

DECREE

In 2009, in view of changing demographics and decreased church attendance across the Diocese and the downward projection of future priests available for ministry, I established the “Renewing the Church” process. The objective of “Renewing the Church” is to assist pastors and selected lay leaders in a designated area to pray about and to research, discuss, and discern how to insure in their area a vibrant and enduring Catholic presence. “Renewing the Church” has resulted in some extinctive unions but its purpose is *not* solely to generate extinctive unions.

In September 2009, in view of pastoral and financial challenges facing the seven parishes in the City of New Brunswick, I judged it opportune to initiate a “Renewing the Church” process in New Brunswick for the purpose of identifying ways in which the parishes could better collaborate with each other and with the other Catholic entities in the City: the Catholic Center at Rutgers University, Catholic Charities, and St. Peter’s University Hospital. This process concluded in September 2010 and resulted in shared initiatives in such areas as Catholic education, evangelization, healthcare and social services for the poor and assistance to immigrants.

In January 2012, I judged that developments among the parishes in New Brunswick had reached a critical stage: the City’s Catholic population could no longer financially support seven parish infrastructures; while some parishes had diminished in size to where it was no longer justifiable to have a resident pastor given the availability of priests, some growing demographic groups were not being adequately served. Consequently, I commenced a second phase of “Renewing the Church in New Brunswick.”

The primary participants in this process were the members of the New Brunswick Deanery Council, composed of the seven pastors and two representatives from each of the seven parishes. Also participating in the process were representatives of the Catholic Center at Rutgers University, Catholic Charities, and St. Peter’s University Hospital, the diocesan superintendent of schools and the executive director of the Department of Diocesan Planning and Communications. Public meetings to explain the “Renewing the Church” process were held on January 26 and February 2, 2012. The same information was published in the diocesan newspaper and on the diocesan website.

The Deanery Council met monthly from March through November 2012. During that time it made a detailed study of the parish profiles, including Mass attendance and sacramental activity; demographics; finances; and the condition of parish facilities. It also discussed the relationship between the parishes and other Catholic entities in the City. Minutes of the Council’s meetings were made available by means of parish bulletins and the websites of the Diocese and the parishes. Public meetings to hear parishioners’ opinions on the Council’s initial proposals were held in each parish in September and October 2012. On November 26, 2012, the Council presented to me their recommendations for renewing and strengthening the Catholic Church in New Brunswick.

In accordance with canon 515 §2, which requires a diocesan bishop to consult his presbyteral council prior to erecting, suppressing, or altering a parish, on December 12, 2012 I presented the recommendations of the Deanery Council at a meeting of my presbyteral council. In the ensuing discussion, the presbyteral council voiced its unanimous support for the proposals of the New Brunswick Deanery Council.

Having given the recommendations of the Deanery Council and the presbyteral council my prayerful consideration, and taking into account the following:

- in the last six years, due to changing demographics in New Brunswick, St. Peter the Apostle Parish, one of the City's two territorial parishes, has seen its weekly Mass attendance and number of registered families decline 25% and 43% respectively;
- it is estimated that at least half of the students at nearby Rutgers University, the State of New Jersey's largest institution of higher education, claim Catholicism as their religious denomination;
- for some time, the ordinary revenue of St. Peter the Apostle Parish has not offset its necessary yearly expenditures; and
- bonds of unity already exist between St. Peter the Apostle Parish and the Catholic campus ministry at Rutgers University since both have been served for the past seven years by the Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri;

I am convinced that St. Peter the Apostle Parish will be spiritually and financially revitalized by combining the existing parish community with the large Catholic community affiliated with Rutgers University.


THEREFORE, having examined this matter thoroughly and made provision for all parties involved to be informed and to be heard in accordance with canon 50, being motivated by the reasons given above, and having made provision for the pastoral care and the salvation of souls currently served by St. Peter the Apostle Parish and the Catholic Center at Rutgers University, I hereby DECREE

that St. Peter the Apostle Parish be altered to become both a personal parish for the students and faculty of Rutgers University and a territorial parish, retaining that territory defined in the executorial decree dated January 1, 1985.

To allow for the pastoral considerations and civil legalities that necessarily accompany the merging or altering of parishes, the effective date of this decree is January 1, 2014.

Anyone who feels injured by this decree may seek its revocation or emendation within ten available days of its notice (c. 1734 §§1-2).

Given at the Curia of the Diocese of Metuchen, on this twenty-seventh day of February in the Year of Our Lord 2013.


Chancellor



Most Reverend Paul G. Bootkoski, D.D.
Bishop of Metuchen

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