



12.14.2019

**Bishop Persico revokes, issues new decree regarding St. Stephen Parish, Oil City**

On Nov. 15, 2019, The Most Rev. Lawrence T. Persico, bishop of Erie, issued a decree effecting the merger of St. Stephen Parish in Oil City into St. Joseph Parish in Oil City. On Nov. 22, 2019, Ms. Connie Schwabenbauer, a parishioner of St. Stephen Parish, serving as procurator for numerous other parishioners, presented a *remonstratio* — a written petition asking the bishop to revoke or amend his decision. The *remonstratio* also asked that all of the patrimony — financial and real assets — of St. Stephen Parish be sequestered — set aside and remain untouched — pending the outcome of the recourse or the establishment of some other provision following continued study of the situation.

Although the diocese finds numerous canonical errors in the *remonstratio*, it does recognize the need to address the situation in Oil City from a pastoral perspective. For that reason, Bishop Persico has revoked the Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> decree and replaced it with a new one. Parishioners were informed of the

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new decree at weekend Masses beginning on Saturday, Dec. 14. Both decrees can be found at [www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html](http://www.ErieRCD.org/bishop/decrees.html).

The most significant changes in the decree can be found in its introduction as well as in the fifth and sixth provisions it contains. The decision to merge St. Stephen Parish into St. Joseph Parish remains in effect, but St. Stephen Church will now become a secondary church of St. Joseph Parish, with mission status. This means Masses may be celebrated there on Sundays or holy days of obligation or the evenings preceding them.

In light of the fact the diocese encourages planning to occur on the local level, from this point onward it will be up to Saint Joseph Parish leadership to direct any continued efforts in pastoral planning for Oil City.

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