

## DECREE RELEGATING A CHURCH BUILDING TO PROFANE USE

*In nomine Domini. Amen.*

Having received a thorough study regarding Saint Mary Church in Billerica Massachusetts, which was completed by the pastor of Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish in Billerica, Massachusetts, Reverend Paul J. Aveni, following consultation of the members of the parish, including those who formerly participated in sacred worship at the former parish of Saint Mary; and with the concurrence of Very Reverend Brian E. Mahoney, V.F, and His Excellency, Most Reverend Robert F. Hennessey, Regional Bishop of the Merrimack Region, regarding the pastoral and spiritual good of the faithful and the mission of the Catholic Church in the town of Billerica, Massachusetts and the Archdiocese of Boston; and

Having considered the grave reasons proposed for the relegation of Saint Mary Church to profane but not sordid use (cf. cc. 50; 1222 §2) and ensured that the spiritual good of the faithful, would be properly and sufficiently provided, that the good of souls would suffer no detriment, and that the necessary information has been sought from anyone who legitimately claimed rights for themselves in the church (cf. cc. 50; 1222 §2; 1267 §1; 1300);

Having carefully considered the present condition of the church since the merger of Saint Mary Parish, Saint Andrew Parish and Saint Theresa Parish, all located in Billerica, Massachusetts, forming the new parish, Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish on August 1, 2020, and having heard the opinions of financial experts regarding the costs for preserving and maintaining the building for future use;

Having heard the Director of Clergy Personnel regarding available ministerial personnel and the Chancellor and Finance Officer regarding Archdiocesan assets and possible other sources of revenue that might be used for maintaining the church;

Having presented all this information to the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council on September 14, 2021 and having heard the Council regarding the relegation of Saint Mary Church to profane but not sordid use, in accord with the norm of law (cf. cc. 127 §1; 166; 1222 §2);

I hereby decree, in accord with canon 1222 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, that Saint Mary Church of Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish in Billerica, Massachusetts be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

The grave reasons that motivate this decision were presented in full to the Presbyteral Council. Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish has two other churches in the same town, which are more than sufficient for their worship needs, and the parish is unable to bear the grave expense of maintaining three churches. Moreover, the resources of the central administration of the Archdiocese of Boston are gravely insufficient for preserving and maintaining the third additional church, and other sources of revenue have been explored but are not available to us. Further, in light of the grave need for priests, deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers to serve in the churches and parishes of the Archdiocese, the necessary personnel cannot be prudently provided.

This Decree is to be notified to the Pastor and to the faithful of Saint Matthew the Evangelist Parish, Billerica, Massachusetts. A petition for revocation or emendation of this Decree is subject to the applicable canons (*CIC*, cc. 1732-1739).

Given at the Pastoral Center of the Archdiocese of Boston, Braintree, Massachusetts this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of September, 2021. The Decree shall be effective at 12:01 A.M. on November 1, 2021.

  
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Archbishop of Boston

  
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Chancellor

