



September 16, 2025

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With this letter, I am attaching the decree that merges Saint Joseph Parish in Edgerton, Saint Paul Parish in Evansville, Saint Augustine Parish in Footville, Holy Mother of Consolation Parish in Oregon, and Saint Ann Parish in Stoughton into a brand-new parish, Saint Cletus.

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 Saint Cletus, the Church's third pope who, like Saint Peter, was martyred for his faith and is remembered in the First Eucharistic Prayer (Roman Canon). This saint's name comes from the Greek for "one who has been called." Pope Saint Cletus was loved by God and was called to lead the Church and give witness to his faith in Jesus' Passion, death, and Resurrection in a time of paganism and persecution from the Roman Empire. While the times have changed since the first century, we still live in a moment when a great number of people do not know who Jesus is or what He has done to save us. Each of us have been called through our baptism to be witnesses to God's saving love in a world desperately in need of this Good News. 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 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 Very Rev. David Wanish as your pastor and to confirm Rev. Randy Budnar and Rev. John Bosco Pudhota as your parochial vicars to serve your new parish. Additionally, Dcn. Mark Priniski is assigned as a permanent deacon to the 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 Fr. Wanish as your pastor in October. May Saint Cletus inspire us to continually know that Jesus has called us to know and love him and to share that relationship with others.

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, Saint Paul Parish, Saint Augustine Parish,
Holy Mother of Consolation Parish, and Saint Ann Parish into**

SAINT CLETUS PARISH

in Dane and Rock Counties in the State of Wisconsin

Protocol No.: 250916-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

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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 Joseph Parish in Edgerton, located in Dane and Rock Counties, Saint Paul Parish in Evansville, located in Rock County, Saint Augustine Parish in Footville, located in Rock County, Holy Mother of Consolation Parish in Oregon, located in Dane County, and Saint Ann Parish in Stoughton, located in Dane and Rock 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 Saint Paul Parish in Evansville, Holy Mother of Consolation Parish in Oregon, and Saint Ann Parish in Stoughton into a new parish, with Saint Joseph Parish potentially merging with parishes in Cambridge and Fort Atkinson and Saint Augustine Parish possibly merging with five other parishes in the Janesville area, the feedback obtained through the process of consultation suggested that keeping the Evansville and Footville parishes in the same grouping made sense due to a long history of sharing a pastor and that bringing Edgerton into the grouping allowed for better balance with other proposed mergers not becoming too large; and

WHEREAS in March of 2023 the aforementioned parishes were grouped together to become “Pastorate 24,” 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 Thomas Kelley 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 Vicars of the parishes of Pastorate 24 on 6 November 2023 at Saint Ann Church in Stoughton to hear their opinions about the advisability of merging the parishes into a single parish; and

WHEREAS the Parochial Administrator and Parochial Vicars were generally in favor of merging the five parishes into a new parish as proposed, although they noted some challenges given the large territory for the proposed parish; 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 24 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, that Saint Joseph, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Holy Mother of Consolation, and Saint Ann Parishes should be merged as proposed; and

CONSIDERING the following specific reasons providing the required just cause for merging the five 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 Holy Mother of Consolation in 2005, there were 1285 registered households in the parish and an average weekend Mass attendance of around 1110 people. By 2021, the number of registered households decreased slightly to 1183 families, but the average weekend Mass attendance declined to around 480 communicants. Despite Oregon being the largest of the parishes in the proposed merger and being located in one of the largest population centers of the territory, the number of weekly communicants declined by approximately fifty-seven percent over those twenty years. These numbers are mirrored in the second largest parish of the grouping, St. Ann in Stoughton. The number of registered families dropped by about twenty-two percent from 948 households in 2005 to 743 households in 2021. The decline in Mass attendance was more pronounced than in Oregon with the number of weekend communions in Stoughton falling from 969 in 2005 to about 366 in 2021, indicating a decrease of about sixty-two percent. In the previously linked parishes of Saint Paul in Evansville and Saint Augustine in Footville, combined registered families went from 505 in 2005 to 311 households in 2021, representing a decrease of approximately thirty-nine percent, with weekend communicants falling from 450 in 2005 to 224 in 2021, a decline of nearly fifty percent. Finally, Saint Joseph in Edgerton also lost approximately fifty

