



Greetings Mary, Queen of Angels Parishioners,

I have been amazed at how well our parishioners have come together since Beacons of Light began on July 1, 2022. I realize the sacrifices and challenges we have faced along the way, but I am happy to see the growth in our community and the vibrancy I sense at our Sunday Masses.

Since we are now worshipping together at a single location on Sundays, this past March, I shared with parishioners the possibility of bringing our four churches – Immaculate Conception, Sacred Heart, Saint Michael, and Saint Mary – together into one legal entity/parish. This change will align and simplify administration of our churches to better reflect the unity within our parish family, enabling our priests and parish staff to focus more energy and resources on areas of ministry that serve the needs of our people, including youth ministry, adult education, marriage preparation and RCIA.

The concept was supported by our Parish Pastoral Council and each of our Finance Councils. Parishioner feedback received during a town hall meeting and through reactions to bulletin inserts have also been positive. This change will not impact the schedule for Masses or availability of the sacraments across our family of churches.

To create the new legal entity, we submitted a proposal to the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese (a council of priest representatives to the Archbishop) and received the approval of the Archbishop. The Archbishop has now issued the enclosed 'Decree of Amalgamation.'

I want to reiterate that this change does not mean that one church is 'taking over' another church. All four of our churches are coming together cooperatively to form a new parish family that will serve the needs of the entire Champaign County community. Our leadership, including the Parish Council and our new Finance Committee, will be comprised of members from all four churches. Each of our churches has a unique identity and history that we value and desire to preserve.

We will use the existing tax ID number of St. Mary since our office, payroll, and many other things are already set up that way. But again, following the amalgamation, our resources and councils will serve the needs of the entire Champaign County parish.

Father Kohn, our Parish Council and Finance Council representatives, our parish staff and I continue to welcome any comments or feedback. We are confident that this change will help our parish to better provide for the needs and spiritual growth of our parish family into the future!

In Christ,

Father Shawn Landenwitch



DECREE

OF THE AMALGAMATION OF

**SAINT MICHAEL PARISH,
MECHANICSBURG, OHIO,
IMMACULATE CONCEPTION PARISH,
NORTH LEWISBURG, OHIO,
AND
SACRED HEART PARISH,
SAINT PARIS, OHIO,**

INTO

**SAINT MARY PARISH,
URBANA, OHIO**

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Saint Michael Parish was founded in 1865; the present church building was completed in 1888. Immaculate Conception Parish was founded in 1869, and its present church building was completed in 1870. Sacred Heart Parish was founded in 1868; the present church was completed in 1882. Saint Mary Parish was founded in 1853, its current church building being completed in 1966. Since July 2013 all four parishes have been served by a common pastor. Over the years modifications have been made to the administrative structure of the four parishes such that they are now served by a shared central office, with staff members supporting the functions of all four parishes. Beginning in September 2023, a new weekend Mass schedule was implemented which brings parishioners from all four parishes together for worship at Saint Mary Church. The parishes are served by a common pastoral council composed of members from each parish. Each parish maintains a separate finance council; however, these councils work closely together to manage cost sharing across the parishes. Many discussions have taken place between the pastor, the other clergy and lay staff serving the parishes, the parishioners, and the appropriate archdiocesan offices regarding the best way to meet the needs of the faithful and evangelize in accordance with the mandate of the Lord Jesus.

The pastor of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, Sacred Heart, and Saint Mary Parishes with the recommendation of the members of the common pastoral council and finance councils of all four parishes, has proposed an extinctive union in which Saint Michael Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, and Sacred Heart Parish are amalgamated into Saint Mary Parish. The pastor and people of these parishes see this arrangement as a fitting means to both best meet the pastoral needs of the faithful and most effectively

manage the resources at their disposal. Having consulted the Presbyteral Council of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati on July 29, 2024, I have determined that the pastoral mission of the Catholic Church in this portion of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati would best be served through such an amalgamation of Saint Michael Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, and Sacred Heart Parish into Saint Mary Parish.

The following factors provide the just cause which motivates this decision:

