



Prot. No. 19-014

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle,
St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Cyprian, St. Denis**

Decree of Establishment of All Saints Parish

Preamble

Acadians first began settling in what is now Cumberland County around 1672. By 1686 they were worshipping in a small chapel of mud walls but were already in need of a larger church.

After the deportation in the 1750s, a small number of refugee Acadians returned to the region and settled in Minudie. By the 1780s they had established a small church there, which was served by a missionary priest from Memramcook, NB.

In the early 1800s, a small number of English-speaking Catholics began to settle in the Cumberland area. In 1846 a priest was assigned to Minudie – the first time a priest of the Diocese of Halifax was assigned to the region. By 1848, churches were being built in Amherst and Parrsboro, and a new, larger church was being built in Minudie. Churches were also built around the same time in Wallace, River John, and Pugwash. In 1849, care for the region was taken over by a priest from Halifax, who taught at St. Mary's University and was only able to visit on weekends and during the summer, but by 1851 another resident priest was appointed.

Between 1850 and 1875, the number of priests in the Archdiocese of Halifax reduced by about half. This shortage of priests, combined with the ever-changing population in Cumberland County, accounts for many changes to the local churches and pastoral activity during that period.

A church was constructed and blessed in 1854 in Pugwash, called St. Alphonsus Ligouri to honour the Italian workmen who had built it. There was no resident priest, but a priest travelled regularly through the region, celebrating Mass where he could. The church was renovated some time in the 1880s, and at that point began to be referred to as St.

Catherine. This church was destroyed in a fire in 1929, and the present church was blessed and dedicated to St. Thomas More on Sept 23, 1951.

The region was split in 1856, with one priest assigned Minudie who cared for the Acadians and those in the western region and another in Amherst who looked after the English-speaking Catholics in the rest of the region. In 1857 the region was amalgamated again, with one priest overseeing the entire territory, but then re-divided in 1867.

The original church in Parrsboro, built in 1848, was called Church of the Transfiguration, but by 1870 its name had had changed to the Church of St. Bridget of the Transfiguration. When this church was destroyed by a fire, a new structure was built to replace it in 1885 and named St. Brigid's Church.

Through the early 1870s, the population grew significantly, thanks to new mines opened in the region and an influx of Irish-Catholic immigrants who came to work on the railroad from Truro to Amherst. Parrsboro was a major centre for the church, providing care for most of the region as far as Truro. An early church was built in Joggins in 1876, and in 1878 St. Charles Borromeo Parish was erected in Amherst, with Pugwash and North Shore as its missions.

Around the same time, the parish priest in Parrsboro began saying Mass in Springhill in private homes. As the community grew, St. John the Baptist Church was built in Springhill in 1881, and became a parish in 1888. In 1893, this church was deemed too small, and the current church was built with the cornerstone laid in the fall of 1894. It was blessed in 1907 as the community grew thanks to its coal-mining industry, which continued until both mines were closed in 1960.

On August 5, 1884, Archbishop Cornelius O'Brien blessed a new church in Wallace, St. Cyprian. The same year, he blessed St. Cornelius Mission in Streets Ridge, where he stated there were thirteen Catholic families.

Minudie began to experience significant outmigration in the 1880s as its logging and fishing industries declined. In 1887, the pastoral seat was moved from Minudie to Joggins, and Minudie became one of its mission. A new St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Joggins was blessed in 1894.

In the late 1880s through to the early 1900s, changing industry and immigration reduced local populations, causing many of the parishes and missions to close. Additionally, improved roads made it easier for parishioners to travel farther to Mass, so fewer churches were needed.

In 1909 Pugwash became a mission of Londonderry. By then there was a larger Catholic population in Pugwash than in Londonderry, but Londonderry remained the parish for

historical reasons. As the Catholic population continued to decline, Streets Ridge was added to the parish in 1913. In 1920 the Londonderry church was destroyed by fire and Pugwash became the parish centre.

The community of St. Paul the Apostle began in River Hebert in 1936. It became a parish in 1960.

In 1957, Archbishop Berry announced the opening of a new parish in Amherst, Our Lady's Nativity, to accommodate the growing community of St. Charles Borromeo. In 1995, the parishes were assigned a joint pastor, and from 1995 to 2006 began to amalgamate various parish organizations. From 1990 to 2005 the population of Amherst decreased from 12 000 to 9000 people. Eventually, the decision was made to close St. Charles Borromeo and Our Lady's Nativity and open one new parish in Amherst in 2007, Holy Family Parish. A new church for the parish was blessed by Archbishop Anthony Mancini in 2010.

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). In Cumberland County, the parishes organized a series of seven town hall meetings (one in each community) in March 2019 to allow for further two-way communication. As a result of the success of these meetings, a second round of six meetings was held in September and October 2019.

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. Clergy from Cumberland County and surrounding areas met with me on March 9, 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. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, and St. Cyprian – 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 November 2018, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, St. Cyprian. This team informed and involved parishioners of all affected 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 six times between January and May 2019. In October 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that All Saints Parish be established, comprising the former parishes of St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, St. Cyprian. The recommendation included the retention of St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of these communities were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Fr. Craig Christenson, pastor of St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, and St. Cyprian submitted a letter to me dated October 1, 2019 requesting the merger of the above parishes;

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these communities, effective January 1, 2020. Additionally, on October 31, 2019 the Council voted unanimously on a specific motion to create the new parish of All Saints;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the 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. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, and St. Cyprian will be merged to create one parish, called All Saints Parish.

I furthermore decree as follows:


- The territory that composed the former parishes will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- St. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Holy Family 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. Thomas More, St. Brigid, St. Cornelius, St. Paul the Apostle, St. John the Baptist, St. Thomas Aquinas, Holy Family, St. Denis, and St. Cyprian 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 12th day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.


† Anthony Mancini
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth


Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle
Chancellor