



*Prot. No. 19-006*

**Decree of Extinctive Union of  
St. Thomas More Parish and St. Vincent de Paul Parish**

**Decree of Establishment of Christ the King Parish**

**Preamble**

St. Thomas More Parish began in 1950 as a mission of St. Peter's Parish, to serve the communities of east Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. A small building was constructed for its use in 1951, while members raised funds needed to build and furnish an appropriate church. The mission was elevated to the status of St. Thomas More Parish in the spring of 1954, with Rev. George Hooper appointed as its first pastor. Rev. Hooper's initial plans for a school, convent, and rectory to serve the growing parish were altered when the province of Nova Scotia expropriated parish land for infrastructure projects. The parish subsequently purchased additional land in another location and constructed a new church and rectory. A second phase of construction to add a school and convent was planned but never realised. The new church was consecrated on July 9, 1962 (then the feast of St. Thomas More), by Archbishop Berry. Major renovations were undertaken in 1985 and 2006.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish was established November 24, 1983, with Rev. Tom White as its pastor. Masses were initially celebrated at Joseph Giles Elementary School while construction of a permanent place of worship took place. In 1986, the growing parish moved Masses to the Bell Annex of Cole Harbour High School until construction of the church was completed. The first Mass in the new church was celebrated on August 27, 1986 by then pastor, Rev. Martin Currie. A Stewardship Centre was added to the building in 2005 to provide expanded facilities for parish ministries and activities. In 1999 the Sisters of Charity presented the parish with a statue of Christ the King, which was installed on the church grounds thanks to donations from parishioners.

On April 13, 1980, with the permission of Archbishop Hayes, then Archbishop of Halifax, the first Mass for the local Francophone Acadian community of Halifax, Nova Scotia and surrounding regions was celebrated at Our Lady of Wisdom Chapel in the Mount St. Vincent Motherhouse. In the early to mid-1980s the community began to meet

at St. Patrick Church in Halifax, under the direction of Rev. Léon Bélanger. In 2002, the community moved to École du Carrefour in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, and was re-named Mission la Sainte-Famille, although not raised to the canonical status of Mission. The Acadian community has always been central to the Catholic Church in Nova Scotia, and continues to have strong personal and cultural commitment to Catholicism. Although traditionally based primarily in rural Nova Scotia, in recent years the Francophone population in urban Nova Scotia has increased strongly – in 2016, 36% of the Francophones in Nova Scotia resided in the Halifax area. Although our diocese has a number of traditionally French churches and communities, Mission la Sainte-Famille is the only one in the Halifax region. As such, it is crucial that pastoral needs of the Francophone community are not overlooked.

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. 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. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille – 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. Thomas More Parish, St Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte Famille. This team informed and involved parishioners of all three 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 ten times between March and July 2019, and held two meetings with parish ministry leaders (April and June 2019) and two town hall meetings for the broader parish community (April and June 2019). In August 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Christ the King Parish be established, comprising the former parishes of St. Thomas More and St. Vincent de Paul, with a particular ministry to the francophone Acadian community of the parish and surrounding city. The recommendation included the retention of St. Thomas More Church and St. Vincent de Paul Church as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Toochukwu Okafor, pastor of St. Thomas More Parish and St. Vincent de Paul Parish, submitted a letter to me dated July 31, 2019 requesting the merger of St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille;

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

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the three communities have been closely considered and are able to be met through the creation of this new parish, including the celebration of liturgies and sacraments in French for the Francophone community;

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 diocesan presbyteral council, 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 Parish, and St. Vincent de Paul Parish will be merged to create one parish, called Christ the King Parish, and entrusted with a particular ministry to the francophone Acadian community of the parish and surrounding city.

I furthermore decree as follows:

- The territory that composed the former St. Thomas More Parish and St. Vincent de Paul Parish will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- St. Thomas More Church and St. Vincent de Paul Church will be places of worship for the new parish;
- The parish records and sacramental registers of the former St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille shall become the responsibility of the new parish;
- The real property – lands and buildings – of the former St. Thomas More Parish and St. Vincent de Paul Parish, 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 St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille 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 St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille shall automatically become the patrimony of the new parish; likewise, any outstanding liabilities of the former St. Thomas More Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, and Mission la Sainte-Famille 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 Church, St. Vincent de Paul Church, and Mission la Sainte-Famille will accept this decision in a spirit of faith. May this new parish and its ministry to our Acadian community 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.



†Anthony Mancini  
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth



Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle  
Chancellor