



Joseph Charles Bambera

DEI ET APOSTOLICAE SEDIS GRATIA
EPISCOPUS SCRANTONENSIS



DECREE

In the name of God. Amen.

WHEREAS, utilizing the Diocese of Scranton's *Vision 2030: Creating Parish Communities Rooted in the Life of Jesus Christ* process, a pastoral planning process addressing the long-range needs and challenges of the Diocese of Scranton that aims to look proactively at the realities of our local church in the present moment while striving to meet the opportunities and challenges of the coming decade, with the goal of creating vibrant parish communities rooted in the life of Jesus Christ; and

WHEREAS, the territorial parish of Our Lady of Fatima in Wilkes-Barre has as its sole church Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception, 134 South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, and;

WHEREAS, the personal parish of Saint Nicholas in Wilkes-Barre has as its sole church Saint Nicholas, 226 South Washington Street, Wilkes-Barre, and;

WHEREAS, the parish communities have experienced a significant reduction of the Christian Faithful participating in the liturgical and sacramental life of the parishes due to an aging population and relocation of residents of the territory, and;

WHEREAS, the diminishing number of faithful whose donations principally sustain the parish communities has resulted in the continued inability to sustain ordinary maintenance and operations, and;

WHEREAS, the Reverend Joseph Verespy, Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish and Saint Nicholas Parish, with the consent of the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils and in consultation with the effected parishioners and with the recommendation of the clergy of the Wilkes-Barre Deanery, has petitioned the undersigned that there be an extinctive union with Our Lady of Fatima Parish becoming absorbed into Saint Nicholas Parish, which in turn will be simultaneously modified into a territorial parish, and that Saint Nicholas Church will be designated as the principal church and Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church will be designated as the secondary church, and;

WHEREAS, on August 1, 2023, following a presentation to the Presbyteral Council by Father Verespy to provide the information necessary to make an informed consultation, in accord with the norm of canon 515 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, I consulted with the Diocesan Presbyteral Council on the question of the extinctive union in which Our Lady of Fatima Parish will be absorbed into Saint Nicholas Parish, which, in

turn, will be simultaneously modified into a territorial parish, and they made known they were in unanimous agreement, and;

WHEREAS, in consideration of the question of the extinctive union in which Our Lady of Fatima Parish will be absorbed into Saint Nicholas Parish, which in turn will be simultaneously modified into a territorial parish that will occupy the same territory belonging to Our Lady of Fatima Parish, in accord with canon 51 I find the following motivating just causes:

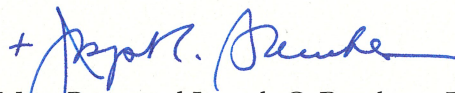
- The demographic changes of the parish communities, which have resulted in a sustained decrease in Mass attendance and sacramental participation
- The inability to sustain operational financial obligations
- The availability of fewer priests within the Diocese of Scranton to attend to the current number of parishes
- The concurrence of the regional Episcopal Vicar, the Vicar Forane, the Presbyteral Council, the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils in favor of the extinctive union of Our Lady of Fatima Parish Saint Nicholas Parish

THEREFORE, I, the Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L., Bishop of the Diocese of Scranton, having in mind my responsibility to best address the spiritual needs of the Christian Faithful of Our Lady of Fatima and Saint Nicholas Parishes specifically and the needs of the Diocese of Scranton generally, and after invoking the Holy Spirit and satisfying myself that the good of souls will suffer no detriment, I hereby decree the following:


- The territorial Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Wilkes-Barre, is hereby in an extinctive union with the personal Saint Nicholas Parish, Wilkes-Barre, and;
- Saint Nicholas Parish is hereby modified into a territorial parish, and;
- The territory of Saint Nicholas Parish now encompasses the territory formerly occupied by Our Lady of Fatima Parish, taking Saint Nicholas-Saint Mary Parish as its title, and;
- Saint Nicholas Church is designated as the principal church and Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception Church is designated as the secondary church of the newly-modified parish
- This decree is to be published to the Pastor and the Parishioners of Our Lady of Fatima Parish and Saint Nicholas Parish through publication in the parish bulletins on the weekend of September 9-10th and on the website of the Diocese of Scranton,
- The effective date of this decree is the second day of the public announcement, September 10, 2023. These changes will be implemented on October 7, 2023.

I am confident that the good of souls would not be harmed by this decree.

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Scranton, on September 5, 2023.



Most Reverend Joseph C. Bambera, D.D., J.C.L.
Bishop of Scranton



Linda E. Price, J.C.L.
Chancellor