- 1) priest allocation has made it impossible to have regularly scheduled weekend Masses at all four churches; parishioners have been united in Sunday worship since Mass schedule changes were implemented in September 2023; additionally, all religious education classes, adult faith formation programs, youth ministry, and sacramental preparation courses take place at the Saint Mary campus;
- 2) the capacity of Saint Mary Church (400) sufficiently meets the needs of the combined parish communities; furthermore, sacramental practice at Saint Michael Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish and Sacred Heart Parish has significantly declined;
- 3) the collections for Saint Michael Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, and Sacred Heart Parish have dropped significantly since the new Mass schedule was implemented; the collections for Saint Mary Parish have increased. Immaculate Conception Parish and Saint Michael Parish have no reasonable path forward for independent financial sustainability, and Sacred Heart Parish's weekly collections have dropped below the amount necessary to cover their percentage of shared cost allocations. The finances of a single parish post-amalgamation would be sustainable and give the parish stability which is not the case under the current canonical structure;
- 4) the current financial agreements for shared expenses among the parishes are complicated and create a significant administrative burden for staff and clergy; uniting the parishes by amalgamation would simplify the determination of financial allocation and responsibility;
- 5) the parishioners of these four parishes have worked effectively over the past several years to establish a high level of ministerial and social cooperation and have begun to use resources more effectively between them;
- 6) the administrative burdens on clergy and staff members would be reduced by such a unification;
- 7) Saint Michael Parish and Immaculate Conception Parish, and Sacred Heart Parish to a lesser extent, currently depend on a diminishing volunteer pool to maintain the churches, and do not have sufficient independent income to pay maintenance costs. Working together in a single parish structure would facilitate more effective maintenance of all associated church buildings;
- 8) this amalgamation into one parish will foster stability in the local Catholic Church by putting into place a parish configuration which can remain secure into the future; and
- 9) this proposal would provide the opportunity for enhanced collaborative ministry and better utilization of clergy and lay personnel and allow for greater emphasis to be placed on evangelization.

Taking into account the supreme law of the Church, i.e. the salvation of souls (cf. canon 1752), it is my belief that this action will better serve the Church's mission to evangelize and allow for more efficient administration of the temporal goods of the faithful.

Therefore, in virtue of my office as diocesan bishop, in accordance with canon 515 §2 of the *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby decree the extinctive union by amalgamation of Saint Michael Parish (Mechanicsburg), Immaculate Conception Parish (North Lewisburg), and Sacred Heart Parish (Saint Paris) into Saint Mary Parish (Urbana).

The intentions of the founders and donors regarding the temporal goods and patrimonial rights proper to the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart must be respected. Furthermore, the patrimonial goods, rights, and assets, including *bona sacra* and religious articles, as well as the obligations and liabilities of the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart shall belong to Saint Mary Parish, according to the norm of law (canon 121). The pastor of Saint Mary Parish will be responsible for the administration of all the temporal goods, in accordance with the universal law of the Church and the particular law of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.

The territory of Saint Mary Parish shall include the territory of the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart. The new boundaries of Saint Mary Parish shall be:

On the north: beginning in Shelby County at the intersection of North Alcony Conover Road and Ohio State Route 29, continuing east on Ohio State Route 29 through Rosewood to the intersection with Ohio State Route 560; from this intersection north along an airline to the Logan County border; east along the Logan County border to a point due south of New Jerusalem; north along an airline to New Jerusalem; then east along an airline through North Greenfield to the border of Union County;

On the east: south along the border of Union County to the Champaign County border; east along the Champaign County border to the border with Union County; south along the Union County border to Madison County; south along the border of Madison County to the border of Clark County;

On the south: west along the Clark County border to Miami County; then south and west on East Casstown Clark Road to the intersection with North Alcony Conover Road;

On the west: north on North Alcony Conover Road to the point of beginning.

I further decree that Saint Mary Church will be the parochial church and that Saint Michael Church, Immaculate Conception Church, and Sacred Heart Church will all continue to function as subsidiary churches.

The sacramental records of the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart shall be closed and remain in the care and custody of Saint Mary Parish to be properly preserved and safeguarded. Any sacraments which take place at Saint Michael Church, Immaculate Conception Church, and Sacred Heart Church are to be recorded in the sacramental registers of Saint Mary Parish with proper notations.

The parishioners of the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart are to associate themselves with their new proper territorial parish, Saint Mary Parish, or another parish of their choice in accordance with universal and archdiocesan law.

The rich history and legacy of the former parishes of Saint Michael, Immaculate Conception, and Sacred Heart are to be held in high esteem and rightly honored. Furthermore, the people of Saint Mary Parish, under the leadership of their pastor, are to strive diligently, with God's help, to form a unified, harmonious congregation dedicated to fulfilling the mission that Jesus Christ committed to his disciples.

This decree becomes effective on November 1, 2024, and is to be published immediately such that all members of Saint Michael Parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, Sacred Heart Parish, and Saint Mary Parish will be properly notified. Recourse may be made against this decree in accord with the norms of canon law.

Given from the Chancery of the Archdiocese,
Cincinnati, Ohio,
on the 23rd day of August in the Year of Our Lord 2024,
Memorial of Saint Rose of Lima.



Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr
Archbishop of Cincinnati

SEAL



Reverend Jason A. Williams, J.C.L.
Chancellor