



JEFFREY J. WALSH

Bishop of Gaylord

By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See

DECREE

Extinctive union of Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Herron, Michigan, and the consolidation of its territory with Saint Augustine Parish in Hillman, Michigan

In 1886, Bishop Richter of Grand Rapids assigned a priest to establish preaching stations in the King Settlement, Presque Isle and Ossineke areas. The King Settlement station eventually became St. Rose of Lima Parish. For the last 40 years, St. Rose has been without a resident pastor, and has been served by clergy from neighboring parishes. On Good Friday of this year (April 7, 2023) a fire caused significant damage to the church, and rendered it unsuitable to the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. On Sunday, April 9, 2023, I celebrated Easter Mass with the community in the parking lot of the church.

On Friday, April 21, 2023, a meeting was held at All Saints Parish, Alpena, with the pastoral and finance councils of St. Rose of Lima, along with the canonical pastor, Fr. Tyler Bischoff, and Theresa Zbytowski the Director of Parish Life. The difficult situation resulting from the fire, and the extent of what would be required to rebuild was clearly understood by all as they discussed their painful loss. In addition, Theresa Zbytowski met with small groups and individuals at the parish office of St. Rose of Lima to discuss the impact of the fire.

On Monday, May 22, 2023, I arranged a “townhall” meeting for the parishioners of St. Rose at All Saints Parish Hall in Alpena. The love of the parishioners for their parish was evident, as was the interest in undertaking the rebuilding process. Nevertheless, as a clearer picture of the reality of the limited resources at the parish, as well as pastoral needs of the Diocese were discussed, the synodal listening revealed the need to consider other options. After a broad consultation with the Diocesan Finance Council, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Presbyteral Council, and other bishops, I prayerfully discerned the decision to not rebuild and called a second “townhall” meeting on June 22, 2023 to announce the decision in-person to the St. Rose Parish community.

This decision is based upon a number of circumstances. These circumstances include the 40-year absence of a resident pastor and no realistic ability to provide a resident pastor in the future. The Diocese of Gaylord has a decreasing number of priests available to provide pastoral care, the assistance of the sacraments, or the celebration of divine worship. In addition, there is great concern for financial unsustainability, and the demographic reality of a scattered and small rural population with no projections of future growth.

At the same time, we recognize that Saint Rose Parish is geographically close to other parishes, and the faithful will be able to approach the sacraments and continue to participate in the full life of the Church without any undue burden. Indeed, this action is motivated principally by concern for souls (*Christus Dominus*, no. 32) and is required for the good of the faithful (*Apostolorum Successores*, no. 214).

Having consulted the Presbyteral Council on September 5, 2023, and listened to the Diocesan Pastoral and Finance Councils and the College of Consultors, in observance of canons 120, §1; 121; and 515, §§2-3 of the Code of Canon Law, and with no harm coming to the good of souls and indeed for the spiritual benefit of the faithful, and all the requirements of canons 50, 51, 127, 166, and 515, having been fulfilled, I, the undersigned, in virtue of my authority as Bishop of Gaylord, do hereby decree:

1. That the territories of Saint Rose of Lima Parish in Herron, Michigan, and Saint Augustine Parish in Hillman, Michigan shall form one territorial parish, with the resulting extinctive union of the present Saint Rose of Lima Parish. This shall take effect at midnight at the end of Sunday, November 26, 2023. The consolidated parish shall include the membership of the present Saint Augustine Parish and the former Saint Rose of Lima Parish, and the current Saint Augustine Parish Church edifice shall be the place of worship for the unified parish community. The new boundaries of Saint Augustine Parish shall include the current boundaries of Saint Rose of Lima Parish, in addition to the current boundaries of Saint Augustine Parish.
2. That the consolidated parish shall retain the name of Saint Augustine Parish.
3. That the Reverend James H. Siler shall be administrator of the consolidated Catholic community to foster the pastoral care of the new Catholic community, bearing in mind the provision of canon 519. In the months since the April 7 fire, the majority of St. Rose of Lima parishioners have been attending St. Augustine Masses and events, having been warmly welcomed by Fr. Siler and the St. Augustine parish community.

Before Sunday, November 26, 2023, the parish registers containing the records of baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, marriage, and deaths, along with all parish records and historical documents, are to be forwarded to St. Augustine Parish, Hillman where they will be faithfully preserved and

maintained in accord with canon 535, §§1-5. According to the norm of canon 121, all assets and liabilities, whether movable or immovable, of Saint Rose of Lima Parish will become the assets and liabilities of the consolidated Catholic community. Furthermore, the parish cemetery, ownership of all ecclesiastical goods and all objects of artistic or historical value belonging to Saint Rose of Lima Parish will be transferred to the new Catholic community and will be administered in accordance with the prescriptions of ecclesiastical law.

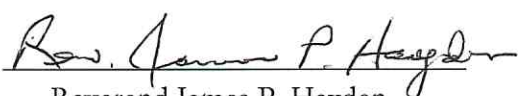
The effect of the extinctive union of Saint Rose of Lima Parish with Saint Augustine Parish is the termination of the juridic personality of the former Saint Rose of Lima Parish, which it now possesses by law. Thus, it will no longer be a subject of obligations and rights in canon law corresponding to its nature as a juridic person, nor will it be capable of acquiring, retaining, administering, or alienating temporal goods according to the norm of law.

I direct that this decree be given to the pastoral leadership of Saint Rose of Lima Parish and Saint Augustine Parish, and that its contents, especially the dispositive part of this decree, be communicated in an appropriate manner to parishioners on the weekend of the Thirty Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, that is, the Solemnity of Christ the King, Saturday, November 25, 2023 and Sunday, November 26, 2023. I further direct that this decree be published on the website of the Diocese of Gaylord (www.dioceseofgaylord.org) which will be presumed to be the official notification of this action.

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 2 October 2023, by seeking its revocation or emendation directly from me (can. 1734 §2). Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Curia of the Diocese of Gaylord on this the Feast of the Guardian Angels, the 2nd day of October, in the year of our Lord, 2023.


Most Reverend Jeffrey J. Walsh
Bishop of Gaylord


Reverend James P. Hayden
Vicar General