



Prot. No. 19-012

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
St. Anselm Parish, St. Genevieve Parish, St. Denis Parish, St. Peter Parish,
and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael**

Decree of Establishment of Saint John of the Cross Parish

Preamble

St. Anselm Parish has its roots as a Mi'kmaq mission in the area now known as West Chezzetcook and Grand-Désert. The first chapel was built in what is now Grand-Désert between 1740 and 1750, a simple, windowless shelter made of logs. In 1803 the Bishop of Quebec visited the community and requested that a more modern church be constructed – a wooden building was erected in 1814 according to his specifications, located further inland in what is now West Chezzetcook. This church was replaced by a brick building in 1894.

St. Genevieve Parish was established in 1884, at the request of the Catholics of East Chezzetcook to the Archbishop of Halifax. The parish was to serve East Chezzetcook, Petpeswick, Musquodoboit Harbour, and the western side of Jeddore Harbour. St. Philip Neri was established as a mission of St. Genevieve Parish in 1893. The first church was built in 1893, and its location was chosen to accommodate the many parishioners who travelled to Mass by boat. By 1950 the community was outgrowing the building, and the location was inconvenient now that travel by car was the norm. A new church was completed in 1955 in a more central location, though it was again outgrown by 1987. The current building was completed and blessed in 1990.

St. Peter Parish was established in 1856 in Sheet Harbour. The church is said to have gotten its name because it was originally a chapel of St. Peter's Church in Dartmouth. St. Michael Mission in Quoddy was first established some time between 1860 and 1873. An acre of land was donated for the new church. Fundraising events like picnics were held on the land to raise money for the church, which was eventually constructed in 1873 and then re-built in 1874 after it was destroyed by a storm. The building underwent extensive repairs in 1959 and 1994.

St. Denis Parish (sometimes spelled “St. Dennis”) was established around 1903 as a mission of St. Peter Parish in Sheet Harbour. It replaced a small chapel in West Ship Harbour, also called St. Peter, that was destroyed by fire in 1871. St. Denis became a parish in 1945. In 1963 it had three missions – St. Anne in DeBaies Cove, St. Martin in Tangier, and the Shrine of the Miraculous Medal in Little Harbour. St. Martin Mission was founded in Tangier in 1958. In more recent times, St. Martin has been administered by St. Peter’s in Sheet Harbour.

St. Anne in Lake Echo was blessed on November 11, 1968. Prior to the church’s construction, Mass was said in the home of Fredericka and Gysbertus Bekkers for twelve years. The church was built in front of their home. The church was designed by a local architect from Dartmouth. The pews are from the old St. Peter Church in Dartmouth that was destroyed by fire, and the baptismal font came from St. Patrick Church in Halifax. The church underwent a major renovation in 2007.

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 November 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. The Dartmouth/Eastern Shore region clergy met with me on November 14 and December 14, 2017. A broader consultation meeting for clergy and transition team members was held on April 28, 2018, which offered all attendees an opportunity to submit parish proposals and other feedback. Clergy met again with members of my staff on June 6, 2018 to review the feedback from that meeting.

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. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter Parishes and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael – 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 March 2019, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter Parishes and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael. This team informed and involved parishioners of all eight 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 four times between March and September 2019, including a meeting of finance representatives and diocesan staff persons. In October 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Saint John of the Cross Parish be established, comprising the former parishes of St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael. The recommendation included the retention of St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter, as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter, St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Vincent Onyekelu, pastor of St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter Parishes and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael, submitted a letter to me dated October 16, 2019 requesting the merger of these parishes.

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these eight communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these eight 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 John of the Cross;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the eight 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. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael will be merged to create one parish, called Saint John of the Cross.

I furthermore decree as follows:

- The territory that composed the former St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter Parishes and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter 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);

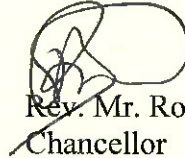
Anyone who feels aggrieved by these decrees may have recourse following the appropriate procedures outlined in the *Code of Canon Law* (Canon 1734).

It is my hope and prayer that the parishioners of St. Anselm, St. Genevieve, St. Denis, and St. Peter Parishes and their missions of St. Anne, St. Philip Neri, St. Martin, and St. Michael 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

