

MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA
BISHOP OF SYRACUSE

DECREE
ON THE TRANSFER THE STATUS OF THE
PARISH OF SAINT MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION, OSWEGO, NEW YORK
FROM A TERRITORIAL PARISH TO A PERSONAL PARISH

Whereas the territorial parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption was founded in Oswego in 1849 by a variety of ethnic communities;

Whereas the parish of Saint Mary became part of a pastoral care area (PCA) in 1990 due to changing demographics in the city of Oswego, concerns regarding its vitality and financial situation, close geographical proximity to the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, and Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary, and the declining numbers of available clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse to provide pastoral care;

Whereas an examination of the condition of this parish took place in 2017 and 2018, evaluating sacramental statistics, Mass attendance, finances, vitality, options for pastoral care, etc., involving the pastor, trustees, finance council, and pastoral council as well as diocesan officials, resulting in a unanimous recommendation to merge with the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, and Saint Stephen 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 parishioners 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 joining 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 as well as with the Recurrent of the hierarchical recourse, proposed the transfer of the parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption from its status as a territorial parish to the status of a personal parish for the purpose of inviting a society of apostolic life into the Diocese of Syracuse to assume the pastoral care of those in the diocese who wish to attend the celebration of the Roman Liturgy in the Extraordinary Form as provided in the apostolic letter, *Summorum Pontificum* (can. 518);

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 modification of the parish of Saint Mary on the agenda ahead of time, ensuring that a summary of its status was provided to the members of the Council (can. 50), proposing the transfer of its status from a territorial parish to a personal parish, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning the proposed modification (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed modification, and receiving an overwhelming majority of support for the proposed modification;

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 population of the city of Oswego has decreased such that there is no longer a need for the current number of territorial parishes and 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;

Whereas the parish of Saint Mary as a territorial parish has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, undergone a decline in total yearly income from offertory collections, operates at a yearly financial deficit, directs its financial resources primarily to the maintenance of its buildings and physical plant as well as to provide for adequate personnel, and has attempted and exhausted various other options concerning its pastoral care;

Whereas some of the faithful in the Diocese of Syracuse continue “to be attached with such love and affection to the earlier liturgical forms which had deeply shaped their culture and spirit” that, in my judgement, there is a need to “erect a personal parish in accordance with the norm of Canon 518 for celebrations according to the older form of the Roman rite,” that is, the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Liturgy, which is celebrated using the liturgical books and observing the norms of 1962 (Pope Benedict XVI, apostolic letter given “motu proprio,” *Summorum Pontificum*, on the use of the Roman Liturgy prior to 1970, introduction and art. 10);

Whereas the parish of Saint Mary, because of its aesthetic beauty and architectural value, is an opportune location for the celebration of the Roman Liturgy in the Extraordinary Form, under the direction of a clerical society of apostolic life to which it may be entrusted for this purpose (can. 520);

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 status of the parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption will transfer from a territorial parish to a personal parish for the purpose of inviting a society of apostolic life into the Diocese of Syracuse to assume the pastoral care of the faithful in the diocese who wish to attend the celebration of the Roman Liturgy in the Extraordinary Form as provided in the apostolic letter, *Summorum Pontificum*.
2. The territory of the parish of Saint Mary will be encompassed in the territory of the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd.
3. The church of the personal parish of Saint Mary will be an oratory, that is, “a place for divine worship” for the benefit of the faithful who avail themselves to the celebration of the Roman Liturgy in the Extraordinary Form as well as for other members of the faithful who wish to come (can. 1223). The Most Holy Eucharist will be reserved there (can. 934 §1, 1°).
4. The regular schedule of Masses and the celebration of the sacraments will be determined by the pastor.
5. All sacramental registers hitherto preserved by the parish of Saint Mary are to be temporarily conveyed to the office of the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd, located at the church of Saint Paul, where they are to be faithfully preserved according to the norms of can. 535 §§ 1-5.
6. The temporal goods as well as any patrimonial rights and obligations of the territorial parish of Saint Mary will remain with the personal parish. The intentions of the founders and donors as well as any acquired rights are to be respected (can. 121).

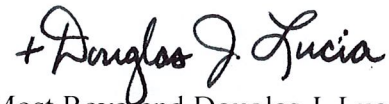
This transfer will become effective on 31 May 2020, the Solemnity of Pentecost.

This decree hereby revokes and replaces the decree issued by my predecessor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham, concerning the parish of Saint Mary of the Assumption on 20 June 2019.

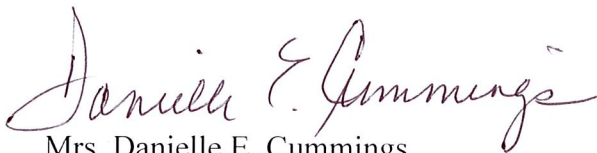
I further order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day, 21 May 2020. This publication on the diocesan website (www.syrдио.org) and in the local diocesan newspaper (The Catholic Sun) will be the legitimate notification. A letter in anticipation of this decree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

This decree may be challenged by anyone who feels aggrieved by it within the peremptory 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

