

## **Decree**

### **Relegating the Prince of Peace Church, Edgewood, Maryland St. Francis de Sales Parish To Profane But Not Sordid Use**

#### **History**

In 1975, a community of priests and individuals from the Edgewood community met to determine whether there was a need for and support of a Catholic Church in Edgewood. The first Holy Day Mass was held in Harford Square Recreation Center, and the Sunday liturgies were held at the Edgewood Cinema. As the membership grew, the Presbury Methodist Church allowed Masses to be held at their church. Children's religious education was taught at the homes of the church members. The sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation were held at the Methodist Church, Edgewood Post Chapel, and St. Stephen's Church. In 1978, the first of three building funds was launched. This fund only supported a multi-purpose building, and the idea of a church building was placed on hold. In 1981, ground was broken for the parish center, with its dedication happening the following year. Archbishop Borders gave permission for a capital campaign in 1989 for the building of a new church. Prince of Peace Church was dedicated in 1996.

#### **Current Situation**

The church became a secondary edifice on July 1, 2025, after the extinctive merger of the Prince of Peace Parish into St. Francis de Sales Parish. The last regularly scheduled Sunday Mass at the church was celebrated on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2025. Since the merger with St. Francis de Sales Parish, the church has remained available for use at baptisms, weddings and funerals. In July of 2025, the pastor and the parish leadership determined that it was appropriate to seek permission to alienate the property and reduce the church to profane use, given the limited available assets of the parish and the financial

challenge of caring for the Prince of Peace Church. The pastor's and pastoral leadership's concerns are based on the financial realities outlined below.

Even before Prince of Peace's extinctive merger, the former parish had struggled to pay for its upkeep and maintenance, given the small number of parishioners. The current deferred maintenance costs for the church are \$588,675. To fund fully this and future needed work requires an annual investment of \$69,322. In addition to the church, the Prince of Peace campus also includes a hall and the former parish's offices. The total deferred maintenance for all structures on the campus is \$856,493, requiring an annual investment of \$173,605 for this and future needed work. In addition, the Prince of Peace campus incurs \$84,885 in annual carrying costs (those independent of the staffing or use of the church, e.g., insurance and utilities).

The St. Francis de Sales Parish campus, which consists of the parish church, a chapel, a rectory, an education center, the parish office, and a Knights of Columbus Hall, has \$815,223 in current deferred maintenance needs, requiring an annual investment of \$315,176 for this and other future needed work. The campus incurs annual carrying costs of \$199,325.

St. Francis de Sales has an anticipated offertory income for the current fiscal year of \$869,963. Even with a hoped-for increase in offertory and other income as the merged parishes come together and grow, St. Francis de Sales has insufficient financial resources to properly support the physical-plant needs of the Prince of Peace Church.

It was hoped that the merger of the Prince of Peace Parish with St. Francis de Sales Parish would result in better financial health for the parish, but the financial challenges have continued. Thus, St. Francis de Sales Parish does not have the financial ability to support an additional church in a manner suitable for the worthy celebration of the sacraments. The attempt to do so is impeding the parish's ability to support other pastoral needs and outreach. The financial strain is depriving other church campuses from receiving proper support and restricting pastoral programs of their necessary resources, thereby harming the overall apostolate of the parish.

The current parish church, St. Francis de Sales Church, is 5 miles (8 kilometers) from Prince of Peace Church.

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.*

The pastor and parish leadership held meetings and discussions regarding the potential future of the church before the submission of their request to reduce the church to profane but not sordid use to allow for the marketing and potential alienation of the property. Being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, the pastor has given his consent (cf. can. 1222 §2).

The pastor attests that the relegation of the Prince of Peace Church will not result in any harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §2).

In accordance with the requirements of canon 1222 §2 the Presbyteral Council carefully considered the proposal to reduce the Prince of Peace Church to profane use at their regularly scheduled meeting on September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Members received pertinent information regarding this request prior to the meeting. After carefully considering the facts of the matter, the members voted unanimously to recommend that the Archbishop of Baltimore approve the request given the financial situation in the parish.

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

Therefore, having first and foremost before me the best possible means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of St. Francis de Sales Parish, while considering that:

- Prince of Peace Church no longer serves as a parish church;
- Prince of Peace campus requires annual expenditure (investment for deferred maintenance and carrying costs) of \$258,490 by St. Francis de Sales Parish;
- Regularly scheduled Masses ceased at the parish in June 2025;
- Maintenance of an additional church has placed an unsustainable financial burden on St. Francis de Sales Parish;
- The parish lacks the financial means to maintain and provide for the proper upkeep of the Prince of Peace Church since its income is insufficient to continue supporting the church in a manner befitting a Catholic place of worship;
- There is no pastoral need for the church edifice in this parish, given the availability of another church within its boundaries and the number of parishioners;
- The pastor and members of the parish leadership have petitioned for the relegation of the church; and,

- There does not appear to be any probable detriment to the good of souls.

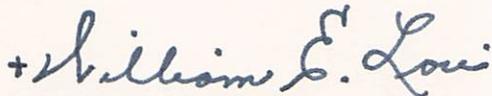
I do hereby judge based on the aforementioned reasons, considered cumulatively, that they constitute the grave cause required by the law (cf. can. 1222 §2) for the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use, and I hereby decree the following:

**Prince of Peace Church of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Abingdon, Maryland, is to be relegated to profane but not sordid use, according to the norm of can. 1222 §2. Relegation will occur as of the date of this decree. At that time, it will herewith lose its blessing and consecration. It will no longer be used for divine worship.**

I also decree that prior to the final alienation of this property that the altar, sacred objects, and religious artifacts are to be removed from the church in accordance with the law.

This decree is to be promulgated immediately and will take effect as noted above, anything to the contrary notwithstanding. It is to be communicated to the pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish, who is to inform the parishioners regarding this decree. It may be challenged within the peremptory time limit of ten days in accordance with the norm of law (canon 1734 §2).

Given at the Chancery in Baltimore, Maryland on this 4<sup>th</sup> day of March 2026.



Most Reverend William E. Lori  
Archbishop of Baltimore



Dr. Diane L. Barr, JD, JCD, PhD  
Chancellor

