

## Diocese of Beaumont

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Beaumont, TX 77701-2899



Office of the Bishop

### DECREE

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The "good of souls" is my primary motive behind this decree; that is, the spiritual and pastoral benefit of the people through a merged parish that is a more vibrant Catholic community of faith, hope, and love.

This decree is based upon numerous factors, but the most significant are listed below.

1. The parish membership of St. John's Parish, Port Arthur, has decreased significantly over the past few decades, and there is not a significant influx of new parishioners, especially young families to assure the future of the parish. Because of Hurricanes Rita (2005) and Ike (2008), and now Tropical Storm Harvey (Aug. 2017) which caused historic flooding, there is a movement of population out of Port Arthur, which has affected this parish. The number of programs and ministries that was provided in the parish before Harvey was minimal, and employing staff and finding qualified volunteers to assist in the parish have been a constant struggle over the past several years.
2. According to the 2016-2017 Parish Profile report that was submitted by the pastor this past August, St. John's had 2 weekend Masses, and a total of approximately 120 people attended. In the Parish Profile, the pastor reported the following:
  - a. There were 2 infant baptisms and zero (0) child/youth or adult baptisms.
  - b. There is no RCIA in the parish.
  - c. There was one First Communion and no Confirmations or weddings.
  - d. There are approximately 19 students in the religious education program.
  - e. The majority of parishioners are elderly, and many cannot drive at night.
  - f. Only about 15% of parishioners are employed; most are retired.
  - g. Out of 9 parish staff members, not including the pastor, only one is paid for 4 hrs. a week, and one is paid for one day a week. All others, including the parish secretary, are volunteers.
  - h. The pastor recommended that a dialogue be opened up to reflect on the future of the parish.
3. Since the historic flooding from Hurricane/Tropical Storm Harvey at the end of August, 2017, many of St. John's parishioners have been attending Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish or St. James Parish, where they have been welcomed. Some have volunteered to assist in liturgical celebrations. A very small number have attended St. Therese, Little Flower Parish. Many families evacuated the area and have not yet returned, because their homes were flooded. Some may not return at all. The parish was devastated by Harvey—all the parish buildings, as well as the homes of parishioners, sustained massive flooding.
4. The damages from "Harvey" are estimated to be \$1,172,162. While insurance will cover most of the damages, St. John parish will have to pay approximately \$12,500 to \$30,000. Given the proximity of Port Arthur to the Gulf of Mexico, the parish remains at risk for significant damages from future hurricanes.
5. There are other parishes within the proximity of St. John Parish that can provide sacramental and pastoral care for its parishioners. From St. John's it is:  
6 miles to Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish in Port Arthur  
6 miles to St. James Parish in Port Arthur  
3.3 miles to St. Therese, Little Flower Parish in Port Arthur (Port Acres).

6. The Parish Council and other leaders of the parish met on January 24, 2018, during which the pastor discussed the situation of the parish and the possibility of merging with another parish. On February 1, 2018, Bishop Guillory conducted a meeting with St. John's parishioners. Approximately 62 people attended to hear the Bishop and to ask questions. On March 7, 2018, Bishop Guillory again met with parishioners, and approximately 50 people attended.

Considering the above factors, and after the required canonical consultation with the Presbyteral Council, I have concluded that merging St. John Parish into Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish is the prudent decision to make for the good of the faithful. The merger will promote a stronger and more viable Catholic parish community.

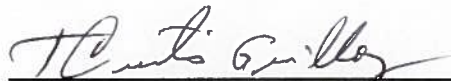
**Therefore, I DECREE that St. John Parish be merged into Sacred Heart-St. Mary Parish, effective April 1, 2018. The new name of the merged parish will be SACRED HEART PARISH. Fr. Sampson Etim, M.S.P. will be the Pastor.**

In accord with Canons 121-123 of the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Rite Catholic Church, all of the assets, liabilities, temporal goods, and property of the original St. John Parish will be transferred to the merged Sacred Heart Parish. In the use of goods and in the fulfillment of obligations transferred to the merged parish, the intentions of founders and donors must be faithfully fulfilled. Most of the proceeds from FEMA and the diocesan insurance for St. John's will be placed in an endowment in the Diocesan Foundation, and the income generated will help to fund the ministries and pastoral programs of the merged parish.

In addition, the previous boundaries of each original parish will be combined and become the territorial boundaries of Sacred Heart Parish. These boundaries are defined by a directional explanation, as well as a map, which are attached.

My decree is issued this date and will be promulgated by insertion in the weekend bulletin of the Parish, by publication in the diocesan newspaper--the *East Texas Catholic*, and by placement on the diocesan website.

Given on the 8th day of March, 2018, at the Curia of the Diocese of Beaumont.



Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D.  
Bishop of Beaumont



Sister Esther Dunegan, IWBS  
Chancellor/Notary



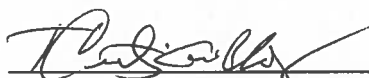
**Boundaries for  
Sacred Heart Parish  
Port Arthur, Texas**

Merger Effective April 1, 2018

Beginning at the Sabine-Neches Ship Channel and Florida Avenue, following northwest on Florida Avenue to 20<sup>th</sup> Street;  
then southwest (left) for one block on 20<sup>th</sup> Street;  
then northwest along the line of Marshall Avenue to Highway 73;  
then northeast along Highway 73 to Highway 69/96/287;  
then northwest on Highway 69/96/287 to proposed 75<sup>th</sup> street;  
then southwest on proposed 75<sup>th</sup> street to West Port Arthur Road;  
then southeast on West Port Arthur Road to 58<sup>th</sup> Street;  
then southwest and west on 58<sup>th</sup> Street to Taylor Bayou;  
then southeast along Taylor Bayou to Texas State Highway 87;  
then southeast on Highway 87 to the Sabine-Neches Ship Channel;  
then northeast to Texaco Island and along the Sabine-Neches Ship Channel to Florida Avenue.

Because Martin Luther King Jr. Drive (Highway 82) and the Martin Luther King Jr. Bridge connecting Pleasure Island are located within these boundaries, all of Pleasure Island is under the jurisdiction of Sacred Heart Parish.

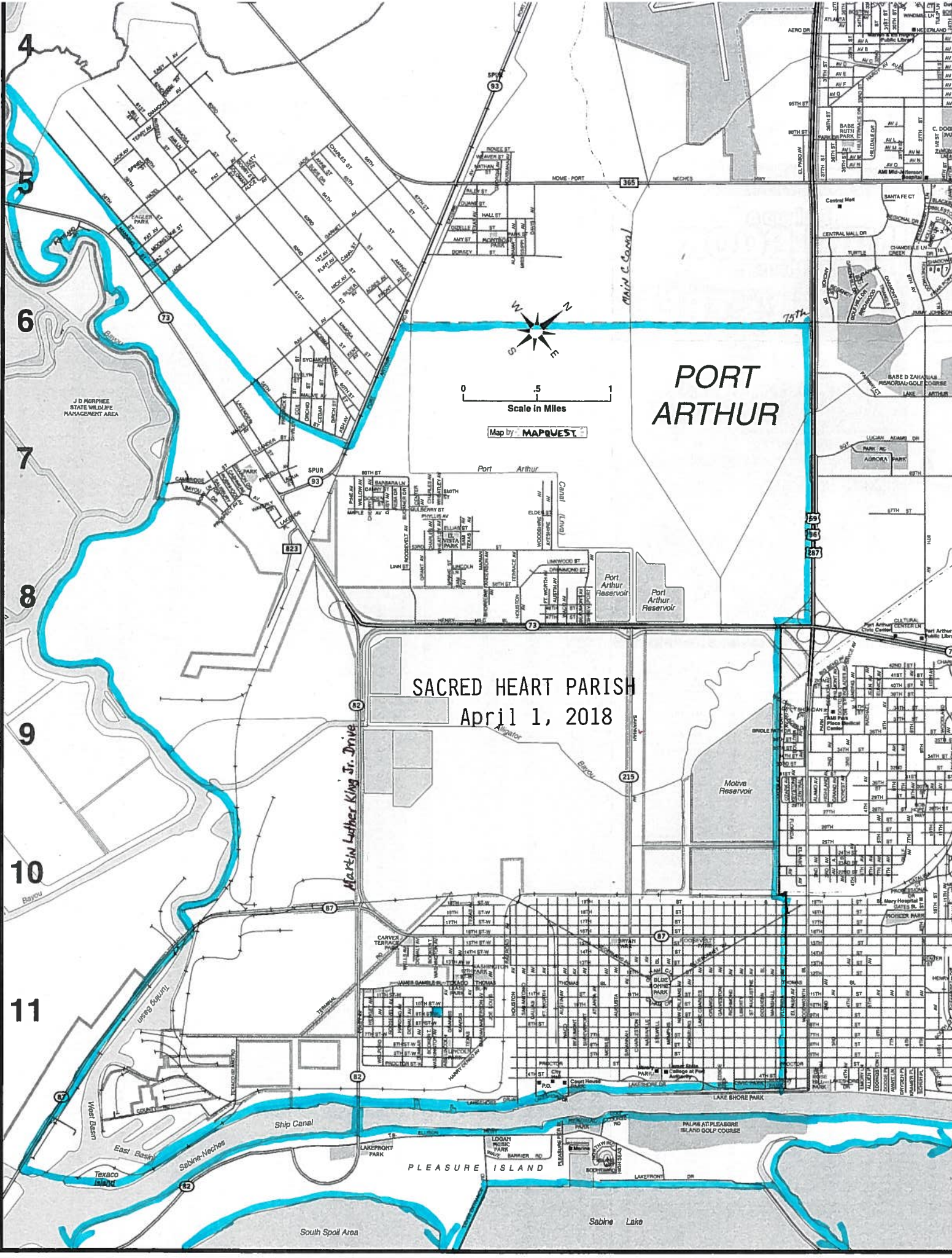
Approved:



Most Rev. Curtis J. Guillory, S.V.D., D.D.  
Bishop of Beaumont

Date:

March 8, 2018



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# PORT ARTHUR

SACRED HEART PARISH  
April 1, 2018

Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

MAIN C. CANAL

PLEASURE ISLAND

Sabine Lake

South Spoil Area

J D MORPHREE STATE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA

Motiva Reservoir

Port Arthur Reservoir

Port Arthur Reservoir

Scale in Miles

Map by MAPQUEST



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