



*Prot. No. 19-011*

**Decree of Extinctive Union of  
St. Catherine of Siena Parish, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata Parish,  
St. Patrick Parish, and St. Theresa Parish**

**Decree of Establishment of St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi Parish**

**Preamble**

St. Patrick Parish began as a mission of St. Mary's. In the 1830s, a priest from St. Mary's would say Mass in a barn on the corner of Gottingen and Gerrish Streets. In 1843 the community began having Mass in a wooden church on the site of the current church, and the first resident priest was assigned to the community in 1859. When the community began to outgrow its home, this building was razed in 1883 and a cornerstone laid for the existing structure, which was opened in 1885 and consecrated in 1910. In the 1960s the parish demographics began to shift, and the community strengthened its commitment to particular outreaches to the poor and marginalized as the need for these ministries increased. In the 1980s and 1990s St. Patrick's was also the home of the local ministry to the Deaf and Francophone communities.

St. Joseph Parish was established in Halifax in 1865. From the 1870s until the early 1900s the parish population grew steadily. The church and glebe were destroyed in the Halifax Explosion of 1917, and rebuilt in 1920.

St. Stephen Parish was established in 1946 and served the North End community until 2007.

In 2007 the parishes of St. Joseph and St. Stephen were suppressed to establish the parish of Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta Parish, with St. Stephen's church retained as the parish's place of worship. In 2016, upon her canonization, the parish name was changed to St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata.

Land was purchased for St. Theresa's Church in 1919, but the parish was not established until 1930. Work began on a "basement church" that same year, and it was blessed in December 1930. By the mid-1950s the community was outgrowing the church, and work

began on a new building atop the existing basement church. The current church was completed in 1958.

St. Catherine of Siena Parish was established in 1948 to better serve the influx of people to Halifax during World War II. When first established, the parish rented a military barracks at the corner of Windsor and Bayers Road in Halifax. The new church was completed in 1953, and opened with a Eucharistic procession from the army building to the parish's new home.

Since 2002, St. Catherine of Siena Parish and St. Theresa Parish have shared one pastor and some common administration, due to the proximity of the churches and as a response to declining numbers of priests in the archdiocese.

In August 2015, the Franciscans of Halifax and the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth entered into a Memorandum of Understanding entrusting the care of the faithful and the administration of St. Catherine of Siena Parish to the Franciscans of Halifax.

Recently, with the steady decrease in Mass attendance across the province of Nova Scotia and accompanying financial restraints, the decline in the number of priests available to serve the parishes, the continued secularization of the culture, and a desire to consolidate parish ministries and services, decisions regarding the configuration of parishes in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth were required.

### **Consultation & Decision**

In 2017 I released a diocesan pastoral plan, *Equip the Saints*, to begin to address these challenges to our local Church. Among other initiatives, the plan proposed a reconfiguration of our parishes to help us more fully orient our temporal goods and pastoral activity towards fulfilling the mission of Jesus Christ. All clergy and parishioners were encouraged to read, discuss, and reflect on this plan, and invited to submit any questions they had. I, along with members of my diocesan staff, personally responded to this feedback at the 2017 Assembly of the People of God, our annual diocesan adult conference, in October 2017. In February 2018, members of the parishes were invited to participate in a diocesan-wide Lenten Video Series, which outlined the vision and general timeline for restructuring. At that time parishioners were asked to send in questions, concerns, and comments about this vision by the Feast of Pentecost (May 2018).

Additionally, clergy from each region of the diocese were specifically consulted and asked to submit proposals, developed in consultation with their lay leaders, for new parish configurations by June 30, 2018. I met specifically with clergy from the Halifax peninsula three times in fall 2017 (September 6, October 4, and November 8), and then four times in 2018 (January 24, March 21, May 23, and September 5). A member of my

staff and I also conducted a meeting for peninsula clergy and lay leaders on April 7, 2018.

