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DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.

In 1916, St. Catherine Parish was established to serve the Catholic faithful in the Apponaug neighborhood of Warwick. Subsequently, St. Francis of Assisi Parish was created in 1943 as a territorial parish to serve the growing Catholic population in the city's Hillsgrove and airport areas. In 1998, St. Rose of Lima and St. Clement parishes were merged to form SS. Rose and Clement Parish, a territorial parish to serve the Catholic faithful of the Greenwood section. For many decades, generations of families have heard the Word of God and received the sacraments in these parishes. However, in recent years, St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes have endured a gradual decrease in overall sacramental practice due to changing demographics. In 2017, a "town hall" meeting involving the diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning and all Warwick parishes discussed the need to consider additional affiliations among them. During 2017 and 2018, a special planning committee comprised of St. Catherine, St. Francis of Assisi, and SS. Rose and Clement parishioners, respectively, was formed to work with the diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning to recommend further modifications.

Some attempts at closer affiliation have been successful. In 2019, the Faith Formation (Religious Education) programs of all three parishes were combined and headquartered at SS. Rose and Clement Parish. As of January 2021, all weekday Masses have been celebrated at SS. Rose and Clement. Additionally, St. Catherine and St. Francis parishes share one parish bulletin and one parish website. Since July 2014, the shortage of priests available for parish assignments has required St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes to share one priest between them. However, the retirement of that pastor in July 2021 will leave vacancies at both St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes.

Following further consultations with the Office of the Bishop, the diocesan Office of Pastoral Planning, and the Office of the Chancellor, the pastors involved submitted a request letter (dated February 23, 2021), recommending that St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes now be merged canonically into SS. Rose and Clement Parish.

The collective decline in recent sacramental activity at St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi is obvious. From 2016-19, there were three weddings at St. Catherine Parish and none at St. Francis of Assisi Parish; 13 children received First Communion at St. Catherine and two at St. Francis of Assisi; there were eight Baptisms at St. Catherine and two at St. Francis of Assisi (in the same timeframe, SS. Rose and Clement Parish had 40 weddings, 225 Baptisms, and 249 children received First Communion). Recent attendance at St. Catherine Parish (for both Sunday Masses) totaled approximately 47 individuals. Recent attendance at St. Francis of Assisi (for the Saturday vigil and one Sunday Mass) totaled approximately 86. Recent attendance at SS. Rose and Clement Parish (for the vigil Mass and both Sunday Masses) totaled approximately 183 individuals. For Faith Formation (Religious Education) from 2016-19, there were approximately 146 students in the St. Catherine, 25 in the St. Francis, and 1,049 in the SS. Rose and Clement programs, respectively.

Given these various factors affecting the viability of St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes, a more formal arrangement is now unavoidable. Therefore, motivated by a desire to strengthen the overall Catholic presence in Warwick; having received the request of the pastor and leadership of SS. Rose and Clement Parish, and of the pastor and leadership of St. Catherine and of St. Francis of Assisi parishes; aware of the sharp decline within the Diocese in the number of priests available for parish ministry; having heard those affected by the proposal; and having consulted the diocesan College of Consultors and the Council of Priests on March 16, 2021 in accord with Canon 515, §2, I hereby decree that:

1. St. Catherine Parish and St. Francis of Assisi Parish (both territorial parishes), shall be merged into SS. Rose and Clement Parish, Warwick, in a *unio extinctiva*;
2. SS. Rose and Clement Parish will remain a territorial parish and will receive the memberships of St. Catherine Parish and St. Francis of Assisi Parish. SS. Rose and Clement Parish also will receive the respective canonical territories of St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes, bounded:

Starting at the junction of West Shore Road and Oak Tree Avenue, East along West Shore Road to Groveland Avenue.

North along Groveland Avenue to Plain Street. West along Plain Street and Pettigrew Drive to George Arden Avenue.

West by an airline from this point to the railroad tracks. North along the railroad tracks to Main Avenue.

West along and including both sides of Main Avenue to Greenwich Avenue.

West by an airline from this point to the Pawtuxet River. West along the Pawtuxet River to the electric high tension lines.

South along the high tension lines to East Avenue. West along East Avenue to Commonwealth Avenue.

South along Commonwealth Avenue to Toll Gate Road. West along Toll Gate Road to Bald Hill Road.

South along Bald Hill Road to Hardig Brook. East along Hardig Brook to Hardig Road.

East by an airline from this point to the corner of Duchess Street and Diamond Hill Road.

East by an airline from this point to the junction of Brookside Lane and Route 1.

East by an airline from this point to Apponaug Cove. East and North through Apponaug Cove to the northern most point of Edgewater Drive.

East along Edgewater Drive to Oak Tree Avenue. North along Oak Tree Avenue to the starting point.

And:

Starting at the junction of Route 37 and the Pawtuxet River. South along the freeway to Wyoming Avenue.

South along Wyoming Avenue to Tennessee Avenue. West along Tennessee Avenue to Senator Street.

South along Senator Street to Dewey Avenue. South along but not including Dewey Avenue to the airport property.

South along the airport property to Strawberry Field Road. West along Strawberry Field Road and Bellair Avenue to the railroad tracks.

South along the railroad tracks to Main Avenue. West along Main Avenue to its end.

West by an airline from this point to the Pawtuxet River. North along the Pawtuxet River to the starting point.

3. All assets, debts, and liabilities of St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes shall become the assets, debts, and liabilities of SS. Rose and Clement Parish, in accord with Canon 121;
4. All parish registers containing the records of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, and deaths of St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes be transferred to the office of SS. Rose and Clement Parish, where they will be permanently maintained in accord with Canon 535;
5. SS. Rose and Clement church building (i.e., the St. Clement church building) will remain as the primary worship site. The St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi church buildings will remain available for occasional use, as pastoral needs demand.

The effective date of this decree is July 1, 2021, at 12:01am.

I direct that this decree be forwarded to the pastor of SS. Rose and Clement Parish, and the pastor of St. Catherine and St. Francis of Assisi parishes, who will provide copies to parishioners at all three parishes at weekend Masses on April 10 - 11, 2021.

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 April 23, 2021 and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

At this challenging time, I extend my prayerful support to all the members of these parishes, which have been a source of stability and strength for generations of faithful Catholics in these neighborhoods of Warwick. Let us continue to trust in God's goodness and providence as we begin a new chapter in our faith journey.

Given in Providence,
at the Chancery,
this 31st of March, 2021.



Thomas J. Tobin

Thomas J. Tobin
Bishop of Providence

Timothy D. Reilly

(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly
Chancellor