



10.26.19

Status of St. Joseph Church in DuBois changes

The Rev. Msgr. Richard Siefer, pastor of the partnered parishes St. Catherine of Siena and St. Michael the Archangel in DuBois, announced on Oct. 26 that the Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, after consultation with the presbyteral council, has relegated St. Michael the Archangel's secondary church, St. Joseph, to "profane but not sordid use," effective December 1, 2019.

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, determines a church building can no longer be maintained for any of a variety of reasons. A complete history of the church, as well as a detailed narrative of

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the current situation, is described in the decree announcing the bishop's decision, now available at www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html

The most recent change for the building occurred in Feb. 2017, when the Diocese of Erie implemented a series of parish mergers and partnerships across the diocese as a result of a pastoral planning initiative. At that time, St. Joseph Parish was merged into St. Michael the Archangel Parish, and St. Michael the Archangel Parish was partnered with St. Catherine of Siena Parish.

Sunday Masses have not been celebrated at St. Joseph since that time; the church has been used only for funerals, one wedding and personal devotion.

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

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