



Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
St. Clare Parish
Our Lady of Mount Carmel 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 St. Clare parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish, the members of St. Clare parish provided their views on the future of their parish through their attendance at open, prayerful discussions and participation in 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. Clare parish into Our Lady of Mount Carmel 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. Clare parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Clare parish into Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish are that (canon 51):

- Mass attendance at St. Clare parish has declined from 903 in 2014 to 330 in 2022;
- The number of registered Catholic households within St. Clare parish has declined from 1442 in 2004 to 778 in 2023;
- The number of baptisms at St. Clare parish has declined from 62 in 2014 to 12 in 2023;
- There has been a decline in confirmations from 41 in 2014 to 7 in 2023;
- The parish has had deficits for 13 of the last 20 years;
- The parish needs 2 times its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve;
- The parish is experiencing an increase in both costs of facilities and unpaid bills indicating an inability to cover all expenses;
- There is 1 other parish within 2 miles of this location;
- St. Clare parish church is only 1.7 miles (2.7 kilometers) from Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish; and
- Our Lady of Mount Carmel parish has the capacity to welcome the parishioners and ministries of St. Clare parish, including Hispanic Catholics.

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

Boundaries

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

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of Our Lady of Mount Carmel 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. Clare parish and Our Lady of Mount Carmel 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. Clare 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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