



MOST REVEREND LEONARD P. BLAIR  
ARCHBISHOP OF HARTFORD

## DECREE

*In nomine Domini. Amen.*

*This decree concerns the merger/extinctive union type I (cc. 121 and 515 §2) of Saint Ann Parish, Milford, Connecticut, and Saint Gabriel Parish, Milford, Connecticut, and the conferral of the new title of the newly created parish to Saint Raphael in Milford; the principal motivation is in consonance with Christus Dominus, no. 32: "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."*

WHEREAS, Saint Ann Parish was erected as a territorial parish on November 14, 1924, to serve Catholics in the Devon area, and Saint Gabriel was established as a territorial parish on May 11, 1946, to serve Catholics in the Walnut Beach area;

WHEREAS, the West Shore Line Deanery wherein Saint Ann and Saint Gabriel parishes are located includes twelve (12) small-to-medium-sized Churches serving a similar demographic;

WHEREAS, on November 25, 2013, the parishes of Saint Ann and Saint Gabriel were "linked" and share a Pastor;

WHEREAS, from 2010 to 2015, there was a steady decrease in sacramental activities at both parishes, 33.1% at Saint Ann Parish and 4.3% at Saint Gabriel Parish;

WHEREAS, the two parishes are located in the same municipality, sharing the same school system and socio-economic composition;

WHEREAS, the finances and pastoral and material resources of the two parishes are more or less similar so that when merged they will be strengthened for the mission of evangelization in the Hartford Vicariate (for 2018, it is estimated that they would have a net surplus of \$64,770 and an estimated cash and investment of \$1,683,888);

Therefore the following just causes suggest that Saint Ann Parish and Saint Gabriel Parish merge:

1. close proximity of the parishes (1.1 miles);
2. downward trends in births and baptisms;
3. dwindling numbers of registered households and Mass counts;
4. reductions in monetary contributions and surplus money: from 2010 to 2015, a decrease in annual offertory of 13% at Saint Ann Parish and 12.4% at Saint Gabriel Parish;
5. redundant ministries in local parishes, leveraging economies of scale;
6. the desire to avoid duplication of services and increase in expenses associated with necessary repairs to and maintenance of aging structures;
7. the size and spiritual welfare of the parish communities;
8. the spread of the Gospel, the promotion of unity among the People of God;
9. the enhancement of collaborative ministry, the better utilization of parish resources and available priest personnel.

WHEREAS, only the Diocesan Bishop can significantly alter a parish in his jurisdiction according to the prescriptions of c. 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law; and in accord with prescriptions of c. 121, having judged that sufficient just causes are present and that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired, having heard the parishioners of both parishes through parish leadership with input from the parishes at large, having received the recommendation of the Pastoral Planning Committee, which reviewed the recommendations of the parishes party to this decree, and under the careful direction of the Vicar for Pastoral Planning, and having consulted the Presbyteral Council on May 1, in accordance with c. 515 §2,

**THEREFORE, I hereby DECREE that:**

The Parish of Ann and the Parish of Saint Gabriel are to be merged and from the merger form a new parish titled Saint Raphael, with two church buildings: Saint Anne Church and Saint Gabriel Church, both in Milford, Connecticut.

The merger is an effort to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel and to ensure the vitality of parish life in the new East Shore Line, West Shore Line & New Haven Deanery (8), with concern for the best stewardship of resources and the right of the People of God to receive assistance from the Church, especially the Word of God, spiritual sustenance and the sacraments. Saint Ann Parish and Saint Gabriel Parish, as separate juridic entities, will cease to exist. All Catholics having domicile or quasi-domicile within the current boundaries of the aforementioned parishes are hereby considered members of the new parish of Saint Raphael and, as such, are entrusted to the care of one pastor. The rich legacies and histories of Saint Ann and Saint Gabriel will be promoted and honored at Saint Raphael, the new Parish. Together, all of the parishioners are encouraged to unite with the newly merged parish through the union with Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The intentions of the founders and donors regarding the temporal goods and patrimonial and acquired rights proper to the extinct Parish of Saint Ann and the extinct Parish of Saint Gabriel shall be honored and respected. In addition, the temporal goods, patrimonial rights, and the obligations of each of the extinct parishes shall be assumed by the new parish in accordance with the norm of law (c.121).

All the parish and sacrament records of the extinct Parish of Saint Ann and the extinct Parish of Saint Gabriel are to be properly preserved and safeguarded at the premises of Saint Ann Church in Milford, in accordance with the norm of law (cc. 535 §§1-5).

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 2<sup>nd</sup> day of May in the Year of Our Lord 2017.



Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair  
Archbishop of Hartford



Reverend Ryan M. Lerner  
Chancellor