



Office of the Bishop
Diocese of Providence
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DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

Since its solemn dedication in 1870, St. Charles Borromeo Church, Woonsocket, has functioned as a spiritual home for generations of families and for the celebration of the sacraments. In recent years, the gradual decrease in parishioners has resulted in diminished parish income. At the same time, normal parish operating costs have continued to escalate, resulting in deferred maintenance on the church structure. This pattern has progressed to a point where physical issues related to its antiquated roof and heating system, as well as the stained-glass windows, are now apparent. A recent inspection by Catholic Mutual Insurance Group indicates that the 40-year-old roof is in poor condition, and that a short-term plan must be developed to replace it. Water damage is visible within the church and has remained unaddressed. The age and condition of the boiler now make the heating system unreliable and inefficient; Catholic Mutual Insurance Group recommends its replacement as well. Additionally, there are significant concerns with the stained-glass windows, which have never been fully and professionally restored.

The staggering costs to meet these physical needs of the church have reached a point where further consideration of necessary, long-term repairs and renovations would be financially impossible and imprudent. A conservative estimate for the projected cost for the long-term replacement of the church roof was \$140,000; likewise, conservative estimates for the total renovations of the church's heating system and stained-glass windows exceeded \$200,000, and \$232,000, respectively.

The parish administrator of St. Charles Borromeo Parish and the Diocese of Providence have identified these causes that, taken together, clearly support the case that the situation regarding the church building has become increasingly tenuous. For these reasons, in their letter of September 26, 2019, the parish administrator and parish trustees recommended that I permanently close the church building.

Therefore, at the request of the parish administrator and trustees of St. Charles Borromeo Parish; having determined that several factors are present and compelling; having heard those affected by the request; having heard the College of Consultors on October 10, 2019 and the Council of Priests on October 10, 2019 as required by Canons 1222, §2, and 515, §2; I hereby decree that:

1. The St. Charles Borromeo church building, Woonsocket, is relegated from sacred to secular (but not sordid) use;
2. The church simultaneously loses its former status as a sacred place. Therefore, Mass and any other public worship or liturgical act is now prohibited there. This means that the church building is closed permanently;
3. All items inside the church be inventoried carefully.

The effective date of this decree is January 12, 2020, at 11:59pm.

I also direct that this decree be forwarded to the parish administrator, who will provide copies to parishioners at the weekend Masses on November 16 – 17, 2019.

Parishioners who wish to make recourse against this decree have the right to do so. According to Church law (Canon 1734, §2), they must do so **within 10 (ten) business days** of receiving notification of this decree. Any recourse must be submitted in writing via postal mail to Bishop Tobin by December 3, 2019 and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

At this difficult time, I extend my prayerful support to all who worship at St. Charles Borromeo Church, which has been a true home and haven for the faithful since before the foundation of our Diocese.

Given in Providence,
at the Chancery,
this 13th of November, 2019



Handwritten signature of Thomas J. Tobin in black ink.

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence

Handwritten signature of Timothy D. Reilly in black ink.

(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly - Chancellor