ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

16 October 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Since the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, Saint Stephen, and Saint Paul merged and formed a new parish - the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd - your parish trustees, the members of your parish and finance councils, and now your current pastor, Father John Leo Oduor, have been considering the future of your parish and its four churches in the life and mission of the Church.

As you know, the Church experienced a seismic shift from Christendom (a time when Christianity and the culture aligned and Christians lived the Christian life) to Apostolic Mission (a time when both Christianity and the culture need to be reinvigorated with the Good News of God's love and salvation in Christ). You, the parishioners, were also invited to consider the future of your parish in various ways.

The result of your deliberations was that the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen be relegated to profane but not sordid use (closed) so that they can be eventually alienated (sold) because of various important factors (e.g., limited financial, personnel, and other resources, the shortage of clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse, the condition of the buildings, the needs of the parish, etc.). The purpose of doing so is to further strengthen your already united community as you work to ensure your existence and vitality.

Accordingly, I have decided to grant the request of Father John Leo to relegate the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen to profane but not sordid use. The Decree of Relegation is attached.

I am grateful to your pastor, the parish trustees, the members of the pastoral and finance councils, and to all of you for navigating these challenging times with faith and trust in the Lord. I am confident that this decision will help provide stable pastoral care as you continue to carry out the mission of the Church.

Churches are a significant part of our history and tradition and the loss of them is certainly sad and something to be mourned. At the same time, it is a reminder that the Church is

not merely a building, but the Body of Christ. When we are united in him we experience God's love and salvation – a tremendous grace and blessing that transcends all space and time!

The "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (*Lumen Gentium*) of the Second Vatican Council reminds us that "the Eucharist is the source and the summit of the Christian life" (no. 11) and is a "sacrament of unity." St. Peter Julian Eymard, a priest who devoted his life to helping people appreciate the Holy Eucharist, has stated: "Know, O Christian, that the Mass is the holiest act of religion. You cannot do anything to glorify God more, nor profit your soul more, than by devoutly assisting at it, and assisting as often as possible." I would like to take this opportunity to invite you not to forget the importance of the Mass in your life as a Catholic Christian and the importance of joining in its celebration on Sundays (the Lord's Day) and Holy days of Obligation wherever it is offered.

May the Lord bless you and fill you with the grace you need to be his witnesses moving forward together as Pilgrims of Hope.

Be assured of my continued prayers for all of you.

In the Name of Jesus,

+Douglas J. Lucia

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse




MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA
*BISHOP OF SYRACUSE*

# DECREE

## ON THE REDUCTION OF THE CHURCHES OF SAINT JOSEPH, SAINT PETER, AND SAINT STEPHEN, OF THE PARISH OF CHRIST THE GOOD SHEPHERD OSWEGO, NEW YORK TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE

Whereas the parish of Saint Joseph was established in 1914 and its current church was dedicated in 1958, the parish of Saint Peter was established in 1862 and its current church was dedicated in 1958, and the parish of Saint Stephen, the King of Hungary, was established in 1908 and its current church was dedicated in 1958;

Whereas the parishes of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, Saint Stephen, and Saint Paul merged (true and proper fusion) to form the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd on 1 July 2019 and the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen became auxiliary churches of the parish for devotion and worship;

Whereas the current pastor to whom the parish is entrusted, Reverend John Leo Oduor, reviewed with the parish trustees, finance council, and pastoral council the need and limited resources of the parish and, as a result, commissioned Teitsch, Kent, and Fay Architects to update the building condition surveys of the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen to ascertain the feasibility of maintaining them, the result of which established the financial impossibility of doing so;

Whereas the results of each building condition survey and the overall status of the parish was presented at a town hall meeting with parishioners, which resulted in no opposition, but rather a consensus to petition me to relegate the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen

to profane but not sordid use for the purpose of alienating the properties in order to ensure the existence and vitality of the parish;

Whereas Reverend John Leo Oduor petitioned me to relegate the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Saint Peter to profane but not sordid use because: (1) the territory of the parish continues to experience a population decline, (2) there is a corresponding decline in the number of people attending Mass and celebrating the sacraments, (3) the needs of the parish for worship are being adequately met at the church of Saint Paul, which is the principal church of the parish, (4) the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen are in need of substantial repairs and continual maintenance, (5) the resources of the parish (personnel, financial, etc.) are limited and diminishing, and (6) the fact that the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen are underutilized buildings is a liability;

Whereas where 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 hereby (canon 1222 §2);

Whereas the grave cause of relegation to profane but not sordid use may exist not in one obvious grave cause but may arise from a combination of many just causes which combined together manifest a grave cause (see Congregation for Clergy, *Procedural Guidelines for the Modification of Parishes, the Closure or Relegation of Churches to Profane but not Sordid Use, and the Alienation of the Same*, April 30, 2013, Prot. No. 20131348);

Whereas, having examined the facts of the present case, it has been well established that grave reasons required by canon 1222 §2 are present for each particular church, even if some of the reasons invoked may not by themselves constitute a grave cause, they do so when taken together;

Whereas after a careful examination, it was established that nobody could legitimately claim rights for themselves in the church, understood primarily as patrimonial rights or rights associated with patrimonial rights (see Supreme Tribunal of the Apostolic Signatura, Final Decree of the College of Judges, 21 November 1988, *Communicationes* 20 [1988] 93);

Whereas, I convoked the Presbyteral Council on 5 October 2026 and presided over it according to the norm of law (cans. 127 §1, 166 §1, and 500 §1), placing the relegation of the churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen as three separate items on the agenda ahead of time, ensuring that a summary of its status was provided to the members of the Council (can. 50), proposing the relegation, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning the proposed modification (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed relegation, and receiving unanimous support for the proposed relegation;

Therefore, I the undersigned Bishop of Syracuse, after prayerful consideration, having weighed all the reasons and causes, have decided as follows:

## DECREE

1. The churches of Saint Joseph, Saint Peter, and Saint Stephen of the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd are hereby reduced to profane but not sordid use according to the prescripts of canon 1222 §2) for the grave causes mentioned above.

2. Negotiations that may lead to the sale of the property can begin, following the proper procedures for alienation.

3. Prior to alienation, all sacred objects, relics, sacred furnishings, stained-glass windows, bells, confessionals, altars, etc. are to be removed for use in other sacred edifices or to be stored in ecclesiastical custody. In case the altars cannot be removed, they must be destroyed (see canons 1212 and 1238).

I order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on 16 October 2026. This publication on the diocesan website (www.syrdio.org), on the website of the local diocesan newspaper (thecatholicsun.com), on the website of the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd, and in the bulletin of the parish of Christ the Good Shepherd will be the legitimate notification. A notarized copy of the decree will be sent to the pastor.

This decree may be challenged by anyone who feels aggrieved by it within the peremptory time limit of ten days from the legitimate notification of the decree, that is, on 16 October 2026, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2).

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Syracuse on this fourteenth day of October in the year of our Lord, two-thousand twenty six.

+Douglas J. Lucia

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse

Danielle E. Cummings

Mrs. Danielle E. Cummings
Chancellor