



DECREE

EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT PHILIP PARISH (CROSSINGVILLE) INTO SAINT LAWRENCE THE MARTYR PARISH (ALBION)

History

A. Saint Philip Parish

The Catholic community which eventually became Saint Philip Parish in Crossingville is among the oldest in the Dioceses of Erie, with immigrants arriving from Ireland between 1798 and 1800. Already by 1802, land was set aside for a Catholic cemetery, and a church was built shortly thereafter. Mass was first celebrated there on August 23, 1807. Construction on the current St. Philip church, under the patronage of Saint Philip Benizi, was begun in 1840 and the new church was blessed on September 9, 1847. It served as a mission of Saint Patrick Parish in Erie until 1850, when the community at Saint Philip church was erected as a parish, and the church became a parish church.

B. Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish

By the 1850's Catholics in the Albion area occasionally gathered for Mass celebrated when a priest could visit. Care was provided by the pastor of Saint Philip Parish in Crossingville until 1866, and then by the pastor of Saint Peter Parish in Conneautville until 1897, and then by the pastor of Saint John the Evangelist Parish in Girard until 1914. As the community grew, a church was built in 1901 and was dedicated on June 16 of that same year. In October of 1914, St. Lawrence the Martyr Parish was formally erected and has continued to serve the needs of Catholics of the Albion area ever since. The current church was solemnly blessed on July 13, 1975.

Current Situation

Despite the significance of Saint Philip Parish in the history of the Diocese of Erie, the number of the parishioners is greatly reduced from its historical high. At one time including more than 500 families, there were only 86 households in the parish in 2015. There are very few youth enrolled in religious education, and projected demographics for the parish do not

indicate any likelihood for growth. The parish has not had the assistance of a full-time pastor for several years, and currently there is only a single Mass celebrated in St. Philip church on Sundays. The pastor of Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish in Albion serves as the non-resident pastor of St. Philip Parish in Crossingville. The two parishes have numerous other combined programs already in place, in a relationship which is cordial and cooperative.

Given the declining number of parishioners at St. Philip 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 Philip 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 Philip Parish in Crossingville 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 Philip Parish into Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Edinboro.

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 Philip and Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parishes, from the pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Parish, from the Saint Philip parishioners themselves, from the Vicar Forane and the Vicar General, and from those responsible for overseeing the development of the pastoral plan. Numerous individuals expressed their thought that merging Saint Philip Parish into Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish in Albion would provide a better opportunity for providing for the pastoral care of souls, given the relationship that already exists between the two parishes. In light of this additional information, all of which was shared with the Presbyteral Council, I asked the council members for their advice on a modified proposal to merge Saint Philip Parish into Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish, for which they expressed unanimous support on June 28, 2016.

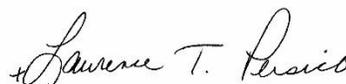
All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

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 Philip Parish in Crossingville, while additionally considering the significant role which Saint Philip Parish has played in the life of the Diocese of Erie, 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 even closer collaboration with Saint Lawrence Parish in Albion which will provide for a more efficient use of temporal goods and personnel, and 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:

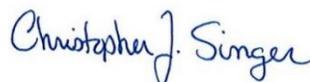
1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Philip Parish in Crossingville shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish in Albion.
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish. It shall be territorial in nature, with the parish retaining all of the territory which Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish now encompasses, and adding to it all of the territory of Saint Philip Parish in Crossingville.
3. All sacramental records from Saint Philip Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Philip Parish shall be transferred to Saint Lawrence the Martyr Parish.
5. The parish church shall be Saint Lawrence the Martyr church. In light of the historical significance of Saint Philip church and of the number of faithful who worship their every Sunday, Saint Philip church shall become a secondary mission church of Saint Lawrence the Martyr 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 Philip church.
6. Furthermore, Saint Philip church is to remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for sacred worship, whether public or private (cf. can. 1214). As required by law, Mass is to be celebrated there every year on the solemnity the church's title (August 22), in accord with current liturgical norms (cf. can. 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. In accord with the norm of law, since the church was merely blessed but not consecrated, the anniversary of the church's dedication is not to be liturgically observed.

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