

Office of the Bishop

His Excellency

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
Bishop of Kansas City – St. Joseph

Decree Amalgamating Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Princeton
to Saint Joseph Parish, Trenton

THE FACTS

1. “Bishop John Hogan recalled in his book *On the Mission* that he visited Princeton at least twice....In 1886 a small group of Catholics led by Mr. and Mrs. John Finn, constructed a church 26’ x 36’ in the town of Princeton. The church was not completed and it was not dedicated at the time the article reporting it was written (1888). It is not known what happened to this church.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 341)
2. “From later years down to 1970 Catholics living in Princeton found that the closest place for Mass was in Cainsville. For some, attending Mass represented a round trip of 100 miles.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 342)
3. “In the late summer of 1965, Fr. Donald Kennedy, pastor at Bethany, with the help of several couples in the Christian Family Movement vacation-mission program, arranged for the celebration of Mass in various parts of the parish. Mass was offered in the last week of August at the Robert Eaves farm near Princeton. This was said to be the first time Mass had been offered in 20 years in Mercer County.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 342)
4. “In the summer 1970 one of the funeral homes in Princeton was put up for sale.... After inspecting the property the Bishop [Helmsing] gave permission to purchase it. The property ...was purchased from Ames and Grace Greenlee on 25 March 1971, for \$30,000. Bishop John Cody had always been interested in establishing a Catholic parish in Mercer County.... [Bishop Cody] put in a good word with the Extension Society, an organization which helps found Catholic churches in counties without a Catholic parish. The Society contributed \$10,000 toward the purchase of the property. Archbishop Cody himself contributed \$4000. (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 342)
5. “The work of renovating the building as a church was done by Robert Wilson, a parish member from Kidder, MO. He prepared a worship chapel and in the second building converted the space to a three-sectioned parish hall. The first Mass was offered in the new church [Immaculate Heart of Mary] on Easter Sunday, 1971, and Cardinal Cody sent a telegram of congratulations to the congregation. It was dedicated on 16 May 1971. The altar, lectern, pulpit and baptismal font were donated by the people of St. Columba parish at Conception Junction, MO. The vestments, linens, as well as the stations of the

- cross and other items were donated by the Sisters of Mercy upon the closing of St. Michael convent chapel in Kansas City.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 342)
6. When the new mission opened there were 22 adults and 27 children. “In 1984 there were 45 individuals and 25 households in the parish.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 342)
 7. Following the diocesan-wide pastoral planning process throughout 2018 that resulted in a multiple year examination process addressing healing our family, using resources wisely and growing God’s family under the diocesan vision umbrella of One Family: Restored in Christ, Equipped for Mission, a study of deaneries IX, X, and part of XII began in February 2023. The study was undertaken of community demographics, parish data, interviews of pastors, parish staff, and parish steering committees prior to additional parish town hall gatherings and reception of input (*Code of Canon Law*, cc. 50, 127, 515, §2).
 8. In the six years of 2016-2022, the sacramental registers and spirituality report data of Immaculate Heart of Mary listed only 11 baptisms total; only 6 youth First Communions; 3 youth Confirmations; zero youth or adult catechumens as well as zero adult RCIA/OCIA candidates. Additionally, in the same span there were zero marriages with a single death. Notable, too, was the decline of both registered households from 50 in 2016 to 28 as of 1 January 2023 with recorded weekly Mass attendance drastically declining further from 43 to 20 persons. (Immaculate Heart of Mary Baptism Register, *Pastoral Plan for Deaneries 9, 10 and Partial 12*, June 2023, page 12; note the number of Baptisms for year 2020-21 is incorrect in *Pastoral Plan*)
 9. The mission community is also aging. In the year 2000, there were 37 registered adults and 15 children. In the year 2020, there were 42 adults and 8 children. (Immaculate Heart of Mary Spirituality Reports 1999-2000 and 2019-20.)
 10. Immaculate Heart of Mary, Princeton, reported to the Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph Finance Office a net fiscal year income of \$841.00 for 2016-2017 but net fiscal deficits for years 2017-2022 of \$4,955; \$4,731; \$4,939; \$5,771; and \$3,667 respectively. (*Key Findings and Observations – Deaneries 9, 10 and Partial 12*, Figure 29h, page 28)
 11. The Parochial Administrator of Saint Joseph Parish likewise became the Parochial Administrator of the Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary St Benedict on July 1, 2022; there has been a continued pairing of communities since late 1974.
 12. Having considered the law and the facts, the undersigned Diocesan Bishop hereby issues this Decree.

