



Office of the Bishop  
Diocese of Providence  
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## **DECREE IN THE NAME OF GOD. AMEN.**

Since 1850, when it was first established as an independent parish, St. Mary Parish has served the Catholic faithful in the Crompton section of West Warwick. During that time, generations of families have heard the Word of God and received the sacraments of the Church in this parish. The parish is home to historic St. Mary Church (built in 1844), the oldest Catholic church building still in use within the Diocese of Providence. Within the past several years, discussions began between the Diocese and the pastors of West Warwick regarding possible affiliations among the parishes of West Warwick. These parishes included St. Mary and Saints John and James. Some initial unifying efforts have been realized, such as the blending of both parishes' faith formation programs, and a shared First Holy Communion Mass. However, given the plummeting number of available priests to assign for parish ministry, and the reality of eight Catholic parishes within West Warwick alone, some parish modification is now unavoidable.

In the past five years, the total number of St. Mary parishioners has decreased from approximately 650 families in 2014 to approximately 500 in 2018. From 2014 – 18 at St. Mary Parish, there were 10 weddings, 39 baptisms and 36 parish children received First Holy Communion. Current weekend Mass attendance at St. Mary (at the Saturday 4pm and Sunday 10am Masses) totals approximately 150 individuals, which is slightly below the benchmark of 2/3 church capacity that is used for parish viability. For the academic year just completed, St. Mary Parish had 16 students total (four in Confirmation II and 12 registered in the SS. John and James Faith Formation program). Another significant timely consideration is the imminent retirement from active ministry of the pastor of St. Mary Parish.

Motivated by a desire to strengthen both communities, it now seems prudent to formalize this affiliation. Therefore, having received the request of the pastor of St. Mary Parish and the request of the administrator and leadership of Saints John and James Parish, both in West

Warwick; aware of their geographical proximity; having heard those affected by the proposal; and having consulted the diocesan College of Consultors and the Council of Priests on June 6, 2019 in accord with Canon 515, §2, I hereby decree that:

1. St. Mary Parish, West Warwick (a territorial parish), shall be merged into Saints John and James Parish (a territorial parish);
2. Saints John and James Parish will receive the membership of St. Mary Parish and its territory. Saints John and James Parish will assume responsibility for the pastoral care of the territory of St. Mary Parish, bounded:
  - Starting at the junction of Bald Hill Road and Centreville Road, West along Centreville Road to the Pawtuxet River;
  - South along the Pawtuxet River to Jefferson Street;
  - West along but not including Jefferson Street to its end;
  - By an airline from this point to the south end of Quidnick Street;
  - South along the Pawtuxet River to the Coventry/West Warwick town line;
  - South along the town line to the East Greenwich town line;
  - West along the East Greenwich town line to the West Greenwich town line;
  - South along the town line to Division Road;
  - East along Division Road to Route 2;
  - North along Route 2 to the starting point.
3. The St. Mary church building, West Warwick, will remain open for liturgical use and will serve as a mission of Saints John and James Parish, West Warwick;
4. All parish registers containing the records of Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Marriage, and deaths of St. Mary Parish be transferred to the parish office of Saints John and James, where they will be faithfully maintained in accord with Canon 535;

5. All assets, debts, and liabilities of St. Mary Parish shall become the assets, debts, and liabilities of Saints John and James Parish, in accord with Canon 121.

The effective date of this decree is July 1, 2019, at 12:01am.

I direct that this decree be forwarded to the pastor of St. Mary Parish, and to the administrator of Saints John and James Parish, who will provide copies to their parishioners at both places.

Parishioners who wish to make recourse against this decree have the right to do so. According to Church law (Canon 1734, §2), they must do so **within 10 (ten) business days** of receiving notification of this decree. Any recourse must be submitted in writing via postal mail to Bishop Tobin by June 26, 2019 and must be accompanied by supporting documentation.

At this time of transition, I extend my prayerful support to all the members of St. Mary Parish, which has been a source of stability and strength for Catholic families since before the Diocese of Providence was established. Let us continue to rely upon God's goodness and providence as we begin a new chapter in our common journey of faith.

Given in Providence,  
at the Chancery,  
this 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 2019



Thomas J. Tobin  
Bishop of Providence

(Rev.) Timothy D. Reilly  
Chancellor