

## **DECREE OF RELEGATION TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE OF**

### **ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH, LITTLE RIVER, NEW ZEALAND**

Canon 1212 Sacred places lose their dedication or blessing if they have been in great measure destroyed, or if they have been permanently made over to secular usage, whether by decree of the competent Ordinary or simply in fact.

Canon 1222 §1 If a church cannot in any way be used for divine worship and there is no possibility of its being restored, the diocesan Bishop may allow it to be used for some secular but not unbecoming purpose.

Canon 1222 §2 Where other grave reasons suggest that a particular church should no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan Bishop may allow it to be used for a secular but not unbecoming purpose. Before doing so, he must consult the council of priests; he must also have the consent of those who could lawfully claim rights over that church and be sure that the good of souls would not be harmed by the transfer.

The Church of St John the Evangelist, at Little River on Banks Peninsular, was extensively damaged in the 2011 Earthquakes. The damaged church was deemed unsafe and unable to be used. A covenant was placed on the building preventing it from being disposed of for 10 Years, until the end of 2025. The extent of the damage to the tower, entrance, sanctuary and walls is so great that the cost of repairing the building is prohibitive. Also, of note is the dwindling number of worshipping Catholics in the area, the last remaining two having now left the area. The Church has not been in use since 2011. It has been acknowledged that the parish council and community cannot maintain the building in its present state indefinitely and repair of the church would impose an intolerable financial burden on the parish of St Patrick's Akaroa and these funds would otherwise be more prudently spent on other parish ministries.

As required, I have met with the Council of Priests, the College of Consultors and the Diocesan Finance Council regarding this matter and all have approved the request.

I have met with the parish priest, and he has confirmed the parish leadership team have discussed the matter with parishioners and agree with the proposal to reduce the church to profane and not sordid use.

I have ensured that the altar, sacred objects, and religious artefacts will be removed from the church.

I have ensured that the good of souls and the spiritual welfare of the faithful will not be detrimentally affected by the church being deconsecrated and the spiritual welfare of the faithful is being provided for within the parish boundaries.

I have carefully considered the law and the facts concerning the church in question and judge that the reasons given, when considered cumulatively, constitute the grave cause required by the law (canon 1222 §2) for the de-consecration and the relegation of St John the Evangelist Church, Little River, to profane but not sordid use.

I, the undersigned, Bishop of the Diocese of Christchurch, do hereby pronounce and decree that St John the Evangelist church, located at 4183 Christchurch-Akaroa Rd, Little River is no longer a sacred place for divine worship. It has herewith lost its blessing and consecration. Following the final Closing liturgy it will cease to be used for divine worship. It is hereto relegated to profane but not sordid use. (canon 1222 §2)

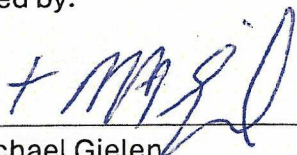
This decree is to be communicated to the parish priest of Akaroa Parish who is the canonical representative of the parish according to canon 532. The parish administrator is to inform the parishioners and provide them with a copy of the decree.

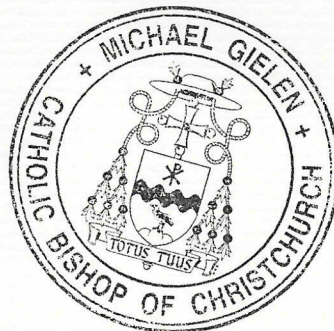
At the same time, I order this decree to be made public to the faithful through its publication on this day, on the website of the Diocese. The publication on the website will be the legitimate notification. A notarised copy of the decree will be sent to the parish priest.

All those who claim to have been aggrieved by this decree are herewith notified that, if they desire to file recourse against the decree, they are required, *ad validitatem*, to submit a petition in the sense of Canon 1734, §1 to me within 10 days from the legitimate notification of this decree.


Given at the Diocesan Office of Christchurch on this date **8<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

Signed by:

  
+ Michael Gielen  
Bishop of the Diocese of Christchurch



Signed by:

  
Reverend Simon Eccleton  
Chancellor