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To all priests and parishioners of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie,

Dear brother priests and dear faithful of the Diocese,

The changing situation of our Church challenges us to better respond to current and future needs of our Christian communities. As we seek to adapt, we need to consider many factors such as decreasing attendance at Masses, decreasing number of priests, decreasing availability of funds to maintain church buildings and increasing parish operating costs.

Ste-Marie and Our Lady of Fatima Parishes in Elliot Lake are among the Christian communities currently facing these challenges. Last autumn, after careful consultation and study, Father Anthony Man-Son-Hing, pastor of both parishes, as well as the Parish Finance Committees and the Parish Pastoral Councils, recommended that I designate one of the two church buildings as the place of worship for both parishes; they also recommended that a transition committee be formed.

During the following months, a transition team worked closely with me, the diocesan administrators and the Pastor. We consulted two independent professional engineering firms as well as a building engineer. These consultations demonstrated that Our Lady of Fatima church would adequately meet the long-term needs of the Catholic community in Elliot Lake.

Therefore, I decided and decreed that **as of June 3, 2019**,

- 1) Our Lady of Fatima Parish and Ste-Marie Parish will be united to form a new bilingual parish known as **Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish Parish**. Father Anthony Man-Son-Hing will be pastor of this new parish.
 - 2) The church for Our Lady of Fatima will serve as the place of worship for the new parish.
- The decrees are posted on the Diocesan website.

I sincerely thank Fr. Tony and the transition team for their hard and serious work. I also thank the parishioners of Elliot Lake for their participation in the discernment process. Change is seldom easy. I assure them of my prayer and my support as they live, in faith and solidarity, this important time of transition. As encouragement, I offer them the words that St. Paul addressed to the Philippians: "I am confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion." (Ph 1, 6)

Yours in Christ,

+Marcel Damphousse
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie