



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of COLUMBUS
OFFICE of the BISHOP

August 10, 2026

I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus. As the Bishop of the Diocese of Columbus, I have oversight or vigilance over parishes and Catholic institutions in the Diocese, including associations of the faithful. This duty or responsibility is an important one to ensure that ecclesiastical discipline is upheld and that the rights and dignity of the faithful are respected.

The Children of Mary were founded over 25 years ago. I have known them throughout my time as a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and as the Bishop of Columbus. They have carried out their apostolic works throughout the diocese and beyond, especially in fostering devotion to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in their prayer for priests. The Children of Mary are a public association of the faithful in the Diocese of Columbus, established in the Diocese with a view to being erected as an institute of diocesan right.

As a relatively new community, the Children of Mary have attempted to reform and refine their Constitutions; to clarify their specific charism; to achieve clarity with respect to ownership of assets; and to provide formation for the members of the community. Desiring to become an institute of diocesan right and acting in good faith, the Sisters provided the necessary documentation to the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life to begin the process. Despite the best efforts of the Sisters, these reforms proved difficult.

Additionally, over the past few years, certain formational issues and even abuses associated with the evangelical counsels and the right of separation of the internal and external forum, that is the forum of one's personal conscience and the forum of observable, external actions, have been brought to my attention.

After sincere attempts at addressing these issues and keeping the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life in Rome informed, I was informed by an official at the Dicastery that even with the attempted reforms, because of the formational issues in communal life from its inception and the persistence of these issues, the Children of Mary would not now or in the future be approved for erection as an institute of diocesan right, which would have offered members greater stability and assurance of perpetual spiritual and physical care.

Knowing this would not be possible and recognizing that some of the women in the Children of Mary may have an authentic vocation as a consecrated religious in an order recognized by the Church, I determined that suppression was the only option so that the members could discern their vocations in a new association or institute or in the world.

Such a suppression is neither common, nor rare, in the Church. It is more deeply felt when it occurs locally and among people we know personally. Please keep them in your prayers and trust in the movement of the Holy Spirit confirming that *"Not as man sees does God see, because man sees the appearance but the Lord looks into the heart."* (1 Sam. 16:7)

With every best wish, I remain,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus