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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Mary of the Snows Reverts To Mission Status

Appleton, WI – August 12, 2010 – After a great deal of discussion with its clergy and people, Bishop Jacobus has officially dissolved the Parish organization of St. Mary of the Snows, Eagle River. This dissolution was agreed to by the Vestry and the congregation now has a canonical status of an Organized Mission. They had become a Parish in 2004.

In early June, the Rev. Jim Fosdick, informed the Bishop that almost all the members of St. Mary's had submitted resignations from the congregation. Those serving on the Vestry continued as members but announced their intention to resign once specific action was taken regarding their status. The Bishop called a special parish meeting on June 27th for all, including those who had resigned, to openly discuss the situation. During the meeting he also encouraged anyone who wished, to contact him directly to continue the discussion privately.

After consultation with the leadership of the congregation, the Standing Committee of the Diocese and the Chancellor, Bishop Jacobus invoked diocesan canon 5.7 which prescribes the process for dissolving a parish organization.

“There have been cases where a congregation has left a diocese or the Episcopal Church” Jacobus said in a recent interview, “but our canons don't allow for such action to be taken. Individuals can remove themselves from membership in a congregation, but I don't see a process which allows a congregation to leave a diocese. So there is now in Eagle River a congregation with no members. I am saddened by this situation, especially since the congregation was established by diocesan missionary efforts, but it is what it is and I am following a canonical process in dealing with it.”

The canons provide a Parish much of the authority to make decisions about its governance. Traditionally the designation of parish also has meant a self-sufficiency for supporting its ministry needs without additional support from beyond its membership. Legally a parish is considered to have its own corporate character, separate from other entities. In a Mission, much of the authority about governance comes from the Bishop as a mission status traditionally has meant a need for assistance from those beyond its membership to meet its ministry needs. A mission's corporate character legally derives from it's connection to and being a part of the diocese.

“There are many things to consider with this change [in status],” Jacobus said. “With the assistance of the leadership of the diocese we will make decisions that we believe will be in the best interests of Episcopalians in that area and the ministry needs of the diocese.”

The Diocese of Fond du Lac is a part of the Episcopal Church, USA and the worldwide Anglican Communion with over 6,000 baptized members worshipping in 38 locations across the northeastern third of the State of Wisconsin.

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