



Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
St. Cecilia Parish
New All Saints 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. Cecilia parish and New All Saints parish, members of St. Cecilia parish participated in completing surveys, attending open, prayerful discussions and providing input at 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 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. Cecilia parish into New All Saints 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. Cecilia parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Cecilia parish into New All Saints parish (canon 51):

- The general population within St. Cecilia parish boundaries has declined by 18% since 2000;
- The number of Catholic households in St. Cecilia parish has declined from 369 in 2004 to 150 in 2023;
- Only 38 of these Catholic households are registered at St. Cecilia parish;
- The number of parishioners attending Mass at St. Cecilia has declined from 233 in 2004 to 65 in 2023;
- There have been a total of 37 baptisms, 11 confirmations and 11 marriages in the parish between 2014-2023;
- St. Cecilia parish has had operating deficits for 14 of the last 20 years;
- St Cecilia parish needs almost 2 times its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve, leaving few funds for ministry;
- The parish did not have sufficient funds to repair its rectory;
- There are 6 parishes within 2 miles of St. Cecilia parish;
- St. Cecilia parish is 2 miles (3.2 kilometers) from New All Saints parish church;
- St. Cecilia parish and New All Saints parish serve parishioners of similar history and culture; and
- New All Saints parish has sufficient facilities to welcome the parishioners of St. Cecilia parish and their ministries.

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

Boundaries

The boundaries of New All Saints 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. Cecilia parish and the civilly incorporated New All Saints parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of New All Saints 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. Cecilia Church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of New All Saints 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). New All Saints Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of New All Saints 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. Cecilia parish and New All Saints 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. Cecilia 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.

+ *William E. Lori*

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



Diane L. Barr

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