



DECREE

EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT ADALBERT PARISH (FARRELL) INTO SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA PARISH (SHARON)

History

A. Saint Adalbert Parish

Saint Adalbert Parish was established in 1912 as a personal parish for Polish-speaking Catholics and their descendants in the Shenango Valley. The original church was dedicated on August 16, 1914 and, after a damaging fire, a new church was dedicated on April 3, 1932. At one time, the parish numbered more than 450 families. The parish was divided in 1931 when Saint Stanislaus Kostka Parish was erected as a second personal parish for Polish-speaking Catholics in nearby Sharon. Due to declining enrollment and a general decline in the Catholic population of Farrell, the parish school was closed in 1959. Since 1993, the parish has not had a full-time pastor.

B. Saint Anthony of Padua Parish

Catholics from Croatia began to gather for divine worship in the Shenango Valley as early as 1916, but it was not until March 19, 1924 that the Bishop of Erie appointed a priest to serve as pastor for the newly-established Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, a personal parish for Croatian-speaking Catholics and their descendants in the Shenango Valley. The temporary parish church was replaced by a new one, which was dedicated on June 19, 1938. For most of its history, the parish was staffed by religious order priests, but in recent years, due to a decline in their own numbers, they withdrew from staffing the parish and since that time, the parish had been staffed by diocesan priests.

Current Situation

The Shenango Valley area has been greatly affected by the demographic changes which have touched all of northwestern Pennsylvania in recent decades. The City of Farrell has been particularly affected by the loss of jobs and the ensuing economic downturn and the loss of population. In fact, this trend has been in place for several generations, seen by the fact that Saint Adalbert school closed in 1959 due to a declining enrollment. According to

the US Census Bureau, in the 2010 the population of the City of Farrell was only 33% of its high recorded in the 1920 census, when Saint Adalbert Parish was in its infancy. In 2015 the parish listed 163 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 68 persons, while Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in nearby Sharon listed 231 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 121 and Our Lady of Fatima, being the territorial parish for Farrell and within whose borders Saint Adalbert church sits, listed 503 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 595.

In light of the above, coupled with the shortage of clergy, it is no longer necessary or feasible to duplicate services with the existence of multiple personal parishes in Farrell and Sharon. The care of souls for the faithful of Saint Adalbert Parish could be better served by a more efficient use of personnel and temporal resources and a unified pastoral vision and approach with a larger parish community, while remaining mindful of the Polish Catholic spiritual patrimony of the parishioners.

In pursuit of that end, as a part of a comprehensive pastoral planning process involving extensive study, collaboration, and dialogue throughout the diocese, together with an analysis of objective data regarding demographic shifts and population trends for individual parishes, specific communities and regions, I brought the matter of Saint Adalbert Parish before the Presbyteral Council on March 9, 2016. With the support of the Presbyteral Council, I announced on April 14, 2016 a preliminary plan to merge Saint Adalbert Parish, together with Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, into Our Lady of Fatima Parish, that being the territorial parish for Farrell.

I specified a time period in which I would welcome feedback in response to this preliminary proposal. As a result, I requested input and advice from the shared pastor of Saint Adalbert and Saint Anthony of Padua Parishes, from the pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, from the parishioners themselves, from the Vicar Forane and the Vicar General, and from those responsible for overseeing the development of the pastoral plan. Numerous individuals indicated that it would be pastorally more advantageous to merge Saint Adalbert Parish into Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, and to allow Our Lady of Fatima Parish to remain as is. Although the need for outreach to Polish-speaking Catholics in the Farrell area is greatly reduced, there are still parishioners at Saint Anthony of Padua Parish who speak Croatian or German as their first language, and so both parishes have a strong sense of maintaining the spiritual patrimony of their founding families. Moreover, the parishes have shared a pastor since 2004, and have profited by a generous spirit of collaboration. Our Lady of Fatima Parish can continue to stand alone as the territorial parish for Farrell. I shared the results of this feedback with the members of the Presbyteral Council. In light of the new information, I then asked the council members for their advice on a revised proposal to merge Saint Adalbert Parish into Saint Anthony of Padua Parish, for which they expressed unanimous support on July 11, 2016.

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

Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the need for a stronger and more sustainable means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of Saint Adalbert Parish and to find a more sustainable means for preserving their Polish spiritual patrimony, while also considering the already diminished number of parishioners and the projected further decline of their number, the lack of available priests which renders it impossible to provide a full-time pastor for Saint Adalbert Parish, the relevant demographics of all of the parishes in the Sharon and Farrell area as well as projected future trends, the fact that Saint Adalbert Parish and Saint Anthony of Padua Parishes already share a pastor, the possibility of better stewardship in the shared use of temporal goods and personnel, and the general plan of pastoral care not only for the Shenango Valley area but also for the Diocese as a whole, I hereby decree the following:

1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Adalbert Parish in Farrell shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Sharon.
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Anthony of Padua Parish. It shall be personal in nature, with the parishioners being those Catholics of Croatian heritage in the Sharon and Farrell areas of the Diocese of Erie and their descendants.
3. The pastoral care previously provided by the personal parish of Saint Adalbert to the Polish-speaking Catholics of Farrell and their descendants is henceforth to be provided instead by an apostolate assigned to Saint Anthony of Padua Parish. That apostolate is to foster the appropriate preservation and inclusion in the life of the parish of elements of the spiritual patrimony of the Polish culture, according to the prudent judgment of the pastor, as well as a welcoming spirit toward those who claim that patrimony as their own. In order to fulfill this apostolate, the priests assigned to Saint Anthony of Padua Parish are hereby given the same faculties for Mercer County Catholics of Polish heritage as they have for the faithful who otherwise are members of the parish.
4. All sacramental records from Saint Adalbert Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish.
5. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Adalbert Parish shall be transferred to Saint Anthony of Padua Parish.
6. The parish church shall be Saint Anthony of Padua church. Saint Adalbert church shall become a secondary church – without mission status – of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish.
7. Saint Adalbert church is to remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for sacred worship, whether public or private (cf. can. 1214), but in accord with diocesan law, Masses are not to be celebrated there on Sundays or holy days of obligation or the evenings preceding them. As required by law, Mass is to be celebrated in Saint Adalbert church every year on the solemnity of the anniversary of the church's dedication and on the solemnity of the church's title, in accord with current liturgical norms (cf. can. 1167 §2 and 1168 of the former Code of Canon Law, and can. 2 of the present Code). If such

an observance is impeded by another date of higher rank according to the Roman calendar, the impeded solemnity is to be transferred to the first available date thereafter.

This decree is effective February 13, 2017, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery
of the Diocese of Erie
on this 21st day of September, 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence T. Persico". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'L'.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher J. Singer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor