



## DECREE

### EFFECTING THE MERGER OF SAINT BONAVENTURE PARISH (GRAMPIAN) INTO SAINT TIMOTHY PARISH (CURWENSVILLE)

#### History

##### A. Saint Bonaventure, Grampian

The first church in Grampian was built in the nineteenth century on the site of the current parish cemetery. It was blessed in 1840 by Bishop Francis Kenrick of Philadelphia. A priest would visit every few months to celebrate the sacraments. Eventually Saint Bonaventure, along with Saint Timothy, Curwensville, became missions of Saint Francis in Clearfield. A new church was built in 1869, and the present church was completed in 1897. In 1904 Saint Bonaventure became its own parish with a resident pastor. Saint Bonaventure partnered with Saint Timothy Parish, Curwensville, in 1992 when one pastor was appointed for both parishes.

##### B. Saint Timothy, Curwensville

Missionary priests began visiting Curwensville around 1850. For the next 30 years they would celebrate Mass in the home of Patrick Kearns. Around 1883 Mr. Kearns donated land for a church. The first Saint Timothy church was constructed in 1884. At this time the community was a mission of Saint Francis Parish in Clearfield. It remained so until 1904, when it became a mission of Saint Bonaventure Parish, Grampian. Finally, in 1914, Saint Timothy became a parish with a resident pastor. The following year, the new parish built a new church. Saint Timothy partnered with Saint Bonaventure, Grampian in 1992 when one pastor was appointed for both parishes.

#### Current Situation

Both St. Timothy Parish, Grampian, and St. Bonaventure Parish, Curwensville, possess a single parish church building and a rectory. Both parishes have been partnered and have shared a single pastor for several years. Grampian and Curwensville are approximately 5.5 miles apart.



Clearfield County has experienced significant demographic changes in recent decades. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the overall population of Clearfield County has decreased by more than 5,400 people – a decline of 6.5% in the period from the year 2000 to 2022. The decline in both the general and Catholic population of the area – combined with the decreasing number of available priests – necessitates the reconfiguration of parishes and the better use of resources in order to assure the proper care of souls in central Clearfield County.

The Diocese of Erie’s comprehensive pastoral planning process began in 2014. In the years that followed, vicariate and deanery meetings were held throughout the diocese to gather information and ideas from pastors, parish leaders and parishioners in general. As the demographic conditions in the Clearfield Deanery changed in recent decades, the need for parish reconfiguration and the better use of material and human resources became more urgent.

On March 9, 2023, Bishop Persico, presented Presbyteral Council with a preliminary plan for parish reconfiguration in the Clearfield Deanery. The preliminary plan was opened for discussion among members of the Council.

On March 20, 2023, at deanery meeting held at St. Francis Church in Clearfield, Bishop Persico presented the Clearfield Deanery preliminary plan (which included the proposed merger of St. Bonaventure Parish into St. Timothy Parish) to the clergy of the deanery and a representative group of lay leaders from each parish. The Bishop then opened a several-week period of comment and feedback for pastors and people to give their views on the proposed changes.

At the June 22, 2023 meeting of the Presbyteral Council, Bishop Persico presented a finalized proposal for parish reconfigurations in Clearfield County. The Presbyteral Council unanimously approved the plan, and within it, specifically recommended to Bishop Persico to merge St. Bonaventure Parish, Grampian, into Saint Timothy Parish, Curwensville.

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 the faithful of the whole Clearfield County area, while also considering the challenges presented by demographic decline and the reduced number of priests; the genuine desire on the part of parishioners and clergy alike to realign parish structures to best situate them for building a strong future; the envisioning of this merger as an integral part of the overall pastoral plan for the Clearfield Deanery area<sup>1</sup>; I hereby decree the following:

1. By means of an extinctive union, Saint Bonaventure Parish in Grampian shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Timothy Parish in Curwensville.

---

<sup>1</sup> The pastoral plan for the Clearfield Deanery area includes the following goals: to: 1) create a more vibrant Catholic community, 2) improve Mass attendance and participation in parish life, 3) engage younger Catholics, 4) reach out to fallen-away Catholics and new parishioners, 5) increase the parish’s community and ecumenical involvement, 6) create a more welcoming environment, and 7) sustain the parish financially.

2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Timothy Parish. It shall be territorial in nature, with the parish retaining all of the territory which it now possesses, and to it will be added all of the territory of Saint Bonaventure Parish.
3. All sacramental records from Saint Bonaventure Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Timothy Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Saint Bonaventure Parish shall be transferred to Saint Timothy Parish.
5. The parish church shall be Saint Timothy church in Curwensville.
6. Saint Bonaventure church in Grampian shall become a secondary mission church of Saint Timothy 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 Bonaventure church.
7. The boundaries of Saint Timothy parish shall be:  
In Clearfield County: starting in the southeast corner of Bell township, follow the township line between Burnside and Bell west to the county line; follow the county line north to the line between Bell and Brady townships; east along the Bell township line to Penn township, north and east along the Penn township line to Bloom township; north and east along the Bloom township line to Pike township; east along the Pike township line to Lawren township; south along the Pike township line and across PA route 879 to state road 2024 (Old Erie Pk); east along state road 2024 to the juncture with state road 2023 (Glen Richey Hwy); south along Glen Richey highway to Little Clearfield Creek/Knox township line; south along the Knox township line to Clearfield Creek; south along Clearfield Creek/Knox township line to Kellytown road; west along Kellytown road to the juncture with state road 2015 (Oak Ridge Rd) at Kellytown; southwest along state road 2015 to state road 3007 (New Millport Rd); northwest along state road 3007 to state road 3022 (Oak Ridge Rd); southwest along state road 3022 to PA Route 729 at Ansonville; north along PA Route 729 to the Ferguson township line; southwest along the Ferguson township line then north along the Ferguson township line to PA Route 36 in Newburg; northwest along PA Route 36 to the Bell township line.
8. As required by law, Mass is to be celebrated in each church every year 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 December 2, 2023, the beginning of Advent. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery  
of the Diocese of Erie  
on this 10<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2023

*+Lawrence T. Persico*

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

*Christopher J. Singer*

The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL  
Chancellor