



**Decree Of Parish Merger
St. Joseph Passionist Monastery Parish
Our Lady of Victory 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.

Regarding the proposed merger of St. Joseph Monastery parish and Our Lady of Victory parish, the members of St. Joseph Monastery parish participated in a survey, open prayerful discussions, three visioning sessions and one open prayerful discernment. 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. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish into Our Lady of Victory 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. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish into Our Lady of Victory (canon 51):

- The general population within the parish boundaries has declined by 11% since 2000;
- Only 71 Catholic households registered at St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish live within the parish boundaries;
- The number of parishioners attending Mass at the parish has declined from 358 in 2004 to 258 in 2023;
- The age of the parishioners has continued to increase with 59% (152 persons) being over the age of 50;
- There has been a significant decline in the number of baptisms (from 33 in 2004 to 14 in 2023), confirmations (from 19 in 2004 to 3 in 2023) and weddings (from 19 in 2004 to 3 in 2023);
- Only 10% of the church is currently being used for worship due to the size of the community;
- The parish has been forced to sell off properties to continue operations and has experienced 16 years of budget deficits over the last 20 years due to the decline in the number of parishioners and income;
- The parish is experiencing an increase in both costs of facilities and unpaid bills which indicates an inability to cover all expenses, leaving few resources for ministry;
- The merging of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery into Our Lady of Victory parish will provide both parishes with needed parishioners, assets and space to grow their ministries within the boundaries of the parish;
- There are currently 7 other parish churches within 2 miles of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish;
- St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish is 2.4 miles (3.8 kilometers) from Our Lady of Victory parish; and
- Our Lady of Victory parish is able to provide pastoral care and receive the ministries of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish will only continue to decline with the resultant diminishment of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with Our Lady of Victory parish at this time, before St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish resources are entirely depleted, will provide the greatest opportunity to continue and even strengthen the ministries which are presently offered for the parishioners of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery 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. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish into Our Lady of Victory parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that St. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish is to be canonically merged into Our Lady of Victory parish, Baltimore effective December 1, 2024.

Boundaries

The boundaries of Our Lady of Victory 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. Joseph Monastery parish and the civilly incorporated Our Lady of Victory parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of Our Lady of Victory 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. Joseph Passionist Monastery 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 Victory 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 Victory Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of Our Lady of Victory parish beginning December 1, 2024.

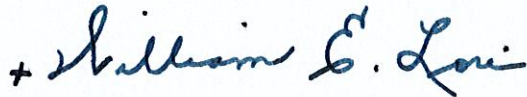
Effective Date and Publication of this Decree

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. Joseph Passionist Monastery parish and Our Lady of Victory 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 of member of St. Joseph Passionist Monastery 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

