



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
Church of the Annunciation Parish
St. Michael the Archangel Parish
Effective December 1, 2024**

Beginning in September of 2022, I initiated an extensive process of listening, visioning and discernment regarding the future of this parish and others in the City of Baltimore and the surrounding areas. The general public, parish leadership and individual parishioners were invited to attend a series of public meetings to advise me on the best future for these parishes. More than 6,000 persons participated in the two-year process. The initial proposal for reconfiguration that was prepared by 250 lay and clergy leaders was made public in March of 2024. Two public meetings were held after this announcement to receive feedback from individual parishes and individual parishioners regarding the initial proposal. All have also been given the opportunity to provide their views to me by mail, email or individually throughout the process.

In regard to the proposed merger of Church of the Annunciation parish and St. Michael the Archangel parish, the members of the Church of Annunciation parish provided information about their views on changes to the status of their parish by responding to a survey, attending visioning sessions and open prayerful discernments. Meetings were also held with parish leadership from both parishes before a final decision was made. After additional changes were made based on the feedback received from that process, the final proposal was made public on May 22, 2024.

The Presbyteral Council and Archdiocesan Finance Council (BOFA) were asked for feedback on both the initial proposal in April 2024 and final proposal in May 2024 for the above referenced merger prior to their final canonical review of the proposed plan. In accordance with canons 50, 120 §1, 121 and the requirements of canon 515 §2, the proposal to canonically merge Church of the Annunciation parish into St. Michael the Archangel parish was formally presented to the Presbyteral Council on September 3, 2024 for the required canonical consultation. After reviewing and discussing the

materials related to the canonical merger, the members gave their unanimous support to the proposal.

The following facts regarding Church of the Annunciation parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of Church of the Annunciation parish into St. Michael the Archangel parish (canon 51):

- The number of Catholic households registered in Church of the Annunciation parish has declined from 967 in 2004 to 245 in 2023;
- Only 78 of these Catholic households are registered at Church of the Annunciation parish;
- The number of persons attending Mass at Church of the Annunciation parish has declined from 841 in 2004 to 246 in 2023;
- 78% of Mass attendees (192 persons) are over the age of 60;
- The parish has shared a pastor and expenses with St. Clement Mary Hofbauer parish since 2009 and St. Michael parish since 2018;
- There has been a significant decline in sacramental celebrations since 2014 with 76 baptisms, 28 confirmations and 9 marriages celebrated at this parish in the last 10 years;
- The parish has operated at a deficit for 12 of the last 20 years and the assets will be depleted over time to cover future deficits;
- The parish has experienced a 34% decline in offertory over the past 10 years;
- The parish would need over 100% of its current offertory to meet the cost of buildings operations and annual recommended facilities reserve, leaving little to no resources for ministry;
- There are 4 other parish churches within 2 miles of Church of the Annunciation parish;
- Church of the Annunciation parish is 2.1 miles (4.2 kilometers) from St. Michael the Archangel parish; and
- St. Michael the Archangel parish has the necessary capacity to welcome the members of the parish and their ministries.

Having heard all who have an interest in this matter, including the opinion of the members of the Presbyteral Council who were properly convened according to law and voted on this matter in my presence, I believe the reasons listed above in this decree establish a just cause for the canonical merger of the Church of the Annunciation parish into St. Michael the Archangel parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that Church of the Annunciation parish is to be canonically merged into St. Michael the Archangel parish, Baltimore effective, December 1, 2024.

Boundaries

The boundaries of St. Michael the Archangel parish shall reflect the current outside boundaries of the two parishes on the date of the canonical merger.

Assets and Liabilities

Until the issuance of a subsequent decree, the temporal goods, assets, and liabilities under civil law of the civilly incorporated Church of the Annunciation parish and the civilly incorporated St. Michael the Archangel parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of St. Michael the Archangel parish, shall nonetheless remain separate and distinct. Furthermore, I order the sequestration *pro tempore* of the temporal goods and assets of each civil corporation for the exclusive use of meeting the debts and liabilities of their respective civil corporations (cf. can. 1496 §1).

Status of Churches

While Church of the Annunciation church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of St. Michael the Archangel parish, with permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament there (cf. can. 934 §1, 2^o) and with the pastor being responsible for the reserved Eucharist (cf. can. 934 §2). St. Michael the Archangel Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

The parish registers for the Church of the Annunciation parish are to be closed as of November 30, 2024. Any entries after that date in the registries of St. Michael the Archangel parish must indicate at which church the sacramental event took place. All closed registers shall be kept and maintained by St. Michael the Archangel parish or sent to the Archdiocesan Archives in accordance with Archdiocesan policy. The parish records (financial, etc.) of the Church of the Annunciation will become the property and responsibility of St. Michael the Archangel parish on December 1, 2024.

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Michael the Archangel parish beginning December 1, 2024.

Effective Date and Publication of this Decree

This decree is effective December 1, 2024. Its official notification is its publication on the website of the Archdiocese of Baltimore on September 29, 2024.

I direct that the Pastor/ Administrator of the Church of the Annunciation parish and St. Michael the Archangel parish announce at all Masses on the weekend of September 28-29, 2024 that this Decree has been published on the website of the Archdiocese of Baltimore (archbalt.org). I ask all the faithful of the new parish to work together to build a thriving, evangelizing community centered on the Eucharist and reflective of their rich histories in the years ahead.

Any of member of the Church of the Annunciation parish who claims to have been aggrieved by this Decree has the right to seek its revocation or emendation (canon

1734). This request must be made in writing to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Baltimore, Catholic Center, 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201 and postmarked no later than October 11, 2024.

Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Baltimore in Baltimore City on this 25th day of September, in the Year of Our Lord, 2024.



Most Reverend William E. Lori, S.T.D.
Archbishop of Baltimore



Dr. Diane L. Barr, JD, JCD, PhD
Chancellor