



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

Decree Amalgamating Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Kansas City  
to St Thomas More Parish, Kansas City

## THE FACTS

1. St. Catherine of Siena Parish, having its first Mass on 22 November 1925 in the Walsh family home, and then on land donated on 10 April 1926 by them north of their home at the corner of Grandview Road and Jackson Street occasioned the building of the church and rectory. Father Thomas F. Kane was appointed first pastor while being in residence at Annunciation Parish, Kansas City to serve the people of Hickman Mills, Dodson, Martin City, Grandview and Belton. The first celebration of Mass in the new church took place on Christmas 1926 and the collection at this time was less than twenty dollars. According to *This Far By Faith*, “The original boundaries of the parish were: east, Raytown Road; north, 83<sup>rd</sup> Street to Prospect, then south to 85<sup>th</sup>, across 85<sup>th</sup> Street to Troost, south to Bannister Road and west on Bannister to State Line; west, State Line; south, to and including Belton.” (Vol. II, 212) In 1934 there were 51 families comprised of 181 individuals. There were 27 children of grade school age and five children of high school or college age. In the diocesan census of 1959 there were 2272 children, 875 of whom were of grade school age and 165 of high school or college age. There were 1974 adult Catholic individuals. In 1984 there were 2750 Catholics living in 900 households.
2. The new St. Catherine of Siena School was blessed on 7 September 1942 to open with 42 students in three rooms under the guidance of the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. By the 1946-1947 school year the number of students required more space and work began in October 1947 on a new school building—eventually expanding to 25 classrooms and a peak enrollment of 1255 students. After the 1974 spring term, the Sisters of Charity departed from the parish. In the summer of 1980 many meetings were held to plan the consolidation of St. Catherine, St. Matthew and Our Lady of Coronation schools. St. Catherine school was chosen for the site of the consolidation due to its size. In 1980, the first year enrollment was 358 at the newly named Our Lady of Peace School.

3. Following the dedication of the new brick church on 23 December 1956, “in the summer of 1965, Bishop Charles Helmsing established three new parishes in the territory of St. Catherine Parish, namely: St. John Francis Regis, St. Matthew the Apostle, and St. Thomas More Parishes. Previously, all or parts of the parishes of Coronation of Our Lady in Grandview; St. Sabina, in Belton, Our Lady of Lourdes in Raytown, and Christ the King in southern Kansas City had been established from territory previous of St. Catherine of Siena Parish boundaries.” (Vol. II, 214) Ground was broken in November 1973 for a new church building offering a seating of 850 persons. The building was dedicated in June 1975. In 1995 the parish became involved in long-term planning with the sub-deanery cluster of St Matthew, Coronation of Our Lady and St. Sabina Parishes to determine how these parishes would deal with a future date without four resident pastors and diminished parish staff.
4. In January 2003 there were 395 parishioners under 18 years of age and 1434 adults. From the five-year span of 2013-2018 the self-reported spirituality data provided to the diocese notes there were only 24 infant baptisms, no youth First Communions, 5 youth Confirmations, zero adult OCIA candidates but four youth catechumens, ten marriages, 72 deaths with no elementary or high school CCD or school of religion enrollment. As of January 1, 2020 the number of registered parish households was 325.
5. In February of 1959, Bishop John Cody was preparing to draw boundaries for a new parish on the far south side of Kansas City to be called St Thomas More Parish. Monsignor John Huhmann was notified on 1 June 1964 that he had been named pastor of the new St. Thomas More Parish with the first Mass on 9 July 1964 at O’Rielly Hall at Avila College. On 1 June 1966, Mass was celebrated in the new church and the church and school dedicated by Bishop Charles Helmsing on 10 July 1966. The school opened on 26 August 1966 with 203 students.
6. In the five years of 2013-2018, the spirituality report data of St. Thomas More Parish listed 289 infant baptisms; 345 youth First Communions; 367 youth Confirmations; 3 youth catechumens and 20 adult OCIA candidates. Additionally in the same span there were 95 marriages with 338 deaths.
7. The Pastor of St Thomas More Parish likewise became the Pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish on July 1, 2022.
8. Following the diocesan-wide pastoral planning process throughout 2018, during 2020 a study of Blue Ridge Boulevard corridor parishes (principally Deanery V) was undertaken of community demographics, parish data, interviews of pastors, parish staff, and parish steering committees prior to additional parish town hall gatherings and reception of input led to the decision to modify the two named parishes, St. Catherine of Siena and St. Thomas More (cc. 50, 127, 515, §2). Promulgated on September 30, 2020, the process identified that both St. Catherine of Siena and St. Thomas More Parishes would remain as stand-alone parishes for the present, but may merge in the near future. Specifically stating, “St. Catherine of Siena’s status as parish is not sustainable at its present level but will be given up to two more years as a stand-alone parish in order to build greater vitality.” (Cf., number 13)
9. 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

10. Willingly encouraging everything in our powers to provide more suitably for the good of souls;
11. And having considered the law and the facts;
12. And having heard, in accordance with canon 50, all those whose rights might be injured by means of a meeting of the study consultant with the pastor and parish leaders on March 4, 2020, of the Steering Committee on March 19, June 2 and July 21, 2020; and meetings of the Saint Catherine of Siena Parish pastor and steering committee with a special all parishioners meeting on August 17, 2020;
13. And having the Vicar General for Pastoral Affairs meeting with the pastor and St. Catherine of Siena Parish Committee on April 22 and September 29, 2021 as well as September 12, 2022 to discuss recovering viability;
14. And having heard that no donors of property or legacy were identified for St. Catherine of Siena Parish;
15. And having heard the Presbyteral Council, in accordance with canon 515, §2 on January 26, 2023;
16. And having determined that the good of souls requires it;
17. I have determined it necessary and proper that Saint Catherine of Siena Parish, Kansas City, and St. Thomas Parish, Kansas City, be united and amalgamated, and that from this extinctive-union and amalgamation, St Thomas More Parish retain the name.

The reasons motivating this decision are as follows:

The number of registered and/or practicing Catholics at St. Catherine of Siena 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, services and engagement to the faithful. Additionally, as the physical driving distance is merely 4.1 miles between the church sites of St. Catherine of Siena Parish and St. Thomas More 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 Catherine of Siena Parish, Kansas City, with all the rights, obligations, and privileges accorded it by law, be and is hereto united to and amalgamated with St. Thomas More Parish, Kansas City.

The new Parish shall comprise the territory of the extinct Saint Catherine of Siena Parish as well as the current territory of St. Thomas More Parish. St. Thomas More Parish, though gaining territory previously in Deanery V, remains in Deanery IV.

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

All the parish and sacramental records of Saint Catherine of Siena Parish are to be properly preserved and safeguarded by the Archives of the Diocese of Kansas City – Saint Joseph in accordance with the norm of particular law.

This Decree is to be effective on April 29, 2023.

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  
This 9<sup>th</sup> day of February 2023



*+ 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