

Special

APRIL 29, 2006

REORGANIZATION REPORT

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

This weekend, in all the parishes of our diocese, pastors are announcing the final decisions of our parish reorganization process that will take until June, 2008, to fully implement. The number of parishes directly affected by this reorganization – those that are being closed, clustered or newly established – leaves no doubt that these decisions are going to have an enormous impact on our diocese. Today's announcement is a defining moment in our history. It calls us to put our trust in God and make a bold commitment to journey together on the path that now opens up before us.

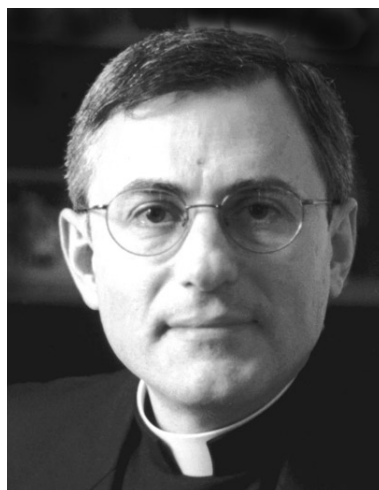
This is not an easy day for many of our people. I am deeply aware of the pain that this process is causing, particularly for those whose parishes will be closing. For some, the future will appear bleak indeed, because their parish – truly their spiritual home – will be no more. As a result, some may even question their commitment to the Church. I share your anguish. Closing any parish is personally painful for me, your bishop.

"It calls us to put our trust in God and make a bold commitment to journey together..."

I am convinced, however, that what is required of the diocese is the fulfillment of our Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Through this plan, we are committed to building stronger parishes, where good liturgies are the norm, where there is outreach to our youth and elderly, and to our fellow Catholics who do not come to Church, where vocations are fostered, where our linguistic and cultural differences are valued, and where the needs of the poor and vulnerable are met. Parish reorganization is but one step toward the fulfillment of the Pastoral Plan, but it is an essential step.

The process of parish reorganization has highlighted the considerable challenges before us: changing demographics in our cities and rural areas, fewer priests, declining clerical and lay people, it became clear that the decisions now being announced are necessary if we are to meet the challenges we face and to ensure vibrant faith communities for the future in every area of our diocese.

This year, we are celebrating the 150th anniversary of our diocese. During this period, we have built a strong presence across our diocese, through parishes that flourished and reached out to those in need, and through schools and hospitals, and other Catholic institutions. This graced history gives us hope as we look to the future.



The incredible sacrifices made by our foremothers and fathers continue to inspire us. The challenges we face are different from theirs, but we must be willing to tackle them with the same courage that our ancestors in the faith demonstrated. Accepting the need for parish reorganization is one of these challenges and a severe one at that.

Today, I appeal to you, the people of our diocese, to accept the decisions of our parish reorganization in the spirit of faith, hope and love. I ask you to reach out to one another in loving prayerful support. It is essential that we be fully aware of the great sacrifice that some of our people are being called to make, especially those whose parishes are closing. We need to be in solidarity with them, to welcome them with open arms into our parishes that are remaining open and invite them to participate in parish ministries and programs. We need to understand anger, hurt and disillusionment, to be in no undue hurry to shortcut the phases of grieving, but at the same time to be ministers of reconciliation and healing.

Jesus calls us to follow him. Being a follower means a willingness to change, to leave things behind. Today, our diocese is embarking on major change. With confidence, we turn to God in prayer. Through the intercession of our Blessed Lady, may our hearts be open to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that the life of Christ will always flourish in our diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+ *Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B.*

Ronald Fabbro, C.S.B.
Bishop of London



Embracing a Future Full of Hope

A PASTORAL PLAN for the Diocese of London
accepted, Pentecost Sunday, 2004



Called by Jesus through baptism into his passion, death, and resurrection and anointed by the Spirit, we, the people of God in the Diocese of London, are to be living signs of Christ's presence in the world today. United in Christ, the Bread of Life, we commit ourselves to carrying out the mission of proclaiming the coming of the kingdom of God in our time. We embrace the Gospel – believing what we read, preaching what we believe, and practising what we preach.

As a people of faith, trusting in the Spirit who leads us, we dedicate ourselves to the following goals:

PERSONAL HOLINESS: As living signs of Christ's presence, we will respond to the call to personal holiness given to all by committing ourselves to opportunities for ongoing conversion and spiritual renewal.

EVANGELIZING AND TEACHING: Called by Christ, we will evangelize through the clear proclamation of the Gospel and the constant teaching of the Catholic faith, assuring that such proclamation is linked to the life experience of the people.

JUSTICE AND COMPASSION: With our sights set on the mission of Jesus, we will minister with justice and compassion to the wounded, the searching, the entrapped, and those in material and spiritual need.

LITURGICAL CELEBRATION: As the Body of Christ, formed by word and sacrament, we will make provision for meaningful liturgical celebrations in our parish communities to ensure full, conscious, and active participation by all.

FORMATION: Inviting all to co-responsible ministry, we will encourage and support the ongoing formation of laity, religious, and ordained.

GOVERNANCE: Imitating Christ the servant-leader, we will employ and model governance practices at all levels that seek to: meet the needs of God's people, support the Church's mission, ensure appropriate decision-making by the laity, religious and ordained, uphold Gospel stewardship, and promote accountability and transparency.



His Excellency, Most Rev. Ronald P. Fabbro, C.S.B.,
Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of London,
after consultation with the Council of Priests,
announces the following parish reorganization
decisions:

St. Anne Parish, Windsor, is to be closed as a parish effective December 2006 and its territory is to be absorbed into *Our Lady of the Rosary Parish, Windsor*.

Christ the King Parish, Windsor, St. Martin de Porres Parish, Windsor, and St. Gabriel Parish, Windsor, are to be closed as parishes effective December 2006. A new parish with a new name is to be established to worship at the present **St. Gabriel Church** site. The new parish is to encompass the territory of the three former parishes.

St. Christopher Parish, Windsor, is to be closed as a parish effective June 2007 and its territory is to be absorbed into Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, Windsor.

Our Lady of Fátima Parish, Windsor, is to be closed as a parish effective June 2006, and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. John Vianney Parish, Windsor*. This confirms the announcement made to the parish prior to the parish reorganization process.

St. Theresa Parish, Windsor, and St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Windsor, are to come to full cluster by June 30, 2008.

Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish, Wheatley, is to be closed as a parish effective June 2006 and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. Michael Parish, Leamington*. The church of *Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament, Wheatley*, will remain open under the pastoral care of the pastor of *St. Michael Parish, Leamington*.

St. John de Brebeuf and Companions Parish, Kingsville, and St. Anthony Parish, Harrow, are to come to full cluster by June 2007. The Star of the Sea Mission, Pelee Island, is to be served by this new cluster.

St. John the Evangelist Parish, Woodslee, is to remain open. St. Mary Parish, Maidstone, and St. John the Evangelist Parish, Woodslee, are to come to full cluster by June 2007. The Zone is to continue to work together sharing in ministry.

St. Joseph Parish, River Canard, and St. Clement

Parish, McGregor, are to come to full cluster by June 2007.

St. William Parish, Emeryville, and St. Gregory the Great, Tecumseh, are to begin the process of working together to form one community. These two parishes will eventually be closed, and a new parish will be established at a new site with a new name at a date to be determined.

St. Anthony of Padua Parish, Chatham, is to be closed, effective June 2008 or at the retirement of the present pastor, whichever comes first.

Our Lady of Victory Parish, Chatham, is to be closed, effective June 2007. It is to be re-established as *Our Lady of Victory Polish Catholic Community* to worship at its present site.

St. Ignatius Parish, Bothwell, is to be closed, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. Paul Parish, Thamesville*.

La Paroisse St. Philippe, Grande Pointe, is to be closed, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into *La Paroisse Immaculée Conception, Pain Court*.

St. Paul Parish, Thamesville, and St. Michael Parish, Dresden, are to be merged into one parish with two church sites effective June 2007.

St. Anne of the Lakes Parish, Erieau, is to be closed effective September 2006, and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. Mary Parish, Blenheim*. The church of *St. Anne of the Lakes* will remain open during the months of May to September under the pastoral care of the pastor of *St. Mary Parish, Blenheim*.

Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Sarnia, is to be closed, effective June 2008 or at the retirement of the present pastor, whichever comes first.

Queen of Peace Parish, Sarnia, is to be closed, effective June 2007. It is to be re-established as *Queen of Peace Polish Catholic Community* to worship at its present site. The present territory of the parish is to be absorbed into *Sacred Heart Parish, Sarnia*.

