



Prot. No. 19-020

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
Immaculate Conception Parish, St. Bridget Parish,
St. Michael Mission, and Sacred Heart Mission**

Preamble

The first building constructed in Shubenacadie was likely the Chapel of Ste-Anne, named for the patron saint of the Mi'kmaq, built by Abbé Jean Louis Le Loutre soon after he arrived in the region in 1738. Shortly after the deportation of the Acadians began, the chapel was destroyed in a battle between the Acadians, their Mi'kmaq allies, and British troops. A new chapel was built in the late 1760s or early 1770s by Governor Lawrence to appease the Mi'kmaq. It was never consecrated, but was used occasionally by the Mi'kmaq, even after the land was granted to Protestant settlers. With the construction of the railroad in the 1850s, a new chapel was built (though never fully finished) to serve the many Catholic labourers who arrived in the area. The property was eventually sold and a replacement constructed in the southern part of the village. St. Bridget became a parish in 1967. In 1988 its mission of Holy Cross opened, but has been served from St. Bernard Parish since around 2006. The current St. Bridget Church was built in 1994.

In 1871 Immaculate Conception Church and rectory were built in Truro. Churches were built in Londonderry (then called Acadia Mines) and Brule around the same time, as missions of Parrsboro. While Brule was always very small and had Mass only four times a year, Truro and Londonderry grew rapidly, thanks to newly opened mines in the area and the construction of a railroad from Truro to Amherst. Despite this growth, the priest was removed from Truro in 1874 due to a priest shortage in the Diocese of Halifax. With no parish priest, priests from Halifax went to Truro on weekends and during the summer, and also said Mass at Londonderry once a month. Londonderry continued to grow quickly, and in 1878 was erected as a parish, with Brule and Wallace as its missions. The church building was expanded soon after, and a parish hall and rectory were built as well.

As the mine in Londonderry began to decline, the population decreased. The mine closed permanently in 1908, and by 1909 there were no longer enough parishioners to support a parish priest. Londonderry remained a parish until the church burned down in 1920, at

which point Pugwash became the parish centre with Londonderry and Brule as its missions.

Londonderry became a mission of Truro in 1964, and was closed in September 2019.

A new church was built in Truro in 1908, and was used until 1977 when it was destroyed by fire. The parish worshipped at First United Church until the present church was blessed in June 1978.

The community from the Millbrook First Nation Reserve worshipped at Immaculate Conception Church, but wanted to have their own church on the reserve. After many years of fundraising, the cornerstone was laid August 10, 1917. They did not have regular Sunday Mass until some time in the late 1940s or early 1950s, but until that time visiting priests celebrated Mass there when they could, and always on July 26, the feast of St. Anne.

The original church in Brule was abandoned and fell into disrepair, but the community gathered faithfully in various locations for worship, including in Sharon United Church in Tatamagouche. Beginning in 1992, a new St. Michael Church was erected, built by the community. The church was opened and blessed on September 29, 1998, feast of St. Michael the Archangel.

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 also met specifically with clergy from the North Region 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 Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart – 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.

Sacred Heart and St. Michael have long functioned as missions of Immaculate Conception Parish. Immaculate Conception has been responsible for pastoral care for St. Bridget Parish since January 1, 2018, and since then have been in a process of bringing together the two communities. In August 2019, finance representatives from Immaculate Conception and St. Bridget met with the archdiocesan finance department to clarify next steps in their transition to sharing a single financial set-up.

In September 2019, the pastor recommended that St. Bridget Parish and the missions of St. Michael and Sacred Heart be subsumed into Immaculate Conception Parish. The recommendation included the retention of Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Dariusz Miskowicz, pastor of Immaculate Conception and St. Bridget, submitted a letter to me dated September 25, 2019 requesting that St. Bridget Parish and the missions of St. Michael and Sacred Heart be subsumed into Immaculate Conception Parish;

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 for the extinctive union

of Immaculate Conception Parish, St. Bridget Parish, St. Michael and Sacred Heart Missions;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the four communities have been closely considered and are able to be met through Immaculate Conception 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 parish of St. Bridget and the missions of St. Michael and Sacred Heart will be subsumed into Immaculate Conception Parish.

I furthermore decree as follows:

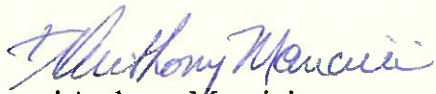
- The territory that composed the former Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart will henceforth compose the territory of Immaculate Conception Parish;
- Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart will be places of worship for Immaculate Conception Parish;
- The parish records and sacramental registers of the former parish and missions shall become the responsibility of Immaculate Conception Parish;
- The real property – lands and buildings – of the former parish and missions shall, upon being subsumed into Immaculate Conception Parish, become the property of Immaculate Conception Parish, to be maintained, administered, alienated, or otherwise disposed of in accordance with civil and canon law;

- Any monetary funds of the former parish and missions that were previously designated as "restricted," shall continue to be maintained separately as part of the patrimony of Immaculate Conception 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 parish and missions shall automatically become the patrimony of Immaculate Conception Parish; likewise, any outstanding liabilities of the former parish and missions shall automatically become the responsibility of Immaculate Conception 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 Immaculate Conception, St. Bridget, St. Michael, and Sacred Heart will accept this decision in a spirit of faith. May Immaculate Conception 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