice; that the pastor has petitioned for the relegation of the church with the unanimous support of the members of his pastoral council and the finance council; and that there does not appear to be any probable detriment to the good of souls, I judge that the aforementioned reasons, when considered cumulatively, constitute the grave cause required by the law (cf. can. 1222 §2) for the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use, and I hereby decree the following:

Holy Family church in Erie, Pennsylvania, is relegated to profane but not sordid use, according to the norm of can. 1222 §2.

This decree is effective on December 29, 2025, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 2nd day of December, 2025

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico,
JCL
Bishop of Erie

Joseph A. Petrone, Jr.

The Reverend Joseph A. Petrone, Jr., JCL
Assistant Chancellor