



DIOCESE OF LONDON

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DECREE

Having received the recommendation of the Episcopal Vicar for Kent and reports of the consultation process conducted with the parishioners of St. Agnes Parish in the city of Chatham in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Agnes Parish*), and having consulted with the Council of Priests of the Diocese of London on November 5, 2024, in accordance with canon 515, §2, I, Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B., Bishop of London, do hereby decree that the said St. Agnes Parish be canonically suppressed, effective January 21, 2025. I further decree that the territorial boundaries of St. Agnes Parish be absorbed and amalgamated into those of Blessed Sacrament Parish in the city of Chatham in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *Blessed Sacrament Parish*).

The reasons for this action are:

- St. Agnes Parish was canonically established in July 1957 by Bishop John C. Cody, its territory taken from the western portion of Blessed Sacrament Parish
- Its initial decades reflected the overall growth in Mass attendance and sacramental practice experienced in parishes across Canada and the United States in the last decades of the twentieth century.
- However the advent of the new millennium marked the beginning of a progressive decline in the life of St. Agnes Parish. Parish statistics reveal a reduction in the number of registered parishioners from 1,181 in the year 2000 to 787 in 2023. More significantly, these years also saw a precipitous decline in the sacramental life of the community. The number of baptisms in the year 2000 was 53 but only 5 in 2020; first communions fell from 51 to 0 in the same period; confirmations decreased from 67 to 0; and the number of marriages dropped from 11 to 0. Clearly the parish has seen a freefall in its sacramental life in the past two decades. While several socio-cultural factors have contributed to this notable diminishment, there is no indication in the current life and experience of the parish that these sacramental statistics will be reversed.

- The loss of parishioners and the marked lack of an active sacramental practice in the parish have, quite understandably, resulted in a significant and serious reduction in the financial resources to sustain its operation. A continuous need since 2018 to draw on the capital reserves to balance the yearly operating budget has resulted in the complete depletion of the parish's savings. The reasonable estimation is that any future operation of the parish will result in a growing deficit that cannot be covered by the other parishes in the Chatham Family of Parishes. Moreover, such a draw on the funds of the other parishes in the family will result in the reduction of ministry and outreach to the greater community and, ultimately, be damaging to the overall pastoral plan developed for the parishes in the city of Chatham.
- These stark realities led both the Parish Pastoral Council and the Finance Committee to recommend to the Bishop of London that St. Agnes Parish be canonically suppressed. This recommendation was affirmed in a set of parish meetings held on September 15 and 22, 2024, utilizing the synodal Conversation in the Spirit mode, with the vast majority of those participating choosing a new future for the parish within the canonical entity of Blessed Sacrament Parish.
- Blessed Sacrament Church is easily accessible to all the parishioners of St. Agnes Parish. Consequently, they will not be denied a reachable locus for the celebration of Mass and the sacraments. Blessed Sacrament Church is large enough to accommodate readily the parishioners of St. Agnes Parish and has sufficient space to provide for its ministries and outreach services.

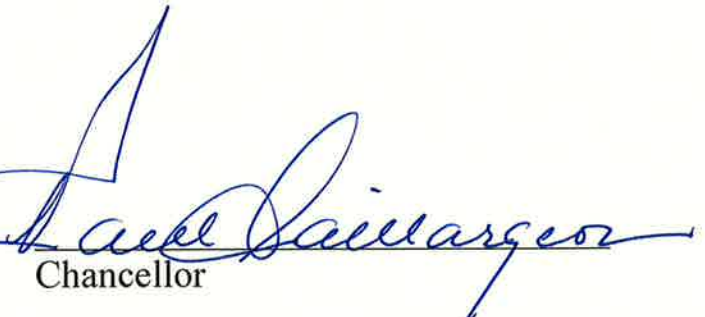
In conformity to the norms set out in canon 121, I also decree that the patrimonial goods and rights of St. Agnes Parish, along with its liabilities, will from the date of its canonical suppression obtain and belong to Blessed Sacrament Parish, with every care to be taken that in the arrangements for the goods and the discharge of obligations, the wishes of founders and benefactors and any acquired rights are fully safeguarded.

Furthermore, in order to provide easier access to the faithful, I decree that the sacramental records of St. Agnes Parish be transferred to and maintained by Blessed Sacrament Parish.

I direct that this decree be published in St. Agnes Parish, Blessed Sacrament Parish and by a suitable means throughout the Diocese of London, with the understanding that any who wish to make recourse against it, in accordance with canon 1734, §1-2, must do so in writing within ten (10) canonical days from the time this decree was lawfully notified.

Given at London in the province of Ontario this ninth day of December in the year two thousand and twenty-four.


Bishop of London



Chancellor