



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

Decree Amalgamating Saint Ann Parish, Independence
to Saint Mary Parish, Independence

THE FACTS

1. An anonymous donor of \$1300 stipulated that the land purchased on 3 August 1914 from Delila May (nee Stewart) and John M. Herman in Independence by Bishop Thomas F. Lillis be used for a parish named after St. Ann. In July 1915, Father P.J. Downey, parochial vicar of Holy Trinity Parish, Kansas City, was appointed to establish the parish.
2. The first church, built of stone on the southeast corner of Cedar and Lexington Avenues, was dedicated 26 March 1916. Father Robert F. Hayes was appointed pastor in the summer of 1917 with his continued residence at St. Stephen's Parish until 1 October 1921.
3. Religious education classes began in 1922 with the Sisters of Mercy from St. Agnes Academy traveling to the parish by streetcar. In the fall of 1925, the parochial school opened in a small frame house on another corner of Cedar and Lexington Avenues staffed by the Sisters of Mercy.
4. After a parish mission in 1925, work began on a two-story brick combination church and school which incorporated part of the old stone church in its foundation. Classrooms were located on the lower floor and the church on the upper floor. The school opened with 85 students. In the fall of 1928, a temporary residence on Lexington Avenue was purchased for the Sisters of Mercy, where they resided for the next thirty years.
5. According to *This Far By Faith*, a diocesan history, "in 1934 there were 135 families and 600 individuals. There were 155 children of grade school age and 22 of high school or college age. In the diocesan census of 1959, 757 children were identified, 359 of whom were in grade school and 126 of whom were in high school or college. There were 1211 adult Catholics. In 1984 there were 500 Catholics in the parish in 300 households." (II, 94)
6. On 3 June 1951, ground was broken for the current church property in the Fairmount region on land donated in 1946 by Joseph and Blanche Boutross. Shaughnessy and Bower were the architects of the church built for \$150,000.

7. After 1952 the “old church,” the second floor of the school building, was remodeled into four classrooms to accommodate the increased school enrollment. A new rectory was begun at 10113 Lexington Avenue, the site of the convent, necessitating the move of the Sisters to the St. Mary Convent in Independence. Upon the completion on 22 August 1958 of the rectory built to house three priests, the Sisters returned to occupy the former rectory at 10118 Lexington Avenue.
8. After 1959 a major effort was made to pay off the \$100,000 debt so a new school could be built. After acquiring property at 221 S. Cedar for \$10,000, ground at 215 S. Cedar was broken on 23 August 1964 for the new school. The two-story school, which cost \$154,000, was carpeted throughout, one of the first schools in the area to do so. The school library was dedicated to Sister Mary Bertrand Tayler, RSM, who had served the school as teacher, principal and friend of many for 26 years.
9. In December 1966, six stained glass windows were added to the church sanctuary. Later, in May 1986, a project was undertaken to place stained glass windows throughout the church. On 4 January 1987, Bishop John J. Sullivan blessed the 37 new windows costing \$60,000 raised through donations by St. Ann parishioners.
10. The former church and school building, having remained empty from 1965, was torn down in July 1979. “When the building was razed, there was found a rough looking stone wall that was the north wall of the original church built in 1914. A going-away party for the old building was held on 29 July 1979.” (II, 95) The cleared area was surfaced and used for playground and parking.
11. On 16 April 1988, a mortgage burning celebration was held celebrating the retirement of the then parish debt and on 10 June 1990 the parish celebrated with native son, Father Robert Stone, his first Mass. Additionally, on 26 October 2002, James Reynolds who had been associated with the parish for 15 years and had sent six children through the parish school, was ordained a Permanent Deacon by Bishop Raymond J. Boland. Deacon Reynolds continued his employment and gained new liturgical responsibilities with his assignment to St. Ann Parish.
12. In 1990 seat cushions and backrests were added to the pews and new fabric recovered the kneelers. Preparations to celebrate the parish’s 75th anniversary saw the installation of a solid marble front with an engraved Pax symbol gracing the altar and the movement of the organ and choir from the loft to the main floor. On 26 July 1992, Bishop John J. Sullivan celebrated the anniversary with the parish, an occasion where a time capsule was prepared to be opened at the 100th anniversary celebration in 2017.
13. In January 2003, there were 279 registered households with 634 parishioners of which 122 were under 18 years of age and 512 eighteen or older.
14. Beginning in July 2021, 17 parishes, including St. Ann and St. Mary Parishes, and one oratory in Deaneries 1, 2 and 11 were invited by the diocese to engage in a strategic study facilitated by a professional consulting firm. The study reviewed community demographic projections and forecasts as well as parish data trends; diocesan leadership as well as parish clergy and lay leaders from the deanery parishes were consulted. The ultimate goal of the study was to develop a pastoral strategy that meets pastoral and sacramental needs thereby leading to greater vitality within these territories. The guiding vision for all planning processes continues to be the Diocesan Mutually Shared Vision of One Family: Restored in Christ, Equipped for Mission. The criteria established for the determination of recommendations were: 1) parish membership, sacramental life,

