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*Diocese of Saint Cloud*
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DECREE
*Receptis*

**Preamble**
In receipt of multiple requests from the Pastor of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families; and recalling that I requested a report regarding potential alternative uses, even secular ones, of the Church of St. Kathryn in Ogilvie; I present motivations and counterarguments, as well as my decision, regarding the relegation of the Church of St. Kathryn to secular but not unbecoming use.

**I. Motivations**
As I detailed in my decree, *Valente communicationes* (57-26), the parish of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, was formed out of a pastoral plan, generated by the Four Pillars in Faith Area Catholic Community. Included in that plan was a request to relegate and then sell, presumably to a secular organization, the Church of St. Kathryn in Ogilvie. As the legal grounds for such a move must be serious and well-documented, I requested that the pastor of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, supply a report regarding potential alternative uses of the Church of St. Kathryn, even secular ones, by December 31, 2027. Further, I indicated that the Pastor should consult the Parish Finance Council in this regard, as well as others he felt appropriate.

*Consultations with parishioners and councils (c. 50)*
Even before that deadline, Fr. Gapinski, the Pastor of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, wrote to me and to the Presbyteral Council, representing, as is his role (c. 532), the consultations of parishioners, the Pastoral Council, the Finance Council, and the All Things New Transition Team. These consultations yielded the opinion that the Church of St. Kathryn should be relegated in anticipation of an eventual sale. Despite the lack of serious offers from any buyers, these same consultations yielded the opinion that relegation sooner rather than later is preferable, as it prevents a lengthier grieving process for those who, in the past, used the church with regularity.

*The rights of the Faithful*
The parishioners of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, who previously attended Mass at the Church of St. Kathryn have access, within 20 miles, to other churches where Mass is celebrated. St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, is able to provide the sacraments to these people, and these people are able to exercise their rights to receive from the spiritual goods of the Church (cc. 212, 213).

*Financial motivations*
Though steps have been taken to reduce expenses associated with the Church of St. Kathryn – the regular parish schedule of activities does not routinely utilize the building – the Parish still incurs costs from maintenance of the grounds, from utilities, and from insurance.

*Reasonable alternative uses, consultation with experts*
Fr. Gapinski reports that the Church of St. Kathryn is a modern building, all on one level, and easily adapted to business or even residential use. Nevertheless, Fr. Gapinski has found, after reflection and consultation, that the building could not easily be adapted to serve as an alternate to the primary and partner churches of the parish. Further, it would not be useful as a central parish office without significant remodeling and financial expenditure.

In the opinion of a realtor, the modern design and adaptability of the church structure make St. Kathryn likely to attract a potential buyer. Further, those same design factors increase the probability that a buyer would repurpose the property in a manner beneficial to the local community of Ogilvie. However, interested parties have informed the parish that a lengthy canonical process of relegation, prior to a sale, diminishes their interest in purchasing the building. This latter observation motivates engaging in the canonical process sooner, even without a clear offer on the table.

*Consultation with the Presbyteral Council*
On September 22, at a meeting of the Presbyteral Council, duly convoked in my presence and with a quorum present, I presented Fr. Gapinski's findings and entertained arguments for and against the relegation of the Church of St. Kathryn. Ultimately, the Presbyteral Council rendered a consultative vote recommending the relegation of the Church of St. Kathryn in Ogilvie to secular but not unbecoming use.

*In Summary*
The ability of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, to fulfill the rights of the Faithful even without the Church of St. Kathryn; the financial burden that the church places on the parish, which motivates the sale of the building, which in turn nearly always requires relegation; the possibility of a sale giving some benefit to the community; the expert opinion that the building is marketable; and the consultations past and present, especially of the parish leadership and the Presbyteral Council; and my understanding that the relegation will not harm the good of souls; all motivate the relegation of the church.

**II. Counterarguments I have prudently considered**
*The Law*
In an instruction (c. 34) issued by the Congregation for Clergy on 30 April 2013 (Prot. No. 20131348), regarding the procedural guidelines for the modification of parishes and the closure, relegation and alienation of churches, the Congregation instructs that the relegation of a church should be motivated only by a grave cause, judged by the authority competent to relegate the church, and may be constituted from

a number of just causes, each insufficient in itself, together manifesting the seriousness of the situation (see parts 2e-h). As examples of causes which, though serious, are each insufficient in themselves, the instruction lists: "i. a general plan of the diocese to reduce the number of churches; ii. the church is no longer needed; iii. the parish has been suppressed; iv. the number of parishioners has decreased; v. closure will not harm the good of souls; vi. a desire to promote unity in the parish; vii. some potential future cause that has not actually happened yet …" (2h; see also the more contemporary *Instruction "The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelising mission of the Church"*, issued by the Congregation for the Clergy, 20 July 2020, which establishes "lack of clergy, demographic decline, or the grave financial state of the diocese" as further, insufficient causes (51)).

I note that while motives i, ii, iii, v, vi and vii from the first instruction, as well as "lack of clergy" and "demographic decline," certainly could motivate this decision, I have only carefully considered, as I explain above, motives in the categories of ii, v, and vii, which together with the other motivations – especially the frequent requests born of consulting the Faithful of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families – constitute *together*, in my judgment, the requisite, grave, and church-specific causes for the relegation of the church.

