

# DIOCESE OF SAGINAW

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

**HIS EXCELLENCY  
MOST REVEREND ROBERT D. GRUSS  
By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SAGINAW**

**DECREE  
Relegation to Profane but Not Sordid Use of Saint Joseph Church  
Argyle, Michigan**

## THE FACTS

**Whereas**, the Church of Saint Joseph located at 4960 N. Ugly, MI 48410, is one of the worship sites of Good Shepherd Parish in Ugly and has served the faithful for many years as a place of prayer, worship and sacramental life;

**Whereas**, Saint Joseph was designated a parish church in 1906.

**Whereas**, In July 2013, by decree of the Most Reverend Joseph R. Cistone, Bishop of Saginaw, it was merged with St. John Evangelist in Ugly and St. Ignatius in Frieburg and St. Columbkille to form Good Shepherd Parish in Ugly.

**Whereas**, in recent years, the parish has experienced a sustained decline in active membership, resulting in decreased sacramental participation and diminished financial resources;

**Whereas**, a pastoral and financial review has concluded that the continued maintenance and operation of St. Joseph church site is no longer feasible or prudent;

**Whereas**, Good Shepherd is facing critical financial difficulties, including sustained deficit spending over several years, in large part due to maintenance of multiple church buildings;

## THE LAW

**Whereas**, in accordance with can. 1212 of the Code of Canon Law, sacred places lose their dedication or blessing if they have been destroyed in large part or if they have been permanently relegated to profane but not sordid use by decree of the competent ordinary or in fact;

**Whereas**, in accordance with can. 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the Presbyteral Council and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby, may relegate it to profane but not sordid use;

**Whereas**, can. 515 §2 and can. 87 §1 of the Code of Canon Law affirm the diocesan bishop's authority regarding the erection, suppression, and modification of parishes, as well as the governance of ecclesiastical discipline for the spiritual good of the faithful;

### **THE ARGUMENT**

**Whereas**, the continued use of St. Joseph church site is no longer justified by the current demographic and financial realities of the parish;

**Whereas**, the faithful of the parish will continue to have full access to the sacraments and will be fully integrated into the liturgical and pastoral life of Good Shepherd Parish;

**Whereas**, the parish has experienced a sustained decline in active membership, resulting in diminished participation and reduced financial capacity;

**Whereas**, this decline renders the continued operation of the multiple worship sites unsustainable;

**Whereas**, responsible stewardship, ecclesial unity, and pastoral effectiveness require the consolidation of parish resources and activities;

**Whereas**, the relegation of the building to profane but not sordid use will permit proper stewardship of parish assets and avoid the unnecessary expenditure of parish resources on maintaining a building no longer necessary for divine worship;

**Whereas**; considering these factors, it is judged pastorally and financially most responsible to consolidate parish resources and to ensure the sustainability of the parish and its mission, having regard to can. 1222 §1 of the Code of Canon Law;

#### **Wherefore:**

1. Having carefully considered the law and the facts; and
2. Having heard the Presbyteral Council on October 13, 2025; and
3. Having heard on July 23, 2025 the Pastor and the Parish Pastoral and Finance Council of Good Shepherd Parish, in whose territory the aforesaid property is situated; and
4. Having obtained the consent of those whose rights might be injured or violated, especially the major donors (or: the heirs of the major donor,), in accordance with the norm of canon 1222§2; and
5. Having ensured that the church will be stripped of its altar, sacred objects, and religious artifacts; and

6. Having ensured the good of the souls will suffer no harm thereby; that is, the spiritual and pastoral good of the parishioners will continue as it has been provided by Good Shepherd Parish in Ubly;
7. Having ensured that no scandal would arise from the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use;

## DECREE

I, the Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss, Bishop of the Diocese of Saginaw, by the authority granted to me in canon 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, and after consultation with the Presbyteral Council, hereby pronounce, declare, and decree that St. Joseph Church, located at 4960 N. Ubly Road, Argyle, Michigan, has lost its blessing, dedication, or consecration and is no longer to be used as a place for divine worship.

The altar, sacred objects, and religious artifacts are to be removed from the church, insofar as possible, for reuse at Good Shepherd Parish or otherwise transferred to the Diocesan Archives for use by other ecclesiastical entities.

Therefore, the church is hereby relegated to profane but not sordid use, in accordance with canon can. 1222 §2. This decree shall take effect on June 1, 2026.

Everything I have decreed herein is to be observed in all its parts. Anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, notwithstanding, may not be acted upon following the promulgation of this decree.

I further decree that this act be promulgated by publication on the website of the Diocese of Saginaw and on the parish website of Good Shepherd Parish.

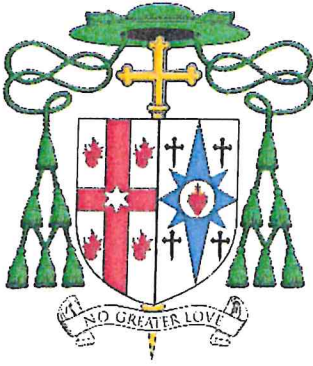
In accordance with canons 1734-1737, any party aggrieved by this decree has the right to petition for its revocation or amendment by hierarchical recourse within ten (10) canonical days of its legitimate notification.

Given on this 12<sup>th</sup> day of May in the year of Our Lord 2026, at the chancery of the Diocese of Saginaw.



Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Saginaw

  
Reverend Alberto E. Vargas, JCL. JV.  
Chancellor



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MOST REVEREND ROBERT D. GRUSS  
By the Grace of God and the Authority of the Apostolic See  
BISHOP OF THE DIOCESE OF SAGINAW**

## **DECREE**

**Reversion of St. Ignatius Church, Frieburg from Occasional use to Additional use Church  
Good Shepherd Parish, Ubly Michigan**

## **THE FACTS**

Saint Ignatius Church, Frieburg, located at 1826 Cumber Road, Ubly, Michigan 48475, was established in 1904 and has long served the Catholic faithful of the region.

In July 2013, St. Ignatius Church was merged into Good Shepherd Parish, Ubly, together with St. John the Evangelist (Ubly), St. Columbkille (Sheridan Corners), and St. Joseph (Argyle), thereby consolidating regular parish life within the new parish structure.

The Pastoral and Finance Councils of Good Shepherd Parish reviewed the matter on July 23, 2025, and the Presbyteral Council was consulted on October 13, 2025.

It has been determined that the building of St. Ignatius Church remains structurally sound and pastorally suitable for limited liturgical use, and that there is continuing pastoral benefit in permitting its use for certain celebrations.

## **THE LAW**

In accordance with can. 1214 of the Code of Canon Law, a church is a sacred building destined for divine worship to which the faithful have the right of access for the exercise of divine worship, especially public worship.

In accordance with can. 1215 §§1–2, no church is to be erected without the written consent of the diocesan bishop, who judges its suitability for divine worship.

In accordance with can. 515 §2, it belongs to the diocesan bishop alone to erect, suppress, or modify parishes after hearing the Presbyteral Council.

In accordance with can. 381 §1, the diocesan bishop possesses all ordinary, proper, and immediate power required for the exercise of his pastoral office.

## THE ARGUMENT

The pastoral circumstances of Good Shepherd Parish indicate that while regular liturgical life has been consolidated within the parish churches, St. Ignatius Church continues to hold significant historical, spiritual, and pastoral value for the faithful of the region.

The building remains suitable for sacred use on a limited basis, and its use for divine worship serves the good of souls, particularly by providing proximity for the celebration of the sacraments.

Such limited use does not contradict the prior parish merger, nor does it require the erection of a new parish or quasi-parish. Rather, it constitutes a prudent exercise of the diocesan bishop's governance to ensure pastoral care in accord with can. 381 §1 and can. 1752, whereby the salvation of souls is the supreme law of the Church.

Therefore, it is pastorally appropriate to designate St. Ignatius Church as an additional place of worship within Good Shepherd Parish for liturgical use.

## THE DECREE

Therefore, **I, Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss**, Bishop of Saginaw, by virtue of my ordinary executive authority and after having considered all pertinent circumstances, hereby decree the following:

1. Saint. Ignatius Church, Frieburg, is hereby designated as an additional church within Good Shepherd Parish, to be used for the celebrations of divine worship seasonal liturgies, and other pastoral celebrations as determined by the pastor;
2. This designation does not constitute the erection of a new parish or quasi-parish, nor does it alter the canonical structure of Good Shepherd Parish;
3. The pastor of Good Shepherd Parish is entrusted with the pastoral, liturgical, and material care of St. Ignatius Church in accord with diocesan norms;
4. All celebrations in this church must be conducted in full conformity with liturgical law and diocesan directives;
5. I reserve to myself and my successors the right to modify or revoke this decree for pastoral reasons if circumstances so require.
6. This decree is to take effect on June 1, 2026

Everything I have decreed herein is to be observed in all its parts. Anything to the contrary, even if worthy of special mention, notwithstanding, may not be acted upon following the promulgation of this decree.


I further decree that this act be promulgated by publication on the website of the Diocese of Saginaw and on the parish website of Good Shepherd Parish.

In accordance with canons 1734-1737, any party aggrieved by this decree has the right to petition for its revocation or amendment by hierarchical recourse within ten (10) canonical days of its legitimate notification.

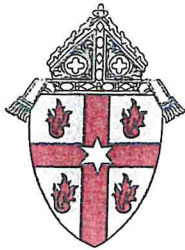
Given on this 12<sup>th</sup> day of May in the year of Our Lord 2026, at the chancery of the Diocese of Saginaw.



Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Saginaw



Reverend Alberto E. Vargas, JCL. JV.  
Chancellor



# Catholic Diocese of Saginaw

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May 12, 2026

## Canonical Instructions for Notification to the Parish Regarding the Canonical Changes of the Churches

1. The decrees are to be communicated to the parish communities in a timely and pastoral manner.
2. The Pastor/Parochial Administrator is to ensure that the decrees are read or appropriately announced at all weekend Masses of the affected parish(es) on the designated weekend.
3. A copy of the decree is to be made available to parishioners, either in printed form, on the parish website, or through other suitable means of communication.
4. The effective date of the decree is to be clearly communicated to the faithful.
5. The Pastor/Parochial Administrator is to explain the canonical effect of the decree and provide pastoral guidance regarding sacramental celebrations, Mass schedules, parish records, and the continued use of the church building, if applicable.
6. The decree is to be preserved in the parish archives together with all related canonical documentation.
7. Any questions from parishioners regarding the implementation of the decree are to be directed to the Chancery.
8. **Notification should also be provided to parish staff, finance councils, pastoral councils, and other affected parish organizations.**
9. All sacred vessels, relics, liturgical appointments, sacramental records, and other ecclesiastical goods are to be inventoried and safeguarded in accord with canon law and diocesan policy.
10. Sacred objects designated for divine worship are not to be sold or transferred for profane use without the prior written permission of the Diocese.
11. Any proposal regarding the sale, transfer, demolition, lease, or alienation of church property or ecclesiastical goods must receive prior diocesan approval and must follow the requirements of canon law, including cann. 1212, 1222, and 1291–1298, as applicable.
12. Before any church building is sold or permanently transferred to profane but not sordid use, the diocesan process established by the Bishop is to be fully observed.
13. Historical, artistic, and archival materials are to be preserved and may not be discarded or alienated without consultation with the Diocese.
14. Parish financial and property records related to the church are to be maintained and transmitted to the Diocese upon request.
15. **No public announcement regarding the sale or future use of church property is to be made prior to diocesan authorization.**

Given on this 12<sup>th</sup> day of May in the year of Our Lord 2026, at the chancery of the Diocese of Saginaw.

*+ Robert D. Gruss*

Most Reverend Robert D. Gruss  
Bishop of Saginaw