



Decree

Relegating the St. Cecilia Church, Baltimore City New All Saints Parish To Profane But Not Sordid Use

History

Originally a mission of Saint Edward Parish, Saint Cecilia Roman Catholic congregation in Walbrook Junction was established in 1902. Construction of the church occurred between 1902-1904 and the first mass was celebrated at midnight on Christmas Eve, 1904. St. Cecilia Catholic School began in 1915, and the school building was built in 1922. It was staffed initially by the Sisters of Mercy and later, in 1961, by the Oblate Sisters of Providence. In 1975 the school merged with the parish schools of St. Ambrose, All Saints, and Our Lady of Lourdes to become the Windsor Campus of the Rosa Parks Cluster. During the 1990s, the parish experienced much tension and drastic changes. The school was closed in 1993. In 1995, during the Archdiocesan restructuring process within the Urban Vicariate, St. Cecilia was twinned with Immaculate Conception Parish. The current church seats 168 persons.

Current Situation

The church became a secondary edifice on December 1, 2024, after the extinctive merger of the St. Cecilia Parish into New All Saints Parish. The last regularly scheduled Sunday Mass at the church was celebrated on November 24, 2024. Since the merger with New All Saints Parish, the church has remained available for use at baptisms, weddings and funerals. In July of 2024, 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 St. Cecilia Church. The pastor's and pastoral leadership's concerns are based on the financial realities outlined below.

Even before the St. Cecilia Parish'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 \$263,792. To fund fully this and future needed work requires an annual investment of \$82,574. In addition to the church, the St. Cecilia campus also includes a garage and a rectory. The total deferred maintenance for all structures on the campus is \$676,403, requiring an annual investment of \$139,796 for this and future needed work. In addition, the St. Cecilia campus incurs \$46,159 in annual carrying costs (those independent of the staffing or use of the church, e.g., insurance and utilities).

The New All Saints Parish campus, which consists of the parish church, with an attached school and convent, as well as a separate rectory, and another detached building used for offices (the "Umoja" building) has \$1,161,414 in current deferred maintenance needs, requiring an annual investment of \$442,514 for this and other future needed work. The campus incurs annual carrying costs of \$269,852.

New All Saints has an anticipated offertory income for the current fiscal year of \$328,316. Even with a hoped-for increase in offertory and other income as the merged parishes come together and grow, New All Saints has insufficient financial resources to properly support the physical-plant needs of the St. Cecilia Church.

It was hoped that the merger of the St. Cecilia Parish with New All Saints Parish would result in better financial health for the parish, but the financial challenges have continued. Thus, New All Saints 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, New All Saints Church, is 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from St. Cecilia 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 St. Cecilia 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 St. Cecilia Church to profane use at their regularly scheduled meeting on April 8th, 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 New All Saints Parish, while considering that:

- St. Cecilia Church no longer serves as a parish church;
- St. Cecilia campus requires annual expenditure (investment for deferred maintenance and carrying costs) of \$185,965 by New All Saints Parish;
- Regularly scheduled Masses ceased at the parish in November of 2024;
- Maintenance of an additional church has placed an unsustainable financial burden on New All Saints Parish;
- The parish lacks the financial means to maintain and provide for the proper upkeep of the St. Cecilia 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:

St. Cecilia Church of New All Saints Parish in Baltimore 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 New All Saints 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 4th day of March 2026.



Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore



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

