



ROMAN CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF SYRACUSE

OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

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

July 6, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The mission of the Church continues in new and creative ways, particularly during this difficult and challenging time. The parish of Saint Bernadette has been tending to the pastoral needs of the people of Constantia since 1959. Indeed, your parish has had a remarkable and beautiful 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, on the North Shore and who take an active part in the mission of the Church through their involvement at the parish of Saint Bernadette has experienced a significant decline. Sadly, the same decline is present in many of the parishes and in all the vicariates of our diocese.

In order to better navigate the pastoral challenges of our time, your parish came together with Divine Mercy Parish in Central Square in 2015, forming "Divine Mercy Parish and The Mission of Saint Bernadette." Since then, great work in the care of souls has been accomplished in Brewerton, Central Square, Constantia, Cleveland, and beyond!

Nevertheless, the parish of Saint Bernadette finds itself at another crossroads. Last year, your pastor, parish trustees, and the members of your parish and finance councils began considering the future of your parish. You, the parishioners, were also invited to consider the future of your parish over the course of three town hall meetings.

The result of your deliberations was that the final transition to Divine Mercy Parish would eventually be a necessary one because of various important factors (e.g., an annual operational deficit, the cost of maintaining the church building of the parish of Saint Bernadette for the celebration of one Mass per week and the future maintenance needs of this facility, an average weekly Mass attendance of 50 people, the shortage of clergy in the Diocese of Syracuse, etc.). Considering the many blessings that you have experienced from your current relationship with Divine Mercy Parish in the areas of worship and spirituality, evangelization, care of the poor, community, and administration, you decided to make the final transition now, in a pastorally effective and spiritually fruitful way.

Consequently, Father Seibt, has requested from me that the parish of Saint Bernadette be canonically merged (extinctive union – amalgamation) with Divine Mercy Parish and the church of Saint

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Bernadette be relegated to profane but not sordid use (closed) so that it may eventually be alienated (sold).

I have decided to grant this request. The Decree of Modification and Relegation is attached. I am grateful to Father Seibt, the parish trustees, the members of the pastoral and finance council, 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 to strengthen the vitality of Divine Mercy Parish and The Mission of Saint Bernadette so that it may more effectively continue the mission of the Church.

Church buildings are a significant part of our history and tradition and the loss of the church of Saint Bernadette 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 at a parish church near you.

A final Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at the church of Saint Bernadette on Saturday, July 15th, the vigil of the final apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Saint Bernadette.

Please join me in giving thanks to God for the great gift that this church has been for so many years. And let us together ask the Lord to bless you that, as you begin a new chapter in our history, he may fill you with the grace you need to be his witnesses so that your parish will be a beacon of faith, hope, and charity to the people of Brewerton, Central Square, Constantia, Cleveland, and beyond!

Be assured of my continued prayers and support for you and your community during this difficult yet hope-filled time.

In the Name of Jesus,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Douglas J. Lucia". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Douglas" and last name "Lucia" clearly legible.

Most Reverend Douglas J. Lucia
Bishop of Syracuse