Further, the instruction specifies that the relegating authority must engage in a true consultation of the Presbyteral Council, during which arguments for and against the relegation are considered. Likewise, the relegating authority must obtain the consent of those who claim rights in the church, which jurisprudence has understood to be, at least, the Pastor and, possibly, also the founders of the church. Finally, the relegating authority must obtain the consent of those who claim rights in the church and determine that the good of souls will not suffer as a result of the relegation (2i).

As I already noted, I have engaged in a true consultation with the Presbyteral Council, at the request of the pastor of the parish which administers the Church of St. Kathryn. Also, by the Pastor's testimony, I believe that the good of souls will not suffer from the relegation of the Church of St. Kathryn.

Canon 1222 §2, which is the basis of the above instruction, specifies that the proper relegating authority for a parish church is the diocesan bishop. By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See, I hold that office.

*Derogation from customary practice*
Custom is the best interpreter of laws (c. 27). It has been the practice in the Diocese of Saint Cloud, as well as other dioceses in the region, to postpone the relegation of churches intended for sale until such time as a buyer has made an offer, the amount of the offer demonstrating (or not) just cause or even, combined with other causes, grave motivation for the relegation.

In this case, however, no such offer is on the table. As of this writing, even a particular buyer for the Church of St. Kathryn is unknown to me. To relegate in this case, then, would be contrary to custom.

Nevertheless, it is not clear that this customary practice has attained the force of law. It is certainly not reflected in the instructions of the Roman Curia. In addition, it is my responsibility, as a legislator (c. 26), to judge the suitability of customs, and I find this customary practice lacking, as it seems to reduce the utility of a sacred space to its market value, without due or balancing consideration of the psychological and spiritual value of the edifice, even for the Faithful who may no longer routinely use it. Indeed, my heart is moved by the observation that parishioners of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families, are grieving and would be better able to pass through this grief when this act of relegation takes place. Such psychological and spiritual values are worth far more than market values.

*Disproportionate remedy*
It must be noted that relegation of the church does not immediately alleviate the financial burden on parish. Even though it no longer be a sacred edifice, the Church of St. Kathryn would still require a minimum of utilities, insurance, etc. In order to make the church ready for a possible sale, it must be kept in reasonably good repair, requiring expenditures for routine maintenance. The gravity of rendering the building to secular use, then, does not seem proportionate, as the financial relief it provides is neither absolutely assured nor immediate.

Again, however, I must note that consultation with parishioners pointed to higher psychological and even spiritual values than that of merely temporal goods. Thus, the remedies for what matters – these higher goods – are far more immediate and assured.

**III. The Decision**
Therefore, in light of the general plan of consolidation currently underway in the diocese; in light of the specific plans established organically in the Parish of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families; recognizing that the church is not absolutely required for the continued activity of that parish; concerned for the financial welfare of the parish; judging that the relegation will not harm the good of souls; having consulted the Presbyteral Council and having secured the consent, insofar as possible, of those who claim rights in the church; having otherwise consulted, through parish leadership, those whose rights could be injured; respecting the opinions of experts; and moved to pastorally care for those who grieve, **I hereby render the Church of St. Kathryn to secular but not unbecoming use, and I hereby establish the following norms:**

**If the church is ever sold to anyone other than a juridic person of the Catholic Church;**

**1º restrictions preventing use inconsistent with the building's history must be included in the deed;**
**2º the altars, which retain their dedication or blessing in spite of this act (c. 1238), must be handled in accord with the norm of law;**
**3º other blessed and unblessed objects must be kept by the Parish in a manner consistent with their status – it is permitted to transfer unblessed**

**objects, especially, to the purchaser of the church, in accord with the norm of law;**
**4º signage and other elements of the building are discretely altered so as to communicate the change in the church's status without detracting from its past purpose.**

**IV. Notification and Appeals**
For this decree to be properly notified, **I hereby establish that the following must occur:**

**§1 The pastor must be given a signed copy of this decree;**
**§2 With whatever explanation the pastor judges prudent, Section III and the part of this section regarding appeals must be read aloud by the pastor or his delegate to the congregation at all regularly scheduled weekend Masses of the parish of St. Joseph, Pillar of Families (i.e., excluding weddings, funerals, and the like), on the weekend of October 31 and Nov 1;**
**§3 Paper copies of this entire decree are made available that same weekend to those Faithful who wish to receive them;**
**§4 A copy of this decree is posted to the All Things New Website on or before October 30.**

*Appeals*
In accord with c. 1734 and following, members of the Faithful aggrieved by this decision are able to petition me to modify or even revoke this decree. Such petitions must be presented to me, in writing, before the close of business on Monday, November 16, 2026. To present such a petition to me, it is sufficient that it be received electronically or physically at the Chancery of the Diocese of Saint Cloud (see the address in the header).

**V. Enactment**
If notification takes place according to the above formula, this decree becomes effective at 11:59 PM on December 20, 2026.

Given at the Chancery, the 26th Day of October, the Year of Our Lord 2026

+ Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.

+Patrick M. Neary, C.S.C.
Bishop, Diocese of Saint Cloud

Joseph C. Tourville

Ecclesiastical Notary

SIGILLUM DIOCESIS SANCTI CLODOALDI
SAINT CLOUD

Pro. No. 167-26