percent in registered households and communicants from 2005 to 2021 (551 families to 256 families and 550 Mass attendance to 239). While some of the decline can be accounted for by the Covid pandemic at its height in 2020-2021, the trend shows a significant downturn in church participation. The trend is also reflected in the number of baptisms and other sacraments celebrated in the parishes. The number of infant baptisms for all five parishes in 2001 was 132, whereas infant baptisms in 2021 only numbered 47. Confirmations declined from 112 in 2001 to 75 in 2021. Finally, weddings in 2001 numbered 33, but only 5 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 continued growth in the overall population in the near future. The overall population growth in the area covered by these parishes is expected to increase by about ten percent from 68,353 people in 2022 to 74,853 inhabitants by 2032. While the work of evangelization will need to grow and increase in this area, 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 see solid population growth 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 Oregon and Stoughton were going to be kept as distinct parishes, but they were asked to have more joint programming and coordination of Mass schedules to encourage shared pastoral ministry. They were also slated to work with two other parishes to the north and east in a collaborative model. As for the parishes in Evansville and Footville, they were linked and had shared a pastor for many years. It was suggested that this linkage continue, but that if a shortage of priests would become more acute, a pastor would need to be shared with Edgerton and another parish. Saint Joseph Parish in Edgerton was going to be linked with Saint Pius X Parish in Cambridge. During that round of planning, it was already suggested that a potential merger for the four parishes in Evansville, Footville, Edgerton, and Cambridge would be a feasible plan. Though some of the recommendations from that process were implemented through the linking of parishes sharing a common pastor, 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 Stoughton, 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 is an important pastoral priority for the parish. In 2005, Saint Ann School had 180 students. As of the 2024-2025 academic year, the 4K through eighth grade school only had an enrollment of 102. Thus, the merger of the five 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 both suburban and rural communities that will make up the new parish;

- 4) **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 five distinct parishes;
- 5) **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 Edgerton, located in Dane and Rock Counties, Saint Paul Parish in Evansville, located in Rock County, Saint Augustine Parish in Footville, located in Rock County, Holy Mother of Consolation Parish in Oregon, located in Dane County, and Saint Ann Parish in Stoughton, located in Dane and Rock Counties, are hereby joined by extinctive union to form Saint Cletus 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, Saint Paul Parish, Saint Augustine Parish, Holy Mother of Consolation Parish, and Saint Ann Parish, along with the obligations proper to each, are hereby transferred to Saint Cletus 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 Cletus Parish shall be as follows:

