



DIocese of Grand Rapids

Office of the Bishop

May 8, 2026

Reverend Michael Hodges
St. Mark the Evangelist Parish
15164 Juniper Drive
Marne, MI 49435

Dear Father Hodges,

My decree of April 21, 2026, merging Saint Michael Parish, Coopersville, and Saint Mary Parish, Marne, into Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish has taken legal effect. A notarized copy of the decree is enclosed.

The parishes of Saint Michael and Saint Mary have been canonically suppressed. Saint Mark the Evangelist was legitimately erected as a parish according to the norm of law by my decree issued on April 21, 2026. Your six-year term as pastor of Saint Mary and Saint Michael Parishes, begun on July 1, 2022, will perdure as pastor of Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish and conclude in 2028.

Please consult Michael Lown, Chancellor/CFO, and Father Colin Mulhall, Vicar General, on the financial and canonical matters pertaining to the new parish.

Thank you for your diligent work throughout this process. May God continue to bless your ministry to the people of Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids

Very Reverend Colin J. Mulhall
Ecclesiastical Notary

c: Mr. Michael Lown, *Chancellor/CFO*

Enclosure



DAVID J. WALKOWIAK

DECREE

MERGER OF THE PARISHES OF
SAINT MICHAEL, COOPERSVILLE, AND SAINT MARY, MARNE

Whereas Saint Michael Parish, Coopersville, erected in 1950, is comprised of the Catholic faithful of that area,

Whereas Saint Mary Parish, Marne, erected in 1852, is comprised of the Catholic faithful of that area,

Whereas both Saint Mary and Saint Michael Parishes have operated on fiscal deficits since 2022, making it increasingly difficult for the parishes to operate independently,

Whereas Saint Mary and Saint Michael Parishes have been in the care of one pastor since 2012,

Whereas the merger of the parishes of Saint Mary and Saint Michael will provide for the spiritual and pastoral needs of the same in a more financially stable manner,

Having received a request from the Pastor of Saint Mary and Saint Michael Parishes, which was endorsed by the respective parish Pastoral and Finance Councils, to merge Saint Michael and Saint Mary Parishes into a new parish, and

Having consulted the Presbyteral Council on January 21, 2026, with the council members expressing their agreement unanimously,

I, the Most Reverend DAVID J. WALKOWIAK, Bishop of Grand Rapids, hereby decree that Saint Michael and Saint Mary Parishes be canonically merged in accordance with canons 121 and 515, §2 of the Code of Canon Law.

The name of the newly defined territorial parish is
SAINT MARK THE EVANGELIST PARISH

CONCORDAT CUM ORIGINALI.
DATUM 4/21 NOTARIUS *John J. Mallon*



DAVID J. WALKOWIAK

CONCORDAT CUM ORIGINALI.
DATUM 4/21 NOTARIUS *Colin Mulhall*

In accord with universal and particular law, Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish obtains the territory, territorial subjects, goods, patrimonial rights, obligations, assets, and liabilities of the former parishes of Saint Mary and Saint Michael. Saint Mary Church, Marne, will be the primary church of Saint Mark Parish, while Saint Michael church, Coopersville, will serve as the secondary church. The decree is to be implemented in accordance with canon 121 regarding the allocation of temporal goods and the fulfilment of obligations.

Combining the territory of Saint Michael and Saint Mary Parishes, the boundaries of Saint Mark the Evangelist Catholic Parish shall be as follows:

Beginning at the intersection of Seven Mile Rd and Fruit Ridge Ave, NW, (Kent County), south on Fruit Ridge to Three Mile Rd, west to Remembrance Rd, southeast to Leonard St, west to the Grand River, west along the River to 120th Ave, north to Pontaluna Rd, east to 72nd Ave (extended), south to Wilson St, east to 56th Ave, south to Taft St, east to 32nd Ave, south to Roosevelt St, east to 24th Ave, south to Cleveland St, east (via Seven Mile Rd) to Fruit Ridge Ave.

This decree is to be published on the diocesan website and posted in the churches of Saint Mary and Saint Michael on the date it is issued. This decree will come into effect on May 1, 2026.

Given at the Chancery on the twenty-first day April in the year of our Lord two thousand twenty-six, the Memorial of Saint Anselm of Canterbury.

+David J. Walkowiak

The Most Reverend David J. Walkowiak
Bishop of Grand Rapids

Colin J. Mulhall

Very Reverend Colin J. Mulhall, J.C.L.
Ecclesiastical Notary

