

Office of the Bishop  
Diocese of Providence  
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## **DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.**

In 1895, Sacred Heart Parish was founded as a territorial parish to serve the Catholic faithful of northern Woonsocket. Likewise, in 1902, Holy Family Parish was established as a national parish to serve the French-Canadian Catholic population in the city. Subsequently, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs Parish was created in 1953 as a territorial parish to serve the growing Catholic population in the city's southern portion and neighboring North Smithfield. For many decades, generations of families have heard the Word of God and received the sacraments in these parishes. However, in later years, the parishes have endured a gradual decrease in population and in overall sacramental practice due to the changing demographics. Since July 2017, the shortage of priests available for parish assignments has required the three parishes to share one priest among them. In July 2017, efforts began within these parishes to consolidate staff and resources wherever possible and some initial progress was realized. The Faith Formation Program was combined, and a joint Parish Pastoral Council was formed to recommend further affiliations among the three parishes.

In January 2018, after consultations with the Diocese of Providence, a draft proposal was presented in which Holy Family, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, and Sacred Heart parishes would form a new successor parish, with a new name. At that time, the pastor/administrator informed the parishioners that "some proposal regarding the future disposition of our three parishes must be made", and that "the decline in the number of priests in active ministry causes us to consider reducing the number of church buildings". Following additional parish discussions, the pastor/administrator submitted a request letter (dated March 23, 2018), recommending that the three parishes be merged to form a new successor parish, and that the Holy Family and Sacred Heart church buildings both be closed permanently.

The collective decline in recent sacramental and devotional life at Holy Family and Sacred Heart is obvious. From 2013-16, there were no weddings at Holy Family Parish and five

at Sacred Heart Parish; three children received First Communion at Holy Family and 28 at Sacred Heart; there were seven Baptisms at Holy Family and 24 at Sacred Heart (in the same timeframe, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs Parish had four weddings, 62 Baptisms, and 86 children received First Communion). Of the 104 students in the combined Faith Formation Program this past academic year, one was from Holy Family and 19 from Sacred Heart. Current Sunday Mass attendance at Holy Family (for the one Mass) totals approximately 100 individuals. Current attendance at the only Sunday Mass at Sacred Heart totals approximately 100 as well. Each of these Mass totals is well below the 2/3 capacity used as an objective measure of parish viability.

Additionally, the Catholic Mutual Group Insurance Company has documented several maintenance concerns for Holy Family and Sacred Heart parishes, including: interior painting in both rectories; repairs to the Sacred Heart rectory exterior; replacement of the old, shingled roofs of both the Sacred Heart rectory and parish center; and winterizing the Holy Family rectory and replacing its flooring. These necessary measures soon will become a financial burden for each parish, especially as their incomes gradually dwindle. Currently, Holy Family and Sacred Heart parishes combined generate less than \$200,000 in annual operational income. As of 3/31/18, Holy Family Parish had \$2,297 in diocesan payables and Sacred Heart had \$47,229.

Given these various factors affecting the viability of these parishes, and the challenges of maintaining three parishes within a small area, a more formal and closer affiliation is now unavoidable. Therefore, motivated by a desire to strengthen the overall Catholic presence and to foster a newfound vibrancy and sense of parish identity; having received the request of the administrator of Holy Family Parish, of the pastor and leadership of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs Parish, and of the administrator and leadership of Sacred Heart Parish; aware of their geographical proximity; having heard those affected by the proposal; and having consulted the diocesan College of Consultors and the Council of Priests on April 11, 2018 in accord with Canon 515, §2, I hereby decree that:

1. Holy Family Parish (a national parish), Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs Parish (a territorial parish), and Sacred Heart Parish (a territorial parish) shall be merged to form one new successor parish entity, **Holy Trinity Parish**, Woonsocket, in a *unio extinctiva*;
2. Holy Trinity Parish will be a territorial parish and will receive the membership of Holy Family Parish, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs Parish, and of Sacred Heart Parish. Holy Trinity Parish also will receive the respective canonical territories of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs and Sacred Heart parishes.

Therefore, the boundaries of Holy Trinity Parish will be coterminous with those of the former Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs and Sacred Heart parishes:

Beginning at the junction of the Massachusetts/Rhode Island state line and the Blackstone River, South along the Blackstone River to the River Street Bridge.

Along but not including River Street to Main Street. South and west along and including both sides of South Main Street to Front Street.

South along and including both sides of Front Street to Transit Street. Southeast along and including both sides of Transit Street to Gilbert Street. Along Gilbert Street to its end.

East from the end of Gilbert Street by an airline to the junction of Knight Street and Williams Street. Along but not including Knight Street to Carnation Street.

South by an airline from this point to Booth Pond. South by an airline to the junction of Old Smithfield Road and Old Louisquisset Pike.

South along and including both sides of Old Louisquisset Pike to the junction of Sayles Hill Road.

South by an airline across Woonsocket Reservoir to the Smithfield/North Smithfield town line. West along the town line to the point where the Providence Pike crosses the town line.

North and including both sides of Providence Pike to the junction of Greenville Road.

North along but not including Providence Pike to Woonsocket Hill Road.

North along but not including Woonsocket Hill Road to Follett Street. Northeast by an airline to Route 146. Along and including both sides of Route 146 to the junction of Route 146 and Pound Hill Road.

Northwest by an airline from this point to the railroad bridge on Great Road. Along but not including Great Road to Mendon Road.

Along and including both sides of Mendon Road to St. Paul Street.

North by an airline from the junction of St. Paul Street and Mendon Road to the Massachusetts state line. East along the state line to the starting point.

3. All assets, debts, and liabilities of Holy Family, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, and Sacred Heart parishes shall become the assets, debts, and liabilities of Holy Trinity Parish, in accord with Canon 121;

4. All parish registers containing the records of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, and deaths of Holy Family, Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs, and Sacred Heart be transferred to the office of Holy Trinity Parish, where they will be faithfully maintained in accord with Canon 535;
5. The Mass schedule of the new parish will be at the pastor's discretion;
6. The new parish's primary worship site will be the Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs church building. The Holy Family church building will be the secondary worship site, and its status will be reviewed in one (1) year.

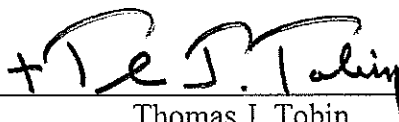
The effective date of this decree is July 1, 2018, at 12:01am.

I direct that this decree be forwarded to the pastor of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs (administrator of Holy Family and Sacred Heart parishes), who will provide copies to parishioners at all three parishes at weekend Masses on June 2 – 3, 2018.

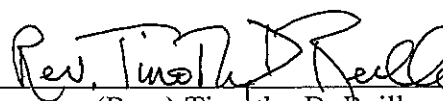
Parishioners who wish to make recourse against this decree have the right to do so. According to Church law (Canon 1734, §2), they must do so **within 10 (ten) business days** of receiving notification of this decree. Any recourse must be submitted in writing via postal mail to Bishop Tobin by June 18, 2018 and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

At this challenging time, I extend my prayerful support to all the members of these three parishes, which have been a source of stability and strength for generations of faithful Catholics in Woonsocket and North Smithfield. Let us continue to trust in God's goodness and providence as we begin a new chapter in a faith journey that finds its fulfillment in the love of the Holy Trinity – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Given in Providence,  
at the Chancery,  
this 30<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018



Thomas J. Tobin  
Bishop of Providence



(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly  
Chancellor