



**Decree Of Parish Merger
St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Baltimore
St. Leo the Great Parish, Baltimore City
Effective July 1, 2025**

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 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 draft 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. Vincent de Paul parish and St. Leo the Great parish, the members of St. Vincent de Paul parish have participated in the discernment of their future through the completion of a survey, attendance at open prayerful discussions, visioning sessions and listening sessions. Parish leadership participated in three-day long sessions that created the reorganization draft model for city parishes. 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.

Since that final proposal was made public, I authorized Bishop Bruce Lewandowski and others to have further discussions with the leadership of St. Vincent de Paul parish and St. Leo the Great parish regarding the prospective merger of these entities. Members of both parishes met more than eight times regarding this proposal with the assistance of a facilitator and their views have been communicated to me throughout this time.

The Presbyteral Council and Archdiocesan Finance Council (BOFA) were asked for feedback on both the initial proposal in April 2024 and prior to the final 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. Vincent de Paul parish into St. Leo the Great parish was formally presented to the Presbyteral Council on February 18, 2025, for the required canonical consultation. After reviewing and discussing the materials related to the merger, the members gave their unanimous support to the proposal.

The following facts regarding St. Vincent de Paul parish constitute the reasons, in summary, for the canonical merger of St. Vincent de Paul parish into St. Leo the Great parish (canon 51):

- The number of Catholic households in the St. Vincent de Paul parish boundaries has declined from 637 in 2004 to 231 in 2023, despite the 24% increase in the population residing in the parish boundaries;
- Only 6 of those Catholic households that are registered at St. Vincent de Paul parish reside in the parish territory;
- The number of parishioners attending Mass has declined from 378 in 2004 to 136 in 2023, which is a 64% decline;
- Based on the last parish census, 47% of Mass attendees were over the age of 60 and 22% were over the age of 70 thus limiting the availability of volunteers for parish activities and outreach;
- The number of sacraments received at the parish has declined from 25 baptisms in 2014 to 4 baptisms in 2024;
- The parish has not implemented Archdiocesan policies and guidelines regarding evangelization and celebration of the sacraments;
- There are four other parishes within 1 mile of this location and 8 parishes within two miles of the parish campus;
- St. Vincent de Paul parish is located 0.5 miles (0.8 kilometers) from St. Leo the Great parish; and
- St. Leo the Great parish has the resources necessary to welcome the parishioners and ministries of St. Vincent de Paul to their parish.

From these facts, considered as a whole, it is my opinion that left to itself, St. Vincent de Paul parish will only continue to decline with the resultant diminishing of pastoral ministry and sacramental life. Merging with St. Leo the Great parish will allow the greatest opportunity to continue and even strengthen the ministries which are presently offered for the parishioners of St. Vincent de Paul parish.

Having heard all who have an interest in this matter, including the opinion 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 merger of the St. Vincent de Paul parish into St. Leo the Great parish. As a result, I do hereby decree that St. Vincent de Paul parish is to be merged into St. Leo the Great parish, Baltimore, effective July 1, 2025.

Boundaries

The Boundaries of St. Leo the Great 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. Vincent de Paul parish and the civilly incorporated St. Leo the Great 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. Vincent de Paul church remains a sacred edifice to which the faithful have the right of entry under canon 1214, St. Leo the Great church will continue its designation as the parish church for the merged parishes.

Sacramental Registers and Other Parish Records

The parish registers for St. Vincent de Paul parish are to be closed as of July 1, 2025. Any entries after that date in the registries of St. Leo the Great parish must indicate at which church the sacramental event took place. All closed registers shall be kept and maintained by St. Leo the Great parish or sent to the Archdiocesan Archives in accordance with Archdiocesan policy. The parish records (financial, etc.) of the merging parishes will become the property and responsibility of St. Leo the Great parish on July 1, 2025.

Parish Seal

All parish seals shall be the property of St. Leo the Great parish beginning July 1, 2025.

Effective Date and Publication of this Decree

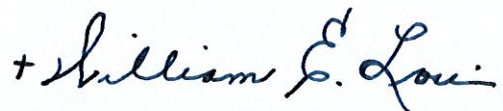
This decree is effective July 1, 2025. Its official notification is its publication on the website of the Archdiocese of Baltimore on February 23, 2025.

I direct the Pastor/ Administrator of St. Vincent de Paul parish and the St. Leo the Great parish to announce at all Masses on the weekend of February 22-23, 2025, that this Decree has been published on the website of the Archdiocese of Baltimore (www.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. Vincent de Paul 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 and postmarked no later than March 7, 2025, to the Most Reverend Archbishop of Baltimore, Catholic Center, 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201.

Given at the Curia of the Archdiocese of Baltimore in Baltimore City on this 22nd day of February, in the Year of Our Lord, 2025.



Most Reverend William E. Lori, S.T.D.
Archbishop of Baltimore



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





ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

February 22, 2025

Dear Friends in Christ,

Three years ago, we as an Archdiocese embarked upon the prayerful and extensive journey of Seek the City to Come to reimagine our Catholic Church in Baltimore City and in some surrounding areas. It was during this time that we visited parishes, worked with leadership, held open listening sessions, shared stories, and prayed together to gain a more accurate understanding of the present-day Church in Baltimore City. We spent those years envisioning a fully alive and evangelizing Church and in May 2024, I released the final Seek the City plan.

At the time the final plan was announced, St. Leo and St. Vincent de Paul parishioners were invited to come together to engage in a process of discernment. The process has included the establishment of the inter-parish committee whose work is to discern how the two parishes can best come together to serve their parishioners and reach out to their neighbors. The work of the interparish committee continues and is bearing fruit.

After consulting with the Archdiocesan Presbyteral Council, I am now issuing the official decree regarding St. Vincent de Paul parish. This is a step required by Canon Law. This parish will be merged into St. Leo parish on July 1, 2025. The reasons behind my decision are outlined in the decree which will be made available to view on Sunday evening, February 23, 2025, at www.archbalt.org. Please expect the decree to be published after 8:00 p.m.

Any parishioner of the Archdiocese has the right to ask me to change or revoke my decision through an official appeal. This request must be made in writing and postmarked no later than March 7, 2025, and sent to me. Appeals may also be printed out and hand-delivered to the Catholic Center (320 Cathedral Street, 21201) by 5:00 p.m. on March 7, 2025. I ask you to join me in praying for your parish community. Please continue to work with your pastor, his staff, the interparish committee and Catholic Center personnel as we move forward in discerning and implementing the Eucharistic Vision of Seek the City to Come. May the Holy Spirit guide us as we work together to build evangelizing parishes centered on Christ.

With kindest personal regards, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore