



Prot. No. 19-017

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
Paroisse Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Paroisse Sacré-Coeur, Paroisse St-Alphonse
de Ligouri, Paroisse St-Bernard, Paroisse Ste-Marie, and Paroisse Stella Maris**

Decree of Establishment of Paroisse Notre Dame d'Acadie

Preamble

The first settlers in Clare, Joseph Dugas and his wife and daughter, arrived from Port Royal in 1768. In 1769 a larger community was established when they were joined by a group of deported Acadians who had walked to the area from Massachusetts. The first church in the area was a small chapel built in 1774 in Grosses Coques, which was the population centre at the time. When the population growth shifted, a second church was built in 1786 on a point of land extending into the water – which was thus named Pointe de l'Église. In 1799 Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne arrived from France, after having been exiled during the French Revolution. Père Sigogne was the first parish priest of Ste-Marie and went on to establish many of the other churches in Clare and Argyle. A third church was built in 1808, but subsequently destroyed by fire in 1820. A new church and rectory were completed in 1829, but replaced in 1903 by the current church, which has ever since been recognized as the largest wooden church of North America. In 2018, the Société Édifice Sainte-Marie de la Pointe signed an option to purchase the church to preserve it. Mass is no longer celebrated in the church regularly, but in the rectory instead. At a public meeting on November 10, 2019 the community decided to also cease Masses in the rectory as of January 1, 2020.

From 1803 to 1837, Meteghan was a mission of Ste-Marie. Since 1800, the parish has had five churches. The first was begun in April 1815, located in the old cemetery. The first stone altar was placed and blessed in the church in May 1815, with the name St. Mandé in memory of Père Jean-Mandé Sigogne. In 1849 the church was expanded and re-named St-Martin under the title Étoile de Mer – Stella Maris. It was replaced in 1885 with the second church, due to its deterioration. The second church was expanded in 1903, but burned down in 1943. A third church replaced it in 1944, and a fourth was

completed in 1967. The fourth church burned down in 1971, and work began on a new one almost immediately. The fifth church was blessed in June 1972.

St-Bernard was founded in 1855. Construction of the church began in 1910 and was completed in 1942. The exterior of the church is granite, but all the interior woodwork was made by local craftsmen. All the wood, except for the wood for the pews, is also local. The church stands on the banks of Baie Sainte-Marie, where early Acadians sought refuge after the deportation, and stands as a testament to the community's devotion, sacrifice, and unity.

Sacré-Coeur was established in Saulnierville in 1880 as a mission of Ste-Marie de la Pointe-de-l'Église. It was erected as a parish in 1890. Since that time the parish has mostly been served by Eudist priests. The church dates from the establishment of the mission, and is the oldest church in the Clare region. It was entirely built by hand by parishioners, who generously donated their time and limited financial resources. The church has undergone numerous renovations, most significantly in 1977-1979. The parish established the first consolidated school west of Halifax, l'École Jean-Marie Gay in honour of their first pastor.

On November 10, 1901, Père R.P. Dagnaud, c.j.m., met with people to see if Concessions needed a church, and if they would be able to build one. The people donated the wood for the building and 25 days' labour each. Work began in December by digging the basement. The church was blessed October 1902 under the name Notre Dame de la Délivrance, and the people of Concessions and Saint-Joseph became its parishioners. Until 2009 when it was lowered for repairs, the steeple was the highest point on the horizon. It served as a daily reference point for the fishermen in Baie Ste-Marie, helping them gauge their location and return home to port.

In 1921, Mgr Alphonse Côté asked Bishop McCarthy, the Archbishop of Halifax, for permission to build a new church to reduce the distance parishioners – many of whom did not have cars – had to travel to Mass every Sunday. A piece of land was donated, and parishioners donated wood and their own labour to build the new church. The altar was blessed in 1922. The Lourdes grotto was built in 1923 by Mgr Côté, and St-Alphonse was erected as a parish in 1932. In 1940 Père Maximin LeBlanc added a source of running water and a statue of St. Bernadette to the grotto, and a woman from Clare is said to have been miraculously cured by Mgr Côté. Later, Père LeBlanc brought back a bottle of water from Lourdes, France, and added it to the water source in the parish's grotto. The parish was named a pilgrimage site, with the first pilgrimage in 1948. To this day, there is a pilgrimage every October to honour Our Lady of the Rosary. In 1955, St-Alphonse Church was designated a Diocesan Marian Sanctuary by Mgr Albert Leménager, Bishop of Yarmouth.

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 Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris – 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.

In the fall of 2018 and winter of 2019, there were four meetings of about 20 people from the different parishes of Clare to begin the process of coming together. On October 18, 2018 the parishes hosted a public meeting providing general information on the changes

to come. I spoke at a similar meeting on November 17, 2018 to discuss the need for a Transition Team, which was established soon after, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of various parishes in Clare. This team informed and involved parishioners of all six 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 fifteen times between February and October 2019, and held a public meeting on June 20, 2019 for the broader parish communities to apprise them of the team's work. In October 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Paroisse Notre Dame d'Acadie be established, comprising the former parishes of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris. The recommendation included the retention of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, and Stella Maris as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Père Wieslaw Papuga, pastor of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris, submitted a letter to me dated October 7, 2019 requesting the merger of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris;

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these six communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these six 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 d'Acadie;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of the six 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 Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris will be merged to create one parish, called Notre Dame d'Acadie.

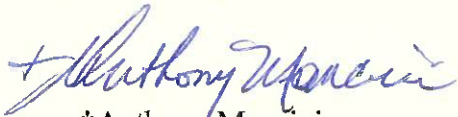
I furthermore decree as follows:

- The territory that composed the former parishes of Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, and Stella Maris will henceforth compose the territory of the new parish;
- Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, and Stella Maris 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 Notre Dame du Mont-Carmel, Sacré-Coeur, St-Alphonse de Ligouri, St-Bernard, Ste-Marie, Stella Maris 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