

MOST REVEREND DOUGLAS J. LUCIA  
*BISHOP OF SYRACUSE*

**DECREE**  
**ON THE EXTINCTIVE UNION – AMALGAMATION OF THE**  
**PARISHES OF SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST AND SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE,**  
**NEW HARTFORD, NEW YORK**  
**AND THE REDUCTION OF THE**  
**CHURCH OF SAINT THOMAS THE APOSTLE,**  
**NEW HARTFORD, NEW YORK**  
**TO PROFANE BUT NOT SORDID USE**

Whereas the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle was established in 1957 and the church was dedicated in 1958;

Whereas various factors (i.e., changing demographics of the town and the parish, financial concerns, limited resources, shortage of both people in the parish and clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse, etc.) necessitated the linkage of the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle with the parish of Saint John the Evangelist (est. 1887) at the church of Saint John the Evangelist in 2023 for the sake of proper pastoral care, placing the pastoral care of both parishes under the direction of one pastor (can. 526 §1) and in one location;

Whereas the administrator to whom the parish is entrusted, the Reverend Monsignor James Lang, reviewed with the parish trustees, finance council, and pastoral council the sacramental statistics, Mass attendance, vitality, and limited financial situation of the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle as well as the feasibility of maintaining the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle, the result of which established the financial and practical impossibility of doing so;

Whereas this consultation resulted in a consensus to petition me to officially merge (extinctive union-amalgamation) the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle with the parish of Saint John the Evangelist and relegate the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle to profane but not sordid use for the purpose of alienating the property in order to ensure the existence and vitality of the parish;

Whereas the Reverend Monsignor James Lang petitioned me to relegate the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle to profane but not sordid use because: (1) there is a decline in the number of people attending Mass and celebrating the sacraments at the parish, (2) the needs of the parish for worship are being adequately met at the church of Saint John the Evangelist which has functioned as the principal church of the parish since 2023, (3) the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle is in need of substantial repairs and continual maintenance, and (4) the financial resources of the parish are limited and diminishing;

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 (can. 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, 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 9 June 2025 and presided over it according to the norm of law (cans. 127 §1, 166 §1, and 500 §1), placing the modification (extinctive union- amalgamation) of the parishes of Saint Thomas the Apostle and Saint John the Evangelist as well the relegation of the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle 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 modification and relegation separately, seeking the informed and free counsel of the members concerning each individual proposed action (can. 515 §2), listening to arguments both for and against the proposed modification and relegation, and receiving unanimous support for the proposed modification and 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 parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle is hereby canonically merged with the parish of Saint John the Evangelist for the sake of proper pastoral care.
2. The church of Saint Thomas the Apostle of the parish of Saint John the Evangelist is hereby reduced to profane but not sordid use according to the prescripts of canon 1222 §2 for the grave causes mentioned above.
3. The church of Saint John the Evangelist is hereby officially designated as the principal church of the parish.
4. Negotiations that may lead to the sale of the property can begin, following the proper procedures for alienation.
5. 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 cans. 1212 and 1238).

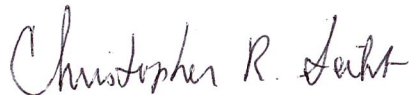
This decree is effective immediately and hereby revokes and replaces the decree issued by me or my predecessor, the Most Reverend Robert J. Cunningham.

I further order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day, 26 June 2025. The publication on the diocesan website ([www.syrдио.org](http://www.syrдио.org)), on the website of the local diocesan newspaper ([thecatholicsun.com](http://thecatholicsun.com)), 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 useful days from the legitimate notification of the decree, that is, on 26 June 2025, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2).

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

  
Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia  
Bishop of Syracuse

  
Reverend Christopher R. Seibt  
Vice Chancellor