St. Charles Mission, Courtright, is to be closed, effective June 2007.

Holy Rosary Parish, Wyoming, is to be closed, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. Philip Parish, Petrolia*.

St. Matthew Church site of Our Lady Help of Christians Parish, Watford, is to be closed effective June 2007.

St. Thomas Aquinas Parish, Sarnia, is to be newly designated as the Francophone parish for the city of Sarnia and Lambton County, under the name of

La Paroisse St-Thomas D'Aquin, effective June 2008.
The present territory of the parish is to be absorbed
into *Sacred Heart Parish, Sarnia*.

St. Joseph Mission, Listowel, is to be established as a parish, effective June 2007.

St. Brigid Parish, Logan, is to be closed, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into the parish of *St. Patrick, Kinkora*.

St. Mary of Perpetual Help Parish, Hesson, is to be closed effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into the new parish of St. Joseph, Listowel.

St. Joseph Parish, Kingsbridge, is to be closed as a parish, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into **St. Peter Parish, Goderich**. The church of **St. Joseph, Kingsbridge** is to remain open under the pastoral care of the pastor of St. Peter Parish, Goderich.

St. Joseph Parish, Clinton, is to be closed as a parish, effective June 2007, and its territory is to be absorbed into *St. Peter Parish, Goderich*. A worship site in Clinton is to be determined in the near future.

English Martyrs Mission, Bayfield, is to be closed, effective September 2006.

St. Augustine Mission, St. Augustine, is to be closed, effective September 2006.

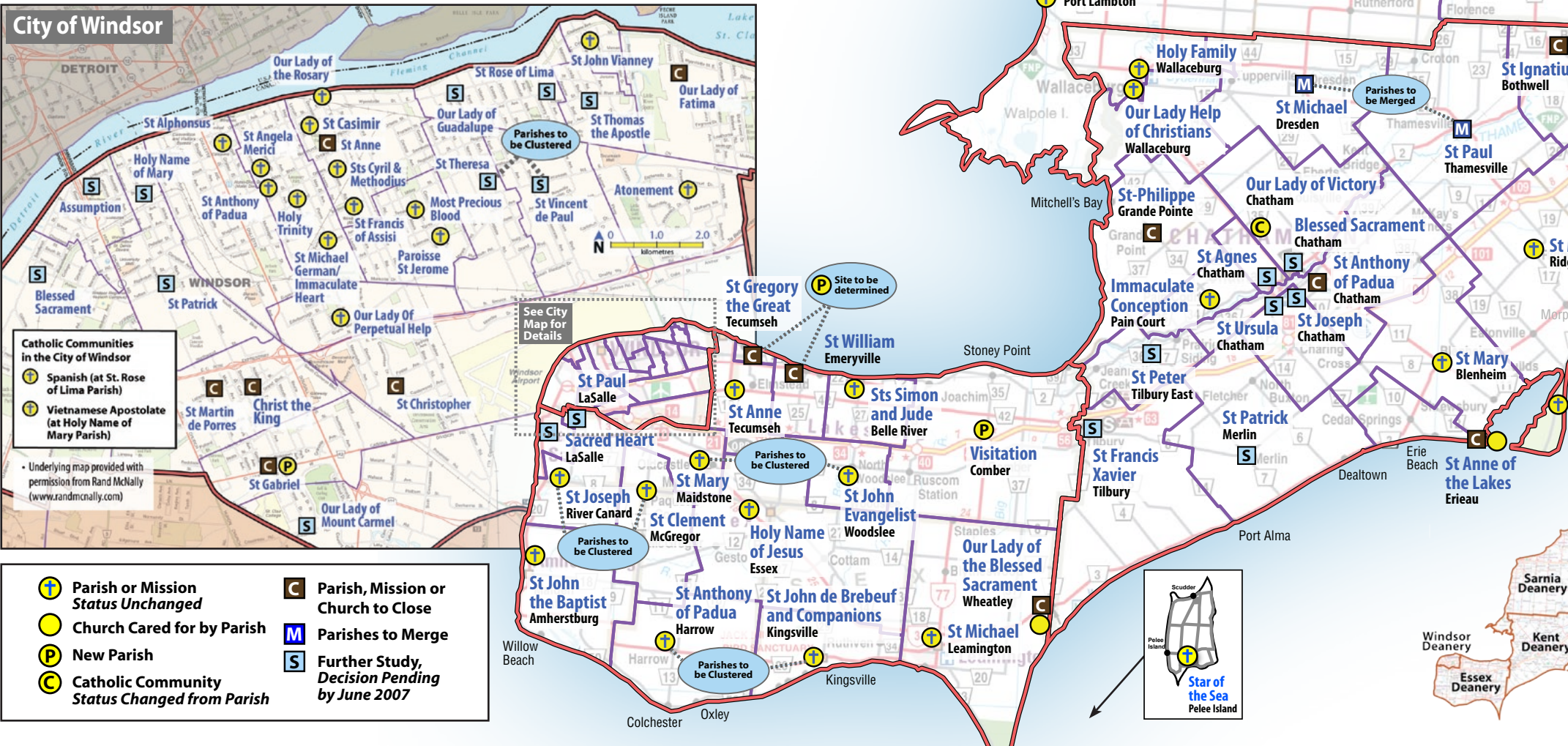
St. Mary Mission, Lucknow, is to be closed, effective June 2007.

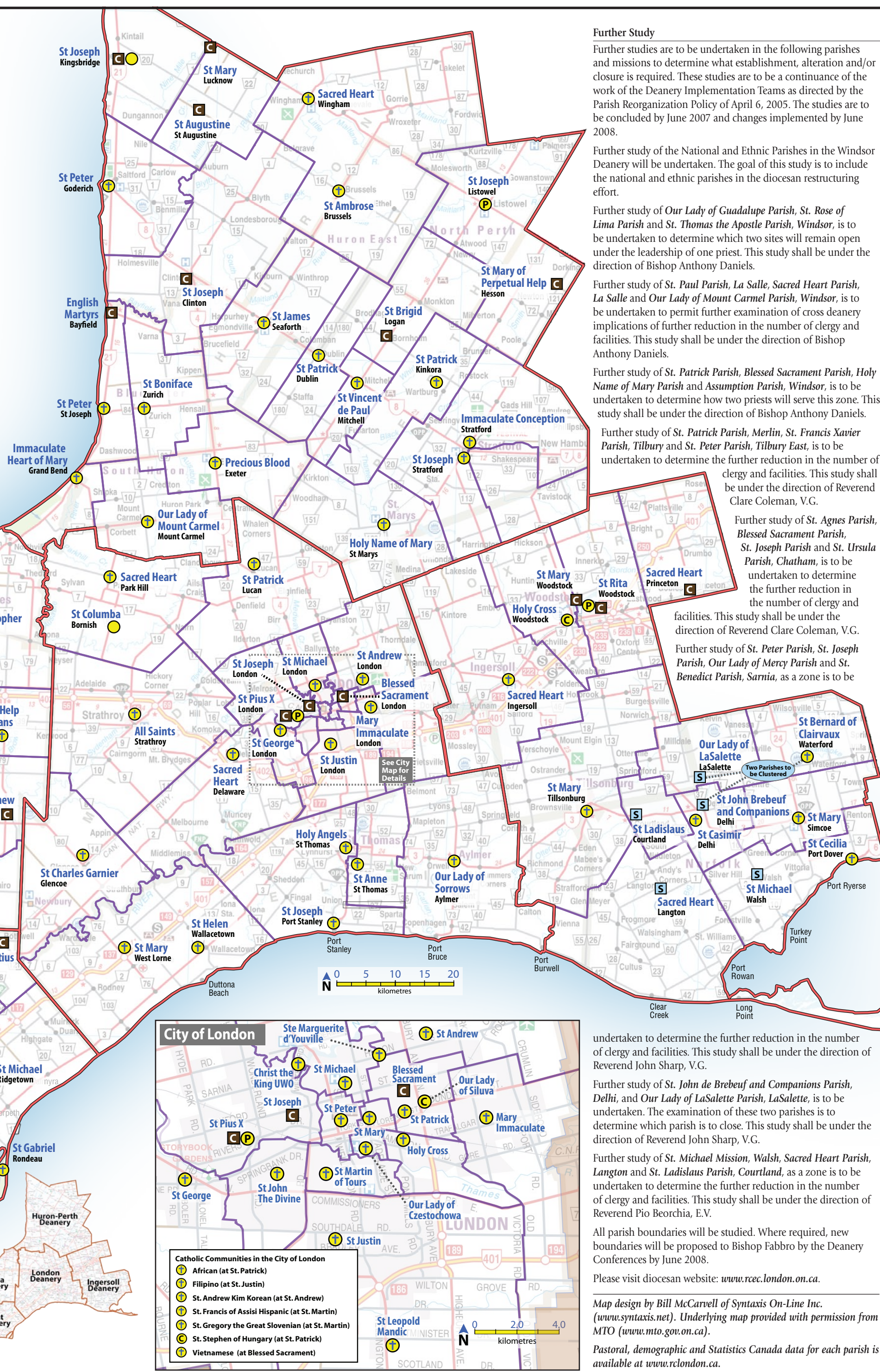
St. Mary Parish, Woodstock, St. Rita Parish, Woodstock and Sacred Heart Mission, Princeton are to be closed effective June 2006. *Holy Trinity Parish, Woodstock* is to be established at a new site.

Holy Cross Parish, Woodstock, is to be closed effective June 2007. It is to be re-established as *Holy Cross Polish Catholic Community* to worship at its present site.

St. Bernard of Clairvaux Parish, Waterford, is to be clustered with either St. John Brebeuf and Companions Parish, Delhi, or Our Lady of LaSalette Parish, LaSalette, by June 2007, depending on which of these two parishes remains open.

Our Lady of Sorrows Parish, Aylmer, is to rejoin the London Deanery, effective June 2006.





The Experience of Clustering and Closure

We have been going through clustering and closure of our home parishes in recent years and we'd like to share some of our feelings.

Immaculate Conception was a very old building. The structure required a few million dollars just to make it safe. We were a smaller parish and couldn't meet the needs of the physical building of the Church. Working with the Diocese, it was determined that Immaculate Conception and the parish of Sacred Heart should cluster, sharing one priest. The struggle was: we both had a Saturday night Mass, we both had two Sunday Masses so how could this work out? It was resolved through trial and error, and while these experiences were painful, it was evident this could work. We would attend Sacred Heart for some masses and the parishioners were very welcoming and over time we got to know many other families. For our personal comfort we tried to maintain the two buildings as long as we could, but neither building was able to withstand the further structural deterioration, plus the challenges of running two parishes was wearing on the priest.

When the buildings could no longer be maintained, the decision was made to close both and move the clustered parish of Immaculate Heart and Sacred Heart to the present St. Michael's German Catholic Church. Through the process we had input and many meetings and discussions were held. When the announcement came that both parishes would close and we would move to an already existing parish, my feelings at the time were more of relief. I felt that we couldn't cope with the physical deterioration of the buildings. The best solution was hopefully to sell them and begin anew in a well-established, physically sound parish.

While the feeling of never going to Immaculate Conception or Sacred Heart Parish buildings again was there, I felt it was the people who were important. The welcoming by St. Michael's parish, the meetings we had with them, sharing their parish building and their heritage, helped me understand that this was something that had to be and the feelings of hurt went away knowing I would still be with our clustered parish family. We were simply in another building.

The experience of moving to St. Michael's and using the facilities for our Saturday night and two Sunday Masses was a bit uncomfortable at first. People would ask "Are you from Immaculate Conception or Sacred Heart?" Eventually, the questions stopped and it didn't matter whether you were from one or the other; we are now one parish called Immaculate Heart.

Virginia Walsh,
Parishioner at Immaculate Heart - Windsor

I was a member of St. Joseph the Worker parish for 38 years when we got the news that we were to cluster with Most Precious Blood. Since that time, we have come from total cluster and have closed St. Joseph the Worker. My first feelings were anger, fear, sadness, and a feeling of hopelessness. What could I do? How could I make a difference? I wanted to be a role model for our children and also for the young people in our church family. So being angry, sad and frustrated were not good things. I had to change my thinking. I turned my feelings around through prayer; by being informed; by being involved; and, by communication.

