



Prot. No. 19-015

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
the Parishes St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul**

Decree of Establishment of Stella Maris Parish

Preamble

Herring Cove and Ketch Harbour were at one time missions of the parish in Prospect. When a parish was established in Herring Cove it also included the communities of Purcell's Cove, Ferguson's Cove, and Ketch Harbour. In 1937 Ketch Harbour was separated from Herring Cove, and they remained separate until 2001 when they began sharing a parish priest and operating as a unit in a limited fashion. In 2013 the two parishes merged to form the parish of St. Peter and St. Paul.

St. John the Baptist began as a mission of St. Agnes Parish in 1920. The first church was a former powder magazine, and it and the land it was on were donated to the archdiocese by John Egan for use as a chapel. It was established as a parish in 1927. An addition to the church was built soon after to accommodate the growing community, but when even that didn't provide enough space the current church was built to replace it in 1929.

St. Michael Parish was established in the late 1940s as an offshoot of St. John the Baptist Church, due to the overcrowding in the parish. The new parish celebrated Mass in what was then Kent Theatre, on the corner of Pine Grove and Herring Cove Roads. The first church building was a temporary steel structure in the current parking lot. The current church was completed in 1966.

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 clergy from the Halifax region surrounding the peninsula, including St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul, on January 25, 2019

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. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul – 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 December 2018, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul. 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 six times between December 2018 and July 2019. In September 30, 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Stella Maris Parish be established, comprising the former parishes of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael,

and St. Peter and St. Paul. The recommendation included the retention of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, St. Peter, and St. Paul as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Jose Thomas, pastor of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul, submitted a letter to me dated September 30, 2019 requesting the merger of St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul;

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 Stella Maris Parish;

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;

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. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul will be merged to create one parish, called Stella Maris Parish.


I furthermore decree as follows:

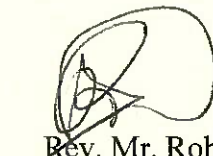
- The territory that composed the former St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- St. John the Baptist, St. Michael, St. Peter, and St. Paul will be places of worship for the new parish;
- The parish records and sacramental 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. John the Baptist, St. Michael, and St. Peter and St. Paul 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 11th day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.


† Anthony Mancini
Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth


Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle
Chancellor