



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger  
St. Anthony of Padua Parish  
St. Matthew 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 St. Anthony of Padua parish and St. Matthew parish, the members of St. Anthony of Padua parish participated in surveys, prayerful discussions and visioning sessions to make their views known about the future of their parish. 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 St. Anthony of Padua parish into St. Matthew 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. Anthony of Padua parish constitute reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Anthony of Padua parish into St. Matthew parish (canon 51):

- The number of registered Catholic households in the parish boundaries has declined from 1440 in 2004 to 91 in 2023;
- Only 21 of the Catholic households are registered with St. Anthony of Padua parish;
- The number of persons attending Mass at St. Anthony of Padua parish has declined from 544 in 2004 to 123 in 2023;
- 55% of Mass attendees (68 persons) are over the age of 60;
- The parish has shared a pastor and expenses with Most Precious Blood parish since 1995 and with St. Dominic parish since 2010, but without an increase in parishioners or financial support;
- The number of sacraments administered in this parish has continued to decline since 2004;
- The parish has operated at a deficit for 8 of the last 20 years;
- The parish has been forced to lease its physical assets to obtain funds to maintain its church and fund its operations;
- Rental income from its assets is 64% of total parish income;
- There are 6 other parishes within 2 miles of St. Anthony of Padua parish;
- St. Anthony of Padua parish church is 2.8 miles (4.5 kilometers) to St. Matthew parish church; and
- St. Matthew parish has the facilities to welcome the parishioners from St. Anthony of Padua parish.

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

### **Boundaries**

The boundaries of St. Matthew 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 St. Anthony of Padua parish and the civilly incorporated St. Matthew parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of St. Matthew 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. Anthony of Padua 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. Matthew 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). St. Matthew Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

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

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

### **Parish Seal**

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Matthew 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. Anthony of Padua parish and St. Matthew 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 St. Anthony of Padua 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