I began to pray and talk to God. I did a lot of talking to get rid of the anger. I kept going back to "Why me?". Through prayer I was able to turn my thinking around and to begin the process of healing, of letting go, of mourning, of loss. And for what I have received since making that decision, I could never repay the Lord. God blessed us in so many ways; by being able to go to another church, to worship, to be welcomed there by many wonderful people, and to be a 'family' again. We were also very sensitive to the fact that we were bringing another 250 families into the Most Precious Blood faith community. There were some people there who were also scared or frustrated, maybe some of them didn't want us there. We understood that and tried to work very slowly together. After being part of the M.P.B. parish now for four years, I can say we have accomplished that and do work together. We truly have been blessed with many, many people. We have 50 ministries, wonderful leadership, and a Youth Ministry that is very dedicated to the future of our church. It's very vibrant.

Once the decision to close St. Joseph's was made, I decided to go to mass once a month at M.P.B. I was truly welcomed and we felt a part of the faith community from the beginning. I wanted to be involved in God's work at M.P.B. and they accepted that with open arms.

Sisters of St. Joseph Spiritual Ministries Network

Throughout the years, the Sisters of St. Joseph have been a constant beacon and source of hope for us in our diocese. Once again, through their *Spiritual Ministries Network*, the Sisters are willing to assist anyone who desires to grow through the changes that life offers them at this time.

For more information, brochures will soon be available in your parish.

As a result of this process and the experience of clustering, I truly believe that the church in our day is not the building, it is the people of God who come together.

Georgette Lefaive
Parishioner at Most Precious Blood - Windsor

This process of Parish Reorganization will free up people and revitalize our parishes and it will give many people new experiences of growth, change and welcome.

There has been a multiplicity of dialogue and the Bishop has listened to the people. He has heard the pain and anguish. I have seen the concern and I have heard the Bishop's questions. He has been fair.

In Windsor, we have experienced by the downsizing of four parishes in the past few years. There has been some pain but there has been even more reaching out. There were smiles and there were tears and there has been so much warmth.

The Pastoral Plan of the Diocese and this Parish Reorganization gives us hope for the future: we have dared to risk because we plan, not only for our Church, but for our tomorrow.

Fr. Jim Roche
Immaculate Heart Parish - Windsor

Fr. Mooney, our beloved pastor of St. Joseph's, Port Burwell, had just died, and shortly after his funeral we were made aware that our parish was to close. Even though we expected this, we accepted the decision reluctantly. Some parishioners were bitter, all were saddened, most wept and felt lost. Those of us on the advisory board had a better understanding of the reasons for closure, but the big questions were: How would we be treated? Did we have a role in the procedure for closing the parish? Who would we have to deal with from the diocese? What demands would the diocese dictate? Would they listen to us?

It turned out the diocese didn't want to close our parish any more than we did. They understood our pain as it was also painful for them. Though difficult to accept, it made sense financially and also due to the shortage of priests. We were surprised that our advisory board determined, with the diocese, where the funds from the proceeds of the church property would be directed. During this difficult time representatives from the diocese were very compassionate, patient, trustworthy and understanding. In our hearts, we knew closure was inevitable, but hope springs eternal and miracles do happen.

John Sebok,
Our Lady of Sorrows Parish - Aylmer

Summary of Parish Reorganization, April 29, 2006

Currently we have 153 church buildings.
After this reorganization, we will have 130 church buildings.
Additional changes are likely as a result of further study.

6 new parishes will be established:

- 2 with a new church building
- 1 with the church building of a current mission
- 3 with the church building of a current parish

10 parishes will cluster or merge with other parishes:

- 4 clusters of 2 parishes
- 2 parishes will merge into a single parish

36 parishes will close:

- 3 have church buildings that will be reopened in a new parish
- 5 have church buildings that will be reopened in a new Catholic community
- 3 have church buildings that will remain open under the care of a neighbouring parish
- 25 church buildings will close

26 parishes will be involved in further studies.

	Establishment of New Parishes		Alteration and Closure of Parishes and Missions					Further Study
	In New Church Building	In a former Mission	Parish Established in Closed Parish	Parish Clustered or Merged	Parish Closed and Catholic Community established at same site	Parish Closed with Church to remain open	Parish or Mission Closed and Church closed	
Windsor			1	2			5	8
Essex	1			4		1	2	2
Kent				2	1	1	3	7
Sarnia			1		1		4	4
London			1		2		2	
Huron-Perth		1				1	6	
Ingersoll	1			2	1		3	5
TOTAL	2	1	3	10	5	3	25	26

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