



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Providence
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Providence, RI 02903
Phone: (401) 278-4546

DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

In 2011, due to gradual patterns of population decline and diminishing parish income, St. Leo the Great Parish and St. Cecilia Parish were merged canonically to form Blessed (later Saint) John Paul II Parish, Pawtucket, and, at the same time, St. Leo and St. Cecilia churches became “missions” of John Paul II Parish. Since its solemn consecration in 1917, St. Leo Church has functioned as a spiritual home for generations of Catholics in the Darlington section of Pawtucket and for the celebrations of Holy Mass, baptisms, weddings, and funerals.

Within the past year, the pastor of St. John Paul II Parish and the Diocese of Providence have identified causes that, taken together, clearly support the case that the situation regarding the St. Leo church building has become increasingly tenuous. The gradual decline in sacramental practice at the St. Leo church building is obvious and alarming. Total attendance at the two Sunday Masses has averaged approximately 180 individuals. With the exception of one Sunday Mass, no Mass at St. Leo currently draws near 2/3 capacity. From September 2015 – August 2018, at St. Leo Church there were 3 weddings, 22 baptisms and 107 funerals (during the same timeframe, there were 13 weddings, 32 baptisms, and 65 funerals at St. Cecilia Church). The parish estimates an annual expense of approximately \$40,000 to maintain St. Leo Church (nearly identical to the cost to maintain St. Cecilia Church). Additionally, repairs to the heating system at St. Leo Church surpassed \$16,000, and more are needed. An estimate for a new church roof exceeded \$43,000. Given the consistent decline in sacramental practice at St. Leo and the resulting decrease in parish income, these expenses and their negative impact upon the financial condition of the parish at-large now make impossible the continued sustainability of the church building. By letter of November 19, 2018, the pastor of St. John Paul II Parish, with the parish trustees and members of the parish finance council, recommended that I permanently close the church building, so that it can be marketed.

Therefore, at the recommendation of the pastor and of parish leadership; having determined that a combination of just causes is present; having heard the parishioners of St. John Paul II Parish; confident that the good of souls will suffer no harm; having consulted the College of Consultors on December 13, 2018 and the Council of Priests on December 13, 2018 as required by Canons 1222, §2, and 515, §2; I hereby decree that:

1. The St. Leo the Great church building, is relegated from sacred to secular (but not sordid) use;
2. The church simultaneously loses its former status as a sacred place. Therefore, Mass and any other public worship or liturgical act is now prohibited there. This means that the church building is closed permanently;
3. All items inside the church be inventoried. Since they are the assets of St. John Paul II Parish, items should be made available first to that Parish and then to other parishes.

The effective date of this decree is January 12, 2019, at 12:01am.

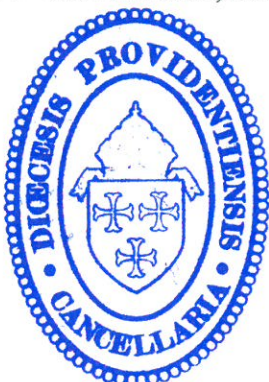
I also direct that this decree be forwarded to the pastor, who will provide copies to parishioners at both St. Leo and St. Cecilia churches at Masses the weekend of December 15-16, 2018.

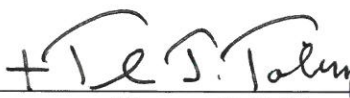
Parishioners who wish to make recourse against this decree have the right to do so. According to Church law (Canon 1734, §2), they must do so **within 10 (ten) business days** of receiving notification of this decree.

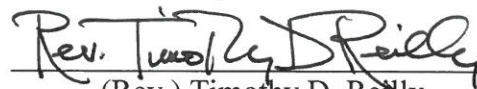
Any recourse must be forwarded in writing to Bishop Tobin with supporting documentation, and must be received by January 8, 2019.

I assure all involved in the transition of St. Leo Church of my prayers at this time.

Given in Providence,
at the Chancery,
this 14th of December, 2018




Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence


(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly
Chancellor