



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

240 E. ONONDAGA STREET, SYRACUSE, NY 13202-2608

26 June 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Saint Thomas the Apostle, New Hartford, has been tending to the pastoral needs of the people of New Hartford since 1957. It has a wonderful history. More importantly, it has been a place where God is worshiped, the Good News of his love and salvation are lived and shared, and those in need are served.

It is unfortunate that the number of faithful who gather for the celebration of the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, and who take an active part in the mission of the Church through their involvement at this mission has experienced a significant decline. Sadly, the same decline is present in many of the parishes and in all the vicariates of our diocese.

Consequently, your administrator, Monsignor Jim Lang, your parish trustees, and the members of your parish and finance councils have been considering the future of your parish and its mission church in the life and mission of the Church, which has 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 parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle be merged (amalgamated) with the parish of Saint John the Evangelist, New Hartford and the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle be relegated to profane but not sordid use (closed) so that it can be eventually alienated (sold) because of various important factors (e.g., decreases in Mass attendance, the celebration of the Sacraments, parish programs, etc., limited financial and other resources, the shortage of clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse, 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 Monsignor Lang to merge the parish of Saint Thomas the Apostle with Saint John the Evangelist and to relegate the church of Saint Thomas the Apostle. The Decree of Relegation is attached.

Faith • Hope • Charity

I am grateful to your administrator, 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.

Parishes and churches are a significant part of our history and tradition and the loss of a church is certainly sad and something to be mourned. At the same time, it is a reminder that the Church is 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,



Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse