



NEWS RELEASE

DIOCESE OF ERIE

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Our Lady of Fatima Church in Canadohta Lake relegated

Father Thomas Whitman, pastor of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, Corry, announced on August 10 that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, has relegated Our Lady of Fatima Church in Canadohta Lake, a secondary church of St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, to “profane but not sordid use.” The technical designation refers to the canon law process by which a bishop removes the blessing or consecration of a church building. The building then ceases to be reserved for divine worship, and therefore, can be used for non-religious purposes.

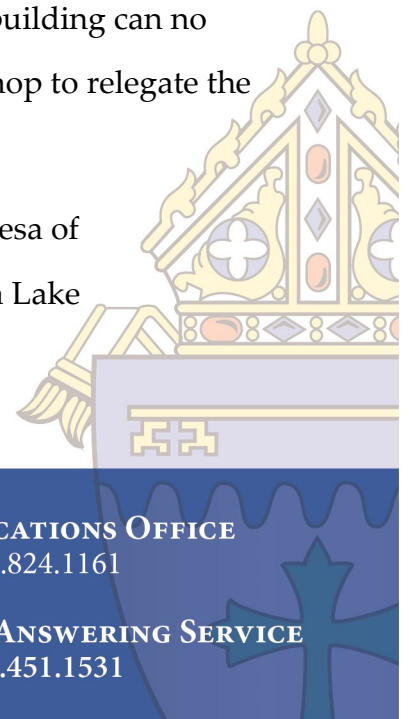
The designation is the result of a process that occurs when a pastor, with the support of the parish finance council and the parish pastoral council, believes a church building can no longer be maintained for any of a variety of reasons and petitions the bishop to relegate the church.

Our Lady of Fatima Church was established as a mission of St. Teresa of Avila Parish in Union City to serve tourists who vacationed at Canadohta Lake

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during the summer. In 1951, the pastor of St. Teresa received permission to celebrate Mass at Our Lady of Fatima Church from the third Sunday of June until Labor Day each year. For a short time, Mass was offered at Our Lady of Fatima church year-round, but in 2017, the church returned to celebrating Mass only in the summer. Regularly scheduled Masses ceased there altogether in 2023.

St. Thomas the Apostle Parish is currently responsible for the financial upkeep of three churches. In addition to the parish church, Saint Teresa of Avila Parish in Union City — including its secondary church, Our Lady of Fatima — was merged into St. Thomas Parish on July 9, 2024. As both the general population and the Catholic population in the area has diminished, the need for multiple churches and the finances necessary to sustain them, have declined.

Recognizing the reality of the situation, Father Whitman, with the unanimous support of both the parish finance council and the parish pastoral council, petitioned the bishop to request that Our Lady of Fatima Church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. A complete history of the church, as well as a detailed narrative of the current situation, is described in the decree announcing the bishop's decision, now available at www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html.

The decree is effective August 14, 2024.

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