



Prot. No. 19-019

**Decree of Extinctive Union of
St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission**

Preamble

The first church in Yarmouth, All Saints Church, opened in 1845. Before this, Mass was celebrated regularly in private homes and later in a carpentry workshop, the site of which became the site of this first church. There was no resident priest, and the community was served by St-Michel Parish in Wedgeport. A larger church was opened on the same site in 1862 to accommodate the growing community. All Saints became a parish around 1870, and its name was changed to St. Ambrose around 1883 (although some had referred to it as such starting as early as the 1850s). When the community outgrew the new church, a third building was begun in 1889 on Albert Street. The new church had Roman-style architecture, said to have been suggested by Archbishop O'Brien after a trip to Rome. The church was blessed and dedicated in October 1890. It was expanded – doubling the length of the church – in 1908-1910, re-opening in July 1910. In 1953 the Diocese of Yarmouth was erected, and St. Ambrose Church was named its Cathedral. When the Archdiocese of Halifax-Yarmouth was erected in 2011, St. Ambrose was named Co-Cathedral of the new archdiocese.

Our Lady of Lourdes was built in Melbourne in 1958 as a mission of Comeau's Hill. After 1970 the priest moved from Comeau's Hill to the new rectory in Melbourne, though Melbourne was not erected as a parish. Our Lady of Lourdes became a mission of St. Ambrose in 2015, at the request of the pastor and community. At the same time, St. Gabriel Parish in Comeau's Hill and St. Raphael Mission in Pinkney's Point merged with St. Ambrose Parish.

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 clergy from the Yarmouth-Valley region on October 20, 2017.

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 St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission – 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.

A transition team was established in February 2019, comprising parishioners, staff, and the pastor of St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission. This team informed and involved parishioners of both 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 three times between February and September 2019. In August 2019, the pastor and transition team recommended that Our Lady of Lourdes Mission be subsumed into Saint Ambrose Parish. The recommendation included the retention of St. Ambrose and Our Lady of Lourdes as worship spaces.

Whereas the parishioners of St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission were all invited to provide recommendations about the diocesan reconfiguration generally and their own parish merger specifically;

Whereas Rev. Henry Smolenaars, pastor of St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission, submitted a letter to me dated August 25, 2019 requesting that Our Lady of Lourdes Mission be subsumed into Saint Ambrose Parish;

Whereas the Council of Priests was apprised of the situation of these two communities on December 6, 2018 and the Council agreed with the proposal for these two communities, effective January 1, 2020. Additionally, on October 31, 2019 the Council voted unanimously on a specific motion for the extinctive union of Saint Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission;

Whereas the spiritual needs of the parishioners of these communities have been closely considered and are able to be met through Saint Ambrose 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, Our Lady of Lourdes Mission will be subsumed into Saint Ambrose Parish.

I furthermore decree as follows:


- The territory that composed the former St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission will henceforth compose the territory of Saint Ambrose Parish;


- St. Ambrose and Our Lady of Lourdes will be places of worship for Saint Ambrose Parish;
- The parish records and sacramental registers of Our Lady of Lourdes Mission shall become the responsibility of Saint Ambrose Parish;
- The real property – lands and buildings – of Our Lady of Lourdes Mission shall, upon being subsumed into Saint Ambrose Parish, become the property of Saint Ambrose Parish, to be maintained, administered, alienated, or otherwise disposed of in accordance with civil and canon law;
- Any monetary funds of Our Lady of Lourdes Mission that were previously designated as "restricted," shall continue to be maintained separately as part of the patrimony of the Saint Ambrose Parish, and used solely for those purposes for which they were restricted;
- After payment of any outstanding debts, any remaining monetary funds of Our Lady of Lourdes Mission shall automatically become the patrimony of Saint Ambrose Parish; likewise, any outstanding liabilities of Our Lady of Lourdes Mission shall automatically become the responsibility of Saint Ambrose 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 St. Ambrose Parish and Our Lady of Lourdes Mission 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 12th day of December in the year of our Lord, two thousand and nineteen.


 †Anthony Mancini
 Archbishop of Halifax-Yarmouth


 Rev. Mr. Robert Doyle
 Chancellor