



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

DECREE

Relegating St. John Chrysostom Church in Forestville to Secular but not Unbecoming Use

In November 2011, participating in *Planning Tomorrow's Parishes*, each parish in the Diocese of Forestville formed parish core teams for a parish self-study. Each parish's self-study entailed regular communication with parishioners, including bulletin announcements, town hall meetings, and surveys. St. John Chrysostom Church in Forestville has been a mission of Saint Mary Church in Port Sanilac, serving predominantly individuals who visited the area in the summer. Parishioners worked in close collaboration with the surrounding parishes during the planning process.

On January 18, 2013, Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone (deceased) decreed that St. John Chrysostom Parish and Saints Peter and Paul Parish, in Ruth would merge on July 1, 2014, with Saints Peter and Paul Church named as the parish church. The new parish was subsequently named, "Holy Apostles Parish." Since July 1, 2013, additional Masses, as needed seasonally, were celebrated at St. John Chrysostom Church; this discontinued during the pandemic in 2020, due to the impossibility of social distancing. There has been discussion, but no action in providing Masses in St. John Chrysostom Church since 2020. The Pastor has been approached regarding possible closure of the Church and sale of the property.

The Pastor and members of the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils have expressed concern that, because the St. John Chrysostom Church property is not used frequently, the Church is likely to rapidly deteriorate or to be vandalized. The Parish Finance Council estimates that maintenance of the church building costs \$7,000 per year.

Following the advice of the Councils, the Pastor began to explore closure of St. John Chrysostom Church.

On May 11 and May 12, 2022 the membership of the Pastoral Council and the Finance Council voted to request closure of St. John Chrysostom Church. The Parish Finance and Pastoral Council members advised the Pastor to inform the parishioners of the Councils' support of closing St. John Chrysostom Church and to request a decree relegating St. John Chrysostom Church to secular but not unbecoming use. The Pastor made his recommendation public and placed it in the Parish bulletin on June 26, 2022 and on three subsequent Sundays. No letters of objection were received.

The Pastor wrote to me on August 12, 2022, requesting closure of St. John Chrysostom Church. He sent copies of the parish announcements and minutes of the Parish Finance Council and Parish Pastoral Council, in which all members supported relegating the church to secular, but not unbecoming use.

The request to close St. John Chrysostom Church was approved by the respective members of the Parish Pastoral Council and Finance Council.

The following grave causes suggest that St. John Chrysostom Church be relegated to secular, but not unbecoming use:

1. There has been little use of St. John Chrysostom Church since July 1, 2013 and the use was discontinued due to the pandemic in 2020, with no requests for use at this time;
2. Following evaluation of financial needs of Holy Apostles Parish, the Finance Council concluded that there was not adequate financial support for the repair and maintenance of St. John Chrysostom Church;
3. There is no other source of funding and the financial burden of repairing and maintaining the church would cause important pastoral programs of Holy Apostles Parish to suffer due to lack of funds;
4. Funds from the sale of the church property would bolster the pastoral programs, such as outreach to the poor and support of Catholic faith formation;
5. The closure of St. John Chrysostom Church will not make it impossible to hear the word of God, to receive the sacraments, to participate in public worship, and to exercise the works of charity; therefore, the care of souls would not suffer because of this decision due to the commitment of the parishioners to worship and participate in parish activities at Saints Peter and Paul Church; and
6. The Pastor and the Finance Council, and Parish Pastoral Council members are in favor of relegating the church to secular use in order to provide for the financial stability of Holy Apostles Parish

Therefore, having determined that no other parties can legitimately claim rights for themselves in St. John Chrysostom Church, and having heard the opinion of the Presbyteral Council on October 6, 2022 according to the norm of canon 1222 §2 regarding the proposal to relegate the church to the secular but not unbecoming use,


And having judged that sufficient grave causes are present and having determined with moral certitude that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, I hereby DECREE that St. John Chrysostom Church, Forestville, Michigan be relegated to secular but not unbecoming use. In addition, I decree that the remaining sacred objects are to be removed and treated in a manner befitting their character.

The provisions of this decree are to take effect *nunc pro tunc*, all things to the contrary notwithstanding. These provisions may be appealed according to the norm of law (cf. canon 1734 §1).

Given at the Diocesan Offices
October 7, 2022



Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss
Bishop of Saginaw



Sister Mary Judith O'Brien, R.S.M.
Chancellor