



## **TARGETED RESTRUCTURING OF PARISHES IN THE JOLIET DEANERY** **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)**

1. Now that Bishop Hicks has rendered his decision, what are the next steps? How will the Diocese assist parishes in making the transition to new parishes?
  - A. Initially, all pastors in the merging parishes will be asked to create Parish Transition Teams consisting of 3-6 people who will assist the pastors and represent their respective parishes in the transition process. Pastors may nominate deacons, staff members and/or other parishioners. After the transition teams are in place, the Diocese will assist merging parishes in three (3) ways. First, the Diocesan Finance Office will work with current business managers to make all the necessary financial and business-related transitions from their current parishes to the new parishes. Second, the Department of Catechesis and Evangelization will work with the new pastors and Parish Transition Teams in combining all areas of ministry, Religious Education, and the merging of parish traditions, sacred objects, etc. Third, the Diocese will work with the new pastors and Parish Transition Teams to provide pastoral accompaniment to parishioners in the merging parishes to help them process grief and loss, as well as promote unity and acceptance of their new parishes.

The Diocese has established the following timeline of all meetings/events:

### February

- a. Current pastors nominate 3-6 parishioners for Parish Transition Teams.
- b. Initial meeting of Department of Catechesis and Evangelization and Parish Transition Teams to begin planning the merger of existing parish ministries, mass times, RE, sacred objects, etc. into the new parishes.
- c. Initial meeting of Diocesan Finance Office and business managers from merging parishes to begin planning business-related matters for transition.
- d. Diocese begins planning meetings, masses, events, etc. to promote healing and unity for parishioners from merging parishes.

### March

- a. Announcement of pastor and parochial vicar assignments for the two new parishes.

### March/April

- a. Department of Catechesis and Evangelization continues to meet with Parish Transition Teams and the new pastors on the merging of existing parish ministries, mass times, RE, sacred objects, etc.
- b. Diocesan Finance Office continues to meet with business managers to discuss business-related matters and begin budgeting for FY 2025.
- c. Healing and unity event(s); location(s) TBD.

May/June

- d. Department of Catechesis and Evangelization continues to meet with Parish Transition Teams and the new pastors on the merging of existing parish ministries, mass times, RE, sacred objects, etc. until completion of same.
  - a. Diocesan Finance Office continues to meet with business managers to finalize all business-related matters, budgets and staffing for new parishes.
  - b. Healing and unity event(s); location(s) TBD

July-December

- a. Ongoing diocesan support as needed at new parishes.
2. What is the Code of Canon Law and why is it important?
    - A. The Code of Canon Law is the body of law that governs the Church. It is important because Canon Law sets forth the procedural guidelines that must be followed by the Bishop and the Diocese in making a decision to merge, amalgamate, or close parishes and church buildings. The terms “canonical” and “canonically” refer to the Code of Canon Law.
  3. How will the pastors of the new parishes be selected and when will the pastors of the new parishes be announced?
    - A. Priest assignments are handled by the Episcopal Vicar for Priests and the Priest Personnel Board. All open pastorates in the Diocese, including the two new parishes in Joliet, will be posted and any priest interested in serving an open pastorate may apply. The Priest Personnel Board meets and discusses the candidates. This process typically begins in February and concludes in April. The Episcopal Vicar for Priests plans to announce the pastors of the new parishes in March. Bishop Hicks has final approval on all pastor appointments.
  4. What will happen to the current pastors and parochial vicars assigned to the merging parishes?
    - A. Current pastors whose parishes are closing will be assigned to other parishes on or about July 1, 2024. They may apply for any open pastorate, including the two new parishes in Joliet. The same process described in Answer No. 3 will take place.
  5. When will changes start to take place at the merging parishes?
    - A. No changes will occur until the pastors of the new parishes are announced. At that time, the new pastors will be asked to work with the current pastors to ensure as smooth a transition as possible. In addition, the Parish Transition Teams described in Answer No. 1 will work with both pastors on such matters as mass times, sacraments, Religious Education, sacred objects, parish ministries, etc. However, no changes will be implemented until the effective date of new pastor’s assignment on or about July 1, 2024.
  6. What will happen to the deacons at the merging parishes? Will they be assigned to the new parishes?
    - A. Current deacons may be assigned to the new parishes. The Diocesan Office of the Diaconate is responsible for the assignment of deacons to parishes.
  7. What will happen to the staff members at the merging parishes?
    - A. All staff positions at the new parishes will be posted as open positions by the diocesan Director of Human Resources. Due to the size of the new parishes, many staff members

