



MOST REVEREND LEONARD P. BLAIR  
ARCHBISHOP OF HARTFORD

## DECREE

*In Nomine Domini. Amen.*

### **DECREE OF DECONSECRATION AND RELEGATION TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE OF SAINT THOMAS CHURCH, SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT**

**WHEREAS**, in 1862, Saint Thomas Parish was established, and in 1860, Saint Thomas Mission Church was constructed, with the cornerstone of the church building blessed on August 24, 1884, by one of my predecessors, Bishop Lawrence S. McMahon;

**WHEREAS**, in May 2021, I, the undersigned, as Archbishop, wrote to the Catholic faithful in the Southington/Plantsville municipal region to inform them of the imminent pastoral planning process: the Archdiocese's effort to address the reality of fewer priests and of Masses held in church buildings rarely if ever filled to capacity. For the Archdiocese, the pastoral planning process uses the "municipal/regional model," which posits that towns with one high school (as one indicator of population) will have one parish and in some cases only one church;

**WHEREAS**, since the aforementioned municipal region has five churches with a rich history of faith and service, the primary challenge now, in addition to restructuring the parishes into one parish, is to ensure that the new parish is a vibrant, welcoming, attractive and faith-filled community, and to identify or create a church building with enough capacity for parishioners; Saint Thomas Church requires costly repairs;

**WHEREAS**, on August 1, 2021, the following parishes in Southington, Connecticut were linked and are now served by one pastor: Saint Thomas, Immaculate Conception, and Saint Dominic;

**WHEREAS**, the church building of Saint Thomas is over 161 years old and in need of substantial repair: the cast iron pipes for the heating system are corroded and leaking, heaving the basement floor; iron from the broken pipes has circulated through the boiler and damaged the pump; the ceiling in the sacristy has been leaking though light fixtures; many of the sills below the stained glass windows are rotting, causing the windows to sag, bow, and crack;

**WHEREAS**, after the pastor presented the issues to trustees, finance council, pastoral council, a general meeting with parishioners was held with a live stream on March 7, 2021. While the parish has the necessary funds to undertake the repairs, the repairs will be short-lived. With the merger of parishes in the municipal region scheduled for July 2022, the parish needs a church that can accommodate at least 1,000, or one twice the size of Saint Thomas Church;

**WHEREAS**, given the complexity of the issues involved in repairing and maintaining Saint Thomas Church and its inadequate seating capacity, the vast majority of the parishioners opted for the church's relegation to profane but not sordid use;

**WHEREAS**, I convened the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council on September 27, 2021, for consultation on the question of the relegation of Saint Thomas Church to profane but not sordid use, in light of the following facts:

- The "municipal/regional model" for parishes in the Archdiocese is considering establishing one centralized church building for each region; thus, the right of worship will not be denied to the faithful but reinforced;
- The strategic pastoral planning for the Archdiocese was to reduce the number of churches so that our local churches are characterized by spiritual vitality, organizational efficacy and accountability, and financial responsibility;
- The number of parishioners has decreased, and the unity of the future parish will be promoted;
- The closure will not harm the good of the souls, as the parishioners of Saint Thomas Parish will attend Masses at the other four churches within the municipality.

**WHEREAS**, the Presbyteral Council voted to recommend that Saint Thomas Church be relegated to profane but not sordid use;

**WHEREAS**, I have concluded that the economic hardship of maintaining the church building and its lack of usefulness to the new proposed merger constitute grave cause sufficient in law to support the relegation of the church building to profane but not sordid use;

**WHEREFORE:** Having carefully considered the law and the facts, having received formal written requests on June 17, July 26, & September 16, 2021, from the Pastor and the trustees with the support of the parish finance council, having heard the Presbyteral Council on September 27, 2021, having ensured by means of the original deeds and other documents and having heard from others that there are no donors and/or their heirs whose consent is needed to perform this juridic act, in accordance with the norm of canon 1222 §2, and having ensured that its altars, sacred objects, and religious artifacts will be removed from the church in accordance with canonical norms;

I, the undersigned Archbishop of Hartford, do pronounce, declare, and **DECREE** that the current church of Saint Thomas Parish, located at **143 Bristol Street, Southington, Connecticut** be relegated to profane but not sordid use (c.1222 §2). It shall no longer be a sacred place for divine worship, and herewith will lose its blessing, dedication, and consecration.


This decree is to be published to the pastor of Saint Thomas Parish.

This decree becomes effective as of October 20, 2021, prior to which the substance of it is to be communicated to parishioners at the aforementioned parishes, including a display in an appropriate place so that parishioners can read it. It will also be available on the Archdiocese of Hartford website, under News-Public Notices: [<https://archdioceseofhartford.org/public-notice/>].

Canonical recourse may be made within the peremptory time limit of ten (10) business days from the legitimate notification of the decree and in accordance with the norm of law (CIC canon 1734 §2).


All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of September the Year of Our Lord 2021.



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Reverend Ryan M. Lerner  
Chancellor



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Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair  
Archbishop of Hartford