



## **Statement on behalf of Missionaries of Saint John the Baptist, Inc., On the Sudden Loss of the Public Celebration of the Mass and Sacraments at Our Lady of Lourdes Church**

**Park Hills, KY (1/25/2024):** Missionaries of St. John the Baptist, Inc., release the following statement concerning Fr. Shannon Collins, MSJB, and Fr. Sean Kopczynski, MSJB, and the sudden loss of their faculties to perform public ministry as priests at Our Lady of Lourdes Church.

- The Missionaries, Fr. Shannon and Fr. Sean, are veteran Roman Catholic priests in good standing and consecrated religious members of a religious community known as the Missionaries of St. John the Baptist and were the priests that staffed the Traditional Latin Mass Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, under the headship of His Excellency, Bishop John Iffert, the current prelate of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky.
- The Missionaries seek to be teachers of truth and have never, to the best of their knowledge, promoted any errors in regard to the Holy Faith or taught anything contrary to the perennial Catechism of the Catholic Church.
- From the time of their arrival in the Diocese of Covington in 2011 under the benevolence of His Excellency, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, the Missionaries have always followed the lead of the Visible Shepherd of this local Church and will continue to do so. The Missionaries were founded, in part, to help heal the wounds to unity within the local Church and serve Catholics who are attached to a *“more traditional expression of the Catholic faith, who are so often driven to the margins of ecclesiastical and civil life”*, as Bishop Emeritus Foys stated in his decree of erection for the Missionaries in 2019. By the grace of God, the Missionaries helped bring about the return of an entire independent community of Catholics to the heart of the Church.

- Under the direction and approval of Bishop Emeritus Foys, Fr. Shannon and Fr. Sean, in 2015, established a traditional religious community for priests and seminarians. In 2016, again encouraged by Bishop Emeritus Foys, they also established a location for the official Traditional Latin Mass personal parish of the diocese, Our Lady of Lourdes Church, which also serves as the chapel for the Missionaries.
- Over two million dollars were spent by the Missionaries, through the generosity of their donors, in order to acquire and completely renovate a church to offer a beautiful home for faithful traditional Catholics, as well as a rectory and a religious house for consecrated men of which there are now six in formation. Bishop Emeritus Foys also expressly granted his permission for the Missionaries' non-profit corporation to own all of these facilities, which it continues to own today.
- Officially founded as a religious community of priests and seminarians in 2015 with a permanent adherence to the use of the 1962 *Missale Romanum* and *Rituale Romanum*, per Article 3 of the *motu proprio Summorum Pontificum*, the Missionaries were told the offering of the traditional Rites of Rome is at the heart of their episcopally-approved charism, a part of the very soul of their religious life and apostolate, as reflected in their Constitutions approved by Bishop Emeritus Foys and in their decree of erection as a public association of the faithful in 2019.
- For the Missionaries, the ancient and apostolic liturgies of Rome are not just a preference, but a necessity of their charism. In accordance with their constitutions, the Missionaries cannot relinquish that liturgical charism in their community, nor within any pastoral work they do. Therefore, the Missionaries could not, in good conscience and in obedience to their charism, implement any plan of leading the faithful flock of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish away from the use of the older forms of Sacraments and Divine worship.
- The governing board of the Missionaries' non-profit corporation has recently reached out to Bishop Iffert to once again offer Our Lady of Lourdes Church as a home for the traditional Latin Mass and sacraments to the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes.
- The Missionaries gladly honor the license for the personal parish to use Our Lady of Lourdes Church for public Divine worship and Sacraments according to the 1962 liturgical books per the existing agreement with the Diocese of Covington.

- Families and individuals, whether natives to the area or those who have, with great sacrifice, moved from other parts of the country to Northern Kentucky, have made the Missionaries' chapel their home in reliance on previous agreements and contracts with the diocese, including the decree of erection of Our Lady of Lourdes Personal Parish and the existing written agreement between the Missionaries and the Diocese of Covington. The Missionaries' doors are – and will always remain – open to those good Catholics who have made Our Lady of Lourdes Church their spiritual home over the past seven years.
- The spiritual father and guide of the Missionaries, and Servant of God, the Very Reverend Jean Baptiste Rauzan, once said: "Wherever we go, we reverence the bishops, considering them our fathers and our masters."
- With this in mind, Fr. Shannon and Fr. Sean accept the limitations placed on their ministry, and pray that a swift resolution to this difficulty may be found so the Missionaries and their community in formation may continue to serve faithfully the Church and minister to the parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes.
- In terms of next steps, the Missionaries are praying, consulting and weighing their options. Until there is more to say, please keep the faith, and continue to keep the Missionaries, as well as Fathers Shannon and Sean in your prayers, as they will continue to do for their parishioners and their benefactors.

