



DECREE

EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT JOSEPH PARISH (DuBois) INTO SAINT MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL PARISH (DuBois)

History

A. Saint Joseph Parish

From 1877 to 1893, the only Catholic parish in DuBois was Saint Catherine of Siena Parish. In 1893, Bishop Tobias Mullen established Saint Joseph Parish in DuBois as a personal parish for Catholics in the DuBois area who were of Lithuanian or Polish descent. Parishioners quickly began construction of the original parish church, which was dedicated in 1894. For eighteen years, Lithuanian and Polish Catholics worshipped together in DuBois, until a separate parish was erected in DuBois in 1912 for Catholics of Polish heritage. With the creation of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, Saint Joseph Parish was effectively split in half. Since the number of parishioners was still significant, however, a larger church was needed, and the present church was constructed in 1924. The former church building was converted to use as the parish school. For a time, Saint Joseph Parish administered a mission at St. Anthony church in Helvetia. The mission had previously been a parish in its own right before becoming a mission of Saint Stanislaus Parish in Tyler and then of Saint Joseph Parish in DuBois, until fire destroyed the mission in 1955. Saint Joseph parish school, housed in the former church, closed its doors in 1971. Since 1999, Saint Joseph Parish has not had a full-time pastor, sharing a pastor first with Saint Catherine of Siena Parish from 1999 to 2009, and then with Saint Michael the Archangel Parish from 2009 to the present.

B. Saint Michael the Archangel Parish

A parish for Polish-speaking Catholics was erected in DuBois in May of 1912 by dividing Saint Joseph Parish in half, with Saint Joseph Parish remaining as the parish for Lithuanian-speaking Catholics and with Saint Michael the Archangel Parish becoming the parish for Polish-speaking Catholics. For the first five years of the parish's existence, members worshipped in the basement of the church, which was finally completed in 1917 and was solemnly blessed on May 30 of that same year. Since its creation in 1912, Saint Michael the Archangel Parish has remained a personal parish for Catholics of the DuBois

area who are Polish-speaking or otherwise of Polish descent. The parish has not had a full-time pastor since 2009, and now currently shares a pastor with Saint Joseph Parish.

Current Situation

Currently, DuBois has three Latin Rite Catholic parishes and one Byzantine Ruthenian parish. Nearby Falls Creek has a separate Latin Rite parish of its own. As with the rest of northwestern Pennsylvania, the DuBois area has seen significant demographic changes, in which decades of growth and prosperity were followed by decades of population decline and economic challenges, although the city's location on Interstate 80 has helped to mitigate those forces somewhat. According to the US Census Bureau, the 2010 population of DuBois itself was approximately 65% of its historical peak in 1940. There is no indication of any likelihood that the situation will reverse itself.

Of the three Latin Rite parishes in DuBois, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish remains the territorial parish for all of DuBois and the surrounding area of Clearfield County, while Saint Joseph remains a Lithuanian personal parish and Saint Michael the Archangel Parish remains a Polish personal parish. All three have seen declines in their parish membership, affected not only by a decrease in population but also by a rising tide of secularism. In 2015, Saint Catherine of Siena Parish listed 935 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 685 persons, Saint Michael the Archangel Parish listed 800 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 449 persons, and Saint Joseph Parish listed 272 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 206 persons.

With the decline in the number of available priests for assignment, it is no longer possible to provide a full-time pastor for each of these parishes. In fact, Saint Joseph Parish has not had a full-time pastor in nineteen years, and Saint Michael the Archangel Parish has been without a full-time pastor for seven years. If the proper care of souls is to continue for all Latin Rite Catholics of the DuBois area in general, and for Catholics of Lithuanian or Polish heritage in particular, and if the Lithuanian or Polish Catholic spiritual patrimony is to be preserved, then another more sustainable means must be found for doing so.

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 Joseph Parish, Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, and Saint Catherine of Siena Parish before the Presbyteral Council on March 9, 2016. With the support of the Presbyteral Council, I announced on April 13, 2016 a preliminary plan to merge Saint Joseph Parish into Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, with Saint Joseph church becoming a secondary church of Saint Catherine Parish.

I specified a time period in which I would welcome feedback in response to this preliminary proposal. As a result, I received input and advice from the shared pastor of Saint Joseph and Saint Michael the Archangel Parishes, from the pastor of Saint Catherine

of Siena 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. It was suggested that it would be more pastorally advantageous to merge Saint Joseph Parish into Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, which also respects the historical origins of both parishes. 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 once again for their advice, but this time on the proposal to merge Saint Joseph Parish into Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, with Saint Joseph church becoming a secondary church of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish. The council members expressed unanimous support on July 11, 2016.

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

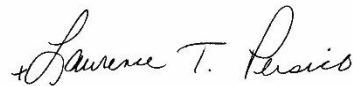
Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the need for a stronger and more sustainable means to provide for the care of souls for all of the faithful of DuBois in general, and of Saint Joseph Parish and of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish in particular, and to find a more sustainable means for preserving their respective Lithuanian and Polish spiritual patrimonies, while also considering the already diminished number of parishioners and the general decline in the population of DuBois, the lack of available priests which renders it impossible to provide a full-time pastor for either Saint Joseph or Saint Michael the Archangel Parish, the historical origins of each parish which illustrate that Saint Michael the Archangel Parish is in fact a daughter parish of Saint Joseph Parish, the possibility of better stewardship in the shared use of temporal goods and personnel between these two parishes, the fact that they have already been sharing a pastor for the past seven years, and the general plan of pastoral care not only for the DuBois area but also for the Diocese as a whole, I hereby decree the following:

1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Joseph Parish in DuBois shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Michael the Archangel Parish in DuBois.
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Michael the Archangel Parish. It shall be a personal parish in nature, whose members shall be Catholics of Polish or of Lithuanian heritage in the City of DuBois and in Sandy Township, thereby restoring within a single parish the unity which these two communities once knew in their origins, and bringing together again the mother and daughter parish.
3. All sacramental records from Saint Joseph Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Joseph Parish shall be transferred to Saint Michael the Archangel Parish.

5. The parish church shall be Saint Michael the Archangel church. Saint Joseph church shall become a secondary church – without mission status – of Saint Michael the Archangel Parish.
6. Saint Joseph 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 Joseph 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. cann. 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 22nd day of September, 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence T. Persico". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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, flowing style.

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor