



Office of the Bishop

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

Decree Amalgamating Saint Louis Parish, Kansas City
to Saint Therese Little Flower Parish, Kansas City

THE FACTS

1. St. Louis Parish was canonically established on July 1, 1919, and on July 31, 1919, received the name, St. Louis, King of France for the Swope Park district with Father L. Curtis Tiernan given the commission to begin the new parish on June 17, 1919.
2. Boundaries were set for the parish as 48th Street on the north, Euclid on the west, and the then city limits on the east and south. According to the diocesan history, *This Far By Faith*, a tract of land, 200 feet by 193 feet, had already been purchased at 57th and Askew, on the crest of a hill one block from the street car line. Older members did not appreciate the prospect of this climb to church, so they asked the pastor to find a better site.
3. In September 1919 the pastor and parish finance committee facilitated the purchase of a 220 foot square property at 58th Street and Swope Parkway for a site cost of \$6315.15. Bishop Lillis gifted the Askew property to assist with the purchase of the new location for the school and a temporary church. Ground was broken for the church on October 16, 1919, with both building completion and celebration of the first Mass on May 23, 1920, and a dedication on November 25, 1920.
4. On Holy Thursday, 1923, excavation began for the new school and in 1924 a convent for the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, the future teachers, was purchased adjoining the church property on the west. The first graduating ceremonies from the school were held in the spring of 1926 with seven girls and one boy graduating. In 1943 the classrooms on the second floor of the school were completed and the convent renovated.
5. In 1934 there were 276 households (1196 Catholics) with 255 children of grade school age and 73 of high school or college age. In 1959 there were 1734 children (717 grade school age; 273 of high school or college age) with 2174 adults living in 1143 households. In 1984 there were 775 Catholic individuals in the parish living in 350 households.
6. On June 1, 1944, the reinforced concrete and steel, not completely constructed building at 60th and Swope Parkway, begun in 1924 for use as a Masonic Temple at a cost of \$86,000 was purchased for \$20,000. The first floor auditorium and stage was converted into Catholic worship space with a 500 person seating capacity. The second floor, designed as a lodge hall seating 700, with a balcony on three sides had a projector booth, numerous small conference rooms, and a

large conference room for the 400 family registered households. The temporary church was torn down in 1945 and the property converted to a playground for the school. A new rectory and convent soon followed. On March 2, 1957, an arson fire in the pamphlet rack of the church vestibule seriously damaged the floor supports for the second story of the church building along with much smoke and water damage throughout the structure. This resulted in \$25,000 worth of direct damage and declaration of the non-safety of the second floor for large gatherings of people or other use.

7. In 1969 there were 650 families in the parish and the fall enrollment in the school was projected to be 350 children. On July 1, 1969, the parish boundaries were extended north to Brush Creek due to the closing of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish.
8. In 1973, the schools of St. Louis and Blessed Sacrament Parishes were consolidated into the newly named St. Martin de Porres school with classrooms at St Louis Parish and athletics in the gym of Blessed Sacrament Parish. On July 1, 1991, the former school and convent were sold to Renaissance West.
9. In 1974, a Senior Citizens Nutrition site was established in the parish hall led by Sister Alice Vincent Downey, SCL, but under the responsibility of the Mid America Regional Council (MARC).
10. The Diocese of Kansas City – St. Joseph began Central City planning in October 1981 with an announced desire to better utilize the resources and better serve the peoples of the central city within the parishes of St. Aloysius, St. Joseph, Church of the Risen Christ, Our Lady of Sorrows, St. James, Blessed Sacrament, St. Francis Xavier, St. Louis, St. Therese Little Flower, and St. Augustine. There were four ad hoc subcommittees: addressing Catholic schools, social services, social justice ministry, and parish administration and organization. By June 12, 1983, a Covenant Agreement was finalized for presentation to Bishop John Sullivan with two broad purposes: a) creation of an ongoing forum for communication among member institutions and organizations on issues of mutual concern with a regularly convening representative board, assisted by task forces; and b) to create a sense of solidarity and interdependence among the member institutions and organizations while respecting their individuality.” The twenty-two final recommendations were presented to Bishop Sullivan on March 15, 1984, with five of the parishes, Blessed Sacrament, Church of the Risen Christ, St. Augustine, St. James, and St. Therese Little Flower, during a March 9, 1985, ceremony of commitment to the covenant the initial signers.
11. On December 1, 1985, St. Louis Parish joined the Catholic Covenant Communities of Church of the Risen Christ, Blessed Sacrament, St. Augustine, St. Therese Little Flower, and St. James Parishes.
12. St. Therese Little Flower Parish, then unnamed followed the June 1, 1923, purchase of land in the Blue Hills area by Bishop Thomas Lillis with the intention of founding a new parish in the southern part of Kansas City. Bishop Lillis gave the assignment of the parish founding to Father Maurice E. Coates on August 28, 1925. In mid-October 1925, after Father Coates and the Church Committee selected the name of St. Therese from several names suggested, Bishop Lillis officially designated the church to be the shrine to the Little Flower, the first such shrine in Missouri to be established.
13. Seventy families were present on October 18, 1925, for the first gathering of the newly established St. Therese Little Flower congregation in the home of Frank Wheeler. Establishing that no home could accommodate these numbers, Father Coates obtained the permission of

Bishop Lillis to accept the offer of the Little Sisters of the Poor to use their chapel at 53rd and Highland, which was utilized for just over one year.

