



DECREE

EFFECTING THE RELEGATION OF SAINT BRIGID CHURCH, MEADVILLE, TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

History

In early 1862, English-speaking Catholics from Ireland petitioned the Bishop of Erie for permission to separate from Saint Agatha parish in Meadville to form an Irish parish. Bishop Young gave permission, and Saint Brigid parish – originally known as Saint Bridget parish – was formed. The parish originally used church buildings purchased from local Protestant communities until the present Saint Brigid church was solemnly dedicated on November 24, 1881. Citing a declining Catholic and general population and the need for prudent reflection on the use of parish resources, in 2021 Bishop Lawrence Persico issued a decree merging St. Brigid Parish with Saint Agatha Parish and Saint Mary Parish by extinctive union, thereby creating The Epiphany of the Lord Parish. Saint Brigid was designated a secondary church without mission status.

Current Situation

According to the law, in order to relegate a church to profane use or even to close it permanently, it is necessary that there be some grave reason(s) suggesting that the church no longer be used for divine worship. Often the gravity of the cause becomes evident when a number of factors are considered together. Can. 1222 §2 states:

Where other 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 thereby.

In 2023, the architectural firm Weber Murphy Fox was engaged to do a feasibility and sustainability study of the facilities of The Epiphany of the Lord Parish with special attention to the cost impact of maintaining them. The immediate needs for Saint Brigid church—to be done within five years of the report—require an estimated \$549,362. Bringing the structure up to existing building code would cost an estimated \$888,362. They also recommended a specialist examine the steeple. In 2025, Jesse L Fiske, Sr., LLC, provided an estimate of \$261,188 to repair worsening damage.

The Epiphany of the Lord Parish is currently responsible for three churches, three social halls, and two rectories. It also has a parochial school and two cemeteries. Spending the money required to repair Saint Brigid would entirely exhaust the liquid assets of the parish and much of the restricted money for building maintenance, leaving nothing for the parish to fulfill its mission in Meadville.



There is also an issue of subsurface water seepage into the social hall, which is inextricably attached to the Church. Several inexpensive attempts to repair have proven unsuccessful. Because of the design of the campus, any further attempts to mediate will require significant excavation and expense to the parish.

In addition to the aforementioned extraordinary expenses required, the annual expenses of maintaining Saint Brigid have averaged \$65,765.25. This alone will drain the liquid assets of the parish in less than 15 years. Any attempt to lease the property would change its tax-exempt status, which will immediately and significantly increase the annual tax bill of the parish.

Recognizing the poor condition of the Saint Brigid church building and the financial hardship that would result from sufficiently repairing the building, on October 7, 2025, Father Lucas, pastor, obtained the unanimous support of both the parish finance council and the parish pastoral council to petition that Saint Brigid church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. Being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, Father Lucas has given his consent (cf. can. 1222 §2). In his letter to Bishop Persico dated October 8, 2025, Father Lucas petitioned the Bishop as such.

Father Lucas attests that relegating Saint Brigid church to profane use is not likely to result in harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §). The parish church, St. Agatha, is approximately 750 feet away, and is of sufficient size to accommodate the parishioners of The Epiphany of the Lord Parish. Father Lucas is also aware of the obligation to see to it that the church, if relegated, not be given over to sordid use.

The above information was shared with the members of the Presbyteral Council on November 19, 2025, at their regularly scheduled meeting held at St. Mark Catholic Center in Erie. Having considered the matter attentively, the members of the Council voted on whether to recommend to me that I grant the petition of the pastor to relegate Saint Brigid church to profane but not sordid use. The vote was 13 members in favor and 1 opposed, with no abstentions.

All the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the best possible means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of The Epiphany of the Lord parish, while considering that Saint Brigid church no longer serves as a parish church, it requires a significant investment to correct several serious maintenance issues; that the obligation of maintaining the Saint Brigid church building has placed an unsustainable financial burden on The Epiphany of the Lord Parish; that the funds required to repair the structure would render the parish unable to support the parish church and school, and would otherwise be much more prudently spent on other parish ministries; that there is no pastoral necessity for the church edifice; that the pastor and members of the finance and pastoral councils have petitioned for the relegation of the church; and that there does not appear to be any probable detriment to the good of souls, I judge that the aforementioned reasons, when

considered cumulatively, constitute the grave cause required by the law (cf. can. 1222 §2) for the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use, and I hereby decree the following:

**Saint Brigid church of The Epiphany of the Lord Parish in Meadville
is relegated to profane but not sordid use, according to the norm of
can. 1222 §2.**

This decree is effective February 2, 2026, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 5th day of December, 2025

+Lawrence T. Persico

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico,
JCL
Bishop of Erie

Joseph A. Petrone, Jr.

The Reverend Joseph A. Petrone, Jr., JCL
Assistant Chancellor