

TIMOTHY MICHAEL DOLAN  
Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church  
of the Title of Nostra Signora di Guadalupe a Monte Mario  
By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See  
ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK

DECREE  
ON THE MERGER OF THE TERRITORIAL PARISH OF SAINT  
FRANCES OF ROME, BRONX, NY, THE PERSONAL PARISH  
OF SAINT FRANCIS OF ASSISI, BRONX, NY, THE PERSONAL  
PARISH OF SAINT ANTHONY, BRONX, NY, AND THE  
TERRITORIAL PARISH OF OUR LADY OF GRACE, BRONX, NY

Whereas bishops “feed their sheep in the name of the Lord by fulfilling their office of teaching, sanctifying and governing them” and “pursue their apostolic work as witnesses of Christ to all people” (cf. Vatican II, Decree on the pastoral office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, October 28, 1965, n. 11);

Whereas the parish is “pre-eminent among all the other communities present in his Diocese, for which the Bishop has primary responsibility: it is with the parishes above all that he must be concerned” (Pope Saint John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores gregis*, October 16, 2003, n. 45) and whereas the parish “remains the fundamental unit in the daily life of the Diocese” (ibid.);

Whereas “the parish is not an outdated institution” and “continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”, provided it “does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few”, but on the contrary is “a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a centre of constant missionary outreach” (cf. Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013, n. 28);

Whereas the Bishop should proceed, after consulting the diocesan presbyteral council, to alter territorial boundaries, to divide parishes that are too large, to merge small parishes, to establish new parishes or non-territorial centres for pastoral service in the community, or even to reorganize completely the arrangement of parishes within a particular city if the good of the faithful so requires, and whereas the Bishop may wish to set up a diocesan office or commission that can operate in collaboration with other relevant diocesan commissions in order to study all the issues pertaining to the

establishment of parishes and the construction of churches (cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, February 22, 2004, n. 214);

Whereas from 2004 through 2009, our beloved predecessor, His Eminence, Edward Cardinal Egan, initiated a study about the future of the parishes in the Archdiocese of New York and made several decisions as a result thereof;

Whereas, after our appointment as Archbishop in 2009, a multi-year pastoral planning process, *Making All Things New*, was undertaken to continue strengthening and enhancing parish life in the Archdiocese of New York and to assist the archdiocese in serving its Catholic faithful most effectively, and whereas this pastoral planning process, which had its beginnings in 2010, sought the input and suggestions of parishioners, the leadership of religious orders of women and men, and the clergy;

Whereas the initial work consisted in surveying the parishioners of every parish of the archdiocese; meeting with priests, deacons, and religious throughout the archdiocese; consulting with the archdiocesan pastoral council; and reviewing my own observations from my own extensive parish visits since my 2009 appointment as archbishop;

Whereas, albeit not mandatory in this matter, I also consulted with the Archdiocesan Finance Council;

Whereas the existing parish structure of the archdiocese was largely established between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries;

Whereas radical changes and shifts in demographics have occurred over the past decades, including a move away from the urban center into the suburbs, together with a substantial immigration of Hispanics;

Whereas the Archdiocese faces a decline in the number of available priests;

Whereas parishes are confronted with a declining number of faithful attending on a regular basis Sunday Mass;

Whereas the changing situation puts a huge financial burden on the smaller parishes, and whereas deficits are covered increasingly by archdiocesan loans;

Whereas the 368 parishes grouped in 75 parish clusters provided their own input about the future of the parishes in the Archdiocese, in particular about collaboration of their own parish with one or more neighboring parishes;

Whereas an archdiocesan advisory council was established, comprised of 40 clergy, religious men and women, and the faithful from across the archdiocese to coordinate, receive, review and recommend any proposed changes to the parish structure;

Whereas a recommendation was given to merge the territorial parish of Saint Frances of Rome, 4307 Barnes Avenue, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Francis of Assisi, 4330 Baychester Avenue, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Anthony, 4505 Richardson Avenue, Bronx, New York, and the territorial parish of Our Lady of Grace, 3985 Bronxwood Avenue, Bronx, New York, based upon the complementarity of the four parishes, their proximity, and the pastoral need for intensive collaboration and the need for the care of the souls;

Whereas the presbyteral council was heard on June 30 and July 1, 2014, and again on October 28, 2014;

Whereas it was decided to return the initial recommendation for further clarification and discussion, first to the cluster, and then to the archdiocesan advisory council;

Whereas, on March 19, 2015, His Excellency, Most Reverend John O'Hara, Titular Bishop of *Ath Truim* and Auxiliary Bishop of New York, presented the results of the review to the presbyteral council;

After having heard the presbyteral council again on March 19, 2015;

Therefore, I, the undersigned Archbishop of New York, have decided as follows:

#### DECREE

1. The territorial parish of Saint Frances of Rome, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Francis of Assisi, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Anthony, Bronx, New York, and the territorial parish of Our Lady of Grace, Bronx, New York, are merged. The name of the newly merged territorial parish will be the parish of Saint Frances of Rome, Saint Francis of Assisi, Saint Anthony, and Our Lady of Grace, until such time when the parish community through the pastor proposes a new name. The boundaries of the newly merged territorial parish will be same as the boundaries of the former territorial parishes.

2. §1. The parish will have four churches.

§2. The church of Saint Frances of Rome is herewith designated as the parish church.

§3. The church of Saint Francis of Assisi will maintain a regular schedule of Masses and the celebration of other sacraments.

- §4. While the church of Saint Anthony remains open for public worship, Masses and other sacraments will not be celebrated on a regular basis at this church.
- §5. While the church of Our Lady of Grace remains open for public worship, Masses and other sacraments will not be celebrated on a regular basis at this church.
3. All members of the originating parishes shall now become members of the new territorial parish, provided they have domicile or quasi-domicile in the newly merged parish.
4. All registers containing records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials hitherto preserved by the territorial parish of Saint Frances of Rome, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Francis of Assisi, Bronx, New York, the personal parish of Saint Anthony, Bronx, New York, and the territorial parish of Our Lady of Grace, Bronx, New York are to be conveyed to the offices of the newly merged parish at the premises of Saint Frances of Rome, where they shall be faithfully preserved according to canon 535, 1°-5° of the Code of Canon Law.
5. All ecclesiastical goods of the originating parishes are now to belong to the newly merged parish. Likewise, all liabilities of the originating parishes are now transferred to the newly merged parish.

This decree will be implemented by August 1, 2015.


All those who claim to have been aggrieved by this decree are herewith notified that, if they desire to file recourse against our decree, they are required, *ad validitatem*, to submit a petition in the sense of canon 1734 §1 to us within ten useful days from the legitimate notification of this decree.

Given at the Chancery, New York, NY, this 8<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2015, Friday of the Fifth Week of Easter.



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Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan  
Archbishop of New York



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Rev. Msgr. Greg Mustaciuolo  
Chancellor