



September 23, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

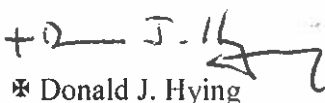
With this letter, I am attaching the decree that merges Saint Joseph Parish in Dodgeville, Saints Anthony and Philip Parish in Highland, Saints Mary and Paul Parish in Mineral Point, and Saint Thomas Parish in Montfort into a brand-new parish, Saint Pius of Pietrelcina.

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 to issue the decree creating your new parish on the feast day of Saint Pius (more commonly known as Padre Pio). This saintly Capuchin friar, born to a peasant family in the late 1800s, is known for his many extraordinary spiritual gifts. He physically bore the wounds of Jesus in his body (the stigmata) and was the first priest to be given such a gift by the Lord. He was also known to bilocate and read souls in the confessional. Despite all of these extraordinary spiritual gifts, he was a priest in love with Jesus in the Eucharist and with his mercy in the confessional. These are gifts that all of us are called to treasure, even if we do not share in Padre Pio's unique spiritual gifts. We are also called to help others know and love these treasures of the Lord and his Church. 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. Tafadzwa Kushamba as your pastor and to confirm Rev. Alex Carmel as parochial vicar to serve your new parish. These dedicated priests have 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 Fr. Tafadzwa as your pastor on November 2. May Saint Pius of Pietrelcina inspire us to live by his words, “Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer.”

In Christ,

+ 

✠ 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 Joseph Parish, Saints Anthony and Philip Parish,
Saints Mary and Paul Parish, and Saint Thomas Parish into**

SAINT PIUS OF PIETRELCINA PARISH

in Iowa and Grant Counties in the State of Wisconsin

Protocol No.: 250923-DB01

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 faithful, to consider statistical data regarding demographics, Mass attendance, reception of the

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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 Joseph Parish in Dodgeville, located in Iowa County, Saints Anthony and Philip Parish in Highland, located in Iowa and Grant Counties, Saints Mary and Paul Parish in Mineral Point, located in Iowa County, and Saint Thomas Parish in Montfort, located in Iowa and Grant Counties, 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 Saints Anthony and Philip Parish in Highland and Saint Thomas Parish in Montfort with two other parishes to the west (Corpus Christi in Boscobel and Queen of All Saints in Fennimore) and merging Saint Joseph Parish in Dodgeville and Saints Mary and Paul Parish in Mineral Point with two parishes to the east (Saint Bernadette in Ridgeway and Saint Isidore in Hollandale), the feedback obtained through the process of consultation suggested that certain pastoral and liturgical differences would make the merger of Highland and Montfort with Boscobel and Fennimore difficult and that other pastorate configurations were more conducive for Ridgeway and Hollandale, thus recommending having the four parishes of Dodgeville, Highland, Montfort, and Mineral Point work together as a grouping due to geographical proximity and similar pastoral priorities; and

WHEREAS in March of 2023 the aforementioned parishes were grouped together to become “Pastorate 5,” 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 Tafadzwa Kushamba was named as the initial 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 5 on 3 October 2023 at Saint Joseph Church in Dodgeville to hear their opinions about the advisability of merging the parishes into a single parish; and

WHEREAS the Parochial Administrator and Parochial Vicar were generally in favor of merging the four parishes into a new parish as proposed, although they noted the challenges faced with fewer human and financial resources and with past issues that are still unresolved in the hearts and minds of certain parishioners; and

WHEREAS, on the same date at the same location, a meeting of key representatives from various bodies (pastoral councils, finance councils, civil trustees, staff, etc.) from the parishes of Pastorate 5 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 recommended to the undersigned Bishop of Madison, in a unanimous consultative vote with one member abstaining, that Saint Joseph, Saints Anthony and Philip, Saints Mary and Paul, and Saint Thomas Parishes should be merged as proposed; and

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

- 1) **Demographic changes and decline in attendance.** As with the majority of parishes in the Diocese, the aforementioned parishes have seen steady declines in the numbers of those participating in Sunday Masses and receiving the sacraments. At Saint Joseph in Dodgeville in 2001, there were 534 registered households in the parish and an average weekend Mass attendance of around 750 people. By 2021, the number of registered households decreased to 415 families, and the average weekend Mass attendance declined to around 277 communicants. Despite Dodgeville being the largest of the parishes in the proposed merger and being located in the largest population center and county seat of Iowa County, the number of weekly communicants declined by approximately two-thirds over those twenty years. These numbers are mirrored in Mineral Point, which is the second largest population center in the parish territory. The number of registered families at Saints Mary and Paul Parish dropped by about thirty-five percent from 483 households in 2001 to 315 households in 2021. The decline in Mass attendance was slightly less pronounced than in Dodgeville with the number of weekend communions in Mineral Point falling from 600 in 2001 to about 231 in 2021, indicating a decrease of about sixty-one percent over that period. In the parish of Saints Anthony and Philip in Highland, registered families went from 422 in 2001 to 363 households in 2021, representing a decrease of approximately fourteen percent, with weekend communicants falling from 450 in 2001 to

176 in 2021, a decline of about sixty-one percent. While the registered families in Saints Anthony and Philip Parish did not decrease as sharply as Mineral Point, the Mass attendance numbers show a comparable decline. Finally, Saint Thomas in Montfort also lost approximately fifty percent in registered households and sixty-eight percent in communicants from 2001 to 2021 (279 families to 144 families and 265 Mass attendance to 86). While some of the decline in the 2021 statistics can be accounted for by the Covid pandemic at its height in 2020-2021, the trend shows a significant downturn in church participation in this area. The trend is also reflected in the number of baptisms and other sacraments celebrated in the parishes. The number of baptisms for all five parishes in 2001 was 53, whereas baptisms in 2021 only numbered 31. First Communions declined from 86 in 2001 to 39 in 2021. Finally, weddings in 2001 numbered 29, but only 15 weddings were celebrated in all five parishes in 2021. While the numbers of those participating in the life of the church decreased over the last twenty years, this area is expected to see a stable population over the next decade. The overall population in the area covered by these parishes is expected to increase by only about 450 from 17,433 people in 2022 to 17,893 inhabitants by 2032. To counter these downward participation trends, the work of evangelization will need to grow and increase in this area. Thus, a merger of the parishes will allow for more focused efforts at evangelization with a single pastor and combined pastoral staff/volunteers and programs to reverse those trends in an area that will see a stable population over the next decade;

- 2) **Insufficiency of less extreme forms of collaboration.** During a previous period of diocesan pastoral planning conducted in 2005, there were many recommendations for the parishes being combined in this extinctive union. The parishes in Dodgeville and Mineral Point were going to be kept as distinct parishes, but it was envisioned that they would link with other smaller parishes and have a single pastor for the parishes in the linkages. Saints Anthony and Philip Parish and Saint Thomas Parish had already worked together as linked parishes since the late 1990s/early 2000s. It was suggested in that round of planning that they would continue to be linked and share a pastor; however, they were encouraged at that time to consider a merger with each other and also to potentially link with Saint Joseph in Dodgeville and any other linked parishes in order to coordinate programs, liturgical schedules, and other pastoral events. Some of these recommendations were implemented, especially the continuing linkage of Highland and Montfort as well as the parish in Mineral Point linking with a neighboring parish in Belmont. Despite these measures, there were still challenges and administrative burdens in operating so many distinct parishes with shared clergy. Additionally, the desired collaboration and integrated scheduling were difficult to achieve given the separation of finances and different pastoral leadership. Thus, while mergers, linkages, and other collaborative measures were either taken or proposed, these efforts were not sufficient to alleviate the challenges to participation in the life of the Church without unified vision and leadership;
- 3) **Promotion and strengthening of the school and other administrative or consultative bodies.** While there is a parochial school at Saint Joseph's in Dodgeville, the other parishes do not have their own Catholic schools. While some of the current parish communities have a higher percentage of older parishioners, the merger of the parishes will allow for

children from all the former parishes to have the opportunity to enroll in a Catholic school. Additionally, being able to draw upon a larger overall parish population could potentially increase attendance at the school, recognizing, however, that the large distances that the parish covers could deter some potential students from attending. Increasing school enrollment and financial viability is an important pastoral priority for the parish. In 2004, Saint Joseph School had 222 students. As of the 2024-2025 academic year, the 3K through eighth grade school only had an enrollment of 123. Thus, the merger of the four parishes will allow for those interested in Catholic education to enroll in their own parish school and increase the vitality and longevity for the school by increasing enrollment. In regard to administration and other parish bodies or groups, a larger pool of parishioners to serve will also enhance the various ministries at the churches. One of the areas that will be enhanced by the merger is making the Parish Finance and Pastoral Councils more robust and focusing on the needs of all the people of the new parish, recognizing the gifts and challenges of the rural communities that will make up the new parish;

- 4) **Increased ability to address facility needs.** Bringing together four parishes with their respective churches, the school building in Dodgeville, and the various cemeteries where the faithful are buried is a challenging task. However, a collaborative approach to utilizing facilities and maintaining historic buildings where practicable is something that can be done better through the extinctive union forming this new parish. In Highland, a fire in the historic Saint Anthony's Church caused the current Saints Anthony and Philip Church to be constructed. However, the historic church of Saint Philip in Highland remains and is used occasionally. Such historic buildings need to be considered in the overall plan for utilizing buildings and maintaining them. Additionally, with the severe structural difficulties being experienced in the facilities at Montfort, solutions are needed to ensure that funds are used wisely while still providing for the spiritual needs of parishioners. A merged parish can look at these issues with a common outlook and approach suited to the needs and resources of the parishes being combined;
- 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, while they cover a large geographical territory, 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 four 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 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 Joseph Parish in Dodgeville, located in Iowa County, Saints Anthony and Philip Parish in Highland, located in Iowa and Grant Counties, Saints Mary and Paul Parish in Mineral Point, located in Iowa County, and Saint Thomas Parish in Montfort, located in Iowa and Grant Counties, are hereby joined by extinctive union to form Saint Pius of Pietrelcina 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 Joseph Parish, Saints Anthony and Philip Parish, Saints Mary and Paul Parish, and Saint Thomas Parish, along with the obligations proper to each, are hereby transferred to Saint Pius of Pietrelcina 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 the territorial boundaries of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish shall be as follows:
 - a. On the North: Starting at the intersection of County Highway Q and Stanek Road, then continuing east along Stanek Road to its intersection with Hooks Road, then continuing southeast along Hooks Road to its intersection with Farmers Ridge Road, then continuing northeast along Farmers Ridge Road to its intersection with State Highway 80, then continuing south along State Highway 80 to its intersection with County Highway P, then continuing east along County Highway P to its intersection with County Highway I, then continuing northeast along County Highway I to its intersection with County Highway II, then continuing southeast along County Highway II to its intersection with Spring Valley Road, then continuing east along Spring Valley Road to its intersection with State Highway 130, then continuing north along State Highway 130 until reaching the Wisconsin River’s southern shoreline, then continuing east along the Wisconsin River’s southern shoreline to its intersection with U.S. Highway 14, then continuing southeast along U.S. Highway 14 to its intersection with County Highway C;
 - b. On the East: Starting at the intersection of U.S. Highway 14 and County Highway C, then continuing southwest along County Highway C to its intersection with High Point Road, then continuing south along High Point Road to its intersection with Coon Rock Road, then continuing south along Coon Rock Road to its intersection with County Highway T, then continuing southwest along County Highway T to its intersection with Far Look Road, then continuing southwest along Far Look Road to its intersection with North Clay Hill Road, then continuing southwest along North Clay Hill Road to its intersection with Korback Road, then continuing west along Korback Road to its intersection with County Highway Z, then continuing

south along County Highway Z to its intersection with County Highway ZZ, then continuing southeast along County Highway ZZ to its intersection with County Highway Y, then continuing southwest along County Highway Y to its intersection with Evans Quarry Road, then continuing south along Evans Quarry Road to its intersection with County Highway Y, then continuing south along County Highway Y to its intersection with McGraw Road, then continuing south along McGraw Road to its intersection with Sunny Ridge Road, then continuing southwest along Sunny Ridge Road to its intersection with Town Line Road, then continuing south along Town Line Road to its intersection with County Highway D, then continuing south along County Highway D to its intersection with the Iowa/Lafayette County Border;

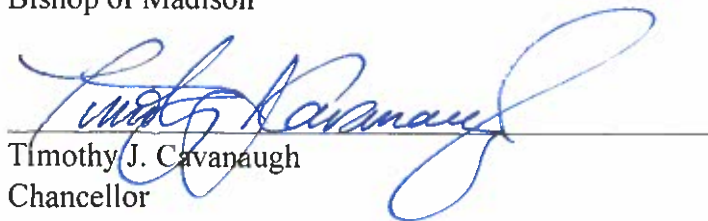
- c. On the South: Starting at the intersection of County Highway D and the Iowa/Lafayette County Border, then continuing due west along the Iowa/Lafayette County Border to its intersection with the Iowa/Lafayette/Grant County Border;
 - d. On the West: Starting at the intersection of the Iowa/Lafayette/Grant County Border, then continuing due north along the Iowa/Grant County Border to its intersection with County Highway A, then continuing west along County Highway A to its intersection with County Highway D, then continuing north along County Highway D to its intersection with County Highway E, then continuing west along County Highway E to its intersection with Annaton Road, then continuing north along Annaton Road to its intersection with Preston Road, then continuing north along Preston Road to its intersection with Cass Hollow Road, then continuing southeast along Cass Hollow Road to its intersection with County Highway G, then continuing northwest along County Highway G to its intersection with Bowers Road, then continuing southeast along Bowers Road to its intersection with Spring Valley Road, then continuing north along Spring Valley Road to its intersection with County Highway Q, then continuing northwest along County Highway Q to its intersection with Stanek Road; and
- 4) That the patronal feast of the parish is to be observed on the Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, which falls on September 23, 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*; and
 - 5) That Saint Joseph Church in Dodgeville, given its location and the presence of the parish school, is designated as the parochial church of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish, while the other churches located in the parish boundaries shall serve as subsidiary churches 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
 - 6) 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

- 7) That, in accord with canon 535 *CIC*, the sacramental registers of the former parishes of Saint Joseph, Saints Anthony and Philip, Saints Mary and Paul, and Saint Thomas shall be closed to any new entries and shall remain in the care and custody of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish to be properly preserved and safeguarded at the new main parish office. A new set of sacramental records is to be established for Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish, and sacraments taking place in any of the churches of the parish are to be recorded in the new sacramental registers of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish in accord with universal and diocesan norms; and
- 8) That Saint Pius of Pietrelcina Parish is to obtain its own ecclesiastical seal in accord with canon 535 §3 *CIC*; and
- 9) 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
- 10) 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
- 11) That this decree takes effect 27 September 2025, the liturgical Memorial of Saint Vincent de Paul, Priest; and
- 12) That the decree is to be notified on 27 September 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
- 13) 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 23rd day of September in the Year of Our Lord 2025, the liturgical Memorial of Saint Pius of Pietrelcina, the patron of the new parish.



✠ Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison



Timothy J. Cavanaugh
Chancellor

SEAL