



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger**  
**St. Ann Parish**  
**St. Francis Xavier 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 St. Ann parish and St. Francis Xavier parish, members of St. Ann parish participated in the completion of surveys, attending three visioning sessions including one for Black Catholics, 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 the 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 St. Ann parish into St. Francis Xavier 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 St. Ann parish constitute the reasons in summary for the canonical merger of St. Ann parish into St. Francis Xavier parish (canon 51):

- The number of persons residing within the St. Ann parish boundaries has decreased by 18% since 2000;
- This parish has shared a pastor and expenses with St. Wenceslaus parish since 1995 and with St. Francis Xavier parish since 2018;
- The number of persons attending Mass at the parish has declined from 183 in 2004 to 61 in 2023;
- 54% of Mass attendees (30 persons) are over the age of 70;
- 75% of Mass attendees (46 persons) are over the age of 50;
- The parish has had 13 baptisms, 3 confirmations and no marriages since 2014;
- The parish has operated at a deficit for 11 of the last 20 years since the number of parishioners has continued to decline;
- The parish would need over 2.3 times its current offertory to meet the cost of buildings operations and annual recommended facilities reserve leaving no resources for ministry;
- There are 15 other parish churches within 2 miles of this location;
- St. Ann and St. Francis Xavier parish share a similar history and culture;
- St. Ann parish is 1.2 miles (1.9 kilometers) from St. Francis Xavier parish; and
- St. Francis Xavier parish is willing to welcome and accommodate the parishioners and ministries of St. Ann parish.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, Saint Ann parish is unable to remain financially solvent or to provide a satisfactory level of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with Saint Francis Xavier parish will allow the greatest opportunity to continue providing necessary ministries for the parishioners of Saint Ann 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 St. Ann parish into St. Francis Xavier parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that St. Ann parish is to be canonically merged into St. Francis Xavier parish, Baltimore effective December 1, 2024.

### **Boundaries**

The boundaries of St. Francis Xavier 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 St. Ann parish and the civilly incorporated St.



Francis Xavier parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of St. Francis Xavier 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 St. Ann Church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of Saint Francis Xavier parish, with permission to reserve the Blessed Sacrament there (cf. can. 934 §1, 2°) and with the pastor being responsible for the reserved Eucharist (cf. can. 934 §2). St. Francis Xavier Church will remain the parish church for the canonical merged parishes.

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

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

### **Parish Seal**

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Francis Xavier 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 St. Ann parish and St. Francis Xavier 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](http://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 St. Ann 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*

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

