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Prot. No. 022/2019

## DECREE

### MODIFICATION BY EXTINCTIVE UNION

of

**OUR LADY OF FATIMA PARISH**

**AND**

**STE. MARIE PARISH**

Whereas, the Code of Canon Law gives the Diocesan Bishop, for the good of the Mission of the Church, the right to "establish, suppress or alter parishes" (canon 515, §2);

Whereas, I have reviewed the assessment and recommendations of the Pastor, the Parish finance committees, the Parish Pastoral Councils and the Transition Team of Our Lady of Fatima and Ste. Marie Parishes;

Whereas, I have listened to and taken into consideration the many presentations regarding both Parishes and the needs of the faithful of Elliot Lake;

Whereas, I have, in accordance with canon 515, §2, consulted the Council of Priests of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie on February 19-20, 2019;

Having prayed to the Holy Spirit for guidance in this decision,

I, Marcel Damphousse, Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, by virtue of my pastoral office, do hereby decree that:

**Our Lady of Fatima Parish**, in the city of Elliot Lake in the province of Ontario, canonically erected on November 15, 1956, and

**Ste. Marie Parish** in the city of Elliot Lake in the province of Ontario, canonically erected in 1958,

will be canonically modified effective **June 3, 2019**.

Consequently, **Our Lady of Fatima Parish** and **Ste. Marie Parish** will be, by extinctive union, merged to form **Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish**, in accordance with the norms of the law (cf. *Decree of Erection of Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish*, issued under my hand and seal on May 1, 2019, Prot. No. 023/2019)

The reasons for this decision are as follows.

- In recent years, Our Lady of Fatima and Ste. Marie Parishes have, , experienced a notable and evident decline in the number of their active parishioners. For example,

Our Lady of Fatima Parish

Year	Baptisms	Attendance on Sundays
2010	12	400
2015	10	250
2018	7	210

Ste. Marie Parish

Year	Baptisms	Attendance on Sundays
2010	20	190
2015	4	100
2018	3	93

The attendance at Sunday Masses has consistently decreased since 2010, 50% in the last eight years, and the number of Catholics in the city of Elliot Lake has fallen from approximately four thousand eight hundred and fifty in 2010, to approximately three thousand in 2018 (*Statistics from the Pastoral Reports completed and submitted to the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie*).

- The decline in the number of active parishioners in both parishes has affected their capacity to fill the various ministries and committees. Together, I sincerely believe that the Catholics of the city of Elliot Lake can flourish and be an active force for the betterment of their community.
- This decline also and inevitably led to a serious deterioration in the two parishes' operating revenues, with the effect that the financial resources are not available to maintain the expected range of ministry and pastoral outreach; indeed, there are insufficient revenues to maintain both church buildings, Ste. Marie church requiring major renovations.

With fewer parishioners, most of whom are elderly, it has become evident that the most prudent decision for the future of all Catholics in Elliot Lake is to move to the smaller, more affordable building, Our Lady of Fatima church.

- Upon my arrival as Bishop of the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie in 2016, I had to transfer the Pastor of Ste. Marie Parish to another Parish, leaving one Pastor with the pastoral care of Our Lady of Fatima and Ste. Marie Parishes, in the city of Elliot Lake, and Ste. Famille Parish in the city of Blind River, which is 57.5 km away.

Considering the present Pastor and future Pastors who will be entrusted with the care of the faithful of Elliot Lake, this decision to modify Our Lady of Fatima Parish and Ste. Marie Parish by extinctive union, to form **Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish** will allow them to diligently fulfil their ministry.

I also decree that the patrimonial goods and rights of Our Lady of Fatima and Ste. Marie Parishes, along with their liabilities, obtain and belong to the new canonically erected **Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish**. Concerning arrangements for goods and discharge of obligations, every care shall be taken to respect the wishes of founders and benefactors and to fully safeguard any acquired rights.

Furthermore, I decree that, as of **June 3, 2019**, the sacramental records of Our Lady of Fatima and Ste. Marie Parishes be transferred to and maintained by the newly erected **Paroisse Ste-Bernadette Parish**.

I direct that this decree be published in **Our Lady of Fatima Parish** and **Ste. Marie Parish** and, by a suitable means, to all the parishes in the Diocese of Sault Ste. Marie, with the understanding that any substantiated recourse against this decree must be presented in writing within ten canonical days from the time this decree is lawfully promulgated, in accordance with canon 1734, §1-2.

Signed in Sudbury, in the province of Ontario, under my hand and seal of the Diocese on this sixth day of May in the year two thousand and nineteen.



+Marcel Damphousse  
Bishop of Sault Ste. Marie



Rev. Jean Vézina  
Chancellor

