



RamTell E-Newsletter February 2026

Sacred objects must always be treated with reverence and respect

Immaculate Heart of Mary Church, Louisville, Kentucky

When West Louisville's Immaculate Heart of Mary Church was closed in December 2025, long time parishioners gathered for a final Mass of Thanksgiving on Gaudete Sunday, December 14. The Latin word "gaudete" means to rejoice—an uncommon emotion for people who are mourning the loss of their spiritual home.

"In this emotional moment, how can we rejoice?" asked Father George Otuma, pastor. "How can we find the joys in the imperfections, in the sufferings and in the disorder? Because the Lord is the source of hope. God is our source of hope."

According to a December 16, 2025, article in The Record, the weekly newspaper for the Archdiocese of Louisville, Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre decreed the closure of Immaculate Heart of Mary on Nov. 24. The decision to close was based on the decline of the Catholic population in the area and the registrations in the parish. "The number of parishioners doesn't allow care for the church facility and property," the decree said, and parish leadership requested Immaculate Heart of Mary "to be

suppressed," and its territory be given to St. Martin de Porres Church, 3112 West Broadway.

The fact that St. Martin de Porres Parish was ready and able to incorporate its neighboring parish is one reason for rejoicing. The spiritual and pastoral needs of the people of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church are now being met by another parish less than two miles away. But what about the church facility and its property? What will be done with the altar and sacred vessels? What about the rest of the church's furniture, stained glass windows, and other items that are used in the liturgy and the celebration of the sacraments?

Parish and archdiocesan leaders have a stewardship responsibility to dispose of the property of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in ways that are appropriate to their significance as sacred art and objects. St. Martin de Porres Parish will undoubtedly use some of the property that it receives in this transition, but serious decisions will have to be made about many other blessed objects.

Holy Cross Church, Indianapolis, Indiana

The Archdiocese of Indianapolis faced similar challenges in 2022 when Holy Cross Parish on the near east side of Indianapolis was closed. According to The Criterion, weekly newspaper of the Archdiocese's of Indianapolis:

Holy Cross Parish was merged into St. Philip Neri in 2014. For decades before the merger, Holy Cross Church had experienced a significant degree of physical deterioration. A year after the merger, in 2015, a stone archway over the front entrance to Holy Cross Church collapsed.

Because of this deterioration, Archbishop Charles C. Thompson issued a decree in 2019 that relegated Holy Cross, in the terminology of canon law, to "profane but not sordid use." This meant that, while Holy Cross was no longer a place of worship, it could also not be used for a purpose inappropriate for a former church.

What was true of the church building was also true for the sacred art and objects it contained. As a result, soon after the church's closure, blessed items that were once an integral part of the worship and sacramental life of Holy Cross Parish began to be

distributed to other parishes throughout the Indianapolis archdiocese.

As reported in The Criterion, despite the physical condition of Holy Cross making worship there not possible, Father Jeffrey Dufresne, pastor of St. Philip Neri Parish, sees "a definite silver lining" in sacred art from Holy Cross continuing to nurture the faith of Catholics across central and southern Indiana.

We know that these beautiful pieces of sacred art and architecture were commissioned or, in some cases, crafted by the people of Holy Cross in order to show their love for the Lord. And so, we want people to continue to benefit from that devotion that prompted the building of Holy Cross. What really brings me joy as a pastor is to see these pieces that were closed in a vacant church for so long installed in parishes where people can experience the beauty and be drawn closer to the Lord by that beauty.

Archbishop Thompson, who is a former professor of Church law at Saint Meinrad Seminary, was asked recently about the treatment of church

property when a parish is closed or merged. He said:

In addition to respect for sacred spaces of worship--such as churches, shrines, and chapels--are the blessed objects found in such sacred places. These include altars, ambos, tabernacles, baptismal fonts, crucifixes, stations of the cross, statues, icons, relics, windows, and other sacred objects. These are to be respected with great care and devotion. They should not be simply tossed aside, sold, indiscriminately given away, or allowed to fall into ruin. When a church or some sacred place is closed and relegated to profane but not sordid use, these sacred objects are to be preserved and

made available for use in other Catholic spaces of worship. In such a way, these sacred objects may continue the heritage of a Christ-centered community while continuing to inspire worthy worship of God and service to neighbor.

RamTell, Inc. applauds the efforts of Church leaders in Indiana and Kentucky to preserve the dignity of sacred art and blessed objects found in churches that are no longer able to be used in the Church's worship and sacramental ministry. We encourage pastors and lay leaders in parishes to share with others the beautiful objects commissioned by Catholics in past generations.