



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger**  
**Corpus Christi Parish**  
**Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 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. An 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 merger of Corpus Christi parish and the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, the members of Corpus Christi parish participated in the discernment of its future through completing a survey, holding listening sessions on site of the parish, attending Archdiocesan open prayerful discussions and participating in three Archdiocesan wide visioning sessions. 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 prior for the above-referenced merger 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 Corpus Christi parish into Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 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 Corpus Christi parish constitute the reasons in summary for the canonical merger of Corpus Christi parish into the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish (canon 51):

- The number of persons residing in Corpus Christi parish boundaries has declined by 7% since 2000;
- The number of registered Catholic households within Corpus Christi parish boundaries has declined from 311 in 2004 to 126 in 2023;
- Only 36 of these Catholic households are registered at Corpus Christi parish;
- The number of persons attending Mass at Corpus Christi parish has declined from 261 in 2004 to 55 in 2023;
- Over 56% of Mass attendees (31 persons) are over the age of 50;
- The number of sacraments received at Corpus Christi parish has declined significantly between 2014 and 2023 to an average of 9 baptisms and 5 confirmations per year in the past 10 years;
- The parish has struggled financially as the number of parishioners has continued to decline resulting in an operational deficit for 12 of the past 20 years;
- Parish offertory has declined 25% in the past 10 years;
- The parish needs 3 times its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve, leaving little to support ministry efforts;
- There are 14 parish churches within 2 miles of Corpus Christi parish;
- Corpus Christi parish is 1.1 miles (1.8 kilometers) from the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Blessed Virgin Mary; and
- The Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary has the capacity to welcome the parishioners and ministries of Corpus Christi parish.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, Corpus Christi parish will only continue to decline with the resultant diminishing of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish will allow the greatest opportunity to continue and even strengthen the ministries which are presently offered for the parishioners of Corpus Christi parish.

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 Corpus Christi parish into Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish. As a result, I do hereby decree



that Corpus Christi parish is to be canonically merged into Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, Baltimore effective, December 1, 2024.

### **Boundaries**

The boundaries of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish shall reflect the boundaries of the two parishes as of 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 Corpus Christi parish and the civilly incorporated Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of Basilica of Assumption 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 Corpus Christi Church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of the Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, with permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament there (cf. can. 934 §1, 2<sup>o</sup>) and with the pastor being responsible for the reserved Eucharist (cf. can. 934 §2). The Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Cathedral remains the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

### **Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records**

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

### **Parish Seal**

All parish seals shall be the property of Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 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 Corpus Christi parish and Basilica of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish to 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 member of Corpus Christi 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 25<sup>th</sup> day of September, in the Year of Our Lord, 2024.

*+ William E. Lori*

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



*Diane L. Barr*

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Chancellor