



## DECREE

### EFFECTING THE MERGER OF HOLY TRINITY PARISH (RAMEY) INTO SAINT BASIL THE GREAT PARISH (COALPORT)

#### History

##### A. Holy Trinity Parish

Holy Trinity Parish in Ramey was erected in 1937, with a former Protestant church for use as the new parish church. It was solemnly blessed in March of 1937. For most of its history, the parish was pastored by Third Order Regular Franciscan priests from Loretto, Pennsylvania. A new church was constructed and solemnly blessed on October 18, 1959. The parish returned to the care of diocesan priests in 2005, and since that time it has shared a pastor with another parish, at first with Christ the King Parish in Houtzdale from 2005 to 2008, and then with Saint Basil the Great Parish in Coalport from 2008 until the present.

##### B. Saint Basil the Great Parish

Saint Basil the Great Parish in Coalport began as a mission, and was erected as a parish in its own right in 1885. The parish church was solemnly blessed on June 14, 1887. During its history, the parish had three missions of its own: Saint Anthony church in Janesville from 1886 to 1922, Saint Aloysius church in Morganland from 1886 to 1926, and for a time during the 1920's the parish had the pastoral care of Saint Richard church in Blandburg in the Diocese of Altoona. From its creation in 1885 until 2008, Saint Basil the Great Parish had a full-time pastor, but since 2008 the parish has shared a pastor with Holy Trinity Parish in Ramey.

#### Current Situation

Significant demographic changes which have transpired in northwestern Pennsylvania in recent decades, and Coalport and Ramey areas have been affected as well. According to the US Census Bureau, Ramey's population in 2010 was 451 individuals, just slightly more than 41% of its historical high in 1920, while Coalport's population was 523, being only 43% of its historical peak in 1930. There is no indication that this decline in population in either community is likely to reverse itself. In 2015, Holy Trinity Parish listed 124 households with



an average Sunday Mass attendance of 94 persons, while Saint Basil the Great Parish listed 246 households with an average weekend Mass attendance of 331 individuals.

Due to diminishing numbers of parishioners, an aging population, the shortage of clergy, the presence of SCI Houtzdale and the pastoral needs attached thereto, and the need to practice better stewardship of both personnel and financial resources, the long-term sustainability of a separate parish in Ramey is no longer possible. Given that Holy Trinity Parish and Saint Basil the Great Parish have shared a pastor for the last eight years, it seems that the care of souls for the faithful in those parishes could be better served by a more efficient use of personnel and temporal resources, greater collaboration between their communities of the faithful, and a unified pastoral vision for both parishes.

In pursuit of that end, as a part of a comprehensive pastoral planning process involving extensive study, collaboration, and dialogue throughout the diocese, together with an analysis of objective data regarding demographic shifts and population trends for individual parishes, specific communities and regions, I brought the matter of Holy Trinity Parish in Ramey before the Presbyteral Council on March 9, 2016. With the support of the Presbyteral Council, I announced on April 13, 2016 a preliminary plan to merge Holy Trinity Parish into Saint Basil the Great Parish, with Holy Trinity church becoming a secondary mission church of Saint Basil the Great Parish.

I specified a time period in which I would welcome feedback in response to this preliminary proposal. As a result, I received input and advice from the shared pastor of Holy Trinity and Saint Basil the Great Parishes, from the parishioners themselves, from the Vicar Forane and the Vicar General, and from those responsible for overseeing the development of the pastoral plan. I shared the results of this feedback with the members of the Presbyteral Council. In light of the new information, I then asked the council members once again for their advice on the aforementioned proposal to merge Holy Trinity Parish into Saint Basil the Great Parish, with Holy Trinity church becoming a mission church of Saint Basil the Great Parish. The Presbyteral Council members expressed their unanimous support on June 28, 2016.

All of the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515 have been fulfilled.

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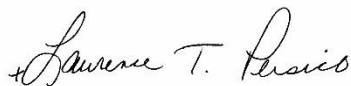
Therefore, having first and foremost before my eyes the need for a stronger and more sustainable means to provide for the care of souls for the faithful of Holy Trinity Parish in Ramey, while also considering the already diminished number of parishioners, the lack of available priests which renders it impossible to provide a full-time pastor for the parish, the relevant demographics of both Holy Trinity Parish and Saint Basil the Great Parish as well as projected future trends, the historical origins of both Holy Trinity Parish and Saint Basil the Great Parish, the fact that both parishes have shared a pastor for the past eight years, the possibility of better stewardship in the shared use of temporal goods and personnel between

the two parishes, and the general plan of pastoral care not only for the Ramey and Coalport area but also for the Diocese as a whole, I hereby decree the following:

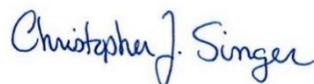
1. By means of an extinctive union, Holy Trinity Parish in Ramey shall be merged and subsumed into Saint Basil the Great Parish in Coalport.
2. The name of the receiving parish shall continue to be Saint Basil the Great Parish. It shall be territorial in nature, with the parish retaining all of the territory which it now possesses, and to it will be added all of the territory of Holy Trinity Parish.
3. All sacramental records from Holy Trinity Parish shall be retained at the parish offices of Saint Basil the Great Parish.
4. In accord with the norm of law (cf. can. 121), all of the assets, responsibilities, and liabilities of Holy Trinity Parish shall be transferred to Saint Basil the Great Parish.
5. The parish church shall be Saint Basil the Great church. Holy Trinity church shall become a secondary mission church of Saint Basil the Great Parish. By diocesan law, therefore, Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation, as well as on the evening preceding them, is permitted in Holy Trinity church.
6. Furthermore, Holy Trinity church is to remain open to the faithful at least occasionally for sacred worship, whether public or private (cf. can. 1214). As required by law, Mass is to be on the solemnity of the church's title, in accord with current liturgical norms (cf. cann. 1167 §2 and 1168 of the former Code of Canon Law, and can. 2 of the present Code). If such an observance is impeded by another date of higher rank according to the Roman calendar, the impeded solemnity is to be transferred to the first available date thereafter.

This decree is effective February 13, 2017, anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery  
of the Diocese of Erie  
on this 22nd day of September, 2016



The Most Reverend Lawrence T. Persico, JCL  
Bishop of Erie



The Reverend Christopher J. Singer, JCL  
Chancellor