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Saint Francis Church in Bradford relegated

The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, has relegated Saint Francis Church in Bradford, a secondary church of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, to "profane but not sordid use," effective November 20, 2026.

The technical designation refers to the canon law process by which a bishop removes the sacred designation of a church building. The building then ceases to be reserved for divine worship and may be used for nonreligious purposes.

The decision follows a period of pastoral planning and evaluation of the needs of the Catholic community in Bradford. Father John Jacquel, pastor of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, with the unanimous support of the parish pastoral council and parish finance council, petitioned Bishop Persico to relegate the church.

Saint Francis Parish was established following World War II, with the first Mass celebrated in the church on Christmas Eve in 1950. In February 2023, Saint Francis of Assisi Parish merged with Saint Bernard of Clairvaux Parish as part of ongoing diocesan pastoral planning. Saint Francis was designated a secondary church in August 2025.

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The decision reflects changing pastoral needs, declining population and the significant financial responsibility of maintaining the Saint Francis property. Saint Bernard Church, located approximately 1.6 miles away, has sufficient space to accommodate parishioners and continue serving the Catholic community in Bradford.

A complete history of the church, as well as a detailed explanation of the circumstances leading to the decision, is included in the decree, available at www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html.

The decree is effective November 20, 2026.

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