



ARCHDIOCESE OF BALTIMORE

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OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

May 22, 2024

Dear Friends in Christ,

For the past two years, the Church here in the City of Baltimore has been actively engaged in the Seek the City to Come initiative. Over these two years, our process has engaged almost 6,000 people in prayerful listening, visioning, and discernment. And now, having carefully considered all that we have seen and heard, including the considerable feedback we have received in the past several weeks, I write to share with you the final outcomes of this process.

First let me say, that while these decisions are difficult, I believe they hold great promise for the future of the Church in Baltimore City. I also believe that these decisions were guided by Holy Spirit whose voice was discerned in listening to the voices of the faithful throughout the city and in prudently considering the challenges and possibilities that lay before us. These decisions, while difficult, are made with an eye toward a future full of hope.

In short, we will merge 61 parishes to 30 worship and ministry sites in Baltimore City and the immediate suburbs. Full details on the parish mergers and realignments can be found here: [Seek the City to Come 2024](#).

Much can be said about the practical reasons behind this dramatic realignment of our Church footprint. But as we have said from the start, this process was aimed at allowing our parishes to focus on mission and ministry, as opposed to leaking roofs, crumbling walls and failing electric and plumbing systems. These decisions were made to pull together gifts and resources, often spread thin across many parishes, to form new communities that are well equipped to carry out the urgent mission before us: announcing the Gospel and helping our neighbors here in the City to encounter the saving love of the Father revealed in Jesus Christ. I firmly believe that these mergers will help accomplish this goal, allowing these new parish communities and their pastors to direct the needed material, human and spiritual resources toward that mission.

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While some parish mergers will occur more quickly in the coming months, others will continue over the next year or so. More information on implementation will follow along with plans for each parish community reflecting the particular situation of each community. New investment in ministries and buildings will follow and careful consideration will be given to any church property that will eventually be sold to ensure responsible reuse for the community and our neighbors.

Many will suspect that these mergers are related to the Chapter 11 Reorganization filing undertaken by the Archdiocese. I assure you; they are not. I have heard speculation, connecting future sales of properties to supporting the bankruptcy settlement. This is not true. During implementation some properties will be repurposed while some will be sold. Proceeds from any building sale will remain in the parish and follow the people to the newly formed parish. This is Church law, and it is supported by civil law.

The Church will remain present in Baltimore as we have since 1789, radiating Christ from sanctuaries to street corners. Seek the City to Come is about the true renewal of the Church in the City. To reach this promise we must turn toward Christ and seek to grow closer to him and to hear where he is calling each of us to love here and now. To reach this goal we must work together, in love for only love can drive the Church's mission forward, a love that is more than a fleeting sentiment but love that is sacrificial, like the Lord's own love for us.

We have been on a journey and that journey continues. We have worked hard but that work goes on. So, with our feet planted firmly here in the City of Baltimore, let us set our sights on the City that is to come, filled with hope for what is possible as we journey together in mission.

May God bless us and keep us always in His love.

With warmest personal regards, I am

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "William E. Lori". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend William E. Lori
Archbishop of Baltimore