

*Office of the Bishop*

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

Decree Amalgamating Seven Dolores Parish, Hurlingen  
to Saint Joseph Parish, Easton

THE FACTS

1. Seven Dolores Parish has a longstanding history. In 1839, the first settlers in the area, originally from Hurlingen, Germany, and who were active in the Church were Sebastian Kessler, Sr. and his wife Scholastica. They travelled from Germany to Ohio to Saint Louis to Liberty and then through a government land grant in Buchanan County arrived locally to the area they named the New Hurlingen. (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 85-86)
2. “On 2 September 1847, Joseph and Marie Louisa Kessler donated five acres to Archbishop Peter R. Kenrick. It was on this land that the first church was built and which later burned to the ground. The land on which the second church was built was donated by Michael and Magdalena Kessler Wiedmaier. It consisted of two acres from the land originally owned by Joseph Wiedmaier who had obtained it from the government when he arrived in 1844. It was deeded on 21 January 1870. The cemetery, also deeded by the same couple, was next to the church. It is said that this was in use by 1865” and “was named St. Mary,” with “on 1 December 1880 another acre for the cemetery was purchased from Charles E. and Paul K. Schoelen.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 86,87)
3. “The third and present church was begun in 1870 and completed in 1872, the first mention of the parish in the Catholic Directory. From 1871 until 1881 the place is referred to as ‘New Hurlingen.’ [sic] Also from 1872 to 1880 the parish is called St. Francis of Assisi. From 1881 to 1889 it was called St. Martin.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 86)
4. “Beginning in 1882 this mission parish became a parish in its own right with mission stations at Easton, Hellena (Andrew County), Maysville and Stewartsville. The first resident pastor, Fr. Carl Schaaf, came in 1885. A parish school was built between the years 1886-1887” and it appears the school “closed in 1898.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 86)
5. “In 1890 the church is called Seven Dolores in the Directory for the first time. From 1895 to 1915 the Directory reports the parish as a mission of Easton. From 1916 to 1934 it had a resident pastor again and Maysville was a mission.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 86)

6. “In December 1939, it was reported that there 261 members of the parish. There were 42 grade school age students and 29 of high school age. The diocesan census of 1959 showed 86 children in the parish, 32 of whom were of grade school age and 14 of whom were high school or college age. There were 132 adult Catholics in the parish. In 1984 it was reported that there were 151 Catholics in the parish, living in 63 households.” (*This Far By Faith*, Vol. II, 87)
7. Statistics submitted to the diocese in 2002 noted 61 registered households with 170 total registered parishioners, 24 youth under 18 years of age and 146 above. (*This Far By Faith*, Supplement 1992-2002, 36)
8. In the five years of 2016-2022, the spirituality report data of Seven Dolores Parish listed 6 infant baptisms; with 0 youth First Communions; 0 youth Confirmations; 0 youth or adult catechumens and 0 adult OCIA candidates. Additionally in the same span there were 0 marriages with 14 deaths. Registered households were nearly halved from 38 in 2016 to merely 20 in 2022, though a notation in the documentation references 30 households being registered as of January 1, 2023.
9. Following the diocesan-wide pastoral planning process throughout 2018 that resulted in 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 (cc. 50, 127, 515, §2).
10. 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

11. Willingly encouraging everything in our powers to provide more suitably for the good of souls;
12. And having considered the law and the facts;
13. 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 pastor on February 9, April 28 and June 9, 2023, with the study consultant and parish leaders on March 4, April 1, April 29, May 20 and June 10, 2023; and receiving feedback from Seven Dolores parish representatives on the planning committee with a special all-parishioners meeting on April 16, 2023; and having heard the faithful through written letter and email correspondence;
14. And having heard that no donors of property or legacy were identified for Seven Dolores Parish;

15. And having heard the Presbyteral Council, in accordance with canon 515, §2 on June 26, 2023;
16. And having determined that the good of souls requires it;
17. I have determined it necessary and proper that the Seven Dolores Parish, Hurlingen, and Saint Joseph Parish, Easton, 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/or practicing Catholics at Seven Dolores Parish, like much of the deanery region, continued significant decline for the past decades in offering sufficient financial support as well as evangelizing and sacramental life (note the zeroes in the celebration of various youth and adult Sacraments and initiation) to the faith community. The aging complex of buildings, maintenance needs and real estate 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, including three of the previous six years having a deficit fiscal year end and an additional, single extraordinary expense in the past 2022-2023 fiscal year that amounted to 37% of the total operating income alone. Additionally, as the physical driving distance is merely 6.3 miles between the church sites of Seven Dolores Parish and St. Joseph Parish which both shared mission status with the other church community in their respective histories, by combining efforts the evangelizing opportunities for the region and the faith life of the same parishioners can become 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 Seven Dolores Parish, Hurlingen, with all the rights, obligations, and privileges accorded it by law, be and is hereto united to and amalgamated with Saint Joseph Parish, Easton.

The new Parish shall comprise the territory of the extinct Seven Dolores Parish as well as the current territory of Saint Joseph Parish. Saint Joseph Parish remains in Deanery IX .

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

My intention as Ordinary is to commit the work of diocesan leadership over the next several months, with the pastor and leaders of Saint Joseph Parish community who receive the patrimony, the responsibility, and the then current decision making for the St Mary cemetery next to the Seven Dolores church building, and with consideration of the current structure that presently exists, to explore the most appropriate status of the cemetery such that proper maintenance and perpetual care are ensured both civilly and canonically.

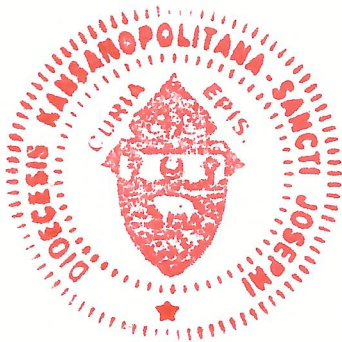
As long as the present church building of Seven Dolores remains Catholic Church patrimony, and it is judged beneficial and is likewise permitted by the Saint Joseph Parish pastor, the following liturgical celebrations are permitted in the Seven Dolores church building: Mass on the Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, Mass on All Soul's Day; funeral masses; nuptial masses; and a marriage between a Catholic and non-Catholic without a Mass for past parishioners of Seven Dolores Parish and members of the newly amalgamated parish at Saint Joseph, Easton.

All the parish and sacramental records of Seven Dolores Parish 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 at the end of the day on September 17, 2023.

This Decree is to be communicated to the Pastor of the parishes concerned (c. 532). The Pastor may challenge this Decree within the peremptory time limit of ten days from the legitimate notification of the Decree in accordance with the norm of law (c. 1732, §2).

Given in the chancery of the  
Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph  
This 10th day of July 2023



*+ 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