

MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA
BISHOP OF SYRACUSE

DECREE
ON THE REDUCTION OF THE
CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN, NORTH BAY, NEW YORK
TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

Whereas the parishes of Saint Agatha, Saint Helena, Holy Family, Saint John, Saint Joseph, Saint Mary, Saint Mary of the Lake, and Saint Patrick were united via an extinctive union-merger to form the new parish of Spirit of Hope in 2023;

Whereas the parish of Saint John, North Bay, New York, was originally founded in 1949 as a mission of Saint Mary, Cleveland, New York, and since 2015, Mass and the celebration of the sacraments has not been offered regularly, but only when there is a need or by request;

Whereas a building condition survey of the church of Saint John resulted in the recommendation that it be kept out of service until serious foundational issues are addressed and a financial analysis of the parish demonstrated the lack of resources necessary not only to address these issues but also to maintain the church and its property;

Whereas the pastoral needs of the people of North Bay are being accomplished through the parish of Spirit of Hope and its other churches such that the parish no longer has need to this building and its property to accomplish the mission of the Church;

Whereas the pastor of the parish, the Reverend Christopher Ballard, who has continued to consult the people of the parish about matters of parish life and the parish structure through the parish trustees, and pastoral and finance councils as well as with parishioners via town hall meetings, has petitioned me to relegate the church of Saint John to profane but not sordid use because: (1) the pastoral care of the people of the parish is being accomplished without the use of the church of Saint John, (2) the structural repairs needed to the church of Saint John are significant and currently prevent it from being used, and (3) the financial resources of the parish are limited and unable to provide for the repair of the church and its ongoing maintenance;

Whereas where 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 hereby (can. 1222 §2);

Whereas the grave cause of relegation to profane but not sordid use may exist not in one obvious grave cause but may arise from a combination of many just causes which combined together manifest a grave cause (see Congregation for Clergy, *Procedural Guidelines for the Modification of Parishes, the Closure or Relegation of Churches to Profane but not Sordid Use, and the Alienation of the Same*, April 30, 2013, Prot. No. 20131348);

Whereas, having examined the facts of the present case, it has been well established that grave reasons required by canon 1222 §2 are present, even if some of the reasons invoked may not by themselves constitute a grave cause, they do so when taken together;

Whereas after a careful examination, it was established that nobody could legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church, understood primarily as patrimonial rights or rights associated with patrimonial rights (see Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, Final Decree of the College of Judges, 21 November 1988, *Communicationes* 20 [1988] 93);

Whereas, I convoked the Presbyteral Council on 9 June 2025 and presided over it according to the norm of law (cans. 127 §1, 166 §1, and 500 §1), placing the relegation of the church of Saint John on the agenda ahead of time, ensuring that a summary of its status was provided to the members of the Council (can. 50), proposing the relegation, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning each individual proposed action (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed relegation, and receiving unanimous support for the proposed relegation;

Therefore, I the undersigned Bishop of Syracuse, after prayerful consideration, having weighed all the reasons and causes, have decided as follows:

DECREE

1. The church of Saint John of the parish of Spirit of Hope is hereby reduced to profane but not sordid use according to the prescripts of canon 1222 §2 for the grave causes mentioned above.
2. Negotiations that may lead to the sale of the property can begin, following the proper procedures for alienation.
3. Prior to alienation, all sacred objects, relics, sacred furnishings, stained-glass windows, bells, confessionals, altars, etc. are to be removed for use in other sacred edifices or to be stored in ecclesiastical custody. In case the altars cannot be removed, they must be destroyed (see cans. 1212 and 1238).

This decree is effective immediately and hereby revokes and replaces any decrees issued by my predecessor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham.

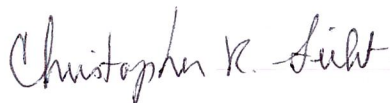
I further order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day, 26 June 2025. The publication on the diocesan website (www.syrдио.org), on the website of the local diocesan newspaper (thecatholicsun.com), on the parish website, and in the parish bulletin will be the legitimate notification. A notarized copy of the decree will be sent to the pastor.

This decree may be challenged by anyone who feels aggrieved by it within the peremptory time limit of ten useful days from the legitimate notification of the decree, that is, on 26 June 2025, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2).

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Syracuse on this twenty sixth day of June in the year of our Lord, two-thousand twenty-five.



Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse



Rev. Christopher R. Seibt
Vice Chancellor