



DIOCESE OF LONDON

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

1070 WATERLOO STREET
LONDON, ONTARIO N6A 3Y2
CANADA
519-433-0658
FAX: 519-266-4353

DECREE

Having received the recommendation of the Episcopal Vicar for Kent and the reports of the consultation process conducted with the parishioners of St. Agnes Parish in the city of Chatham in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Agnes Parish*), and having consulted with the Council of Priests of the Diocese of London on November 5, 2024, in accordance with canon 1222, §1-2, I, Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B., Bishop of London, do hereby decree that St. Agnes Church in the city of Chatham in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Agnes Church*) be canonically closed and no longer designated as a place for divine worship effective January 21, 2025.

The reasons for this action are:

- St. Agnes Church was officially blessed on November 23, 1958 as the parochial church for St. Agnes Parish.
- Major renovations were undertaken in 1981 greatly expanding the size of the church itself and modernizing its heating and cooling systems. Further improvements were made in 1998 with the installation of an elevator.
- Since that time the church has been fairly well-maintained and at present has no significant maintenance issues.
- With the canonical suppression of St. Agnes Parish effective on January 21, 2025, St. Agnes Church will no longer house an existing parish community and will cease to be a parochial church.
- The canonical suppression of a parish is of itself not a justifiable cause for the closure of a church according to the established jurisprudence of the Church in these matters.
- However, serious consideration must be given to the fact that the ongoing maintenance of St. Agnes Church — a church building which will be unused — will result in a drain on the limited financial resources of

Blessed Sacrament Parish, the parochial community into which St. Agnes Parish will be absorbed. These costs will be constant and will, it can be reasonably expected, increase with time as the building ages. As a result, monies used to maintain an unused church building will be unavailable for ministry and outreach to the greater community in the city of Chatham. The mission of the parish will thus be seriously compromised, which mission is indispensable to its self-understandings, growth and vitality.

- Any suggestion to maintain St. Agnes Church as a contingency on the chance of possible future growth in this part of the city of Chatham is ill-founded since the detailed study undertaken to consider the question of the canonical suppression of St. Agnes Parish clearly indicated such possible growth is highly unlikely if not imaginary.
- Nor does St. Agnes Church, a sixty-six-year-old building of no particular historic or artistic significance, qualify for historical designation. Even more, such designation would not provide for the cost of the building's ongoing maintenance. No government subsidies would result from such a designation and the upkeep of the church would continue to be the sole responsibility of Blessed Sacrament Parish.
- Finally, as already noted, with the suppression of St. Agnes Parish, St. Agnes Church will no longer be utilized for divine worship and stand empty, a condition and situation unsuitable and unseemly given its dedication for a sacred purpose.

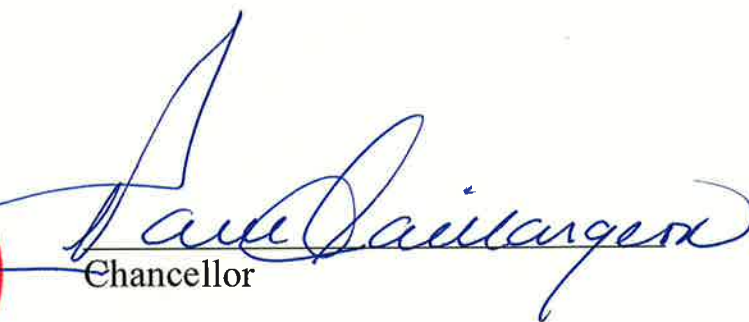
I give leave to those within the diocesan curia charged with the administration of temporal matters to dispose of St. Agnes Church and the property on which it is situated, taking care to observe faithfully the pertinent civil laws in this regard and the provisions of the *Code of Canon Law* concerning the alienation of temporal goods.

In conformity to the norms set out in canon 121, I further decree that the proceeds from the sale of St. Agnes Church and the land on which is situated obtains and belongs to the canonically established parish into which St. Agnes Parish is to be amalgamated, namely, Blessed Sacrament Parish, the wishes of the founders and benefactors having been duly regarded and taken into consideration.

I direct that this decree be published in St. Agnes Parish, Blessed Sacrament Parish and by a suitable means throughout the Diocese of London, with the understanding that any who wish to make recourse against it, in accordance with canon 1734, §1-2, must do so in writing within ten (10) canonical days from the time this decree was lawfully notified.

Given at London in the province of Ontario this ninth day of December in the year two thousand and twenty-four.


Bishop of London

 
Chancellor