

DECREE

Having received the recommendation of the Episcopal Vicar for Kent and those charged with the study of the reorganization of parishes within the Diocese of London and having consulted with the Council of Priests of the Diocese of London on February 15, 2006, May 14, 2013 and again on September 9, 2014, in accordance with canon 515, §2, I, Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B., Bishop of London, do hereby decree that St. Patrick Parish in the hamlet of Merlin in the county of Kent in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Patrick Parish*), originally canonically erected as a parish in 1863, be canonically suppressed effective October 25, 2015. I further decree that the territorial boundaries of St. Patrick Parish be absorbed and amalgamated into those of St. Peter Parish in the hamlet of Tilbury East in the county of Kent in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Peter Parish*).

The reasons for this action are:

- St. Patrick Parish is located in a predominantly rural area in the county of Kent. At present the number of Catholic households within the boundaries of the parish is well below the standard set by the Diocese of London for a viable parochial community in a rural area. Furthermore, there is no potential for any future growth within the present parish boundaries; indeed given the provincial government forecasts for a continued decline of rural populations by two per cent (2%) per year, the size of the community at St. Patrick parish will only continue to decline steadily, making its potential for pastoral viability even more precarious.

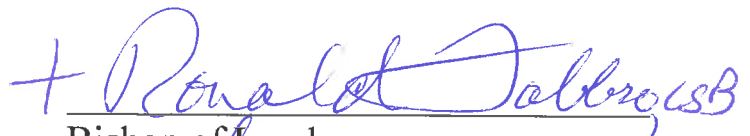
- The small population of the parish has had a marked impact on its financial capacity. In recent years it has only been the presence of a shrine at the parochial church that has made it possible to sustain the parish financially. A 2009 report on the structural condition of the parochial church revealed the need for a number of significant and costly repairs, which were well beyond what the parish itself could afford to take on given that its annual income ranges from \$50,000 - \$55,000; and mounting a fundraising campaign to raise the necessary funds for specified repairs is beyond the resources of the parish.
- The pastoral care of the faithful in St. Patrick Parish will not suffer as a result of its canonical suppression. Since 1999 St. Patrick Parish has been grouped with St. Francis Xavier Parish in the town of Tilbury in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Francis Xavier Parish*) and St. Peter Parish in the hamlet of Tilbury East in the county of Kent in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Peter Parish*) and served by the one priest-pastor of the three parishes. The parishioners of St. Patrick Parish will with the canonical suppression of the parish become members of St. Peter Parish and continue to receive pastoral care from the pastor of that community, as has already been the fact for sixteen (16) years, albeit under his title of pastor of St. Patrick Parish.
- Nor will the suppression of the parish cause or create the lack of access to a place of worship or to the means for the reception of the sacraments since the parochial church will remain open under the new designation of Our Lady of the Rosary Shrine at St. Patrick Church, which shrine will be serviced by priests of the Congregation of the Rosarians, who will provide Sunday and weekday Masses, sacramental celebrations and devotional liturgies. Furthermore, the parishioners are within short driving distance from St. Francis Xavier Church in the town of Tilbury in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Francis Xavier Church*) and St. Peter Church in the hamlet of Tilbury East in the county of Kent in the province of Ontario (hereinafter referred to as *St. Peter Church*).

In conformity to the norms set out in canon 121, I also decree that the patrimonial goods and rights of St. Patrick Parish, along with its liabilities, will from the date of its canonical suppression obtain and belong to St. Peter Parish, with every care to be taken that the arrangements for the goods and the discharge of obligations, the wishes of founders and benefactors and any acquired rights are fully safeguarded.

Furthermore, in order to provide easier access to the faithful, I decree that the sacramental records of St. Patrick Parish be transferred to and maintained by St. Peter Parish.

I direct that this decree be published in St. Patrick Parish, St. Peter Parish, St. Francis Xavier Parish and by a suitable means throughout the Diocese of London, with the understanding that any who wish to make recourse against it, in accordance with canon 1734, §1-2, must do so in writing within ten (10) canonical days from the time this decree was lawfully notified.

Given at London in the province of Ontario this twenty-third day of October in the year two thousand and fifteen.


Bishop of London




Chancellor