



DECREE

EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT LUKE PARISH (YOUNGSVILLE) INTO SAINT JOSEPH PARISH (WARREN)

History

A. Saint Luke Parish

In 1870, Saint John Parish in Tidioute established a mission in Irvine with the construction of Saint Luke church. At first, Mass was celebrated in the mission church only once each month, but eventually this was increased to weekly. When the church proved to be too small, a new mission church was constructed in Youngsville, replacing not only Saint Luke mission church in Irvine but also Saint Agatha mission church in Garland. It was dedicated in 1957. The following year, the community worshipping there, up to then still a part of Saint John Parish in Tidioute, was raised to the level of a parish, and St. Luke church in Youngsville became a parish church. Following renovations, it was rededicated on June 15, 1997.

B. Saint Joseph Parish

The first Catholic church in Warren was erected in 1850 to serve the mission community there in what was then the Diocese of Pittsburgh. In 1853, Warren became part of the newly-created Diocese of Erie. In 1858, the Bishop of Erie raised Saint Joseph mission to a parish and appointed the first pastor. In the 1870's the original church was replaced with a new one which was dedicated on June 6, 1880. The current church was dedicated on January 11, 1959.

Current Situation

Despite the efforts of clergy and laity in Saint Luke Parish since its establishment in 1958, the parish community is not immune to the demographic changes affecting Warren County and, indeed, most of northwestern Pennsylvania. By 2015, the number of parish households had decreased to 114, with an average Sunday Mass attendance of 118 persons. There is no foreseeable reversal of this trend. Furthermore, the shortage of available priests has resulted in the fact that since 2012, the pastor of Saint Luke in Youngsville also serves as the non-resident pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua in Sheffield, and there is no likelihood of the

situation improving in the foreseeable future. It is necessary to pass through two other parishes to travel between these Saint Luke and Saint Anthony of Padua parishes.

Given the declining number of parishioners at St. Luke Parish together with the unlikely prospect for any future growth, and seeing the impossibility of providing the parish with its own proper pastor, it is evident that a more viable and sustainable means must be found to provide for the pastoral care of the Saint Luke 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 Luke Parish in Youngsville before the Presbyteral Council on March 9, 2016. With the support of the Presbyteral Council, I announced on April 12, 2016 a preliminary plan to merge Saint Luke Parish into Saint Joseph Parish in Warren.

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 Luke and Saint Anthony of Padua Parishes, from the pastor of Saint Joseph Parish in Warren, from the Saint Luke parishioners themselves, from the Vicar Forane and the Vicar General, and from those responsible for overseeing the development of the pastoral plan. I then shared these comments and feedback with the members of the Presbyteral Council. In light of this additional information, I once again asked the council members for their advice on the above-mentioned proposal to merge Saint Luke Parish into Saint Joseph Parish, while returning Saint Luke church to the status of a mission church. The council members expressed overwhelming support on June 28, 2016.

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

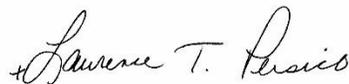
Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the need for a better and more sustainable means to provide for the care of souls for the members of Saint Luke Parish in Youngsville, while additionally considering the already diminished number of parishioners and the projected further decline of their number, the lack of available priests which renders it impossible to provide a full-time pastor for the parish, the possibility of better stewardship in the use of temporal goods and personnel, and recalling that for the majority of its existence the Catholic community of Youngsville was well-served by the presence of a mission church, while taking into account the general plan of pastoral care not only for the parish but also for the Diocese as a whole, I hereby decree the following:

1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Luke Parish in Youngsville shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Joseph Parish in Warren.

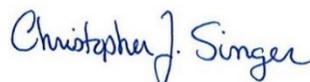
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Joseph Parish. It shall be territorial in nature, with the parish retaining all of the territory which Saint Joseph Parish now encompasses, and adding to it all of the territory of Saint Luke Parish in Youngsville.
3. All sacramental records from Saint Luke Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Joseph Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Luke Parish shall be transferred to Saint Joseph Parish.
5. The parish church shall be Saint Joseph church. In light of the distance which the faithful, many of them elderly, from points west of Youngsville would otherwise have to travel for Mass, St. Luke church shall become a secondary mission church of Saint Joseph parish. By diocesan law, therefore, Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, as well as on the evening preceding them, is permitted in Saint Luke church.
6. Furthermore, Saint Luke church is to remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for other sacred worship, whether public or private (cf. can. 1214). As required by law, Mass is to be celebrated there 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 20th day of September, 2016



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



The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL
Chancellor