



ARCHDIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA

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OFFICE of the ARCHBISHOP

DECREE OF THE RELEGATION OF ST. HEDWIG CHURCH, CHESTER TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

By means of a Decree which took effect on 1 July 1993, the Parish of St. Hedwig, Chester, was suppressed; its Church was eventually designated a place of worship attached to Sacred Heart Parish, Clifton Heights. On 16 October 2023, after having spoken to the congregants at St. Hedwig regarding the dire financial situation facing their Church, the Pastor of Sacred Heart Parish petitioned for the relegation of the Church of St. Hedwig to profane but not sordid use.

In accord with Archdiocesan policy, the Pastor was asked to provide further information and documentation regarding the situation of the Church of St. Hedwig and the Parish of Sacred Heart. This information, received in June 2025, included a letter in support of the petition signed by the members of the Finance and Pastoral Councils of Sacred Heart Parish, copies of announcements made to the faithful of St. Hedwig's and Sacred Heart regarding the petition, financial reports on both the Church and the Parish, and a number of invoices and proposals submitted to Sacred Heart Parish regarding needed repairs to the fabric of the Church.

Since the Church, in its current state, is still capable of being used for divine worship, at least to the minimum level required by canon law, the Archbishop of Philadelphia, having received the petition and the supporting documentation provided by the Pastor of Sacred Heart, referred the matter to the Council of Priests, in accord with the norm of can. 1222 §2.

The material provided by the Pastor, along with a report on the petition provided by the Chancery Office, was provided to the members of the Council of Priests on 28 August 2025, who gathered to consider the relevant arguments both for and against the proposed relegation on 18 September 2025.

In this case, the following factors were taken into consideration:

1. In 1993, St. Hedwig Parish, Chester, was suppressed upon its extinctive union with St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Chester. The Church, however, was made a worship site of

Sacred Heart Parish, Clifton Heights. This arrangement was due to the fact that both St. Hedwig and Sacred Heart were founded to serve Polish speaking Catholics.

2. Since that time, the faithful attending St. Hedwig's Church have received pastoral care from the clergy of Sacred Heart Parish. In 2016, Sacred Heart Parish was "partnered" with its neighboring territorial parish, St. Charles Borromeo, Drexel Hill. These added duties have made it difficult for the clergy of Sacred Heart to continue providing pastoral care to the people of St. Hedwig's.
3. The number of congregants who gather for regular services at St. Hedwig's has steadily declined over the years, most recently numbering between 30 and 40. Their financial contributions, while generous, cover the operating expenses of the Church, but are insufficient to provide for its upkeep and maintenance. This has resulted in multiple repairs to the Church fabric being financed by the people of Sacred Heart.
4. In August of 2023, the boiler at the Church of St. Hedwig failed, and a replacement was estimated to cost over \$60,000. The Pastor explained the dire financial situation facing the Church of St. Hedwig's to its congregants on 10 September 2023. As of December 31, 2023, regular Sunday worship at St. Hedwig's has been suspended.
5. Sacred Heart has limited resources and significant expenses of its own, having run a \$74,357 operating deficit in 2024. While the sale of property adjacent to St. Hedwig's Church in January 2025 provided additional capital to Sacred Heart, this money will be needed to help offset the regular deficits that accrue in parish operations.
6. St. Hedwig's is situated within the territory served by St. Katharine Drexel Parish, Chester, and is surrounded by a number of nearby parishes, including St. Thomas the Apostle, Glen Mills, and St. Joseph, Aston, where, according to the Pastor, many former congregants from St. Hedwig's currently worship. For this reason, he does not believe that the relegation of the Church would harm the good of souls.

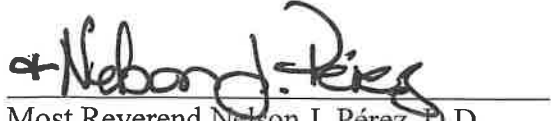
While no one of these individual factors alone would provide sufficient grounds for relegating the Church, the Council of Priests was unanimous in its support of the petition, concluding that a sufficiently grave cause could be determined by the concurrence of such factors, which, when seen as a comprehensive whole, manifest the seriousness of the concrete financial situation being faced by Sacred Heart Parish, and testify to its inability to maintain the Church of St. Hedwig.

Therefore, in virtue of the prescripts of canons 1212 and 1222 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, having consulted the Council of Priests on 18 September 2025, having heard their opinion that these factors constitute a sufficiently grave cause, and having ascertained that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, I hereby **DECREE** that Saint Hedwig Church, Chester, Pennsylvania, be relegated to profane but not sordid use.

This Decree is effective as of January 1, 2026, and is to be communicated to the members of Sacred Heart Parish and to the faithful of this Archdiocese in an appropriate manner. All things to the

contrary notwithstanding. Canonical recourse to this decree is to be sought according to the norms of canon law.

Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, on the thirteenth day of November, in the year of our Lord 2025, in accord with the norm of law.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Nelson J. Pérez", written over a horizontal line.

Most Reverend Nelson J. Pérez, D.D.
Archbishop of Philadelphia

SEAL

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Richard K. McFadden", written over a horizontal line.

Reverend Richard K. McFadden, J.C.L.
Vice Chancellor