



DECREE

EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA PARISH (SHEFFIELD) INTO HOLY REDEEMER PARISH (WARREN)

History

A. Saint Anthony of Padua Parish

Saint Clara church in Clarendon was dedicated on January 22, 1876, and in 1878 Saint Anthony church was built in Sheffield. Both were mission churches of Saint Joseph Parish in Warren until 1893, when Saint Clara was raised to the status of a parish. At that time, Saint Clara church became a parish church, with Saint Anthony as its mission church. Eventually, Saint Anthony church needed to be replaced. The new church was constructed in Saybrook, a community between Clarendon and Sheffield, and was dedicated in 1971.

By decree of Bishop Michael J. Murphy, Saint Clara Parish was suppressed in April of 1990 and in its place, Saint Anthony of Padua mission was raised to the status of a parish. At the same time, Saint Anthony church in Saybrook became a parish church and Saint Clara church was closed. Four years later, the former Saint Clara church was sold.

B. Holy Redeemer Parish

At the request of Catholics residing on the east side of Warren, Holy Redeemer Parish was erected on August 15, 1912 by dividing Saint Joseph parish in half, with Holy Redeemer Parish receiving all of the territory on the east side of Conewango Creek. The boundary between the two parishes was clarified as the Allegheny River running east and west, and Conewango Creek running north and south. In time, the original Holy Redeemer church was dedicated on June 30, 1913 and was replaced with a new church which was dedicated on February 27, 1994.

Current Situation

Saint Anthony Parish in Sheffield (with the church in Saybrook) erected in 1990 to replace Saint Clara Parish in Clarendon, had a full time pastor for only three years. From 1993 until 2012, the pastors or administrators in Sheffield were also assigned as chaplain at Warren

State Hospital. Since 2012, the pastor of Saint Luke parish in Youngsville serves as the non-resident pastor of Saint Anthony of Padua parish in Sheffield.

Demographic changes to Warren County in general and the Sheffield and Clarendon areas in particular have left their mark on Saint Anthony of Padua Parish. As late as 2000, the parish listed 280 households, but by 2015 that number had shrunk to 116. Moreover, there is no foreseeable likelihood for growth, and although the pace of decline may slow, it is likely to continue. The average Sunday Mass attendance for 2015 was 108 persons, down from 128 only the year before. Given these facts, and seeing the impossibility of providing the parish with its own pastor, it is evident that a more viable and sustainable means must be found to provide for the pastoral care of the faithful of Sheffield, Clarendon, and surrounding areas.

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 Anthony of Padua Parish in Sheffield 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 Anthony of Padua Parish into Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren, while designating Saint Anthony of Padua church as a mission church of Holy Redeemer 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 Anthony of Padua and Saint Luke Parishes, from the pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish, from the Saint Anthony of Padua and Holy Redeemer parishioners themselves, from the Vicar Forane and the Vicar General, and from those responsible for overseeing the development of the pastoral plan. I shared the various comments, suggestions, and concerns with the Presbyteral Council which had been expressed by the clergy and other members of the faithful. In light of this additional information, on June 28, 2016, I once again asked the council members for their advice concerning the aforementioned proposed merger, while returning Saint Anthony of Padua church to the status of a mission church. The council members expressed overwhelming support for this proposal.

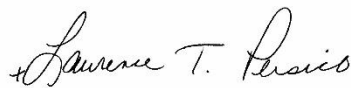
All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the need for a better and more sustainable means to provide long-term for the care of souls for the members of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Sheffield, 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 prospect of better stewardship of temporal and human resources through a closer collaboration with Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren, and recalling that for the majority of its existence the Catholic community of Sheffield was well-served by the presence of a mission church, while considering the general plan of pastoral care not only for the parish but also for the Diocese as a whole, I hereby decree the following:

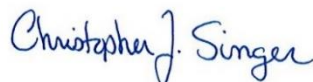
1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Sheffield shall be merged and subsumed into Holy Redeemer Parish in Warren.
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Holy Redeemer Parish. It shall be territorial in nature, with the parish retaining all of the territory which Holy Redeemer Parish now encompasses, and adding to it all of the territory of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish in Sheffield.
3. All sacramental records from Saint Anthony of Padua Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Holy Redeemer Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Anthony of Padua Parish shall be transferred to Holy Redeemer Parish.
5. The parish church shall be Holy Redeemer church. In light of the distance which the faithful, many of them elderly, from points east of Sheffield would otherwise have to travel for Mass, St. Anthony of Padua church shall become a secondary mission church of Holy Redeemer 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 Anthony of Padua church.
6. Furthermore, Saint Anthony of Padua 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