



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger  
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Govans  
Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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. Mary of the Assumption parish and the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish, members of St. Mary of the Assumption parish held local listening sessions for their parish, completed surveys, and participated in three open prayerful discussions and three visioning sessions. Multiple 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 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. Mary of the Assumption parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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. Mary of the Assumption parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Mary of the Assumption parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish (canon 51):

- Due to business development in the area, the number of persons residing in St. Mary of the Assumption parish boundaries has declined by 13% between 2000 and 2023;
- The number of registered Catholic households in St. Mary of the Assumption parish boundaries has declined from 574 in 2004 to 161 in 2023;
- Only 34 of those Catholic households are registered at St. Mary of the Assumption parish;
- The number of persons attending Mass at St. Mary of the Assumption parish has declined from 381 in 2004 to 123 in 2023;
- 76% of Mass attendees (93 persons) are over the age of 60;
- The parish income has continued to decline despite sharing expenses for a pastor and staff with St. Pius X parish since 2016;
- There have been 102 funerals in the parish from 2014 to 2023;
- There have been only 7 children in religious formation in the parish between 2014 and 2023;
- The parish has been forced to sell its property in order to maintain its operations since the number of parishioners has continued to decline;
- The remaining unrestricted assets now total less than \$200,000 and is insufficient to meet the needs of current operations;
- The parish has continued to struggle financially as the number of parishioners has continued to decline resulting in operational deficits for 14 of the past 20 years;
- The parish needs all its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve, leaving no funds available to support ministry;
- There are 4 other parishes within 2 miles of this parish;
- The parish is 1.1 miles (1.8 kilometers) from the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish; and
- The Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish has sufficient facilities to accommodate the parishioners and ministries of St. Mary of the Assumption parish.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, St. Mary of the Assumption parish is already unable to provide a satisfactory level of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish will



allow the greatest opportunity to continue providing necessary ministries for the parishioners of St. Mary of the Assumption 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. Mary of the Assumption parish into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that St. Mary of the Assumption parish is to be canonically merged into Cathedral of Mary Our Queen parish, Baltimore effective, December 1, 2024.

**Boundaries**

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

**Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records**

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

**Parish Seal**

All parish seals shall be the property of Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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. Mary of the Assumption parish and Cathedral of Mary Our Queen 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. Mary of the Assumption 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

