



MOST REVEREND LEONARD P. BLAIR
ARCHBISHOP OF HARTFORD

DECREE

ON THE MERGER OF THE PARISH OF SAINT THOMAS IN THOMASTON, CONNECTICUT, WITH THE PARISH OF IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT AND WITH SAINT CASIMIR, TERRYVILLE, CONNECTICUT

Whereas, “the same concern for souls should be the basis for determining or reconsidering the erection or suppression of parishes and any other changes of this kind which the bishop is empowered to undertake on his own authority” (*Christus Dominus*, no. 32).

Whereas, the parish is “pre-eminent among all the other communities present in his Diocese, for which the Bishop has primary responsibility: it is with the parishes above all that he must be concerned” (St John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores gregis*, October 16, 2003, n. 45) and whereas the parish “remains the fundamental unit in the daily life of the Diocese” (*ibid.*);

Whereas, canon 515 § provides that it is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. Willingly desiring in all things to promote the greater glory of God and desirous of providing for the good of souls;

Whereas, the Bishop should proceed, after consulting the Presbyteral Council, to alter territorial boundaries, to divide parishes that are too large, to merge small parishes, to establish new parishes or non-territorial centres for pastoral service in the community. (cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, February 22, 2004, n. 214);

Whereas, after our appointment as Archbishop in 2013, a multi-year pastoral planning process, *Stewards for Tomorrow*, was undertaken to continue strengthening and enhancing parish life in the Archdiocese of Hartford and to assist the archdiocese in serving its Catholic faithful most effectively, and whereas this pastoral planning process, which had its beginnings in 2014, sought the input and suggestions of clergy, parish leader leadership, and parishioners;

Whereas, the initial work consisted in surveying the parishioners of every parish of the archdiocese; meeting with priests, deacons, and religious throughout the archdiocese; consulting with the archdiocesan pastoral council; and reviewing the recommendation of the Pastoral Planning Committee;

Whereas, the existing parish structure of the archdiocese was largely established between the mid-19th to mid-20th centuries, and Saint Thomas Parish was established in March 1871, Immaculate Conception Parish was erected on April 27, 1900, and Saint Casimir Parish was established in 1906, due to a tenacious adherence to religious expression and a sharp increase of Polish immigrants in Terryville between 1891 and 1900;

Whereas, radical changes and shifts in demographics have occurred over the past decades, including a move away from urban centers into the suburbs, together with a substantial immigration of new cultural groups;

Whereas, the Archdiocese faces a decline in the number of available priests;

Whereas parishes are confronted with a declining number of faithful attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis; for instance from 2010 to 2015, there was a decrease in the number of registered Catholic households, with 12% decrease at Saint Thomas Parish, a 23.9% decrease at Immaculate Conception Parish, and a 6.3% decrease at Saint Casimir;

Whereas, the above decrease in the number of registered Catholic households, has brought about a sharp decline in the sacramental activities of the three parishes; for instance from 2010 to 2015, there was 3.2 % decrease at the Saint Thomas Parish; a 5.6% decrease at Immaculate Conception Parish, and a gradual increase at Saint Casimir Parish;

Whereas, the changing situation puts a huge financial burden on the smaller parishes, and whereas deficits are covered increasingly by archdiocesan loans, and therefore with the proposed merger, the estimated parish operating revenue of the merged parish will \$818,971, with an estimated cash and investment \$1,009,528;

Whereas, Immaculate Conception Parish and Saint Casimir were linked on August 2, 1999, and share a pastor; and a recommendation to merge was based upon the complementary nature of the two linked parishes and Saint Thomas Parish, and their proximity, and the pastoral need for intensive collaboration, and the need for the care of the souls;

After having heard the Presbyteral Council on May 1, 2017, therefore, I, the undersigned Archbishop of Hartford, hereby

DECREE

As follows:

1. The Parishes of Saint Thomas in Thomaston, Connecticut, Immaculate Conception, Terryville, Connecticut and Saint Casimir, Terryville, Connecticut be merged to form one parish. The name of the newly merged parish will be the Parish of Saint Maximillian Kolbe, with three church buildings; Saint Thomas Church, Immaculate Conception Church, and Saint Casimir Church.
2. All members of the originating parishes shall now become members of the new parish, provided they have domicile or quasi-domicile in the newly merged parish. The boundaries of the newly merged parish will be same as the boundaries of the aforementioned, including the cemeteries located at the extinct parishes of Saint Thomas Church and Immaculate Conception Church.
3. All historical documents and sacramental registers containing records of baptisms, confirmations, Eucharist, marriages, and burials will hitherto be preserved and conveyed to the offices of the newly merged parish at the premises of Saint Thomas Church, where they shall be faithfully preserved according to canon 535, 1° - 5° of the Code of Canon Law.
4. All ecclesiastical goods of the originating parishes are now to belong to the newly merged parish. Likewise, all liabilities of the originating parishes are now transferred to the newly merged parish.

This decree will be implemented by June 29, 2017.

This decree becomes effective June 29th, 2017, prior to which the substance of it is to be communicated to parishioners at the aforementioned parishes, including the display in an appropriate place so that parishioners can read it as they enter or exit the Church. It will also be available on the website, *stewardsfortomorrow.org*. Canonical recourse may be made within the peremptory time limit of ten (10) business days from the legitimate notification of the decree and in accordance with the norm of law (c. 1734 §2).

All things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at the Chancery of the Archdiocese of Hartford, Connecticut, on the 2nd day of May in the Year of Our Lord 2017.


Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford


Reverend Ryan M. Lerner
Chancellor