



Diocese of Richmond

January 15, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Thank you for contacting me about your concerns regarding the use of Saint Bede Catholic Church for the ordination and installation of the Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.

Use of space in a Catholic parish for the Episcopal Church to conduct their own religious ceremony is well within the accepted ecumenical teachings and norms of the Church. I appreciate that you are concerned that the sacred space of the Catholic Church be safeguarded, which it is.

I would encourage you to review the following teachings of the Church on ecumenism and norms for ecumenical activities and cooperation. The Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio* from the Second Vatican Council, especially # 1 and #3 speak of the importance of ecumenical dialogue and outreach. In addition, the Directory for the Application of Principal and Norms on Ecumenism #137 gives clear guidelines and recommendations regarding the possibility of sharing space with our separated brothers and sisters. Finally, the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops #207 indicates the importance of concrete acts of ecumenism on the part of the bishop.

I also share with you the letter from Msgr. Joseph Lehman, Pastor of Saint Bede Parish and Director of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs for the Diocese of Richmond, in whom I have great confidence. His letter explains in more detail the background regarding this request and my approval.

In view of the request from the Episcopal Church for the use of space in one of our parishes on a special occasion for their community, the offer of hospitality to a Christian neighbor in need is an act of charity and well within the teachings of ecumenism and the norms provided by the Church for ecumenical activities.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout
Bishop of Richmond