



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
Shrine of the Sacred Heart Parish
Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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 proposed merger of Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish and Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish, the members of Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish participated in the discernment of its future through completing a survey, holding listening sessions on site of the parish, attending Archdiocese wide open prayerful discussions and three 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 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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 the Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish constitute reasons in summary for the canonical merger of Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish (canon 51):

- The number of registered Catholic households has declined from 729 in 2004 to 688 in 2023 with only 173 of these households remain registered at Shrine of the Sacred Heart;
- The number of persons attending Mass has declined from 649 in 2014 to 173 in 2023;
- 57% of Mass attendees (99 persons) are over the age of 50;
- The parish is located in a predominantly Jewish community with little opportunity for evangelization;
- There has been a decline in the number of baptisms from of 24 in 2014 to 13 in 2023;
- There were 24 confirmations in 2014 and only 9 confirmations in 2023;
- The parish has operated at a deficit for 15 of the last 20 years;
- The parish needs over 100% of its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve leaving little to no resources for ministry;
- The parish has been forced to lease or sell its property in order to maintain the funding of parish activities;
- 36% of parish income comes from a lease that will expire in July of 2025 which will further increase the annual deficits;
- There are two other parish churches within 2 miles of this parish;
- This parish is 2.3 miles (3.7 kilometers) from the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish; and
- The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish has sufficient space to accommodate the parishioners and ministries of Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish, including the ministry to Filipino Catholics.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish will only continue to decline with the resultant diminishing of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish will allow the greatest opportunity to continue and even strengthen the ministries which are presently offered for the parishioners of Shrine of the Sacred Heart 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish is to be canonically merged into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish, Baltimore effective December 1, 2024.

Boundaries

The boundaries of Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish shall reflect the current outside 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish and the civilly incorporated Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart Church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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). Cathedral of Mary Our Queen Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Special Apostolate

Cathedral of Mary Our Queen shall be responsible for an apostolate to foster the spiritual and cultural life of those Filipino Catholics currently worshipping at Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart parish and Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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 Shrine of the Sacred Heart 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

