



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
St. Pius V Parish
St. Bernardine 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 the me by mail, email or individually throughout the process.

In regard to the proposed merger of St. Pius V parish and St. Bernardine parish, the members of St. Pius V parish were very active throughout the process. They participated in surveys, attended open prayerful discussions, including one for Black Catholics, and 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. Pius V parish into St. Bernardine 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. Pius V parish constitute the reasons in summary for the canonical merger of St. Pius V parish into St. Bernardine parish (canon 51):

- There are fewer than 5500 persons living within the boundaries of the St. Pius V parish;
- There has been a decline in the number of Catholic households in the parish from 145 in 2004 to 69 in 2023;
- The parish has shared a pastor, worship space, expenses and personnel with St. Peter Claver parish since 2005;
- The number of persons attending Mass has decreased from 140 in 2004 to 105 over the last 10 years;
- 68% of Mass attendees (71 persons) are over the age of 50;
- There have been 6 baptisms and 6 confirmations and only 1 wedding at the parish between 2014 and 2023, while there have been 33 funerals over the same period;
- The parish was forced to sell its church in 2007 because it could no longer financially support it;
- The parish operated at a deficit for 12 of the last 20 years and current assets are not adequate to cover future deficits;
- The parish is experiencing an increase in both costs of facilities and unpaid bills over the last five years which indicates an inability to cover all expenses, leaving few resources for ministry;
- There are 12 parishes within 2 miles of St. Pius V parish;
- St. Pius V parish and St. Bernadine parish share a unique history and culture;
- St. Bernadine parish can accommodate the members of St. Pius V parish with their facilities; and
- St. Pius V parish is 3.2 miles (5.1 kilometers) from St. Bernadine parish for which reason the parishioners would have easy access to St. Bernardine parish.

From these facts considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, St. Pius V parish, already without a proper parish church, is increasingly unable to provide a satisfactory level of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with St. Bernardine parish will bring much needed resources, allowing for the greatest opportunity to continue providing necessary ministries for the parishioners of St. Pius V 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. Pius V parish into St. Bernardine parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that St. Pius V parish is to be canonically merged into St. Bernardine parish, Baltimore effective, December 1, 2024.

Boundaries

The boundaries of St. Bernardine 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. Pius V parish and the civilly incorporated St. Bernardine parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of St. Bernardine 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

St. Bernardine Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Bernardine 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. Pius V parish and St. Bernardine 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. Pius V 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

Dr. Diane L. Barr, JD, JCD, PhD
Chancellor