



CATHOLIC DIOCESE
of COLUMBUS
OFFICE of the BISHOP

Earl K. Fernandes
by the grace of God and the favor of the Apostolic See
Bishop of Columbus

DECREE
SUPPRESSION
PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE FAITHFUL
CHILDREN OF MARY

WHEREAS, on 16 October 2002 Bishop James A. Griffin approved the charism and Plan of Life for the Children of Mary allowing Mary Jane Goffena (formerly Mother Margaret Mary) to accept members into the community, and;

WHEREAS, The Children of Mary moved their “motherhouse” to the Archdiocese of Cincinnati after which time Most Reverend Dennis M. Schnurr, Archbishop of Cincinnati, erected them as a public association of the faithful by decree on 4 November 2016, and;

WHEREAS, the Children of Mary desired to move the “motherhouse” back to the Diocese of Columbus and were erected as a public association of the faithful by Most Reverend Earl K., Fernandes, Bishop of Columbus, on 30 December 2022, and;

WHEREAS, this relocation and erection motivated Archbishop Schnurr to suppress the Children of Mary as a public association of the faithful of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati by decree dated 8 May 2023, and;

WHEREAS, visitations regarding the community’s constitutions and governance were conducted in Winter 2022 and March 2023, and;

WHEREAS, reforms of the constitutions were attempted following the visitations; however, it was the judgement of a representative of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life that eventual erection as an institute of diocesan right was not foreseen due to the questionable, and at times problematic, individual and corporate formation of the community from its inception, which was uncovered in the aforementioned visitations. Those formation issues manifested themselves as abuses associated with the evangelical counsels and the right of separation of the internal and external forum and;

WHEREAS, Bishop Fernandes first heard the Children of Mary moderator and council on 10 May 2026 and discussed the possibility of suppression with the entire association that same day. Bishop Fernandes heard again the moderator and members of Children of Mary on 22 May 2026 in accordance with c. 320 §3 and expressed to them his intention to suppress the association;

THEREFORE, considering the law and the facts, I hereby SUPPRESS the PUBLIC ASSOCIATION OF THE CHILDREN OF MARY, and it is not to be re-erected in the Diocese of Columbus. The destination of its goods are to follow the plan approved by the association and the diocesan bishop which is in accordance with the association constitutions, the law of the Church, and applicable civil law. The current and former members are released of all rights and obligations that came with membership.

The private vows, temporary or perpetual, that the members took according to their constitutions cease by reason of the substantial change in the matter promised, the cessation of a condition on which the vow depended or of the purpose of the vow, namely that the Children of Mary, in which the vows were made no longer exists (*cf. c. 1194*).

Those who were members may not claim anything from the association for work done in the Children of Mary; however, *mutatis mutandis*, evangelical charity may be shown to them based on the determination of the destination of goods.

Given at the Diocese of Columbus Chancery Office this 16th day of October 2026.



Deacon Thomas M. BERG, Jr.
Chancellor



Most Reverend Earl K. FERNANDES
Bishop of Columbus

