

DECREE

In The Name of God. Amen.

Since its solemn dedication in 1903, the Our Lady of Good Counsel church building, located in West Warwick, has functioned for more than a century as a spiritual home for generations of families and for the celebration of the sacraments. In recent years at Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, the gradual decrease in parishioners has resulted in diminished sacramental practice and parish income and, on January 1, 2025, regular weekend Masses and all activities were halted there. In November 2025, there was a parish merger involving the Our Lady of Good Counsel church building (Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish, West Warwick, merged into St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick). During then, parish operating costs at St. Joseph Parish have increased in order to maintain three campuses (St. Joseph, Our Lady of Good Counsel, and Saints Peter and Paul properties). This pattern has progressed to a point where physical issues related to the Our Lady of Good Counsel's church building are now apparent. Since the cessation of weekend Masses and all activities on January 1, 2025, there have been only four funerals and no other public Masses or liturgies. Otherwise, the church building has been unused for communal worship for more than a year.

As documented by Catholic Mutual Group in its insurance report of September 11, 2024, there are issues with the safety and security of the church building. The largest issue from the report identifies the absence of a fire alarm system. Since January 1, 2008, the church building has been deficient in not providing a fire alarm system (that fact alone may directly affect

insurance coverage for the building, as specified by Catholic Mutual Group). Future use of the church building will require a compliant system tied into the town fire alarm system.

Other observations from the Catholic Mutual Group report include: the lack of an automated external defibrillator, necessary exterior paint and maintenance, necessary pointing to repair a missing section of the church chimney, missing ceiling tiles at church entrance, water stains throughout the church building (above the altar; above the alcove to the left of the altar; and to the hallway ceiling to the left of the altar), need for the parking lot across the street from the church to repair holes (the lot should be sealed and relined), and exterior repairs to driveways and stairwells to the church. The church's roof was installed around 2001 and is coming to the end of its life cycle (the shingled roof would need to be fully replaced within the next few years at additional cost). The pastor notes that, in November 2025, a trickle pipe leak also was discovered in the rectory building with a collapsed ceiling and soaked rug. After the removal of the rug, the buckled wood flooring revealed evidence of a long-lasting leak that went undetected from regular inspections. The pastor also specifies that the church building and the rectory share a single meter for electricity. This creates a logistical issue in continued maintenance and segregation of unused buildings and would add to the financial burden of the property should separate water and electrical services be initiated to the church building.

For the first five months of Fiscal Year 2025-26, St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick, spent \$10,064.19 in regular expenses to maintain the Our Lady of Good Counsel property. The pastor projects that, given the cost of heating oil, the annual expenses to maintain Our Lady of Good Counsel campus will exceed \$22,500. Before its canonical merger into St. Joseph, West Warwick, Our Lady of Good Counsel Parish owed \$165,481.27 in unpaid liabilities.

The pastor of St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick, and the Diocese of Providence have identified the above causes that, taken together, clearly support the case that the situation regarding the Our Lady of Good Counsel church building has become increasingly tenuous. For these reasons, in his letter of December 9, 2025, the pastor of St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick, recommended that I permanently close the church building.

Therefore, at the request of the pastor of St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick; having heard those affected by the request; having heard the College of Consultors on February 17, 2026 and the Council of Priests on February 17, 2026, as required by Canons 1222, §2 and 515, §2; I hereby decree that:

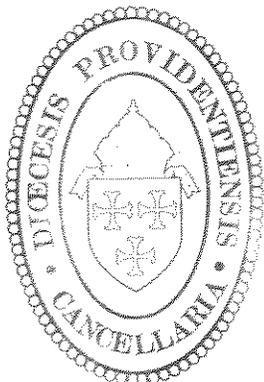
1. The Our Lady of Good Counsel church building, West Warwick, is relegated from sacred to secular (but not sordid) use;
2. The church simultaneously loses its former status as a sacred place. Therefore, Mass and any other public worship or liturgical act is now prohibited there. This means that the church building is closed permanently;
3. All items inside the church be inventoried carefully; they remain the assets of St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick.

I direct that this decree be forwarded to the pastor of St. Joseph Parish, West Warwick, who will inform the parishioners by posting a copy of this decree to via the parish website on the weekend of February 21 – 22, 2026.

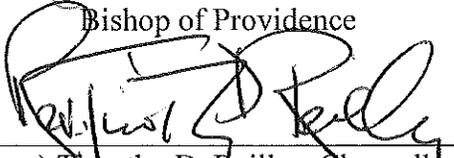
This decree will become effective at that time.

St. Joseph 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 (useful) days** of the above effective dates (February 21 – 22, 2026). Any recourse must be submitted in writing via postal mail to Bishop Lewandowski and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

Given in Providence,
at the Chancery,
this 18th of February 2026





Bruce A. Lewandowski, C.Ss..R.
Bishop of Providence


(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly - Chancellor