



River Catholics

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ST. PAUL'S CHURCH
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Status of St. Rita's Church in Deferiet

Dear Friends,

At a meeting of St. Paul's parish and finance councils held on May 27, 2021, a lengthy discussion was held on the current and future status of St. Rita's Church. Currently St. Rita's is designated an Oratory. As such, the only allowable Eucharistic celebrations to be held within the church would be the funerals of long-standing former parishioners. While a few funerals have taken place since the church's status change in May of 2019, no other celebrations have been held at St. Rita's. As an oratory no Baptisms, Weddings, Sunday or daily Masses, or reservation of the Blessed Sacrament in the Tabernacle are allowed.

The church has been well maintained by several former parishioners, but the practical needs of heat, electricity and the village requirements regarding water and sewer, have resulted in annual expenses in excess of \$4000 a year. Likewise, concerns have been raised about its aging heating system and the potential losses that could occur with a winter-time failure. Given the reality the church is no longer needed, the maintenance concern and the ongoing expense the council discussed requesting a change in St. Rita's status from that of an Oratory to *profane non-sordid use* with permission to sell the building. There was unanimous consensus on the council to make this request of Bishop LaValley, a request he has granted.

With Bishop's approval the process for changing the status of St. Rita's Church unfolds with a number of steps. First, consultation with the neighboring pastor(s), in our case Fr. Thibault in Carthage, as well as consultation with the Dean, Fr. Arthur LaBaff. I have consulted with both Frs. LaBaff and Thibault who have not expressed any concerns or voiced any exceptions to this requested change. Secondly, this announcement/bulletin information conveying to St. Paul's Parish the discussion and proposed plan so as to provide transparent information and invite the expression of any concerns or questions. The subsequent steps in the process will require permissions from the courts to liquidate church owned real property and address the placement of the contents of St. Rita's Church ensuring their proper use/disposal/transfer in accord with Church norms. More information will follow when/if we arrive at that point in this process.

At the council meeting I acknowledged, and we discussed, the fact that with this request for a change of status and the future sale of the building, a grieving process, very similar to a family death, will unfold in the lives of many former parishioners. That is something we have to honor as it unfolds. I am most grateful for the councils' willingness to have what was a difficult and emotional conversation. Several members of St. Paul's Pastoral Council are former parishioners of St. Rita's and, while clearly difficult, an honest conversation about the need to take this next step was respectfully had.

If you have any questions or concerns about this proposed change to the status of St. Rita's Church please don't hesitate to contact me by phone, email or in person.

Sincerely in Christ,

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