

FAQS ON PARISH MERGERS

1. **What is a parish merger?**

In a “merger”, two or three parishes that are neighboring or in a collaborative would be merged/brought together into one new parish.

2. **Why would a merger of parishes be considered?**

- a. Typically, a merger is proposed after years of collaborative activity by parishes. Oftentimes, the parish communities, have a history of sharing staff and/or programs, and the possibility of a merger becomes a likely next step to their previous efforts.
- b. A merger may be proposed for two or three neighboring parishes prior to being formed as a collaborative as a means of strengthening the faith of the community and its financial sustainability.
- c. In some instances, the ability to maintain the upkeep of buildings as well as the parishes’ sustainability may be in question because of significant financial concerns.
- d. There is also the challenge the Archdiocese is facing with the limited number of priests available to serve in multi-parish settings.

3. **Who can start the discussion about merging parishes?**

The pastor can raise the topic of a merger for discussion and consideration with the finance councils and pastoral councils of our parishes. As leaders in the parishes, the pastor consults with them for their experience and support. It is essential that the information be provided to the councils so that they understand the circumstances that led up to the discussion about why a merger should be considered for our two communities.

4. **How does the decision to merge get made and who should be involved in the decision making?**

In general, the process of a merger involves the following steps:

- a. The Pastor consults with the Pastoral and Finance Councils giving them information about the parishes so that they understand the circumstances that led up to the discussion about why a merger should be considered.
- b. Once the councils have had time to review the information, they meet to discuss and come to a consensus about whether the parishes should move forward with the merger.
- c. After a consensus to move forward is reached, a communication plan is developed for ways to communicate the decision to the broader parish community to elicit their response. (ex. video message, letter to parishioners, pulpit announcements...)
- d. After hearing from the wider parish community, the pastor makes the decision whether to move forward with the process.
- e. This decision to merge is then presented to the Cardinal.
- f. The Cardinal consults with the Presbyteral council before making his decision.
- g. Having completed the steps of consultation: with councils, the parishioners and the Presbyteral Council, the Cardinal makes the final decision about the merger and issues a decree to establish a new parish.

5. Does the Archdiocese offer direction and guidance during the process of a merger?

Yes, in the time between the initial presentation to the councils and the follow-up meeting with parishioners, there can be several opportunities for consultation with offices within the Pastoral Center (Pastoral Planning and Parish Services) to maintain open lines of communication with the pastor. They will be available to respond to any questions or issues that get raised.

6. What will happen to the names of our parishes once we merge?

There will be a change to the name of the parish, however, the names of the churches do not change. (ex. Transfiguration Parish at St. Thomas Church).

7. Who decides on the new name of our parishes?

The pastor consults with the parishes about possible names. He will submit three possible names for the merged parish, indicating their first choice. Those three names are then sent to Cardinal Sean and he will decide from the suggested names. Usually he chooses the name that was listed as “first” on the list of parish names.

8. How long does the process of a merger take?

From the beginning discussions to the actual merger can take between six months to a year to complete.

9. Are there other changes we can anticipate when we are merged?

- a. Because the parishes merge, Cardinal Sean will need to appoint a pastor for the new parish. It is likely that he will appoint the current pastor and if that happens, the pastor will be appointed for a six-year term.
- b. There will be one new Pastoral Council and one new Finance Council.
- c. There will be one set of financial statements for the new parish.

10. What happens to our churches after we merge?

The assets, obligations, debts, savings, cash and territory of the two parishes transfer to the new parish.