



MOST REVEREND LEONARD P. BLAIR
ARCHBISHOP OF HARTFORD

In Nomine Domini. Amen.

This decree concerns the merger/extinctive union type I (cc. 121 and 515 §2) of Saint Mary Parish in New Haven, Connecticut, and Saint Joseph Parish in New Haven, Connecticut, with two Church buildings, namely, Saint Mary Church and Saint Joseph Church.

The principal motive for this decree is a concern for souls (*Christus Dominus* no. 32).

WHEREAS, Saint Mary Parish was initially erected and named as Christ's Church, a territorial parish in 1832, to serve primarily the New Haven Catholics. On June 11, 1848, a fire consumed Christ's Church, compelling the parish to hold Mass under a tent in the adjacent cemetery. A Church Street meeting house from a Congregational society was bought by the pastor and on December 18, 1848, Connecticut's first Bishop, William Tyler, dedicated the new parish church as Saint Mary, though the city directory continued to use its former name of Christ's Church. Since the congregation needed more worship space, land was bought on Hillhouse Avenue, where the current Church was dedicated on October 25, 1874;

WHEREAS, Saint Joseph Parish was erected as a territorial parish on April 20, 1900, from the territories of Saint Mary Parish (New Haven), Saint Patrick Parish (New Haven) and Saint Francis Parish (Fair Haven). The new and sizeable congregation had been ably served since 1894 at a Lawrence Street chapel of ease erected by Saint Mary Parish. At first, there was considerable resistance on the part of the Catholics being asked to sever deep ties with their mother parishes. Construction of the new Saint Joseph Church proceeded on Edwards Street and was dedicated on October 22, 1905;

WHEREAS, Saint Mary Parish and Saint Joseph Parish are linked and currently share a pastor;

WHEREAS, because both parishes serve similar demographics and the churches are separated by a few city blocks (0.9 miles);

WHEREAS, the number of registered Catholic households decreased from 502 to 380 from 2010 to 2015 at Saint Mary Parish, and from 487 to 137 from 2010 to 2015 at Saint Joseph Parish;

WHEREAS, after consultation with staff from the Office of Pastoral Planning, and following the meeting of Archbishop Blair with the Dominican Provincial in January 2017, the merger plan was presented to the councils of both parishes at the end of January 2017. The plan was positively received by the councils;

WHEREAS, the pastor held separate meetings at each parish where the plan was presented and feedback welcome. The plan was warmly received by members of both parishes;

WHEREAS, in the weeks since those meeting, major events at each parish have seen strong attendance from members of the “other” parish, and there is a palpable sense that the people of both churches are already making genuine attempts to grow together as one faith community;

WHEREAS, the finances and pastoral and material resources of the two parishes are limited, with an average annual offertory of \$410,347 for Saint Mary Parish and a mere \$84,278 for Saint Joseph Parish. If merged the parishes will be financially stronger:

THEREFORE the following just causes suggest that Saint Mary Parish and Saint Joseph Parish merge:

1. the reasonable proximity of thirteen (13) worship communities;
2. dwindling numbers of registered households and mass counts (a decrease of 24.3% at Saint Mary Parish and of 71.9% at Saint Joseph Parish);
3. migration out of urban areas to the suburbs;
4. minimal sacramental activity, a decline of 8.6% at Saint Mary Parish and a rise of 7.1% at Saint Joseph Parish;
5. reductions in monetary contributions and surplus money, with a mere 3% increase at Saint Mary Parish from 2010 to 2015 and a decline of 2.5% at Saint Joseph Parish within the same period;
6. the desire to avoid duplication of services and increase in expenses associated with necessary repairs to and maintenance of aging structures;

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, and having asked parishioners to make known their needs and desires, having received the recommendation of the *Stewards for Tomorrow 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, 2017 in accordance with c. 515 §2:

I hereby **DECREE**

that Saint Mary Parish and Saint Joseph Parish be merged, in an effort to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel and to ensure the vitality of parish life in New Haven, 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. The merged parish is to be named Saint Mary Parish. All Catholics having domicile within the current boundaries of the aforementioned parishes are hereby considered members of Saint Mary Parish and, as such, are entrusted to the care of the pastor of that parish. The new parish will have two church buildings: Saint Mary Church and Saint Joseph Church.

The two aforementioned parishes, as separate juridic entities, will cease to exist. The rich legacies and histories of the former parishes are to be promoted and honored at the merged parish of Saint Mary. Together, all of the parishioners are encouraged to unite the newly merged parish through the union with Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament. The intention or will of donors and any required rights and obligations have been examined and taken into consideration, especially regarding the allocation of goods and the obligation of debts.

The temporal goods of the extinct parishes, including their properties and treasuries, as well as any debts, shall be assigned to the new parish. The territorial boundaries of Saint Mary Parish include all the territorial boundaries of the two former parishes. Saint Joseph registers containing records of baptisms, confirmation, First Holy Communion, Confession, marriage, and burials are to be conveyed to premises of Saint Mary Parish, where they are to be faithfully preserved according to 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 2nd day of May in the Year of Our Lord 2017.



Most Reverend Leonard P. Blair
Archbishop of Hartford



Reverend Ryan M. Lerner
Chancellor