THE LAW

Canon 515, §2: It is only for the diocesan bishop to erect, suppress, or alter parishes. He is neither to erect, suppress, nor alter notably parishes, unless he has heard the presbyteral council.

THE ARGUMENT

13. Willingly encouraging everything in our powers to provide more suitably for the good of souls;
14. And having considered the law and the facts;

15. And having heard, in accordance with canon 50, all those whose rights might be injured by means of a meeting of the study consultant with the Parochial Administrator and both St. Joseph Parish and Immaculate Heart of Mary parish leaders on March 4, April 1, April 29, May 20 and June 10, 2023 and meetings of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Mission Parochial Administrator and steering committee with a special all parishioners' town hall meetings on April 16 and May 7, 2023 and having heard and acknowledged parishioners via correspondence and in person;
16. And having heard that no donors of property or legacy were identified for the Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary;
17. And having heard the Presbyteral Council, in accordance with canon 515, §2 on June 26, 2023;
18. And having determined that the good of souls requires it;
19. I have determined it necessary and proper that the Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Princeton, and Saint Joseph Parish, Trenton, be united and amalgamated, and that from this extinctive-union and amalgamation, Saint Joseph Parish retain the name.

The reasons motivating this decision are as follows:

The number of registered and practicing Catholics at Immaculate Heart of Mary, Princeton, like much of the deanery region, significantly declined over the past three decades. Likewise, there has been a significant decline in sacramental activity in the faith community. In addition, the ratio of adults to children has markedly increased in recent years, which indicates the community will continue to shrink in the future. The aging complex of buildings and heating/cooling and other basic maintenance needs and concerns, drastically reduced the capabilities of priest and staff in human and capital resources even to offer basic ministries, services and engagement to the faithful. These declines, particularly of sacramental and financial engagement, are evidenced in numbers 6, 8, 9 and 10 above. Additionally, the physical driving distance is only twenty-three miles, with twenty-two of the miles travelled upon Missouri Highway 65, a major well-maintained highway between the church sites of Saint Joseph Parish in Trenton and Immaculate Heart of Mary in Princeton. By consolidating efforts, the evangelizing opportunities for the region and the faith life of the same parishioners can become more enhanced and better served by combination into a larger community.

I, the undersigned Bishop of Kansas City – St. Joseph, exercising my ordinary power and in virtue of canon 515, §2, do hereby decree that the Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary, Princeton, with all the rights, obligations, and privileges accorded it by law, be and is hereto united to and amalgamated with Saint Joseph Parish, Trenton.

The new Parish shall comprise the territory of the extinct Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary as well as the current territory of Saint Joseph Parish. St. Joseph Parish remains in Deanery IX.

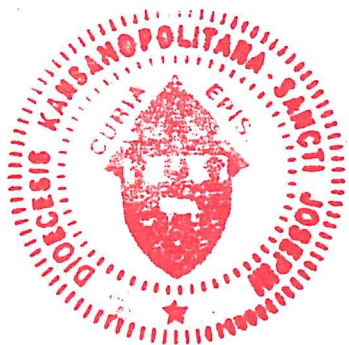
The intentions of the founders and donors regarding the temporal goods and patrimonial rights proper to the extinct Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary must be respected. In addition, the patrimonial goods, rights and obligations of the extinct Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary must be defined and allocated in accordance with the norm of law (cc. 121-122).

All the parish and sacramental records of the Mission of Immaculate Heart of Mary are to be properly preserved and safeguarded by the Archives of the Diocese of Kansas City – Saint Joseph in accordance with the norm of particular law.

This Decree is to be effective on June 9, 2024.

This Decree is to be communicated to the Parochial Administrator of the parish and mission concerned (c. 532), who is the canonical representative of the parish and mission whose boundaries have been adjusted and to all interested persons, according to the norm of law. This Decree may be challenged within the peremptory time limit of ten days from the legitimate notification of the Decree in accordance with the norm of law (c. 1734, §2).

Given in the Chancery of the
Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph
This 19th day of April 2024



+James V. Johnston, Jr.

Most Reverend James V. Johnston, Jr.
Bishop of Kansas City – St. Joseph

Kenneth A. Riley

Very Reverend Kenneth A. Riley
Vicar General – Chancellor