

February 19, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With this letter, I am attaching the decree that merges Saint Dennis Parish in Madison and Saint Peter Parish in Madison into a brand-new parish, Queen of Apostles.

This moment comes for your new parish following years of consultation and preparation with our Into the Deep Strategic Plan begun back in the spring of 2022. It brings me great joy that your new parish is dedicated to Mary under the title Queen of Apostles and that it becomes a reality on the Feast of the Chair of Saint Peter the Apostle, the patron of one of your churches. These two figures, Mary and Saint Peter, give us wonderful examples of our mission as followers of Jesus. Saint Peter, inspired by faith, was able to state that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God.” This statement of faith was confirmed as Saint Peter witnessed our Lord’s Passion, Death, and Resurrection from the dead. He was then inspired by the Holy Spirit, poured out on him, our Blessed Mother, and the other Apostles at the great moment of Pentecost, to give witness to those saving realities, even to the point of giving his life as a martyr in Rome. This same gift of the Spirit, which has been given to all the members of the Church, allows us, like Mary and Saint Peter, to proclaim that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. As your new parish is created, my prayer is that you can all become faithful evangelists spreading the Good News of God’s love. Making Christ known and loved by all people is at the root of why we undertook Into the Deep in the first place – it was so we could more effectively “make disciples” of Jesus Christ. This has been one of the most important parts of my episcopal ministry here in the Diocese of Madison, and I pray that your new parish will truly serve as a center of holiness and missionary zeal leading people to Christ and His Church.

I am also happy to appoint Rev. Gary Krahenbuhl as your pastor and to confirm Rev. Joseph Michael Tarigopula as your parochial vicar and Deacon David Hendrickson as parish deacon assigned to serve your new parish. This dedicated group of clergy, along with your parish staff, has already worked hard to prepare for this moment, and I fully trust that the Lord will guide their ministry in the weeks, months, and years to come.

Please know of my prayers for all of you, and I will look forward to celebrating this milestone when I come to install Rev. Krahenbuhl as your pastor in the near future. May Mary, Queen of Apostles, inspire us to continually seek Jesus and follow Him more closely!

In Christ,

+2 J. H. 2

✠ Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison

Enclosure

O F F I C E O F T H E B I S H O P

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*Donaldus Iosephus
Miseratione Divina et Apostolicae Sedis Gratia
Episcopus Madisonensis*

DECREE OF CANONICAL MERGER

**Uniting Saint Dennis Parish
and Saint Peter Parish (Madison) into**

QUEEN OF APOSTLES PARISH

in Dane County in the State of Wisconsin

Protocol No.: 020-2025

WHEREAS “the diocesan Bishop should be concerned to organize the arrangement of parishes in ways adapted to the care of souls, according to an inclusive and organic vision with wide pastoral outreach,” and “If the good of the faithful so requires, the Bishop should proceed, after consulting the diocesan presbyteral council, to alter territorial boundaries, to divide parishes that are too large, to merge small parishes, to establish new parishes or non-territorial centers for pastoral service in the community, or even to reorganize completely the arrangement of parishes within a particular city” (Directory *Apostolorum successores*, 214); and

WHEREAS “specific attention should be given to the following aspects, all of which form part of the model of parish life, thereby increasing pastoral effectiveness: Priestly collaboration...; Participation of the faithful (clerics, religious and laity)...; Parish associations...; [and] Centers of formation” (Ibid., 211); and

WHEREAS, however, the aforementioned aspects have suffered in the current general situation of the Diocese of Madison due to a shortage of clergy, difficulties in recruiting competent staff and volunteers to conduct necessary pastoral programming, and declining participation of the faithful in the sacramental and charitable activities of the Church for various reasons (e.g., increasing secularization, decreasing population in certain rural areas of the Diocese, the aftereffects of the Covid pandemic, etc.), prompting a comprehensive Diocesan strategic planning initiative undertaken in the spring of 2022, in consultation with a number of priests and competent lay

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faithful, to consider statistical data regarding demographics, Mass attendance, reception of the sacraments, numbers of youth in Catholic schools and faith formation programs, priest resources, and financial giving; and

WHEREAS the results of the strategic study were collated and shared first with priests, deacons, religious, and key lay people from August through October 2022 and then with the entire Diocese online and in a special edition of the *Catholic Herald*, the Diocesan newspaper, dated 10 November 2022, containing information in both English and Spanish; and

WHEREAS the print and online publications of the study included a proposed map restructuring the parishes of the Diocese and invited all interested parties to offer feedback, suggested changes, or questions during a period spanning from November 2022 through December 2022; and

WHEREAS the general factors prompting the strategic planning initiative were found to be operative in the specific circumstances of Saint Dennis Parish and of Saint Peter Parish, both located in Madison, in a manner and degree suggesting that the pastoral care of the faithful within those parishes would be much more effectively and expediently achieved through the union of the respective parishes; and

WHEREAS the initial proposal suggested merging Saint Dennis and Saint Peter Parishes in Madison with their existing parish boundaries, the feedback obtained through the process of consultation noted that the newly proposed parish would not serve a contiguous area since the parish was divided in two parts by the parish territory belonging to the newly named Cathedral of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux; thus, discussions were begun to not only merge Saint Dennis and Saint Peter Parishes, but also to modify the existing boundaries of the newly named Cathedral so that the new parish formed from the merger of Saint Dennis and Saint Peter would cover a contiguous area, and the Cathedral would serve a more specialized portion of the downtown and near-east side of the City of Madison; and

WHEREAS in March of 2023 the parishes of Saint Dennis and Saint Peter in Madison were grouped together to become “Pastorate 23,” both to coordinate pastoral action in the short term and further to discern the prudence of an eventual merger, and on 1 July 2023 the Reverend Gary Krahenbuhl was named Parochial Administrator for each of the respective parishes of the pastorate; and

WHEREAS, in order to gather the necessary information and proofs concerning each proposed alteration of parish structures in the Into the Deep Strategic Plan in accord with canons 515 §2 and 50 *CIC*, the Reverend Tait Schroeder was mandated by the undersigned Bishop of Madison in a Decree dated 29 September 2023 (Prot. No. 127-2023) to collect and prepare information for the Presbyteral Council’s consultation; and

WHEREAS the Reverend Tait Schroeder met with the Parochial Administrator and the Parochial Vicar of the parishes of Pastorate 23 on 29 November 2023 at Saint Dennis Parish to hear their opinions about the advisability of merging the parishes into a single parish; and

WHEREAS the Parochial Administrator and Parochial Vicar were in favor of merging the two parishes into a new parish as proposed; and

WHEREAS, on the same date at the same parish church, a meeting of key representatives from various bodies (pastoral councils, finance councils, civil trustees, school families, permanent deacons, etc.) from the parishes of Pastorate 23 was held to hear comments, concerns, and opinions pertaining to the potential merger of the parishes; and

WHEREAS the findings from these meetings were presented by the Reverend Tait Schroeder to the undersigned Bishop in consultation with the Presbyteral Council at a special session held on 14 December 2023; and

WHEREAS the Presbyteral Council, discussing the future of the Cathedral of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux and the issues of the parish boundaries for both the Cathedral and Pastorate 23, recommended to the undersigned Bishop of Madison, in a unanimous consultative vote with two abstentions, that Saint Dennis and Saint Peter Parish (Madison) should be merged as proposed with a modification to the boundaries of the new parish and the Cathedral, such that the territory north of State Highway 30/Aberg Avenue belonging to the Cathedral, which consists primarily of commercial, educational, and transportation facilities (i.e., the East Towne Mall, Madison Area Technical College, and the Dane County Regional Airport), would become part of the newly merged parish, thus making the territory contiguous and focusing the ministerial area of the Cathedral on the downtown and near-east side of Madison; and

CONSIDERING the following specific reasons providing the required just cause for merging the two parishes into a new parish:

- 1) **Demographic changes and decline in attendance.** As with the majority of parishes in the Diocese, Saint Dennis and Saint Peter (Madison) have seen steady declines in the numbers of those participating in Sunday Masses and receiving the sacraments. At Saint Dennis in 2005, there were 2881 registered households in the parish and an average weekend Mass attendance of around 2150 communicants. By 2021, there were only 1725 registered households in the parish with an average weekend Mass attendance of around 900 communicants. Despite the large size of Saint Dennis Parish, the number of households and communicants declined by approximately fifty (50) percent or more. As for Saint Peter (Madison), the number of registered households decreased by about 300 from a high of 1350 households in 2005 to 1004 households in 2021. Participation at Mass declined more dramatically at Saint Peter during that timeframe, however. In 2005, there were approximately 1100 people attending Mass on a weekend, but by 2021, less than 450 people attended weekend Masses. This trend is also reflected in the number of baptisms and other sacraments. Saint Dennis averaged around 110 infant baptisms in the years between 2000 and 2005, but by 2021, there were only 31 baptisms, around a seventy (70) percent decrease. Saint Peter went from an average of 45 infant baptisms in the period between 2000 and 2005, but there were only 8 baptisms in 2021. These trends occurred

despite modest population growth in the area served by the two parishes. The overall population is expected to grow in the area by about 5000 people by 2032. Thus, a merger of the parishes will allow for more focused efforts at evangelization with a single pastor and combined pastoral staff to reverse those trends in an area that will experience modest population growth;

- 2) **Insufficiency of less extreme forms of collaboration.** During a previous period of diocesan pastoral planning conducted in 2005, Saint Dennis and Saint Peter parishes were engaged in dialogue with the neighboring parishes of Saint Bernard and Immaculate Heart of Mary. In the 2005 pastoral planning initiative, a desired outcome for those parishes was to work more closely together to have more shared staffing resources, especially to help with catechetical and youth ministry efforts. Despite the plans to collaborate more effectively among the four parishes, those efforts did not bear significant fruit as each parish maintained its separate programming. Thus, these attempts at collaborative efforts and desired staffing goals over the past nineteen years were not sufficient to stem the decline mentioned above without unified vision and leadership;
- 3) **More effective outreach to youth.** In the previous planning efforts of 2005 as well as during the recent listening session held to hear people's thoughts about a potential merger, a major area for growth was to more effectively engage with young people, especially in middle and high school. Combining parishes will offer opportunities to consider additional staff dedicated to youth ministry and outreach. Having a greater number of young people to engage in formation events, small groups, retreats, mission trips, etc., also fosters better participation since young people can engage with other members of their peer group that may have been less prevalent at an individual parish;
- 4) **Promotion and strengthening of the school and other administrative or consultative bodies.** While the parochial school at Saint Dennis has been relatively stable, Saint Peter Parish does not have its own Catholic school. While this parish community does have a higher percentage of older parishioners, the merger of the two parishes will allow for children from both former parishes to have the opportunity to enroll in a Catholic school. Some parents from Saint Peter Parish have already enrolled their children at Saint Dennis, but this merger will make attendance easier administratively since the parishes will share common funds and administration. Additionally, being able to draw upon a larger parish population could potentially increase attendance at Saint Dennis School. In regards to administration and other parish bodies or groups, a larger pool of parishioners to serve will also enhance the various ministries at both churches. One of the areas that will be enhanced by the merger is making the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils more robust;
- 5) **More effective distribution of clergy to achieve better pastoral care.** Merging the parishes allows for the pastor to have the parochial care of a single parish as described in canon 526 §1 *CIC*, since the Diocese of Madison is currently experiencing an insufficient number of priests fulfilling all of the requisites of canon 521 *CIC* required for being appointed as pastor. The parishes in question, even beyond their geographical proximity, have affinities and complementarities in their culture, demographics, spiritual patrimony, and other areas, such that their pastoral care could be more effectively provided within a single parish by a single pastor, assisted by one or more parochial vicars, than separately by one or more pastors who are overburdened with the care of several parishes or who

perhaps fall short of the qualities that characterize a suitable pastor. Additionally, merging the parishes in question will reduce the administrative burdens on clergy and staff members that come with having two distinct parishes;

- 6) **More stable organizational structure in service of better evangelization.** Unifying these parishes will provide a stable organizational structure that will serve this urban area, ultimately fostering the good of souls by realigning resources for the sake of the essential mission of the Church to “go make disciples,” a central theme and desire of the undersigned’s episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Madison; and

OBSERVING the precepts of canons 515 §2 and 50 *CIC*, the undersigned Bishop of Madison hereby

DECREES

- 1) That Saint Dennis Parish in Madison, located in Dane County, and Saint Peter Parish in Madison, located in Dane County, are hereby joined by extinctive union to form Queen of Apostles Parish, a new parish having juridic personality in accord with canons 121 and 515 §3 *CIC*; and
- 2) That all of the goods and patrimonial rights of Saint Dennis Parish and Saint Peter Parish (Madison), along with the obligations proper to each, are hereby transferred to Queen of Apostles Parish, respecting the intention of donors and acquired rights for specific funds transferred to the new parish in accord with canon 121 *CIC*; and
- 3) That, despite some of the parish territory outlined below for Queen of Apostles Parish in number four (4) being taken from the parish territory of the Cathedral of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux in accord with canon 122 *CIC*, the patrimonial goods and rights as well as the debts and other obligations will not be significantly altered for either the new Queen of Apostles Parish or the Cathedral of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux by the modification of boundaries since the bulk of the ceded territory includes non-residential areas dedicated to commerce, education, and transportation, and there are no common ecclesiastical goods that are not divisible in the territory; thus, the undersigned Bishop of Madison determines that there need not be any exchange of common, divisible patrimonial goods between Queen of Apostles Parish and the Cathedral of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux; and
- 4) That the territorial boundaries of Queen of Apostles Parish shall be as follows:
 - a. On the North: Starting at the intersection of State Highway 19 and the eastern bank of the Yahara River, then continuing east along State Highway 19 to its intersection with U.S. Highway 51;
 - b. On the East: Starting at the intersection of State Highway 19 and U.S. Highway 51, then continuing south along U.S. Highway 51 to its intersection with Hanson Road, then continuing east along Hanson Road to its intersection with Interstate 90, then continuing southeast along Interstate 90 to its intersection with the southern section line of Section 22 of the Town of Burke (Dane County – S22, T8N, R10E), then continuing east along the southern section line of Section 22 of the Town of Burke to the intersection of Burke Road and City View Drive, then continuing east along Burke Road to its intersection with Reiner Road, then continuing south along

