



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

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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,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse