



MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA  
*BISHOP OF SYRACUSE*

**DECREE**  
**ON THE EXTINCTIVE UNION – MERGER OF THE**  
**PARISHES OF SAINT JOSEPH, SAINT PAUL, SAINT PETER, AND**  
**SAINT STEPHEN, THE KING OF HUNGARY, OSWEGO, NEW YORK**

Whereas the parish of Saint Joseph was founded in 1914 to serve the needs of the Italian-Catholic population of Oswego, the territorial parish of Saint Paul was the first parish founded in Oswego in 1830, the parish of Saint Peter was founded in 1862 to serve the German-Catholic population of Oswego, and the parish of Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary, was founded in 1908 to serve the needs of the Polish-Catholic population of Oswego;

Whereas these parishes became part of the same pastoral care area (PCA) in 1990 due to changing demographics in the city of Oswego, concerns regarding their individual vitality and financial situations, their close geographical proximity, and the declining numbers of available clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse to provide pastoral care;

Whereas an examination of the condition of the parishes took place in 2017 and 2018, evaluating the sacramental statistics, Mass attendance, finances, vitality of each parish, options for pastoral care, etc., involving the pastors/administrator, trustees, finance councils, and pastoral councils of each parish as well as diocesan officials, resulting in a unanimous recommendation to merge into one parish named “Christ the Good Shepherd” in order to provide for the pastoral care of the faithful and to better promote their active engagement in the Church’s mission of worship, evangelization, and care for the poor, the results of which were made known via letters sent to the households of the parishioners of each parish and announcements made by the local media;

Whereas the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham, my predecessor, sought the consultation of the Presbyteral Council in 2019 and then issued decrees enjoining the merger of the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Mary of the Assumption, Saint Paul, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary on 20 June 2019, lawfully communicating them on the same day via the diocesan website and newspaper: The Catholic Sun, the effects of which were implemented on 1 July 2019;

Whereas hierarchical recourse was made to the Congregation for the Clergy against the decree concerning the parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption and the Congregation noted several difficulties with the decree in question as well as with the other decrees that were promulgated, in particular, the mention of the possible reduction of the subsidiary churches to profane but not sordid use;

Whereas I, the Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia, Bishop of Syracuse, issued a decree of suspension of the merger of the parishes on 7 October 2019 to review the process from the beginning and the Recurrent of the hierarchical recourse requested a delay in the decision of the Congregation to allow for the possibility of an equitable solution locally, thus allowing the Congregation to prorogate the preemphory time limits for this recourse until 30 June 2020;

Whereas I revisited the planned merger in Oswego in 2019 and 2020 and, after consultation with the Pastoral Planning Committee, the trustees, and parishioners of each parish as well as with the Recurrent of the hierarchical recourse, proposed the extinctive union-merger of the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary into the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd;

Whereas, I convoked the Presbyteral Council on 12 May 2020 and presided over it according to the norm of law (cans. 127 §1, 166 §1, and 500 §1), placing the proposed modifications of the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary on the agenda ahead of time, ensuring that a summary of the status of each individual parish was provided to the members of the Council (can. 50), proposing the merger of each individual parish, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning the proposed modification of each individual parish (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed modification of each individual parish, and receiving unanimous support for the proposed modification of each individual parish;

Whereas “It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council” (can. 515 §2);

Whereas the parish of Saint Joseph has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a significant yearly financial deficit, and has already attempted being served by the pastor/administrator of the parish of Saint Stephen;

Whereas the parish of Saint Paul has likewise experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments and operates at a significant yearly financial deficit;

Whereas the parish of Saint Peter has likewise experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, a decline in total yearly income from offertory collections, operates at a yearly financial deficit, and is currently served by an elderly priest administrator well past the age of retirement;

Whereas the parish of Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary has likewise experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a significant yearly financial deficit, and has already attempted being served by the pastor/administrator of the parish of Saint Joseph;

Whereas the population of the city of Oswego has decreased such that there is no longer a need for the current number of individual parishes, the number of priests available in the Diocese of Syracuse to provide pastoral care has decreased while the average age of those available to serve has increased, the financial resources of each parish are directed primarily to the maintenance of buildings and physical plants as well as to provide for adequate personnel, and that various other options concerning the pastoral care of some of these parishes have been attempted and exhausted;

Therefore, in order to promote the good of souls as well as the good of the diocese, I the undersigned Bishop of Syracuse, have decided as follows:

## **DECREE**

1. The parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary, located in the city of Oswego, New York are united via an extinctive union-merger to form the new parish of Christ the Good Shepherd.
2. The members of the originating parishes will now become members of the new parish. The territory of the parish of Saint Paul will be included in the territory of the new parish.
3. The parish church will be the church of Saint Paul located at 50 East Mohawk Street, Oswego, New York. It is in this church that the Most Holy Eucharist will be reserved (can. 934 §1, 1°).
4. The other churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen will remain open. The faithful will continue to have the right of entry to these churches for public worship, namely, for the celebration of Mass on the anniversary of the dedication and on the patronal feast of each church (cf. can. 1214 *CIC* 1983 and cans. 1167-1168 *CIC* 1917). Access for private worship including, but not limited to, baptisms, weddings, and funerals may take place at the reasonable discretion of the pastor. The Most Holy Eucharist may be reserved in these churches with the permission of the Bishop (can. 934 §1, 2°).

5. The regular schedule of Masses and the celebration of the sacraments will be determined by the pastor.

6. All sacramental registers hitherto preserved by each parish are to be conveyed to the office of the newly merged parish located at the church of Saint Paul, where they are to be faithfully preserved according to the norms of can. 535 §§ 1-5.

7. The temporal goods as well as any patrimonial rights and obligations of the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen will be assumed by the new parish. The intentions of the founders and donors as well as any acquired rights are to be respected (can. 121).

This merger will become effective on 31 May 2020, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

This decree hereby revokes and replaces the decrees issued by my predecessor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham, concerning the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungry on 20 June 2019.

I further order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day, 21 May 2020. This publication on the diocesan website ([www.syrдио.org](http://www.syrдио.org)) and in the local diocesan newspaper (The Catholic Sun) will be the legitimate notification. A letter in anticipation of this decree was sent to the parishioners of the parishes concerned on 20 May 2020.

This decree may be challenged by anyone who feels aggrieved by it within the preemphory time limit of ten days from the legitimate notification of the decree, that is, on 21 May 2020, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2).

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Syracuse on this twenty-first day of May in the year of our Lord, two-thousand twenty, the Solemnity of the Ascension of the Lord.



Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia  
*Bishop of Syracuse*



Mrs. Danielle E. Cummings  
*Chancellor*