14. Construction began on the parish school on May 4, 1926, with the plan to build the basement as a temporary chapel and one floor for school rooms. Father Coates moved into the school part of the building prior to its completion and Mass was celebrated for the first time in the basement of the school on Thanksgiving Day, November 25, 1916, also the day of its dedication.
15. The school opened on January 5, 1927, with the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for the 50 initial students in the blended classrooms of first and second as well as third and fourth grades. Ninety children were enrolled in the second year, but 167 students showed up for classes.
16. A St Therese convent was built in 1928 and Father Coates moved to a house at 5809 Michigan, the rectory until 1955. On September 3, 1932, a second floor was completed on the school building, adding three more classrooms and a gymnasium.
17. In 1934, it was reported that there were 247 families in the parish comprised of 943 persons, 285 grade school aged and 59 of high school or college age. In the 1959 diocesan census, there were 947 children listed (340 grade school aged; 194 high school or college) and 1310 Catholic adults in St. Therese Little Flower Parish. In 1984 there were 280 Catholic individuals in the parish living within 229 households.
18. On April 4, 1948, ground was broken for a new church of native stone in a modern, modified Gothic style to seat 450 persons with an additional 100 persons ability to sit in the balcony. The basement church was turned into a hall for youth activities.
19. In June 1969, with the closing of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish on Swope Parkway, St. Therese Little Flower Parish boundaries were extended to Brush Creek, between Paseo and Prospect.
20. Beginning in July 2021, 17 parishes, including St. Therese Little Flower and St. Louis 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.
21. This 2021 study, including Deanery 1, 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).
22. Specifically, from 2015 through 2020, St. Louis Parish has celebrated only four infant baptisms, seven first Holy Communions; there have been no youth catechumens; only one adult has been received into the Church, no marriages have been celebrated; there have been 44 funerals.

Registered households have fallen from 108 in 2015 to 80 in 2020 (though 83 as of January 1, 2021).

23. As St. Louis Parish has been unable to pay the full salary and benefits of a priest since July 2018. The pastor and his religious community, the Society of Our Lady of the Most Holy Trinity, have been graciously working at a salary reduced by 60% since July 2018 and, therefore, further subsidizing the parish. Additionally, the parish debt currently stands at \$253,000, along with an outstanding loan of over \$22,000. The debt continues to accumulate because the parish has been unable to fund the basic services and cathedraticum which are typical for parishes.
24. On May 19, 2022, the *Pastoral Plan for Deaneries 1, 2 and 11* will be promulgated at Saint Mark the Apostle Parish, Independence, where I will announce the amalgamating merger of St. Louis Parish with that of St. Therese Little Flower Parish.
25. 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

26. Willingly encouraging everything in our powers to provide more suitably for the good of souls;
27. And having considered the law and the facts;
28. And having heard, in accordance with canon 50, all those whose rights might be injured by means of town hall meetings at St Louis Parish of the Pastor, Pastoral and Finance Council members as well as parishioners on November 20, 2021 and February 19, 2022 about the Strategic Plan for Deaneries 1, 2, and 11; and additionally by means of meetings with leadership groups of pastors and parish representatives on August 19, 2021; September 22, 2021; October 20, 2021; December 2, 2021; January 11, 2022; March 22, 2022; and April 28, 2022;
29. And having heard that no donors of property or legacy were identified for St. Louis Parish;
30. And having heard the Presbyteral Council, in accordance with canon 515, §2 on May 5, 2022;
31. And having determined that the good of souls requires it;
32. I have determined it necessary and proper that Saint Louis Parish, Kansas City, and Saint Therese Little Flower, Kansas City, be united and amalgamated, and that from this extinctive-union and amalgamation, St. Therese Little Flower Parish, Kansas City, retain the name.

The reasons motivating this decision are as follows:

The number of registered and/or practicing Catholics at St. Louis 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 driving distance is merely 1.3 miles between the church sites of St. Louis Parish and St.

Therese Little Flower 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.

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 Louis Parish, Kansas City, with all the rights, obligations, and privileges accorded it by law, be and is hereto united to and amalgamated with Saint Therese Little Flower Parish, Kansas City.

The new Parish shall comprise the territory of the extinct Saint Louis Parish as well as the current territory of Saint Therese Little Flower Parish. Saint Therese Little Flower Parish remains in Deanery 1.

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

All the parish and sacramental records of St. Louis Parish are to be transferred to the diocesan archives within fourteen days after June 30, 2022, 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 June 30, 2022.

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 on this 19th day of May of the year 2022.



+ 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