Using the proposals and feedback from clergy and laity, my staff and I developed an action plan titled *New Parishes: Stronger Together*. This first draft was shared with the clergy of the entire diocese during two days of consultations in October 2018. Following these meetings, a revised draft of the plan was presented to all the faithful at the October 2018 Assembly of the People of God, with further input from the faithful sought until mid-November 2018.

On December 6, 2018 a final draft of the plan – which included the establishment of a new parish comprising St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes – was presented to all the clergy for final discussion. Having heard the clergy, the Presbyteral Council was consulted, and accepted the proposed parish configurations on December 6, 2018. The action plan was launched January 1, 2019.

A transition team was established in December 2018, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastors of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes. This team informed and involved parishioners of all four communities in determining the necessary facilities, human resources, and administrative structures of a new parish, as well as determining a name deemed appropriate to the community's charisms and devotions.

The transition team met a total of nine times between December 2018 and December 2019. In September 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi Parish be established, comprising the former parishes of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa. The recommendation included the retention of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata (St. Stephen's Church), St. Patrick, and St. Theresa as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Francesco Pirisi, FoH, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes, submitted a letter to me dated September 30, 2019 requesting the merger of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes;

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these four communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these four communities, effective January 1, 2020. Additionally, on October 31,

2019 the Council voted unanimously on a specific motion to create the new parish of Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the four communities have been closely considered and are able to be met through the creation of this new parish;

Whereas Canon 515 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law* gives the diocesan bishop the authority to erect, suppress or alter parishes, after he has consulted the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese;

Whereas the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops, *Apostolorum Successores*, of February 22, 2004 reminds the bishop that he has the responsibility of proceeding, after consulting the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese, to alter territorial boundaries, to merge smaller parishes, to establish new parishes for the pastoral service in the community, or even to reorganize completely the arrangement of parishes within a particular city;

Whereas the Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops reminds the bishop that he has the responsibility to organize the arrangement of parishes in ways adapted to the care of souls, according to a vision of the appropriate use of resources in the diocese (nn. 214-251).

Therefore, invoking the authority given to me as the Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth, and from canon 515 §2, and judging that all the conditions have been met, I hereby decree that, effective January 1, 2020, the parishes of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa will be merged to create one parish, called Saint Francis and Saint Clare of Assisi.

I furthermore decree as follows:

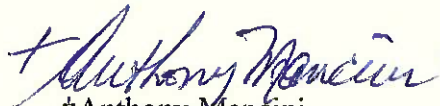
- The territory that composed the former St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata (St. Stephen's Church), St. Patrick, and St. Theresa will be places of worship for the new parish.
- The parish records and sacramental registers of the former parishes shall become the responsibility of the new parish;
- The real property -- lands and buildings -- of the former parishes shall, upon their merger into the new parish, become the property of the new parish, to be maintained, administered, alienated, or otherwise disposed of in accordance with civil and canon law;


- Any monetary funds of the former parishes that were previously designated as "restricted," shall continue to be maintained separately as part of the patrimony of the new parish, and used solely for those purposes for which they were restricted;
- After payment of any outstanding debts, any remaining monetary funds of the former parishes shall automatically become the patrimony of the new parish; likewise, any outstanding liabilities of the former parishes shall automatically become the responsibility of the new parish (see Canon 121);

Anyone who feels aggrieved by these decrees may have recourse following the appropriate procedures outlined in the *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 1734).

It is my hope and prayer that the parishioners of St. Catherine of Siena, St. Mother Teresa of Kolkata, St. Patrick, and St. Theresa Parishes will accept this decision in a spirit of faith. May this new parish be a sign of the commitment and vitality of the parishioners as they continue to grow and serve as a vibrant Christian community in the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth.

Given at Halifax, NS under our signature, the seal of the diocese, and the signature of the chancellor this 3rd day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.

  
†Anthony Mancini  
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth

  
Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle  
Chancellor

