DECREE

Suppressing Holy Family Parish,
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania and the Subsequent Altering of the Parochial Boundaries of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Harrisburg.

The Catholic faithful of East Harrisburg and the surrounding area, within the Diocese of Harrisburg, have been served since 1958 by the canonical erection of Holy Family Parish and the subsequent opening of the parochial school in 1959. During that time, many people have heard the Word of God, have worshipped and received the Sacraments of the Church in that parish. During that time, many students have learned the truths of the Catholic Faith and advanced along the ways of academia.

Now, in an effort to strengthen the preaching of the Gospel and to ensure the vitality of parish life, with concern for the best stewardship of resources and the right of the People of God to receive assistance from the Church (especially the Word of God and the Sacraments), it seems prudent and necessary to make new provisions for the spiritual care of the parishioners of this parish. Appropriate accommodations have been made for the smooth and seamless continuation of Catholic education of the youth.

My predecessor, Bishop Ronald Gainer asked parishioners of Holy Family to make known their needs and desires through a Town Hall Meeting on February 16, 2023. He received the recommendations of the parish pastoral council and parish finance council and heard no major concerns or negativity from them. Bishop Gainer expressed to me that the people foresaw this diocesan action coming and were expecting it for some time. He also consulted with and heard the advice of the Presbyteral Council, legitimately convened, on March 1, 2023 as well as consulted with members of the Diocesan Curia. To this end:

In accord with canon 515, §2, I hereby suppress Holy Family Parish, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. This suppression shall take effect at midnight, June 25, 2023.

This decision to suppress the parish and relegate it is based on, but not limited to, the following just causes, that taken in their totality, culminate into a most grave cause to do so:

1. The parish serves a decreasing population while trying whole heartily to maintain its activities, programs and apostolates. These ministries are important to the work of the Church and the vitality of evangelical efforts within this geographical location.
2. Over the past ten years, the parish has administered only twenty-nine baptisms, fifty-seven First Holy Communions, fifty-eight Confirmations, two Weddings and eighty-eight Funerals;
3. Its close proximity to many other Catholic parishes, including: St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Harrisburg (1.7 miles); St. Catherine Laboure Parish, Harrisburg (1.8 miles); The Cathedral Parish of St. Patrick, Harrisburg (2.7 miles) and Prince of Peace Parish, Steelton (4.1 miles). There is little to no hardship placed on the faithful from attendance at Mass or any of the Sacraments or liturgical celebrations at one of the aforementioned parishes;
4. The desirability of avoiding duplication of services and programs in a small geographic area and thus the best use of available priest personnel, in what is a dearth of priests for our diocese at the current moment in time;
5. The accumulated debt of the parish to the Diocese of Harrisburg stands at around 1.7 million dollars. This figure is insurmountable;
6. If forced to maintain the current edifice of the church and school, the building would require ongoing maintenance, utility and insurance costs far too heavy for the parish to bear.

The territorial boundaries of St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, shall now be altered to include the former territory and membership of Holy Family Parish, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

All parish registers, containing records of baptism, confirmation, marriage and deaths previously preserved at Holy Family Parish, shall be transferred to St. Francis of Assisi Parish, Harrisburg, where they will be faithfully preserved in accord with canon 535, §§1-5.

Any remaining assets, whether movable or immovable, after the eventual canonical and legal alienation of the Holy Family Parish property, will be given to St. Francis of Assisi Parish. The proceeds of the sale of the property will go to the reduction of the incurred debt aforementioned. Any surplus of the proceeds from the alienation (after repayment of the debt) shall be given to St. Francis of Assisi Parish. Any debt remaining (after the application of the proceeds) of the sale of the property will be forgiven by the Diocese of Harrisburg and not transferred to St. Francis of Assisi Parish.

I am assured that the good of souls and the rights of parishioners will not be harmed in any way by this Decree. In fact, this canonical and pastoral action is both prudent and necessary to enhance the good of souls. This process was begun by Bishop Gainer and is within my own plan and vision for the Diocese of Harrisburg.

I direct that this decree be promulgated today by sending an authentic copy to the pastors of these parishes, and read aloud, at least in summary of its constitutive elements at all the Masses of obligation within the parishes on the weekend of June 24 and 25, 2023. Notice to the faithful is also to be placed on diocesan and parish websites as well as in parish bulletins and/or other parish communications and social media sites.
Canonical recourse to this Decree must be made within ten useful days from the first public communication of the Decree to the faithful concerned (cf. canon 1734).

Given at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on this, the twenty-second day of June, 2023 in accord with the norm of law. All contradictory law, notwithstanding.

In testimony whereof...

[Signature]
Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg

[Signature]
Barbara A. Bettwy
Chancellor