Reiner Road until its intersection with County Highway T, then crossing County Highway T and continuing south along Sprecher Road to its intersection with East Buckeye Road;

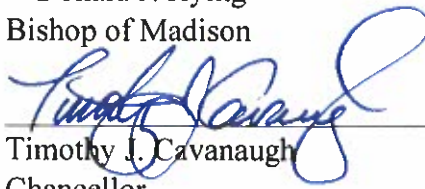
- c. On the South: Starting at the intersection of Sprecher Road and East Buckeye Road, then continuing west along East Buckeye Road until it ends and becomes Buckeye Road, then continuing west along Buckeye Road to its intersection with Monona Drive, then continuing north along Monona Drive until it ends and becomes Atwood Avenue, then continuing northwest along Atwood Avenue to its intersection with Starkweather Creek, then continuing northeast along Starkweather Creek to its intersection with State Highway 30, then continuing west along State Highway 30 until it ends and becomes Aberg Avenue, then continuing west along Aberg Avenue until it ends and becomes Maple Wood Lane, then continuing due west in a line along Maple Wood Lane to the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad tracks;
 - d. On the West: Starting at the intersection of Maple Wood Lane and the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad tracks, then continuing northwest along the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad tracks to the northeast corner of Warner Park Beach, then crossing Woodward Drive and continuing southwest in a line along the park's northernmost border to the Lake Mendota shoreline, then continuing west along the Lake Mendota shoreline until reaching Harper Road, then continuing from the Lake Mendota shoreline due north in a line along Harper Road to its intersection with Troy Drive, then continuing east along Troy Drive to its intersection with the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad tracks, then continuing northwest along the Wisconsin and Southern Railroad tracks to their intersection with the eastern bank of the Yahara River, then continuing northeast along the eastern bank of the Yahara River to its intersection with State Highway 19; and
- 5) That the patronal feast of the parish is to be observed on the Optional Memorial of Mary, Queen of Apostles, which falls on the Saturday after the Ascension, and should be celebrated in the churches of the parish with the rank of Feast in accord with number 52, c) of the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar*, ranking at number 8, e) on the *Table of Liturgical Days*, fittingly using the prayers and readings from Mass number eighteen (18) from *The Collection of Masses of the Blessed Virgin Mary*; and
 - 6) That Saint Dennis Church in Madison is designated as the parochial church of Queen of Apostles Parish, while Saint Peter Church in Madison shall serve as a subsidiary church where divine worship may take place to serve the spiritual needs of the faithful, retaining, however, the baptismal font, the reservation of the Blessed Sacrament, and other such rights and uses as are proper to a parish church, insofar as the law allows and the pastor sees fit; and
 - 7) That provision for the office of pastor, along with instructions about his taking possession of the new parish, as well as the assignment of other clergy to serve the parish, will be effected in separate decrees; and
 - 8) That, in accord with canon 535 *CIC*, the sacramental registers of the former parishes of Saint Dennis and Saint Peter shall be closed to any new entries and shall remain in the care

and custody of Queen of Apostles Parish to be properly preserved and safeguarded at the new main parish office. A new set of sacramental records is to be established for Queen of Apostles Parish, and sacraments taking place in any of the churches of the parish are to be recorded in the new sacramental registers of Queen of Apostles Parish in accord with universal and diocesan norms; and

- 9) That Queen of Apostles Parish is to obtain its own ecclesiastical seal in accord with canon 535 §3 *CIC*; and
- 10) That a pastoral council and finance council are to be established within the new parish in accord with universal and diocesan norms as soon as possible following the effective date of this decree; and
- 11) That the Chancellor is to ensure that this decree, along with other ecclesiastical documents, information, and minutes of the Presbyteral Council concerning this extinctive union and modification of parish boundaries, as well as relevant documents pertaining to the civil incorporation of the new parish with the State of Wisconsin are carefully preserved in the Diocesan archive in accord with the norm of canons 486 and 491 §1 *CIC*, without prejudice to the norm of canon 535 §4 *CIC*; and
- 12) That this decree takes effect 22 February 2025, the liturgical Feast of the Chair of Peter; and
- 13) That the decree is to be notified on 22 February 2025 by its publication on the Vicar General's page of the Diocesan website and by posting a print copy or copies in each of the churches of the new parish, with reference made to the decree by an announcement at Masses held at the respective churches, in the bulletins, or by other suitable means; and
- 14) That any eventual recourse against this decree can be taken in accord with the norms of canons 1734 *CIC* and following.

Given at the Chancery of the Diocese of Madison on the 19th day of February in the Year of Our Lord 2025.


✠ Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison


Timothy J. Cavanaugh
Chancellor

SEAL