



DECREE

IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN

The Diocese of Joliet has been undergoing significant changes over the past years due to changing demographics which have affected the size and economics of the Diocese. The overall population of the Diocese has decreased 17.2% in just two years, from 2,336,202 in 2020 to 1,935,465 in 2022. Whereas, its Catholic population has decreased by 20.7% in just twelve years, from 655,415 in 2010 to 520,148 in 2022. This has also had an impact on the sacramental life of the faithful in the Diocese of Joliet, influencing things such as: fewer priests and seminarians, fewer sacraments being celebrated and decreased Mass attendance.

In late July 2022, in deliberation with my Restructuring Committee regarding the vibrancy and sustainability of parishes and schools in specific geographic areas of the Diocese, a thorough process began. The following trends were discovered: the number of clergy has significantly decreased—there are 41% fewer diocesan priests as compared to 1970 and 66% fewer order priests; the number of seminarians has significantly decreased—there are 84% fewer seminarians today as compared to 1970; the ratio of active priests to parishioners in 1970 was 1:1,680, whereas in 2022 it was 1:4,816; infant Baptisms have decreased by 50.2% since 2000; First Communions have decreased by 35.6% since 2000; Confirmations have decreased by 14.1% since 2010; and Catholic marriages have decreased by 58.2% since 1990.

In the Joliet Deanery, many of the parishes were initially established for national, linguistic or ethnic groups which no longer reside in the neighborhoods where they had been founded. Today, many of these parishes are unable to financially support themselves; overall, there is a decrease in Sunday collections and the aging buildings require tremendous financial resources to be maintained. The total cost of facility needs and all other parish expenses is unsustainable when compared with the combined funds on deposit of all parishes in the Joliet Deanery.

This Decree concerns four parishes, all located in the eastern territory of the city of Joliet approximately 11.6 square miles: St. Joseph Personal Parish (established 1891), 416 N. Chicago St., Joliet, IL 60432-1781; St. Anthony Personal Parish (established 1902), 100 N. Scott St., Joliet, IL 60432-1210; St. Bernard Parish (established 1921), 1301 Sterling Ave., Joliet, IL 60432-1398; and St. Mary Magdalene Parish (established 1953), 127 S. Briggs St., Joliet, IL 60433-1398. The pastors of St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene are staffed by priests of the Diocese of Joliet, and the pastor of St. Joseph is staffed by a priest from the Order of Carmelites.

In the Fiscal Year 2022 the average Sunday Mass attendance was the following: 22% at St. Anthony; 25% at St. Joseph; 15% at St. Bernard; and 42% at St. Mary Magdalene. At St.

Anthony and St. Bernard there was no (0) administration of the sacraments of baptism, first communion, confirmation and marriage, whereas, combined they celebrated 14 funerals. St. Mary Magdalene celebrated 3 baptisms, 6 first communions, 28 confirmations, 0 marriages, and 6 funerals. St. Joseph celebrated 14 baptisms, 6 first communions, 32 confirmations, 15 marriages, and 29 funerals.

With clarity and transparency, consultations occurred among the parishioners and clergy of the said parishes (cf. can. 50)—two sessions were provided for each parish so that all could be heard. In these meetings, they were informed that a restructuring of the parish would occur and possible canonical scenarios were provided; they were also invited to submit alternative scenarios. Subsequently, members of the Restructuring Committee met and discussed the possible canonical scenarios. Due to the near disappearance of the communities for which the personal parishes were established, and due to the small geographical size of each said parish, historical decline and the low numbers of parishioners attending Sunday Mass, aging populations, declining parish incomes, it has become clear that changes are necessary. The principal motivation for modifying these parishes is a concern for souls and the good of the faithful—with our vision of *Catechesis, Evangelization, Faith into Action*, the focus is on the mission of Jesus Christ rather than on the preservation of our buildings so that our Church can continue to produce great fruit.

THEREFORE, I, The Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks, Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois, in accord with the canons 121, 127 §1 & §3, 166, 515 §2 of the Code of Canon Law (*CIC '83*), convened the Presbyteral Council of the Diocese of Joliet on January 24, 2024 at the Blanchette Catholic Center in Crest Hill Illinois. Having heard the Presbyteral Council at the same meeting, which voted unanimously in favor of all the points outlined in the proposal I, after invoking the Holy Spirit,

hereby decree the following:

1. Effective July 1, 2024, the abovementioned St. Joseph Parish, St. Anthony Parish, St. Bernard Parish and St. Mary Magdalene Parish will be extinguished as separate juridic persons in the Church and united to form one new juridic person, a territorial parish within the combined territory of the four parishes, and called, *ad interim*, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene Parish;
2. Each and all the parishioners of the four extinguished parishes, along with the faithful domiciled within the new parish boundaries, will be parishioners of the new St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene Parish;
3. The territory of the new St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene Parish will be as depicted and described in the map and document attached to this decree;
4. Subject to the intention of the founders and donors, with due regard for acquired rights, the goods and patrimonial rights of the four extinguished parishes, together

- with any obligations with which they may be burdened, will be those of the new St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene Parish;
5. The churches of the extinguished St. Joseph Parish, St. Anthony Parish, St. Bernard Parish and St. Mary Magdalene Parish, will be churches of the new St. Joseph, St. Anthony, St. Bernard and St. Mary Magdalene Parish, and St. Mary Magdalene Church will be designated the parish church of the new parish.
 6. The data compiled by the Restructuring Committee and presented to the parishes and Presbyteral Council meeting of January 24, 2024 are attached to this decree;
 7. The sacramental records and other materials relevant to historical research concerning the extinguished parishes will be collected and maintained at the St. Mary Magdalene Church campus, unless otherwise determined by the expert staff from the Archives of the Diocese of Joliet;
 8. The notification of this decree shall be communicated to the pastors of St. Joseph Parish, St. Anthony Parish, St. Bernard Parish and St. Mary Magdalene Parish as well as to their parishioners. Notification will be given through parish bulletins (or other suitable means) and the official website of the Diocese of Joliet.

Before hierarchical recourse may be taken against this decree, a petition to reconsider or amend the decree must be sent or delivered to me within ten (10) useful days from notification of the decree (CIC '83 cc. 1734; 1735; 1737) at the Blanchette Catholic Center, 16555 Weber Rd., Crest Hill, IL 60403.

Given on this 25th day of January 2024
Blanchette Catholic Center
Crest Hill, IL



+ Ronald A. Hicks

Most Reverend Ronald A. Hicks
Bishop of the Diocese of Joliet-in-Illinois

David Salvato

David Salvato, JCD
Chancellor