



**DECREE**  
**OF THE AMALGAMATION OF**  
**SAINT MARY PARISH,**  
**CAMDEN, OHIO,**  
**AND**  
**SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH,**  
**NEW PARIS, OHIO,**  
**INTO**  
**VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY PARISH,**  
**EATON, OHIO**

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

Saint Mary Parish was founded in 1942; the present church building was initially constructed in 1942 and expanded in 1960. Saint John the Evangelist Parish was founded in 1870, and its present church building was completed in 1960. Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish was founded in 1852; the present church was completed in 1956.

Since July 2014 all three parishes have been served by a common pastor. From that time many of the administrative functions of the parishes have been united and streamlined, and the parishioners of the three parishes have continued to grow together as a community of faith. The pastor is assisted by a combined pastoral council with representatives from all three parishes as well as individual finance councils for each parish. The weekend Mass schedule has been adjusted to best accommodate the needs of the faithful according to the capability of the priests assigned to 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 Mary, Saint John the Evangelist, and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parishes with the recommendation of the members of the common pastoral council and finance councils of all three parishes, has proposed an extinctive union in which Saint Mary Parish and Saint John the Evangelist Parish are amalgamated into Visitation of the Blessed Virgin 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 September 8, 2025, 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 Mary Parish and Saint John the Evangelist Parish into Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish.

The following factors contribute to the just cause which motivates this decision:

- 1) since 2014 when one priest was assigned as pastor of the three parishes, arrangements have progressed for sharing clergy and expenses, centralizing the administrative offices, centralizing communication efforts, sharing common faith formation opportunities as well as sacramental formation and initiation;
- 2) parishioners from the parishes have come together for worship and to support social outreach and evangelization in their community;
- 3) 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;
- 4) the parishioners of these three 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;
- 5) the administrative burdens on clergy and staff members would be reduced by such a unification; finance council meetings, sacramental registers, financial accounts and other committee meetings would be reduced from three to one; and
- 6) 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 Mary Parish (Camden) and Saint John the Evangelist Parish (New Paris) into Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish (Eaton).

The intentions of the founders and donors regarding the temporal goods and patrimonial rights proper to the former parishes of Saint Mary and Saint John the Evangelist 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 Mary and Saint John the Evangelist shall belong to Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish, according to the norm of law (canon 121). The pastor of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin 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 Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish shall include the territory of the former parishes of Saint Mary and Saint John the Evangelist. The new boundaries of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish shall be:

On the north: from the point where the Preble-Darke County Line meets the Ohio-Indiana State Line, east along said county line to the Preble-Montgomery County Line; then,

On the east: south along the Preble-Montgomery County Line to Old Dayton Road; east along Old Dayton Road to Clayton Road; south along Clayton Road to Chicken Bristle Road; west along Chicken Bristle Road to the Preble-Montgomery County Line; south along the Preble-Montgomery County Line to the Preble-Butler County Line; then,

On the south: west along the Preble-Butler County Line to State Route 503; south on State Route 503 to the air line extension of Sommerville Road; west long this air line to Sommerville Road and continuing west along Sommerville Road to State Route 177; northwest along State Route 177 to State Route 725; west along State Route 725 to the Ohio-Indiana State Line; then,

On the west: north on the Ohio-Indiana State Line to the point of beginning.

I further decree that Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church will be the parochial church and that Saint Mary Church and Saint John the Evangelist Church will continue to function as subsidiary churches.

The sacramental records of the former parishes of Saint Mary and Saint John the Evangelist shall be closed and remain in the care and custody of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish to be properly preserved and safeguarded. Any sacraments which take place at Saint Mary Church and Saint John the Evangelist Church are to be recorded in the sacramental registers of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish with proper notations.

The parishioners of the former parishes of Saint Mary and Saint John the Evangelist are to associate themselves with their new proper territorial parish, Visitation of the Blessed Virgin 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 Mary and Saint John the Evangelist are to be held in high esteem and rightly honored. Furthermore, the people of Visitation of the Blessed Virgin 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 February 2, 2026, and is to be published such that all members of Saint Mary Parish, Saint John the Evangelist Parish, and Visitation of the Blessed Virgin 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 12<sup>th</sup> day of December in the Year of Our Lord 2025,  
Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



Most Reverend Robert G. Casey  
Archbishop of Cincinnati

SEAL



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