

MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA
BISHOP OF SYRACUSE

DECREE
ON THE EXTINGUISHING UNION – MERGER OF THE
PARISHES OF SAINT BERNARD (WATERVILLE), SAINT MARY (HAMILTON),
SAINT JOSEPH (ORISKANY FALLS), AND SAINT JOAN OF ARC (MORRISVILLE)

Whereas the parish of Saint Bernard was established in 1850 and its current church was dedicated in 1912, the parish of Saint Mary was established in 1869 and its current church was dedicated in 1875, the parish of Saint Joseph was established in 1870 and its current church was dedicated in 1923, and the parish of Saint Joan of Arc was established as a mission in 1931 and then as a parish in 1978 and its church was dedicated in 1971;

Whereas these parishes were linked in 2020 under one pastor (can. 526 §1) for the sake of providing proper pastoral care due to changing demographics of the area, limited resources, retirements of pastors, and geographical proximity;

Whereas an examination of the condition of each of the parishes took place beginning in 2020, evaluating the sacramental statistics, Mass attendance, finances, vitality of each parish, options for pastoral care, etc., involving the pastors, trustees, finance councils, pastoral councils, committees of volunteers, and parishioners from each parish as well as diocesan officials, resulting in a unanimous recommendation to merge into one parish in order to provide for the pastoral care of the faithful and to better promote their active engagement in the Church's mission of worship, evangelization, and care of those in need, the results of which were made known at Town Hall meetings as well as through parish bulletins, announcements at the end of Mass, etc.;

Whereas, I convoked the Presbyteral Council on 4 March 2026 and presided over it according to the norm of law (cans. 127 §1, 166 §1, and 500 §1), placing the proposed modifications of the parishes of Saint Bernard, Saint Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc on the agenda ahead of time, ensuring that a summary of the status of each individual parish was provided to the members of the Council (can. 50), proposing the merger of each individual parish, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning the proposed modification of each individual parish (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed modification of each individual parish, and receiving unanimous support for the proposed modification of each individual parish;

Whereas “It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council” (can. 515 §2);

Whereas the parish of Saint Bernard has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a yearly financial deficit, and has limited resources;

Whereas the parish of Saint Mary has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a yearly financial deficit, and has limited resources;

Whereas the parish of Saint Joseph has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a significant yearly financial deficit, and has limited resources;

Whereas the parish of Saint Joan of Arc has experienced a significant decline in Sunday Mass attendance and in the celebration of the sacraments, operates at a significant yearly financial deficit, and has limited resources;

Whereas the population of Waterville, Hamilton, Oriskany Falls, and Morrisville is aging and in some cases has decreased such that there is no longer a need or the possibility of sustaining the current number of individual parishes in this area of the Diocese, the number of priests available in the Diocese to provide pastoral care has decreased while the average age of those available to serve has increased, the financial resources of each parish are directed primarily to the maintenance of buildings and physical plants as well as to provide for adequate personnel, and that various other options concerning the pastoral care of some of these parishes have been attempted and exhausted;

Therefore, in order to promote the good of souls as well as the good of the diocese, I the undersigned Bishop of Syracuse, have decided as follows:

DECREE

1. The parishes of Saint Bernard, Saint Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc located in Waterville, Hamilton, Oriskany Falls, and Morrisville, New York are united via an extinctive union-merger to form the new parish of the Holy Spirit.
2. The members of the originating parishes will now become members of the new parish. The territories of the parishes of Saint Bernard, Saint Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc will be included in the territory of the new parish.
3. Given its historical, architectural, and liturgical significance as well as its location and ministerial import, the principal church of the parish will be the church of Saint Mary located at 16 Wylie Street, Hamilton, New York.
4. The auxiliary churches of the parish will be Saint Bernard, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc. At present, the faithful will continue to have the right of entry to these churches for public worship. Also, at present, the Most Holy Eucharist will be reserved at these churches (can. 934 §1, 1°).
5. The regular schedule of Masses and the celebration of the sacraments will be determined by the pastor.
6. All sacramental registers hitherto preserved by each parish are to be conveyed to the office of the newly merged parish located at the church of Saint Bernard (190 Stafford Ave, Waterville, New York), where they are to be faithfully preserved according to the norms of can. 535 §§ 1-5.

7. The temporal goods as well as any patrimonial rights and obligations of the parishes of Saint Bernard, Saint Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc will be assumed by the new parish. The intentions of the founders and donors as well as any acquired rights are to be respected (can. 121).


This merger will become effective on 1 July 2026.

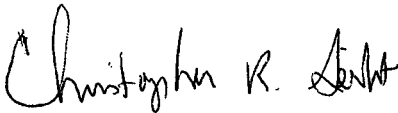
This decree hereby revokes and replaces any decrees issued by my predecessor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham, concerning the parishes of Saint Bernard, Saint Mary, Saint Joseph, and Saint Joan of Arc.

I further order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day, 16 June 2026. This publication on the diocesan website (www.syrdio.org), on the website of the local diocesan newspaper (thecatholicsun.com) with notification in the newspaper itself, on the parish website, and in the parish bulletin 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 June 2026, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2).

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


+ Douglas J. Lucia
Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse



Reverend Christopher R. Seibt
Vice Chancellor