



J. PETER

BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND
THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTOLIC SEE
ARCHBISHOP OF SEATTLE

DECREE

To Our Brothers and Sisters of the Archdiocese of Seattle

Holy Rosary Church, a church of the Archdiocese of Seattle located in Tacoma, Washington, was built in 1920 and dedicated on November 21, 1921. The church has served the Catholic community in Tacoma for nearly a century, and is a visible icon of the Catholic faith as it stands atop a hill and can be seen from the heavily-travelled Interstate 5 corridor, as well as surrounding areas. The Church is a magnificent structure, and is the worship site for approximately 250 Holy Rosary parishioner families.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On October 6, 2018, sheetrock from the ceiling fell into the choir loft and back pews of the church. A plan was created to assess the issue, and several contractors were hired to conduct a safety assessment. It was determined that the building should be shut down during the assessment, due to safety concerns, and liturgical celebrations were moved to the school auditorium located on the same campus.

The safety assessment was completed on January 8, 2019. As a result of the findings, a due diligence project plan was created to include:

- Building assessment
- Real estate assessment
- Operations assessment
- Fundraising and grant assessment
- Pastoral planning assessment
- School assessment

Following are the results of these assessments.

Building assessment

The building assessment involved a team consisting of Broderick Architects, Hilger Construction, Nexus Building Envelope Consultants, Swanson Say Faget Structural Engineers,

and parish and archdiocesan leadership. The cost of conducting this assessment was \$15,000 and was borne by the Archdiocese, as was the cost of the fencing (\$2,000) to assure that the church would not be entered. The building assessment results indicated that a minimum cost to re-occupy the building would be \$2.25 million dollars, the cost of necessary other repairs in the near future would cost an additional \$6.7 million dollars, and the total cost to repair the church interior and exterior would be approximately \$17.7 million dollars.

Real estate assessment

The real estate assessment indicated that the potential value of the church lot would be \$1.7 million, and the potential value of the entire parish holdings would be \$5 million. The preliminary estimate of demolition costs for the church range from \$.07 million to \$1.6 million, largely dependent upon asbestos conditions which are currently not fully known but believed to be significant. The cost to build a smaller church would be \$6-7 million, but parishioners clearly indicated a lack of support for this approach.

Operations assessment

The parish has been running a net operating loss of between \$47,000 and \$104,000 for the last five years. The parish received some gifts and bequests to offset the losses, but the primary benefactor is now deceased. It is clear that the parish community is not able to afford the ongoing costs of maintaining the church building.

The number of households and the sacramental life of the parish have also been in a continued decline (except for funerals).

Fundraising and grant assessment

A fundraising firm with deep experience and familiarity with the Catholic Church in the Archdiocese of Seattle was consulted. After review, the firm advised that it did not believe it would be feasible to raise the funds needed to repair Holy Rosary church. Capital campaigns historically raise between 2 and 2.5 times the ordinary annual income, which is an average of \$279,000 for Holy Rosary parish over the last three years. This would result in an anticipated \$627,000 potential for a parish capital campaign. After reviewing grants, the anticipated revenue from grants are less than \$100,000.

Pastoral planning assessment

The Pierce County deanery in which Holy Rosary parish is located has been undergoing an extensive pastoral planning process since March of 2015. The process has included many leadership meetings and convocations. In April 2018, and September 2018, prior to the sheetrock falling in Holy Rosary church, the ongoing viability of Holy Rosary parish was brought into question. More than half of Holy Rosary's parishioners are from outside the geographic parish territory, and there are 6 other parishes with churches within 3 miles. Due to this geographic makeup and the continued decline of parishioners, the Pierce County deanery began discussing the pastoral plans for Holy Rosary.

School assessment

Holy Rosary's bilingual school was established as a separate juridic person on July 11, 2013, with the building and land continuing to be owned by the juridic person of Holy Rosary Parish. The school has been successful in recent years in fulfilling its mission of Catholic education and is currently able to meet its mission and financial obligations.

CONSULTATION

There has been extensive consultation within the deanery since 2015 regarding the pastoral plan for Pierce County Deanery. In addition, since the building concerns manifested in October of 2018, there have been several meetings with Archdiocesan leadership and Holy Rosary Parish's pastoral and finance councils, as well as a meeting for all parishioners on May 29, 2019. Current leaders, Deacon Jim Fish and Reverend Michael Radermacher, as well as the dean, Reverend Jerry Burns, have been involved in every step of the process. In addition, the Presbyteral Council has been kept informed as the process unfolded and a special meeting was held on August 7, 2019, dedicated solely to this topic.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION COMMUNICATED IN THIS DECREE

This decision has been a very difficult one. Extensive financial, staff (more than 800 hours of effort) and consultant resources were expended to identify a solution to restore Holy Rosary Church as a safe worship site for its parishioners. Regretfully, the cost to fully repair and maintain Holy Rosary church is simply too high. The community is declining and unable to support either the cost of the repair or the building's continued maintenance. There are no other identifiable sources to cover the cost. A question must be asked, as well: Even if the financial resources could be identified, is it the best use of almost \$18 million to repair one church serving a small and declining community of faithful, when there are so many other pressing human needs in the area? Faithful stewardship of both parish and archdiocesan resources says no.

DECISION

With deep regret and sadness, and also with confidence that all viable alternative options have been explored, I hereby relegate Holy Rosary Church, located at 424 South 30th Street in Tacoma, to profane but not sordid use effective August 25th, 2019, in accord with canon 1222 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law. In addition, since due diligence has been completed to explore all known options, I authorize that the church building be razed due to its unsafe condition and the inability to fund repairs. Archdiocesan leadership will continue to work with parish leadership to assess options for Catholic use of the property, including but not limited to low income or affordable housing.

RECOURSE

To seek revocation or emendation of this decree, the first step that is required by canon law is to propose recourse to the author of the decree in writing within 10 business days of the communication of the decree, in accord with canon 1734 §1. In order to meet this requirement, a

written request must be sent to: The Archbishop of Seattle, 710 9th Avenue, Seattle, Washington, 98104. This request must be sent by September 9, 2019.

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Washington
this 25th day of August
in the year of our Lord, 2019.



+ J. Peter Sartain

J. Peter Sartain
Archbishop of Seattle

Mary E. Santi

Mary E. Santi
Chancellor