



DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

On February 14, 2025, following consultation with the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Joliet, I issued a decree extinguishing St. Mary Parish, Park Forest, IL. The decree extinguished St. Mary Parish as a separate juridic person and it was united with St. Liborius Parish, Steger, IL. This amalgamation was effective from July 1, 2025.

The parishioners of the aforementioned parish were consulted in two different sessions so that all could be heard. In these meetings, parishioners were informed that the church building could be reduced to profane but not sordid use. Moreover, Rev. Thomas Milota, Pastor and representative of St. Liborius Parish, Steger, supports the relegation of St. Mary Church to profane but not sordid use. Consequently, I, in consultation with the Presbyteral Council, have decided to relegate **St. Mary Church** to profane but not sordid use (*CIC/83*, can. 1222).

A church may be relegated to profane but not sordid use when, after hearing the presbyteral council, the diocesan bishop determines there is a “grave cause” indicating a church should no longer be used for divine worship and that the good of souls suffers no detriment from the relegation. A Definitive Sentence of the College of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, given May 4, 1996, considered what constituted the grave cause required for the relegation to profane but not sordid use of a church belonging to a parish formed from the union of parishes (*Ministerium Iustitiae: Jurisprudence of the Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura*, Montreal: W & L (2011): Prot. N. 24388/93 CA, pp. 526-527). As related in the Definitive Sentence, a new parish formed from the extinctive union of five parishes sought to relegate three of its five churches to profane but not sordid use. Christ’s faithful who worshipped at one of these churches took recourse against the relegation of their church. The Supreme Tribunal found that the following conditions together constituted the grave cause required for relegation: 1) preservation of all the churches would impose an intolerable burden on the new parish; 2) the church in question was no longer of service to the pastoral care of the faithful due to changed circumstances; 3) the new parish was burdened from the beginning by a huge debt; 4) sale of the church would offer ready and effective assistance, otherwise lacking, to the urgent needs of the new parish; 5) the number of faithful contributing to the support of the parish was diminishing; and 6) charity and other assistance to the poor should not be neglected to preserve a sacred building.

In the case of St. Mary Church, it is established that: 1) the church building would impose an intolerable burden on St. Liborius Parish from a financial point of view; 2) due to the decrease in the overall Catholic population of the East, South Will-Grundy area, the church is no

longer of service to the current parishioners of the new parish; 3) the new parish has taken on an overall large debt by sustaining two church buildings; 4) the sale of the church building will help keep the new parish out of debt; 5) the overall combined Mass attendance has decreased by 62% in the past several years; the remaining church building of the new parish will provide more than enough space for all the faithful to receive the sacraments and participate in divine worship; 6) preserving this sacred building would prevent the new parish from providing charity and alms giving to those most in need.

It is unreasonable to expect a parish formed from the amalgamation of two parishes to continue maintaining a church it cannot afford, does not need and which is no longer useful for divine worship. Furthermore, there are no diocesan, parochial or other funds available to keep and maintain St. Mary Church as a place of Catholic worship. Additionally, there is no governmental assistance for building or maintaining churches in the United States of America.

The most reasonable and prudent decision is to relegate the church to profane but not sordid use, allowing it to be sold or otherwise developed for the benefit of the new parish, its ministries, and works of charity.

THEREFORE, I, the Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks, Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois, in accord with the norms of Canon Law, convened the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Joliet on February 13, 2025 at the Blanchette Catholic Center in Crest Hill Illinois. Having heard the Presbyteral Council at the same meeting, which voted unanimously in favor of relegating St. Mary Church to profane but not sordid use I, after invoking the Holy Spirit,

***hereby decree the following:***

1. Effective immediately, St. Mary Church, Park Forest is relegated to profane but not sordid use;
2. Officials of the Diocese of Joliet, cooperating with the pastor of St. Liborius Parish will ensure that the real property associated with St. Mary Church is secure for the benefit of St. Liborius Parish;
3. If the church of St. Mary is alienated, the alienation is to provide St. Liborius Parish with the proceeds from the sale of the real property or rental under lease;
4. The minutes of the Presbyteral Council meeting are to be included with this decree;
5. The notification of this decree will be given through the official website of the Diocese of Joliet.

*Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent or delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC '83 cc. 1734; 1735; 1737) at the Blanchette Catholic Center, 16555 Weber Rd., Crest Hill, IL 60403.*

Given on this 6<sup>th</sup> day of January 2026  
Blanchette Catholic Center  
Crest Hill, IL

*+ Ronald A. Hicks*



Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks  
Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois

*Grzegorz J. Podwysocki*  
Very Rev. Grzegorz Podwysocki, JCL  
Chancellor