



Prot. No. 19-018

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
the Parishes of Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne,
Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre**

Decree of Establishment of Paroisse Notre-Dame De l'Assomption

Preamble

St-Michel Parish was founded in 1767, although the first church was not built until 1822. A larger church was built in 1867 to accommodate the growing community. The present church was built in 1915.

Ste-Anne Parish was established in 1799 by Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne, originally called Sainte-Anne d'Argyle. The original church was completed in 1808, and used until it was destroyed by fire in 1900. The new church was begun in 1900 and used for Christmas Masses that year.

In 1859, Ste-Anne was subdivided to create two new missions – Ste-Agnès in Quinan and St-Joseph on Île-Surette. Ste-Agnès began as Notre-Dame-de-la-Purification in 1859, a mission of Ste-Anne. The present church of Ste-Agnès was dedicated in 1883. St-Joseph was originally called Notre-Dame-des-Iles when it was built in 1859, but when it was rebuilt and enlarged in 1887 the name was changed to St-Joseph. Pastoral care for St-Joseph is currently provided by Ste-Famille.

St-Pierre was established in 1816, also by Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne, for an area that included both sides of Pubnico Harbour. The first church was built in 1816 and the second in 1841, both in Pubnico-Ouest-le-Bas. The current church was built in 1892 in Pubnico-Ouest-le-Centre. Immaculée-Conception was founded in 1879, and the first church was blessed that same year. After major renovations, the new church was blessed in 1919.

Ste-Famille Parish was established in Buttes-Amirault in 1900. The first Mass was celebrated in December 1901.

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 with the French Vicariate specifically about this matter on November 21, 2017, and continued to discuss it further as needed in their regular meetings.

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 Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre – 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 January 2019, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of the seven parishes. This team informed and involved parishioners of all seven 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 January and September 2019. In September 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Notre-Dame de l'Assomption be established, comprising the former parishes and missions of Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre. The recommendation included the retention of Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre as worship spaces.

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

Whereas Père Albéni d'Entremont, pastor of Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre, submitted a letter to me dated September 30, 2019 requesting the merger of Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre;

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these seven communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these seven communities, effective January 1, 2020. Additionally, on October 31, 2019 the Council voted unanimously on a specific motion to create the new parish of Notre-Dame de l'Assomption;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the seven 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 Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre will be merged to create one parish, called Notre-Dame de l'Assomption.


I furthermore decree as follows:


- The territory that composed the former Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre 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 Immaculée Conception, Ste-Agnès, Ste-Anne, Ste-Famille, St-Joseph, St-Michel, and St-Pierre 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 18th day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.


† Anthony Mancini
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth


Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle
Chancellor

