

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

HIS EXCELLENCY

The Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss

By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See

Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw

DECREE

**On the Reduction of Saint Mary's Church, Saint Charles, Michigan
To Profane but Not Sordid Use**

THE FACTS

Whereas, Saint Mary's Church located at 5661 Fergus Rd, St. Charles, MI 48655 is one of the worship sites of Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, and has served the faithful for many years as a place of prayer, worship and sacramental life;

Whereas, on June 7, 1955, the Most Reverend Stephen Woznicki, then Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw, Michigan, dedicated the new church; and

Whereas, on June 19, 1967, Saint Mary's Albee was established as an independent parish; and

Whereas, on November 30, 1997, a new parish center was dedicated, with the Most Reverend Kenneth Untener presiding over the liturgy;

Whereas, by decree effective July 2013, the Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone, Bishop of Saginaw, erected the parish of Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Saint Mary's Albee merged into this newly formed parish.

Whereas, Saint Mary's Albee was designated as a church for occasional use to meet pastoral needs.

Whereas, in 2022, Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss granted permission for the celebration of a Sunday morning Mass in Albee in an effort to welcome back parishioners, however, the response was limited;

Whereas, in recent years, the parish has experienced a sustained decline in active membership, resulting in decreased sacramental participation and diminished financial resources;

Whereas, a pastoral and financial review concluded that the continued maintenance and operation of Saint Mary's Church site is no longer feasible and prudent;

THE LAW

Whereas, can. 1212 - Sacred places lose their dedication or blessing if they have been destroyed in large part or have been turned over permanently to profane use by decree of the competent ordinary or in fact.

Whereas, can. 1222 - §1. If a church cannot be used in any way for divine worship and there is no possibility of repairing it, the diocesan bishop can relegate it to profane but not sordid use. §2. Where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the presbyteral council, can relegate it to profane but not sordid use, with the consent of those who legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby.

Whereas, canons 515§2 and 87§1 support the diocesan bishop's authority to make decisions regarding parish structures and discipline for the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

THE ARGUMENT

Whereas, the continued sacred designation of Saint Mary's church is no longer justified given its closure and its non-use for liturgical purposes;

Whereas, the continued use of Saint Mary's church is no longer justified by the current demographic and financial realities of the parish;

Whereas, the faithful of the parish will not be deprived of access to the sacraments and will be fully integrated into the liturgical and pastoral life of Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish;

Whereas, the Parish has undergone a sustained decline in active membership, resulting in diminished participation and reduced financial capacity;

Whereas, this decline renders the continued operation of the two worship sites unsustainable;

Whereas, responsible stewardship, ecclesial unity, and pastoral effectiveness require the consolidation of parish resources and activity;

Whereas, relegating the building to profane use will allow for proper stewardship of parish assets and prevent the unnecessary expenditure of parish resources on maintaining a building that is no longer necessary for divine worship;

In light of these factors, it is deemed most responsible, both pastorally and financially, to consolidate parish resources and explore viable solutions to ensure the sustainability of the parish and its mission (can. 1222§1);

Wherefore:

1. Having carefully considered the law and the facts; and
2. Having heard the Presbyteral Council on February 18, 2025; and

3. Having heard on January 15, 2025, the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral and Finance Council of Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, in whose territory the aforesaid property is situated; and
4. Having obtained on October 5th, 2024, the consent of those whose rights might be injured or violated, especially the major donors (or: the heirs of the major donor,), in accordance with the norm of canon 1222§2; and
5. Having ensured that the church will be stripped of its altar, sacred objects, and religious artifacts; and
6. Having ensured the good of the souls will suffer no harm thereby; that is, the spiritual and pastoral good of the parishioners will continue as it has been provided by Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish and;
7. Having ensured that there would be no scandal resulting from the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use;

DECREE

I, the Most. Reverend Robert D. Gruss, Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw, by the authority granted to me in canon 1222§2, and after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, do hereby pronounce, declare and decree that Saint Mary's Church located at 5661 Fergus Rd, St. Charles, MI 48655, is permanently closed effective at 12:01AM on July 28, 2025.

The church has hereby lost its blessing, dedication, and consecration, and is no longer to be used as a place of divine worship. Its altar, sacred objects, and religious artifacts shall be removed, insofar as possible, for reuse at Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish or, if not so used, to be transmitted to the Diocesan Archive for potential use by other ecclesiastical entities.


Saint Mary's church is hereby relegated to profane but not sordid use effective at 12:01AM on July 28, 2025. (can. 1222§2).


Everything I have decreed must be observed in all its parts. Anything else to the contrary notwithstanding, even if worthy of particular mention, may not be carried out following the promulgation of this decree.

I establish that it be promulgated by way of publication on the website of the Diocese of Saginaw and on the parish website of Mary of the Immaculate Conception.

In accordance with canons 1734-1737, any party aggrieved by this decree has the right to petition for its revocation or amendment by hierarchical recourse within ten (10) canonical days of its legitimate notification.

Given on this 25th day of July in the year of Our Lord 2025, at the chancery of the Diocese of Saginaw.


Reverend Alberto E. Vargas, JCL. JV.
Chancellor


Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw