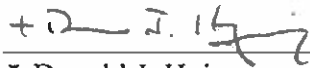
- a. On the North: Starting at the intersection of South Fish Hatchery Road and Lacy Road, then continuing east along Lacy Road to its intersection with County Highway MM, then continuing south along County Highway MM to its intersection with Goodland Park Road, then continuing east along Goodland Park Road to its intersection with Lakeside Street, then continuing southeast in a line to the northeast corner of Goodland County Park and the Lake Waubesa shoreline, then continuing south along the Lake Waubesa shoreline until its intersection with the westernmost point of Jordan Drive, then continuing from the Lake Waubesa shoreline south to the westernmost point of Jordan Drive, then continuing in a south-southeasterly line to the intersection of Stace Road and Mahoney Road, then continuing south along Mahoney Road to its intersection with County Highway B, then continuing east along County Highway B to its intersection with Hawkinson Road, then continuing south along Hawkinson Road to its intersection with Schneider Drive, then continuing east along Schneider Drive to its intersection with Barber Drive, then continuing north along Barber Drive to its intersection with Scovill Court, then continuing due east in a line along Scovill Court to the Lake Kegonsa shoreline, then continuing east along the southern shoreline of Lake Kegonsa to its confluence with the Yahara River, then continuing southeast along the western bank of the Yahara River until directly west of the intersection of River Estate Lane and Pleasant Street, then continuing due east in a line along Pleasant Street to its intersection with County Highway B, then continuing east along County Highway B to its intersection with Interstate 90, then continuing southeast along Interstate 90 to its intersection with County Highway A, then continuing east along County Highway A to its intersection with the Dane/Jefferson County border;
- b. On the East: Starting at the intersection of County Highway A and the Dane/Jefferson County border, then continuing south along the Dane/Jefferson County Border to its intersection with the Lake Koshkonong shoreline, then continuing south along the western shoreline of Lake Koshkonong until its intersection with the Rock River, then continuing southwest along the northwestern bank of the Rock River to its intersection with Interstate 90, then continuing south along Interstate 90 to its intersection with Kennedy Road, then continuing south along Kennedy Road to its intersection with U.S. Highway 14;
- c. On the South: Starting at the intersection of Kennedy Road and U.S. Highway 14, then continuing west along U.S. Highway 14 to its intersection with County Highway H, then continuing south along County Highway H to its intersection with West Plymouth Church Road, then continuing west along West Plymouth Church Road to its intersection with State Highway 213, then continuing northwest along State Highway 213 to its intersection with South Old 92, then continuing northwest along South Old 92 to its intersection with West Spring Valley Road, then continuing west along West Spring Valley Road to its intersection with West

Gempler Road, then continuing northwest along West Gempler Road until it ends and becomes North Lyons Road, then continuing north along North Lyons Road to its intersection with County Highway B, then continuing west along County Highway B to its intersection with the Rock/Green County border;

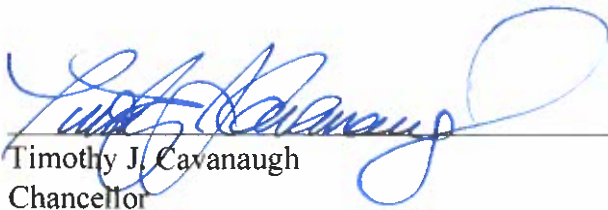
- d. On the West: Starting at the intersection of County Highway B and the Rock/Green County border, then continuing north along the Rock/Green County border to its intersection with the Dane County Border, then continuing west along the Dane/Green County Border to its intersection with Glenway Road, then continuing north along Glenway Road to its intersection with County Highway A, then continuing west along County Highway A to its intersection with Tipperary Road, then continuing north along Tipperary Road to its intersection with Lincoln Road, then continuing east along Lincoln Road to its intersection with South Fish Hatchery Road, then continuing north along South Fish Hatchery Road to its intersection with Lacy Road; and
- 4) That the patronal feast of the parish is to be observed on the Optional Memorial of Saint Cletus, which falls on April 26, 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 Ann Church in Stoughton, given its centrality and the presence of the parish school, is designated as the parochial church of Saint Cletus Parish, while Saint Joseph Church in Edgerton, Saint Paul Church in Evansville, Saint Augustine Church in Footville, and Holy Mother of Consolation Church in Oregon 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, Saint Paul, Saint Augustine, Holy Mother of Consolation, and Saint Ann shall be closed to any new entries and shall remain in the care and custody of Saint Cletus 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 Cletus Parish, and sacraments taking place in any of the churches of the parish are to be recorded in the new sacramental registers of Saint Cletus Parish in accord with universal and diocesan norms; and
- 8) That Saint Cletus 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 20 September 2025, the liturgical Memorial of Saints Andrew Kim Tae-gŏn, Paul Chŏng Ha-sang, and Companions, Martyrs in Korea; and
- 12) That the decree is to be notified on 20 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 16th day of September in the Year of Our Lord 2025, the liturgical Memorial of Saints Cornelius and Cyprian.



✠ Donald J. Hying
Bishop of Madison



Timothy J. Cavanaugh
Chancellor

SEAL