

NOTICE OF COMMUNICATION TO PARISHIONERS OF SAINT JOSEPH PARISH, MATAMORAS

AUGUST 14, 2022



For the last several years, the Diocese of Scranton has been working proactively to address the realities of our local church while striving to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming decade. Acknowledging that fewer parishioners are supporting the mission of the church, in addition to a diminishing number of ordained priests and many parishes facing financial challenges and infrastructure issues, the Diocese created its *Vision 2030 Pastoral Planning Process*.

This planning process addresses the ongoing needs of parishes through the lens of four distinct priority drivers:

- Vibrancy of Parish Life (Sunday Mass Attendance and other aspects of Sacramental Life)
- Condition of Facilities
- Financial Viability of a Parish
- Distribution and Availability of Clergy

When a concern regarding one or more priority drivers are present in a parish, or deemed critical by the needs of the diocese overall, the Diocese of Scranton looks to make modifications to parishes in a proactive way so that the Gospel can be announced and the Church's sacraments celebrated in vibrant parish communities.

Since the summer of 2015, **Holy Family Church**, 104 Doug Miller Road, Mill Rift, a secondary church of Saint Joseph Parish in Matamoras, has not been utilized for the celebration of Mass. In recent years, the church property has fallen into disrepair and the needed maintenance would be costly, and an undue burden, for the faithful who support Saint Joseph Parish.

When Holy Family Church was dedicated in 1957, it primarily served Catholic summer residents and guests at the then flourishing Glenwood Hotel. Over the last 65 years, demographics in Pike County have continued to change and the current worship site of Saint Joseph Church has already shown that it is sufficient enough for all of the faithful in the community over the last seven years.

In the spirit of the Vision 2030 process, conversation and consultation has taken place within the parish community and Reverend Joseph J. Manarchuck, V.F., Pastor, has collaborated with the Saint Joseph Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils who support the idea to close Holy Family Church (defined in canon law as "relegated to profane but not sordid use").

On **August 8, 2022**, the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, Bishop of Scranton, signed a formal decree (which is a document that formalizes a decision within the Church) to best address the spiritual needs of the faithful as well as the needs of the Diocese of Scranton. The decree, which is located on the reverse side of this announcement, states Holy Family Church will permanently close on **Sunday, August 28, 2022**. The future of the property will be determined by Saint Joseph Parish in consultation with the Diocese of Scranton, but will conform with Catholic faith and morals and with its dignity as a former place of divine worship.

According to Church law, diocesan bishops alone have the power to "erect, suppress or alter parishes" but can only do so after speaking to the Presbyteral Council and consulting parishioners. Throughout this process, the diocesan bishop needs to be certain that people will have access to another nearby place of worship. In this case, Bishop Bambera has determined that Saint Joseph Parish has already proven it has more than adequate resources to serve the liturgical and sacramental needs of the community.

While change is never easy, the People of God know that a parish is not just a building or piece of real estate, it is the community of people. Let us hold fast to the Lord's promise that He is with us always, and trust in the fact that He is at work in a special way within our faith community and is creating something new for all of us.

The text of the official decree regarding Holy Family Church is located on the reverse of this page.

DECREE
In the Name of God. Amen.



Joseph Charles Bambera

DEI ET APOSTOLICAE SEDIS GRATIA
EPISCOPUS SCRANTONENSIS



WHEREAS, Holy Family Church, located at 104 Doug Miller Road, Mill Rift, Westfall Township, Pennsylvania, is a secondary church of Saint Joseph Parish of Matamoras, Pennsylvania, and;

WHEREAS, the Saint Joseph Parish, in holding the assets and liabilities of maintenance and operating expenses for Holy Family Church, has been unduly burdened with the buildings and costs it does not need and cannot reasonably use or afford, and;

WHEREAS, the Reverend Joseph J. Manarchuck, V.F., Pastor of Saint Joseph Parish, in collaboration with the Saint Joseph Parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, supports the desire and need to relegate Holy Family Church to profane but not sordid use, and desires to see the parish community move forward without the financial and other burdens of caring for Holy Family Church, and;

WHEREAS, Holy Family Church has only ever served Saint Joseph Parish seasonally and has not been utilized since Summer 2015 because of a lack of usefulness as a secondary church, and, because of the dearth of finances, has fallen into disrepair, in addition to its addition to the tax rolls of Pike County, Pennsylvania, and;

THEREFORE, having heard the Presbyteral Council and received its favorable recommendation on May 10, 2022, I hereby decree the reduction of Holy Family Church, 104 Doug Miller Road, Mill Rift, Westfall Township, Pennsylvania, to profane but not sordid use in accord with the norm of canon 1222 §2 of the Code of Canon Law, effective Sunday, August 28, 2022.


In fulfillment of the requirements of canon 51, the reasons for the reduction of Holy Family Church are:

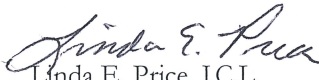
1. Changing demographics of the community resulting in dwindling Mass attendance;
2. Diminishing number of faithful whose donations sustain the parish;
3. Holy Family Church facility in need of repairs;
4. Absence of funds external to the parish to assist in the maintenance of Holy Family Church;
5. In holding the assets and liabilities of Holy Family Church, the Saint Joseph Parish is financially burdened;
6. Ready and effective assistance available to the parish from the sale of Holy Family Church;
7. The Presbyteral Council, the regional Episcopal Vicar, the Vicar Forane, and Saint Joseph's Parish Pastor, Pastoral Council and Finance Council are all in favor of the reduction.

FURTHERMORE, parishioners of Saint Joseph Parish are hereby notified that, should they decide to file recourse against this decree, that they are required *ad validitatem*, in light of the prescripts contained in CIC cc. 1732 - 1739, to submit a petition to the undersigned within ten useful days from the actual or presumed notification of this decree. Moreover, should recourse against this decree be lodged, it has suspensive effect *ipso iure*.

I am confident that no individuals who can claim any rights over this church will suffer injury and I am confident that the good of souls will not be injured by this decree.

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Scranton on the 8th day of August in the Year of Our Lord, 2022.


Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton


Linda E. Price, J.C.L.
Chancellor