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Status of St. Anthony of Padua Church in Walston changes

Msgr. Joseph Riccardo, pastor of Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish, Punxsutawney, announced on April 24 that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the presbyteral council, has relegated St. Anthony of Padua Church in Walston, a secondary church of Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish, to “profane but not sordid use,” effective May 3, 2021.

The technical designation refers to the canon law process by which a bishop removes the blessing or consecration of a church building. Through that process, the building 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.

St. Anthony of Padua was first organized as a parish in 1897. At various times since its founding, it has functioned either as an independent parish or as a mission of another parish. The last resident priest left St. Anthony of Padua in 2006, at which time the church was placed under the care of the pastor of

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Ss. Cosmas and Damian in Punxsutawney, along with St. Joseph, Husband of Mary in Anita and St. Adrian in Delancey. In 2010, ownership of all three churches was formally transferred to Ss. Cosmas and Damian parish. St. Anthony of Padua is the last of the three secondary churches of the parish to 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 .

A pastoral planning process involving parishes in the Diocese of Erie was completed in 2017. After an initial diocesan-wide restructuring, the plan was designed to encourage parishes to evaluate their own situations going forward, and to make recommendations to the bishop from the local level.

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