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Cardinal Priest of the Holy Roman Church

of the Title of Nostra Signora di Guadalupe a Monte Mario

By the Grace of God and the Apostolic See

ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK

## DECREE

# ON THE MERGER OF THE TERRITORIAL PARISH OF SAINT FRANCIS XAVIER – OUR LADY OF THE LAKE, NARROWSBURG, AND THE TERRITORIAL PARISH OF SAINT ANTHONY OF PADUA – SAINT THOMAS AQUINAS – SACRED HEART, YULAN, SULLIVAN COUNTY, NEW YORK

WHEREAS, bishops “feed their sheep in the name of the Lord by fulfilling their office of teaching, sanctifying and governing them” and “pursue their apostolic work as witnesses of Christ to all people” (cf. Vatican II, Decree on the pastoral office of Bishops in the Church *Christus Dominus*, October 28, 1965, n. 11);

WHEREAS, the parish is “pre-eminent among all the other communities present in his Diocese, for which the Bishop has primary responsibility: it is with the parishes above all that he must be concerned” (Pope Saint John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Pastores gregis*, October 16, 2003, n. 45) and whereas the parish “remains the fundamental unit in the daily life of the Diocese” (ibid.);

WHEREAS, the “Catholic Church is not an archeological museum, but the old fountain of the village that gives water to the generations of today, as it did to those of the past” (Pope Saint John XXIII, Homily on the occasion of the celebration of the solemn liturgy in Byzantine-Slavic rite in honor of Saint John Chrysostom, November 13, 1960);

WHEREAS, “the parish is not an outdated institution” and “continues to be the Church living in the midst of the homes of her sons and daughters”, provided it “does not become a useless structure out of touch with people or a self-absorbed group made up of a chosen few”, but on the contrary is “a sanctuary where the thirsty come to drink in the midst of their journey, and a

centre of constant missionary outreach” (cf. Pope Francis, apostolic exhortation *Evangelii gaudium*, November 24, 2013, n. 28);

WHEREAS, 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 if the good of the faithful so requires, and whereas the Bishop may wish to set up a diocesan office or commission that can operate in collaboration with other relevant diocesan commissions in order to study all the issues pertaining to the establishment of parishes and the construction of churches (cf. Congregation for Bishops, Directory for the Pastoral Ministry of Bishops *Apostolorum Successores*, February 22, 2004, n. 214);

WHEREAS, the pastoral care of all requires the contribution of all the baptized and that “demands that the historical Parish institution not remain a prisoner of immobility or of a worrisome pastoral repetition, but rather, it should put into action that ‘outgoing dynamism’ that, through collaboration among different Parish communities and a reinforced communion among clergy and laity, will orient it effectively toward an evangelizing mission, the task of the entire People of God, that walks through history as the ‘family of God’ and that, in the synergy of its diverse members, labors for the growth of the entire ecclesial body” (Congregation for the Clergy, Instruction *The pastoral conversion of the Parish community in the service of the evangelizing mission of the Church*, June 29, 2020, n. 123);

WHEREAS, the existing parish structure of the archdiocese was largely established between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and whereas radical changes and shifts in demographics have occurred over the past decades, including a move away from the urban center into the suburbs, together with a substantial immigration of Hispanics;

WHEREAS, the Archdiocese faces a decline in the number of available priests, and whereas parishes are confronted with a declining number of faithful attending Sunday Mass on a regular basis;

WHEREAS, the changing situation puts a huge financial burden on the smaller parishes, and whereas deficits are covered increasingly by archdiocesan loans with parishes unable to repay their debt;

WHEREAS, the situation in Sullivan County has been affected by ever changing demographics, leading to lower Mass attendance;

WHEREAS, a consultation following the synodal model took place, involving clergy, religious and laity to discuss the challenges with the people, especially those most invested in finding workable solutions;

WHEREAS, Most Reverend Gerardo Colacicco and Most Reverend Edmund Whalen, two of my auxiliaries, together with Mrs. Eileen Mulcahy, Archdiocesan Vice Chancellor for Parish Planning, have been working with the parishes in Sullivan County to develop a robust and

sustainable plan that will extend the pastoral and temporal care to all parishioners, united in the spirit of shared faith and mission;

WHEREAS, in the discussions in Sullivan County, four regions surfaced, two of the regions in the Route 17 corridor and two in the Route 97 corridor, and whereas the territorial parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake, Narrowsburg, and the territorial parish of Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart, Yulan, are all located in one such area that fits well together;

WHEREAS, on May 22, 2025, after consultation with the parish communities involved, I consulted the presbyteral council about the recommendation to merge the territorial parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake, Narrowsburg, and the territorial parish of Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart, Yulan, all in Sullivan County, New York, based upon the complementarity of the two parishes, their proximity, the pastoral need for intensive collaboration, the need for the care of the souls, the priest shortage, and the changed demographics;

Therefore, I, the undersigned Archbishop of New York, have decided as follows:

#### DECREE

1. The territorial parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake, Narrowsburg, and the territorial parish of Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart, Yulan, are merged. The name of the newly merged parish will be the parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake – Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart –until such time when the parish community through the pastor proposes a new name. The boundaries of the newly merged parish will be the same as the boundaries of the former territorial parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake, Narrowsburg, and the former territorial parish of Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart, Yulan. The parish will have four churches.
2. The church of Saint Francis Xavier in Narrowsburg is herewith designated as the parish church.
3. The church of Our Lady of the Lake in Lake Huntington will maintain a regular schedule of Masses and other sacraments.
4. The church of Saint Anthony of Padua in Yulan will maintain a regular schedule of Masses and other sacraments.
5. The church of Sacred Heart in Pond Eddy remains open for public and private worship. Mass will be celebrated on the anniversary of the dedication of the church and of its patronal feast. Further Masses and other sacraments will be celebrated as provided by the pastor of the newly merged parish.
6. All members of the originating parishes shall now become members of the new parish.

7. All registers containing records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, and burials hitherto preserved by the territorial parish of Saint Francis Xavier – Our Lady of the Lake, Narrowsburg, and the territorial parish of Saint Anthony of Padua – Saint Thomas Aquinas – Sacred Heart, Yulan, are to be conveyed to the offices of the newly merged parish at the premises of Saint Francis Xavier in Narrowsburg, where they shall be faithfully preserved according to canon 535, 1°-5° of the Code of Canon Law.

This decree is effective September 1, 2025. At the same time, I order this decree to be made public to all the faithful through its publication on this day on the website of the Archdiocese. This publication on the website will be the legitimate notification. A notarized copy of the decree will be sent to the pastor, and an announcement will be made in the Archdiocesan digital newsroom.

All those who claim to have been aggrieved by this decree are herewith notified that, if they desire to file recourse against our decree, they are required, *ad validitatem*, to submit a petition in the sense of canon 1734 §1 to us within ten useful days from the legitimate notification of this decree.

Given at the Chancery, New York, NY, this 26<sup>th</sup> day of July 2025, Memorial of Saints Joachim and Anne, Parents of the Blessed Virgin Mary.



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Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan  
Archbishop of New York



John P. Cahill  
Chancellor