

DECREE

In nomine Domini. Amen

A parish is a definite community of the Christian faithful established on a stable basis within a particular church. The bishop of the diocese has the responsibility of erecting parishes as the needs of the faithful require. It is also the responsibility of the bishop to alter the configuration of parishes as conditions change and circumstances warrant.

On October 14, 2010, I issued a decree indicating that, after studying the needs of the entire Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, I had decided that it was appropriate to consider a merger of the parishes of The Church of Saint Joseph (Lexington), established as a mission in 1903, the Church of Saint Benedict of Saint Benedict, established in 1859, Saint Scholastica Church of Heidelberg, established in 1856, the Church of Saint John the Evangelist of Union Hill, established in 1867, and the Church of Saint Thomas of Derrynane, established in 1867, with the Church of Saint Wenceslaus of New Prague, which was established in 1858 and which served for many years as the 'mother' church of the neighboring missions, including those of Saint Joseph and Saint Benedict.

This decision was announced to the faithful of those parishes on October 16, 2010. Following that announcement, I received several letters and requests for reconsideration from parishioners and leadership of the parishes to be merged. Many of these letters addressed the need for continued religious services at the rural churches. This was provided for in the original decree, which indicated that the churches of Saint Scholastica of Heidelberg and Saint John the Evangelist of Union Hill will continue to be utilized for worship by the merged parish. Many of the letters also expressed consternation that the financial resources of the merged parish will be 'taken' by the Church of Saint Wenceslaus and used for purposes other than that for which the monies were collected. However, canon law is clear that the assets of a merged parish are transferred to the enlarged parish community, which will include the members of the former parish, and that the intentions of the benefactors are to be carefully safeguarded. Finally, several letters stated that there was no opportunity for parishioners to voice their thoughts and concerns prior to the delivery of the decision to merge the parishes. As a point of fact, however, the Strategic Planning Process provided many opportunities for parishioners to engage in the decision-making process, including at a meeting for parishioners of these parishes held on September 22, 2009, at the Church of Saint Wenceslaus.

Therefore, after carefully and prayerfully reviewing the responses to the original decree, and after consulting with the Appeal Review Board, the Presbyteral Council, and the pastor of the impacted parishes, I have decided that the concerns raised in the letters I have received can be adequately addressed within the context of the original decision to merge the five rural parishes. However, I have decided to emend the original decision in the following way:

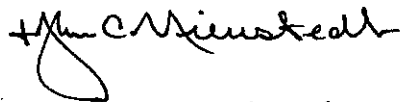
The Church of Saint Thomas of Derrynane will no longer be merged with the Church of Saint Wenceslaus of New Prague. The Church of Saint Thomas will instead be merged into the Church of Saint Anne of LeSueur.

Interested parties who feel aggrieved by this decree have the right to challenge this decision through the normal channels of hierarchical recourse. This process must begin with the aggrieved parties requesting that I revoke or amend this decree. This request must be made in writing within ten days of the communication of this decision.

This decree is effective on January 1, 2011.

Given at Saint Paul, Minnesota, this fifteenth day of November, in the year of Our Lord 2010.

In witness of this, we have set our seal and our hand.



The Most Reverend John C. Nienstedt
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis



Jennifer Haselberger, JCL, PhD
Chancellor for Canonical Affairs