



**Decree Of Canonical Parish Merger
Transfiguration Catholic Community 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.

In regard to the proposed merger of Transfiguration Catholic Community parish and Our Lady of Victory parish, the members of Transfiguration Catholic Community parish participated in the discernment of its future through completing a survey, attending open, prayerful discussions and participating in 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of Transfiguration Catholic Community parish into Our Lady of Victory parish (canon 51):

- The general number of persons residing in Transfiguration Catholic Community parish boundaries has declined by 19% since 2000;
- There has been a decrease in the number of registered Catholic households within Transfiguration Catholic Community parish boundaries from 475 households in 2004 to 115 households in 2023;
- Only 22 of these Catholic households are registered at Transfiguration Catholic Community parish;
- Attendance at Mass at Transfiguration Catholic Community parish each week has declined from 124 in 2014 to 62 in 2023;
- 64% of parishioners (40 persons) are over the age of 50;
- Transfiguration Catholic Community parish has experienced operating deficits in 15 of the last 20 years;
- The high number of deficits has resulted in a significant depletion of unrestricted parish assets;
- Transfiguration Catholic Community parish has had to sell its parish properties in order to continue to fund its operations;
- The parish needs 5 times its current offertory to meet the costs of building operations and annual recommended facilities reserve, leaving no funds for ministry;
- There are 13 other parishes within 2 miles of Transfiguration Catholic Community parish;
- Our Lady of Victory Parish is 4.7 miles (7.5 kilometers) from Transfiguration Catholic Community parish; and
- Our Lady of Victory Parish has sufficient facilities to receive the parishioners of Transfiguration Catholic Community parish and their ministries.

From these facts, considered as whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, Transfiguration Catholic Community parish will only continue to decline with the resultant diminishing of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with Our Lady of Victory parish will allow the greatest opportunity to continue and even strengthen the ministries which are presently offered for the parishioners of Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic

Community parish into Our Lady of Victory parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

The parish registers for Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 Transfiguration Catholic Community 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 member of Transfiguration Catholic Community 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

