



## DECREE

### EFFECTING THE RELEGATION OF HOLY CROSS CHURCH (BRANDY CAMP) TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

#### History

The original Holy Cross Church was built in 1908 and dedicated in 1910 by Bishop John E. Fitzmaurice. The current church replaced the original and was dedicated by Bishop Alfred Watson on May 24, 1970.

As the Catholic community in Brandy Camp moved in and out of parish status for more than a century from 1910 to 2017, Holy Cross church served intermittently as either a parish church or as a mission church. As a mission, it was variably attached to St. John the Baptist parish in Shawmut, St. Boniface parish in Kersey, St. Bernard parish in Falls Creek and St. Tobias parish in Brockway. Finally, on February 13, 2017, Holy Cross church lost its parochial status for the last time when Holy Cross parish was merged into Saint Boniface parish in Kersey. The church now serves as a mission church of Saint Boniface parish.

Prior to the 2017 merger, there was only a single Mass celebrated on Sundays in Holy Cross church, and none at all on holy days of obligation, but regularly scheduled Sunday Masses ceased there altogether when the parish merger took effect on February 13, 2017. Since then, only one baptism and one funeral have been celebrated at Holy Cross church.

#### Current Situation

According to the law, in order to relegate a church to profane use or even to close it permanently, it is necessary that there be some grave reason(s) suggesting that the church no longer be used for divine worship. Often the gravity of the cause becomes evident when a number of factors are considered together. Can. 1222 §2 states:

*Where other grave causes suggest that a church no longer be used for divine worship, the diocesan bishop, after having heard the presbyteral council, can relegate it to profane but not sordid use, with the consent of those who legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church, and provided that the good of souls suffers no detriment thereby.*



There has not been a resident priest in Brandy Camp for decades. Even when it was a parish, the community was served by priests living elsewhere. The village of Brandy Camp itself is unincorporated. The US Post Office branch there closed in 2005, and since then the population has continued to decline.

Following the merger of the parishes in 2017, Saint Boniface parish is now responsible for the financial upkeep of Saint Boniface church in Kersey (the parish church) and Holy Cross church in Brandy Camp (secondary church without mission status). In addition, the parish is now responsible for the perpetual maintenance of three cemeteries. Although the parish has reserves for cemetery upkeep, they do not meet expenses and when the reserves are depleted (in approximately seven years), the yearly \$25,000 expenses for the cemeteries will need to be borne by the annual operating budget.

Altogether these financial obligations are creating a burden on the parish. It should be noted that in the past four years, Saint Boniface received two large bequests as well as the assets from the former Holy Cross parish, but these were largely offset by a number of extraordinary expenses in the physical plant of Saint Boniface parish and school. Apart from these extra acquisitions and expenses, St. Boniface parish had been running at about a break-even budget. In the past two years, however, the parish has seen a net loss of more than \$39,000 (almost \$20,000 annually). Of this amount, \$11,000 is the annual cost to maintain Holy Cross church, including utilities and insurance. Although this rate of annual deficit could be manageable for a while, if the parish were able to be spared the expense of maintaining Holy Cross church, those funds could be used instead to promote pastoral life, faith formation, evangelization for the parish, youth ministry, religious education, and life-long formation programs.

There is no pastoral need for Holy Cross church. The church has been seldom used since the merger in 2017. All of the sacraments and devotions are available at the parish church of St. Boniface (seven miles away). In addition, both St. Leo Magnus parish church, Ridgway and St. Tobias parish church, Brockway are fewer than ten miles away.

At a joint meeting of both the parish finance council and the parish pastoral council on October 30, 2019, the Very Reverend Ross R. Miceli, V.F., pastor, obtained the unanimous support of both the councils to petition that Holy Cross church be relegated to profane but not sordid use. Being the only person who can legitimately claim rights concerning the church edifice, Father Miceli has given his consent (cf. can. 1222 §2).

Father Miceli attests that relegating Holy Cross church to profane use is not likely to result in harm to the good of souls (cf. can. 1222 §). He is aware of the obligation to see to it that the church, if relegated, not be given over to sordid use. Should it be lawfully sold, the parish would be able to put the proceeds at the service of the pastoral life of the parish.

This information was shared with the members of the Presbyteral Council on May 5, 2020. Having considered the matter attentively, and after adequate discussion, the members of the Council unanimously recommended to me that I grant the petition of the pastor to relegate Holy Cross church to profane but not sordid use.

All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

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Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the best possible means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of Saint Boniface parish, while considering that Holy Cross church no longer serves as a parish church; that regularly scheduled Masses ceased there in February of 2017; that the church has been used for only one (1) funeral and one (1) baptism since February of 2017; that the obligation of maintaining two separate church buildings has placed a financial burden on Saint Boniface parish; that the funds required to maintain the structure are needed for and would be much more prudently spent on other parish ministries; that there is no pastoral need for the church edifice; that the pastor and members of the pastoral council and finance council have petitioned for the relegation of the church; and that there does not appear to be any probable detriment to the good of souls; I judge that the aforementioned reasons, when considered cumulatively, constitute the grave cause required by the law (cf. can. 1222 §2) for the relegation of the church to profane but not sordid use, and I hereby decree the following:

**Holy Cross church in Brandy Camp, being a secondary church of Saint Boniface parish in Kersey, is relegated to profane but not sordid use, according to the norm of can. 1222 §2.**

This decree is effective July 26, 2020 anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery  
of the Diocese of Erie  
on this 13th day of July, 2020

*+Lawrence T. Persico*

The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL  
Bishop of Erie

*Christopher J. Singer*

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL  
Chancellor