will become part of the staff of the new parish should they choose to apply. Staffing decisions will be made by the new pastor with the assistance of the diocesan Director of Human Resources. The Director of Human Resources will assist current staff members who are not hired at the new parishes in finding positions at other parishes in the Diocese.

8. What will be the names of the new parishes?
  - A. Canonically, the temporary names of the new parishes will be a combination of the names of the merged parishes. Thus, the name of the new parish in Group 1 will be St. Mary Magdalene, St. Joseph, St. Bernard, St. Anthony Parish, and the name of the new parish in Group 2 will be St. Paul, St. Patrick, St. Jude, Sacred Heart Parish. After the new parishes are in existence, the pastors and parish councils may decide they would like to change the names of the new parishes. Possible names may be submitted to the Bishop for approval and he will make the final decisions. He will then issue decrees officially renaming the parishes.
9. Will the names of the church buildings be changed?
  - A. The new pastors will be responsible for making these decisions. However, since most, if not all, of the names on the church buildings are etched or carved, it is unlikely these will be removed or changed.
10. Who will be the parishioners of the two new parishes?

Current parishioners at St. Mary Magdalene, St. Joseph (Joliet), St. Bernard and St. Anthony will become parishioners of the new parish that will be created by the merger of these four (4) parishes. Current parishioners of St. Paul the Apostle, St. Patrick, St. Jude, Sacred Heart and St. Joseph (Rockdale) will become parishioners of the new parish that will be created by the merger of these five (5) parishes.
11. How will the average parishioner be affected by these changes?
  - A. Sunday and daily mass times at the new parishes will likely be different than they are now. Parishioners in parishes whose churches are closing will attend mass at the new parish churches or secondary worship sites.
12. What is an extinguished parish?
  - A. An extinguished parish is one that is suppressed by decree of the diocesan bishop.
13. What happens to the savings on deposit at the Diocese and in the operating accounts of the merging parishes?
  - A. The savings and operating accounts of the merged parishes will become the property of the new parishes. These accounts will be combined on or about July 1, 2024.
14. What happens to the debt owed by the merging parishes?
  - A. A parish may have diocesan debt and/or third-party debt. Third-party debt includes long-term equipment leases and other contractual debt. Third-party debts will be assumed by the new parishes as they are contractual and must be paid. Diocesan debt will be negotiated with the Diocesan Finance Office.
15. How will Mass times of the new parishes be determined?
  - A. The new pastor will consult with the Parish Transition Teams to create the daily and Sunday mass schedules for the new parishes. Masses will be celebrated at both worship sites of the new parishes.
16. How will the sacraments of Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion, and Confirmation at the churches that are closing be handled?

- A. Baptisms may continue to take place until June 30, 2024; parishes should not schedule any baptisms after June 30, 2024. Reconciliation should continue as usual until June 30, 2024. First Communion and Confirmations will take place as scheduled at churches that are closing until June 30, 2024.
17. How will scheduled marriages at the churches that are closing be handled?
- A. Marriages may continue to be celebrated as scheduled until June 30, 2024. Parishes should contact engaged couples whose marriages are scheduled after June 30, 2024 and advise them of the church closures. Marriages may be scheduled starting July 1<sup>st</sup> at either of the worship sites of the new parishes. The new pastors and Parish Transition Teams will coordinate marriages at the new parishes.
18. Will the Religious Education programs at the merging parishes be combined into one program at the new parishes? What will happen with current DREs and catechists?
- A. The current Religious Education programs will be merged into one new program, but classes may take place at both worship sites. This will be the responsibility of the new pastors and DRE with the assistance of the Diocesan Department of Catechesis and Evangelization. Current DREs may apply for the DRE position(s) at the new parishes. Since the new programs will be much larger than any of the current Religious Education programs, several volunteer catechists will be needed to staff the new programs. The new DRE will be responsible for staffing the new programs.
19. Will the ministries of the merging parishes be combined at the new parishes?
- A. Existing parish ministries will be combined into new ministries at the new parishes. The new pastors and Parish Transition Teams will oversee this process with the assistance of the Diocesan Department of Catechesis and Evangelization. The new parish in Group Two (2) will also take on the Hispanic ministry that currently exists at St. Patrick and the African-American ministry that currently exists at Sacred Heart.
20. Will current volunteer ministers such as Eucharistic Ministers, lectors, cantors, musicians, ushers, greeters, counters, etc. be able to serve in these ministries at the new parishes?
- A. Due to the sizes of the two new parishes, all these ministries will require numerous volunteers. It is very likely that most, if not all, current volunteer ministers will be needed at the new parishes. The new pastors and Parish Transition Teams will oversee this process with the assistance of the Diocesan Department of Catechesis and Evangelization.
21. Who is responsible for the maintenance needs of the merging parishes once the new parishes are in existence?
- A. The new parish will be responsible for maintaining all former parish campuses unless and until they are sold.
22. Each parish has its own traditions. How will these traditions be preserved at the new parishes?
- A. The new pastors and Parish Transition Teams will oversee this process with the assistance of the Diocesan Department of Catechesis and Evangelization. The new parishes should maintain as many traditions of the merged parishes as is feasible.
23. What will happen to the sacramental records of the merging parishes?
- A. Sacramental records from merging territorial and national parishes will be transferred to the designated church building of the new parish (or to the Diocesan Archives,

- depending on the available space). Sacramental records from closed church buildings parishes will be transferred to the Diocesan Archives.
24. What will happen to the statues, stations of the Cross, and other sacred objects in the church buildings of the merging parishes?
    - A. The two new parishes are encouraged to incorporate statues and other sacred objects from the merged parishes into the new parish churches and second worship sites. These decisions are ultimately left to the new pastors. Any sacred objects not taken by the new parish will be inventoried, recorded and stored in the Diocesan Archives.
  25. What will happen to the territories of the merging parishes?
    - A. The existing territories of merging territorial parishes will be assigned to the new parishes. National parishes have no territorial boundaries.
  26. What will happen to other personal property (non-sacred objects) located in the merging parishes?
    - A. All non-sacred personal property in merging parishes will become the property of the new parishes. Any property not needed or wanted by the new parishes will be inventoried and offered to other parishes and schools. Any property left over will either be sold or discarded.
  27. After parishes/churches are closed, can the buildings be used by the new parishes?
    - A. The new pastors are responsible for determining which, if any, buildings on closed campuses will be utilized by the new parishes and how they will be utilized. The only exception is the closed churches. Once they are relegated to profane but not sordid use (removal of the sacred nature of the church building), no sacred rites may take place in a closed church.
  28. Will the closed parishes/churches be insured?
    - A. All diocesan owned real estate has comprehensive insurance coverage through Catholic Mutual Group.
  29. When will the final masses be celebrated at the merging parishes/churches?
    - A. The new pastors will be responsible for planning the final masses at the merging parishes and churches. These masses should take place prior to June 30, 2024. If a parish wants to celebrate a final mass after that date due to scheduling conflicts, the bishop's approval is required.
  30. Does the Diocese have plans to sell any of the real property of the closed churches?
    - A. The Diocese has no plans to sell any real estate in the Joliet Deanery at this time.
  31. What are the Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors?
    - A. The Presbyteral Council and the College of Consultors are two canonical consultative bodies comprised of priests serving in the Diocese. The Bishop is required to consult with them and/or obtain their consent when making decisions involving the merging, amalgamation, and closing of parishes and churches.