



1. 18.2020

Status of St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Church in Anita changes

The Rev. Msgr. Joseph Riccardo, pastor of the Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish in Punxsutawney, announced on Jan. 18 that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the presbyteral council, has relegated one of the three secondary churches of Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish — St. Joseph, Husband of Mary Church (hereafter referred to as St. Joseph) — to “profane but not sordid use,” effective January 26, 2020.

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 same process is described in England as “reducing a church to secular but not unbecoming use.” This language helps clarify that the term “profane” means secular or non-religious, while “sordid” means unbecoming or inappropriate.

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 asks the bishops to remove the building’s blessing.

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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.

Since July 1, 2010, Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish has been responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of four church edifices: the parish church of Ss. Cosmas and Damian as well as the three mission churches of St. Adrian in Delancey, St. Anthony of Padua in Walston and St. Joseph in Anita. Ss. Cosmas and Damian Parish no longer has the financial resources to maintain all four churches in a manner suitable for the worthy celebration of the sacraments. Regular Sunday Masses have not been celebrated at St. Joseph since 2006.

The pastoral planning process involving parishes that was completed in 2017 in the Diocese of Erie was designed to allow parishes to evaluate their own situations going forward, and to make recommendations at the local level.

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