



Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
St. Rose of Lima Parish
St. Athanasius 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. Rose of Lima parish and St. Athanasius parish, the members of St. Rose of Lima parish participated in the discernment of its future through completing a survey, holding listening sessions on site at the parish, attending Archdiocese wide open prayerful discussions and two 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 May 2024. In accordance with canons 50, 120 §1, 121 and the requirements of canon 515 §2, the proposal to canonically merge St. Rose of Lima parish into St. Athanasius parish was formally presented to the Presbyteral Council on September 3, 2024, for the required canonical consultation. After reviewing and discussing the

previously distributed materials related to the canonical merger, the members gave their unanimous support to the proposal.

The following facts regarding St. Rose of Lima parish constitute reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Rose of Lima parish into St. Athanasius parish (canon 51):

- There are 14% fewer persons living within St. Rose of Lima parish boundaries since 2020;
- St. Rose of Lima parish has shared a pastor and expenses with St. Athanasius parish since 2010;
- There are 165 Catholic households in St. Rose of Lima parish boundaries and only 26 of these Catholic households are registered at St. Rose of Lima parish;
- There has been a significant decline in weekly Mass attendance at St. Rose of Lima parish from 110 persons in 2004 to only 56 persons in 2023;
- The Polish and Lithuanian communities that were served by the parish have moved elsewhere in the Archdiocese;
- There has been a significant decline in the sacramental activity in the parish from 13 baptisms in 2004 to 5 baptisms in 2023;
- The parish has had a budget deficit for 16 of the last 20 years;
- The parish is experiencing declining offertory while the building maintenance costs are increasing, leaving few funds for ministry;
- St. Rose of Lima parish is 1.4 miles (2.3 kilometers) from St. Athanasius parish; and
- There are 7 other parishes within 2 miles of this parish.

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

Boundaries

The boundaries of St. Athanasius parish shall reflect the current outside boundaries of the two parishes on 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. Rose of Lima parish and the civilly incorporated St. Athanasius parish, all under the canonical administration of the pastor of St. Athanasius 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. Rose of Lima Church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, it now becomes a subsidiary church of St. Athanasius 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). St. Athanasius Church will remain the parish church for the canonically merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

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

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Athanasius 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. Rose of Lima parish and St. Athanasius 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. Rose of Lima 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

