

For the attention of the Congregation of the Clergy in Rome

Notice of appeal

1. Prof. dr. M.J.A. van Mourik, residing in Ravenstein (The Netherlands),
and

2. Dr. C.G.M. Verhoeckx, residing in Ravenstein (The Netherlands)

acting

A. in their private capacity, and

B. in their capacity of chairman and secretary of the foundation incorporated under Dutch law

Stichting Loterijfonds Ravenstein, with its seat in Ravenstein (The Netherlands)*

(This foundation has its origin as a lottery fund and was created in 1729. From the proceeds of a lottery, the construction of the St. Lucia's Church was financed. Nowadays, the main objective of the foundation is to look after the sociocultural interests of the parishioners of the former St. Lucia's Parish in Ravenstein).*

have taken due note of:

the Additional Decree issued by *dr. Gerardus Johannes Nicolaas de Korte*, bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch (Dutch diocese) on 29 July 2020, in which a decision is given on the objection against the decree of the bishop of 5 June 2020, published on the website of St. John the Baptist Parish, with its seat in Schaijk (The Netherlands) on 21 June 2020, in which the decision is given that the *Roman Catholic Church of Saint Lucia with altars* located at Sint Luciastraat 1 in Ravenstein, can no longer be used for divine worship,

appeal against:

this decree, subject to canon 1737 § 1 Code of Canon Law,

whereas:

1. the objection primarily relates to the fact that the bishop decided that the Saint Lucia's Church in Ravenstein can no longer be used for divine worship, even though the parochial church council did not consult the catholic community (the parishioners) of Ravenstein in any way prior to this decision;
2. none of the seats in the parochial church council of St. John the Baptist Parish, with its seat in Schaijk - located at 9 km from Ravenstein - of which the Saint Lucia's Parish of Ravenstein forms a part as of the extinctive union in 2015, is held by a parishioner from Ravenstein, due to serious communication problems;
3. the bishop acknowledges that the parishioners and population of Ravenstein were not heard, however without putting forward a convincing defence when referring to the '*many moments of contact and consultation with the location council, parishioners, interested parties, government, experts and the diocese*';
4. after all, as far as we are aware, the decision that the church was not to be used any longer for divine worship was not included in the agenda of the 'moments of contact and consultation' referred to above and these moments were not expressly intended to hear the parishioners on that decision;
5. the appellants would be pleased to substantiate the above with further information, if need be in your session, provided that they are allowed inspection of the list of the 'moments of contact and consultation', which list they have not been allowed to inspect to date, hereby expressly requesting to be allowed to inspect said list;
6. the catholic community of Ravenstein did not learn until 15 June 2020, through Facebook, that the church, together with the presbytery, was sold and could no longer be used for divine worship as of 1 July 2020;

whereas furthermore:

7. the appellants had wanted to contest the intended decision that the church was not to be used for divine worship any longer with a discussion on the (accumulation of) '*grave causes*' required by canon 1222 § 2 Code of Canon Law for such a decision;
8. in the objection - the contents of which are to be regarded as known and included herein - questions were raised about these causes that are not answered or not truly answered in the additional decree;
9. great weight is given continually to the structural condition of the church, while precisely this grave cause, if even real at all, disappears when implementing the intention to dispose of the church;
10. the commitment of the community of Ravenstein to St. Lucia's Church is demonstrably strong, which is also evidenced by the demonstration of 14 September 2019, directed against the failure to communicate of the parochial church council (**see annex 1**) and other meetings organized by the people of Ravenstein in 2018 and 2019;

11. the possibility of the disposal of the church without decommissioning it, so that it can be used for divine worship while also given it a profane but not sordid use, has not been truly investigated;
12. such an investigation would have been logical given that the intended acquirer of the church is a newly created foundation with sociocultural objects and Stichting Loterijfonds Ravenstein as well intends a profane but not sordid use;
13. the foundation Stichting Loterijfonds Ravenstein, created in 1729, is as well willing to acquire the church, provided that it can still be used for divine worship, which possibility is not investigated at all.;

whereas moreover:

14. the parochial church council and the diocese do not favourably consider the special history of St. Lucia's Church in the historical city of Ravenstein (anno 1360) and as a result, the cultural-historical identity of Ravenstein is seriously harmed;
15. the church was built in 1735, in a century in which Land van Ravenstein, ruled by German Electors, was an oasis of religious freedom in the Calvinistic Dutch Republic;
16. the baroque style and baroque interior are closely linked to the Order of Jesuits, who served the Ravenstein 'mission' from Emmerich (Germany) from 1643 to 1772;
17. all art treasures linked to the divine worship in this church also form a bond with many previous generations of parishioners and these bonds should not be broken by deciding unnecessarily that the church is no longer to be used for divine worship and removing the art treasures;
18. this was nevertheless done in the course of the objection proceedings and contrary to all rules of law and decency (**see annexes 2 et seq.**);
19. it should not be possible that the city of Ravenstein, founded in 1360, has to continue without a catholic church;

having regard to these considerations, they request

that the objection against the Decree of the bishop of 's-Hertogenbosch of 5 June 2020 and his Additional Decree of 29 July 2020, jointly containing the decision that

as of 1 July 2020, St. Lucia's Church of Ravenstein can no longer be used for divine worship,

be declared well-founded.

Ravenstein, 11 August 2020

Prof. dr. M.J.A. van Mourik

Dr. C.G.M. Verhoeckx

in their private capacity

and as chairman and secretary respectively of

Stichting Loterijfonds Ravenstein (anno 1729)
of Ravenstein

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Annex 1: church and concerned citizens, 14 September 2020
Annexes 2 et seq.: clearance St. Lucia's Church during the objection
proceedings