



MARK
Bishop of Shrewsbury

Prot. No.: P20/01

The Parish of St Philip Neri, Birkenhead

DECREE of AMALGAMATION (by extinctive union) of the two PARISHES of Saint Joseph, Birkenhead and Saint Michael and All Angels, Woodchurch in order to form one new parish known as the Parish of St Philip Neri, Birkenhead

Whereas the two parishes of Saint Joseph, Birkenhead and Saint Michael and All Angels, Woodchurch (together hereinafter referred to as 'the Merging Parishes') have each, for some years, served the Catholic faithful and wider population of their respective areas, during which time, many have heard the Word of God, have worshiped and have received the Sacraments of the Church in their respective parish communities;

and whereas, since 2014, the Merging Parishes, whose two Parish Churches are only three miles apart, have been jointly served by a single Parish Priest resident at Saint Joseph's, Birkenhead with pastoral the care of the Faithful of both of the Merging Parishes;

and whereas it appears that there will not, in the coming years, be any prospect of there being a Parish Priest appointed to each of the Merging Parishes;

and whereas the Bishop of the Diocese is concerned for the best stewardship of resources and mindful of the right of the People of God to receive assistance from the Church (especially the Word of God, spiritual sustenance and the sacraments) normatively from their own Parish Priest (cc. 527-530);

and whereas the two communities of Christ's faithful of the Merging Parishes have been engaged in recent times in a common effort to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel and ensure the vitality of Parish life;

and whereas the Bishop has proposed that the Merging Parishes be amalgamated and a period of consultation lasting three months began on 15th February, 2020 which included: The invitation of written comments and the holding of two open meetings held in both Merging Parishes, allowing those who will be affected by the changes enacted by this Decree, to have their views on the proposed amalgamation heard. Thus, in so far as possible, all those whose rights could be injured have been heard and the presumed intentions of founders and of substantial benefactors have been respected and no acquired rights are proposed to be transgressed; and, further, the matter has been considered by the Council of Priests of this Diocese (cann. 515 §2 and 127) at the 109th meeting on 10th March, 2020, the informed opinions of whom the Bishop has heard and duly weighed.

Now I, MARK, BISHOP of SHREWSBURY under and in accordance with canons 120 §1, 121, and 515 §§2-3 of the Code of Canon Law 1983 HEREBY DECREE as follows:

1. The above-named Merging Parishes shall be modified by extinctive union, such that the Parish of Saint Joseph, Birkenhead and the Parish of St Michael and All Angels, Woodchurch, shall cease to exist as separate and independent canonical entities and that, from them, one, new parish is constituted (c 121). The territory, property and assets of the Merging Parishes, and the obligation to care for the souls living there shall be amalgamated into a new parish which is to be known as the Parish of St Philip Neri, Birkenhead.

2. The two Churches within the territory of the newly-amalgamated Parish shall retain their patronal dedications as, respectively, the Church of St Joseph and the Church of St Michael and All Angels. For the avoidance of doubt, the Parish Church of the newly amalgamated parish of St Philip Neri, Birkenhead will be the Church of St Michael and All Angels, while the Parish Priest will remain resident at the presbytery at St Joseph's, which will also be the site of the Parish office.

3. New parochial registers, required to be maintained under c. 535 relating to the Parish of St Philip Neri shall be kept at the office housed in the presbytery at St Joseph's and the historic registers of the Merging Parishes shall be transferred to be kept securely with the Parish records at St Joseph's, or to such other place which I may determine, with a view to securing their faithful preservation and maintenance. The diocesan archivist should be consulted in relation to any registers, records and historical documents not needed for continued administration.

4. Fr Christopher Matthews is appointed as Parish Priest of the newly-amalgamated Parish.

5. The provisions of this decree shall take effect at Noon on 26th May, 2020, the Feast of St Philip Neri.

AND I DIRECT that this decree be delivered to Fr Christopher Matthews, Parish Priest of the newly-amalgamated Parish, and that its existence be announced at all livestreamed, publicly-celebrated Masses celebrated in the Parish of St Philip Neri on the weekend of 30th/31st May, 2020, and in the parish Newsletter. AND I FURTHER DIRECT that notice of its contents be communicated by affixing copies of the Decree to notice boards external to the two Church buildings in the Parish so that they may be read by the faithful. I further direct that the full text of this decree be published on the website of the Diocese of Shrewsbury (<http://www.dioceseofshrewsbury.org/>) and on the website and social media applications maintained by the newly-amalgamated Parish. Anything to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Cathedral House, Shrewsbury, under my hand and curial seal this 26th May, 2020 in the year 2020

+ Mark Davies

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The Rt Rev Mark Davies
Bishop of Shrewsbury


Fr Thomas Cunnah SV
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The Revd Fr Thomas Cunnah
Chancellor