



DECREE

The merger of
St. Mary Parish of Houston, Minnesota,
with St. Joseph Parish of Rushford, Minnesota

St. Mary Parish of Houston, Minnesota, was founded in 1872, serving the faithful of the area for 149 years. In 2011 the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, with the assistance of professional consultants, embarked upon Vision 2016: a comprehensive visioning and planning process aimed at providing opportunities to enhance the pastoral care of the faithful, address shortages in clergy, and evaluate current parish structures in light of changing demographic trends. As Pastoral Planning efforts continued in light of the Vision 2016 process, and with further demographic decline, conversations were held with St. Mary Parish and St. Joseph Parish and diocesan leadership, and topics of discussion were the possible merger of St. Mary Parish with St. Joseph Parish and the eventual sale of the St. Mary Parish building. Guidance was solicited from the Presbyteral Council throughout the pastoral planning process.

In a letter presented on May 10, 2021, the current Pastor of St. Mary Parish and St. Joseph Parish requested that St. Mary Parish be merged into St. Joseph Parish. The request included documentation as to the current plan to no longer have Mass celebrated in the building, the recommendation of the parish leadership to merge the parishes and subsequently sell the building of St. Mary Parish, and the lack of fiscal and human resources necessary to properly maintain the structure.

On May 25, 2021, the Presbyteral Council provided consultation, in accord with canon 515, §§2, 3, concerning the proposal that St. Mary Parish be merged (*unio extinctiva*) into St. Joseph Parish. Upon full discussion, at which time due consideration was given to reasons for and against the proposed merger, and with opportunity to suggest alternate courses of action, members of the Presbyteral Council expressed unanimous agreement in favor of the proposed merger.

The following just causes suggest that St. Mary Parish be merged into St. Joseph Parish:

- 1) The declining number of faithful attending Mass and the limited quantity of additional sacramental experiences;
- 2) The enhancement of collaborative ministry and to ensure the best utilization of priest personnel;
- 3) The recent and projected shifts in populations, moving from rural to urban settings;
- 4) A consolidation of human resources directed toward strengthening the quality of the liturgy and encouraging fuller active participation;
- 5) To better effect the preaching and spread of the Gospel.

Accordingly, in virtue of the prescription of canon 121 and 515, §2 of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, having judged that just causes are present, that the intentions of donors and any other acquired rights have been examined and given due consideration, and that the good of souls will not thereby be impaired,

**I HEREBY DECREE AN EXTINGTIVE UNION BY WHICH
ST. MARY PARISH OF HOUSTON, MINNESOTA
BE MERGED INTO
ST. JOSEPH PARISH OF RUSHFORD, MINNESOTA.**

Furthermore, the newly established territorial boundaries of St. Joseph Parish are to be:

Starting in the Northwest Corner at the intersection of County Highway 33 and Interstate 90. Head South along County Highway 33 then directly South on a continuous line that overlaps Minnesota Highway 250 to the intersection of Firefly Road and 220th Street. Head directly East from the intersection at Firefly Road and 220th Street to the intersection at Plitzuweit Road and County Road 20. Head directly North from the intersection at Plitzuweit Road and County Road 20 to Interstate 90. Head West along Interstate 90 to the starting point.

Upon the completion of the transfer of such assets and liabilities, the civil corporation of the St. Mary Parish shall take such actions at civil law as are necessary to dissolve itself. Furthermore, any other patrimony, including sacramental records, deaths, and items or documents of historical or spiritual significance shall be transferred to St. Joseph Parish.

This decree becomes effective June 29, 2021. A copy of this decree is to be sent to the pastor of St. Mary Parish and St. Joseph Parish and its contents is to be communicated at all of the Masses of obligation on the weekend of Saturday, June 12, 2021, and Sunday, June 13, 2021. Furthermore, this decree is to be published on the diocesan website. Any legitimate party, considering himself aggrieved by this decree, retains the right to request emendation or revocation within ten (10) useful days (c. 1734 §§1, 2).

Given in the Diocese of Winona-Rochester on this 11th day of June in the year of Our Lord 2021.