- involvement of parishioners in councils and other ministries; 2) financial stability of the parish; 3) potential for population and membership growth and other demographics; 4) seating capacity of the church and the capability of other facilities to support vibrant ministry; and 5) condition of the facilities and capability to be updated and renovated.
15. This 2021 study, including Deanery 11, was begun in July 2021 and concluded in May 2022. It thoroughly researched community demographics and parish data; interviews were conducted of pastors, parish staff, and parish steering committees; subsequently, additional parish town hall gatherings were held. The painstaking research and thoughtful discussions led to the decision to consider modifying the two named parishes (cc. 50, 127, 515, §2).
 16. Specifically, from 2015 through 2020 annual spirituality reports, St. Ann Parish has celebrated only four infant baptisms, five first Holy Communions; there have been four youth catechumens and six youth Confirmations; no adults have been received into the Church, only three marriages have been celebrated; there have been 67 funerals. Registered households have fallen from 232 in 2015 to 210 in 2020. More precipitously, in the same five-year period average Mass attendance has fallen from 172 to 91. The current parish debt of over a quarter of a million dollars grows exponentially each month as parish contributions have a minimum five thousand dollars shortfall.
 17. 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

18. Willingly encouraging everything in our powers to provide more suitably for the good of souls;
19. And having considered the law and the facts;
20. And having heard, in accordance with canon 50, all those whose rights might be injured by means of meeting for all parishioners and friends of St Ann Parish with the Parochial Administrator on November 20, 2021; parish leaders also met regarding parish life on September 23, 2021, October 20, 2021, December 2, 2021, January 12, 2022, March 23, 2022, and April 27, 2022. Additionally, the Parochial Administrator met with parishioners February 26, 2022.
21. And having heard that no donors of property or legacy were identified for St. Ann Parish;
22. And having heard the Presbyteral Council, in accordance with canon 515, §2 on May 5, 2022;
23. And having determined that the good of souls requires it;
24. I have determined it necessary and proper that Saint Ann Parish, Independence, and Saint Mary Parish, Independence, be united and amalgamated, and that from this extinctive-union and amalgamation, St. Mary Parish, Independence, retain the name.

The reasons motivating this decision are as follows:

The number of registered and/or practicing Catholics at St. Ann Parish, like much of the deanery region, continued significant decline for the past three decades in offering sufficient financial support as well as evangelizing and sacramental life 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—including an ability to even meet financially the basic obligations to a priest pastor, services and engagement to the faithful. Additionally, as the physical distance is merely 2.8 miles between the church sites of St. Ann Parish and St. Mary Parish, 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 of St. Mary Parish.

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

The new Parish shall comprise the territory of the extinct Saint Ann Parish as well as the current territory of Saint Mary Parish. Saint Mary Parish remains in Deanery XI.

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

All the parish and sacramental records of St. Ann Parish are to be transferred to the diocesan archives within fourteen days after February 19, 2023, to be properly preserved and safeguarded by the same archives, in accordance with the norm of law.

This Decree is to be effective at the end of the day on February 19, 2023.

This Decree is to be communicated to the Pastor and Administrator 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
on this 4th day of January of the year 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