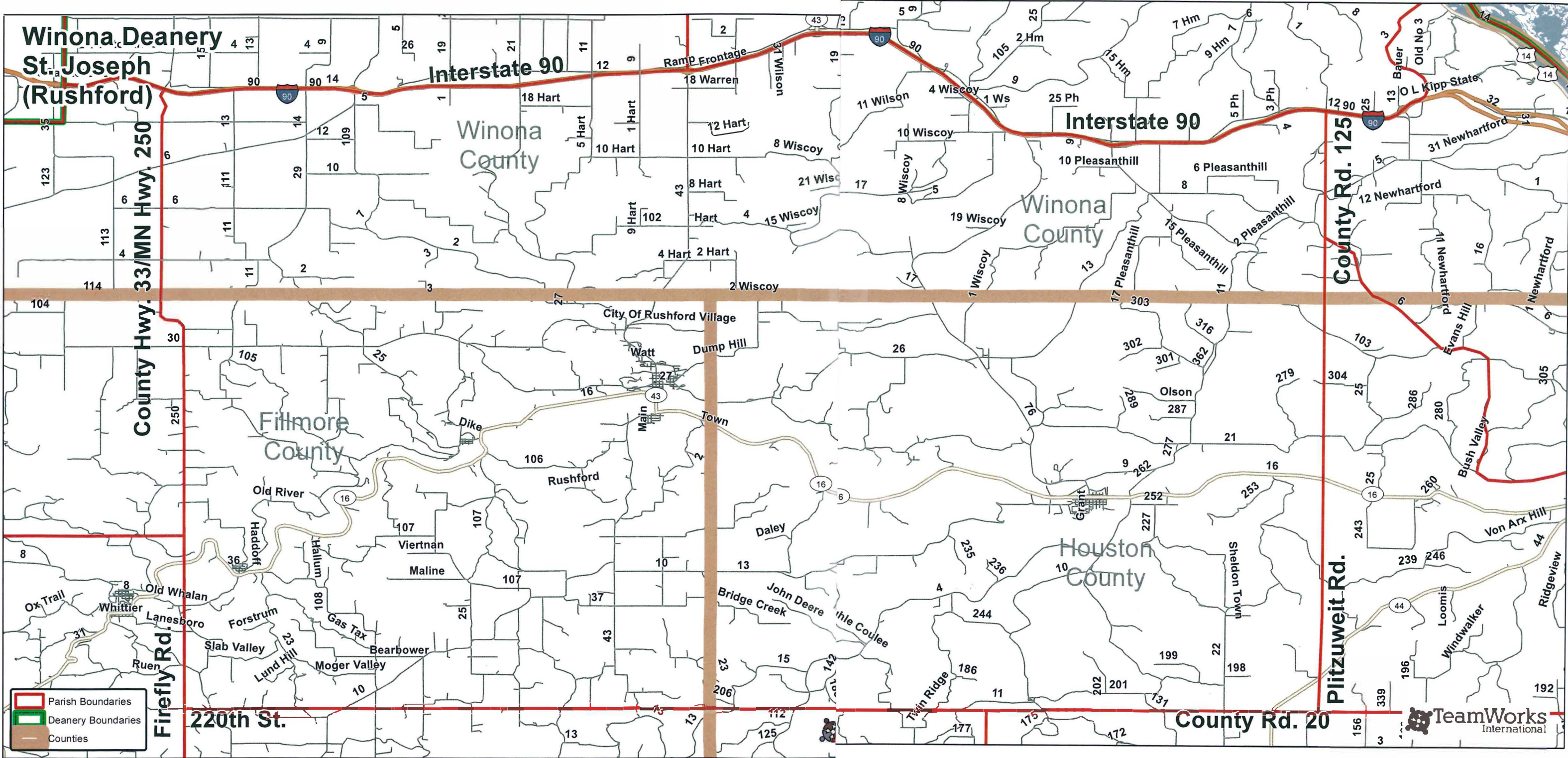
+ John M. Quinn



The Most Reverend John M. Quinn
Bishop of Winona-Rochester

Andrew Brannon

Vice Chancellor

SEAL



 Parish Boundaries
 Deanery Boundaries
 Counties