



MEMO

TO: All Priest, Deacons, Staff, and Parishes
FROM: Office of Pastoral Life & New Evangelization
DATE: December 12, 2019
RE: New Parishes: Stronger Together Update

As we begin a new liturgical year, many of us will also become part of a new community – a new parish with a new name. This marks an important milestone in our New Parishes: Stronger Together initiative, our plan to increase our mission capacity and efficiency. A major part of this has been renewing and transforming our parish structures. On January 1, 2020, new parishes will be formally created and begin the work of coming together – not just on paper, but in fact. The three goals for this phase are:

- 1) Decrees of merger for new parishes
- 2) Financial merger of parishes
- 3) Establishment of Parish Leadership Teams

All of these goals are on schedule and nearing completion.

Parish Transition Teams submitted their Transition Team Reports at the end of September. These reports contain their review and recommendations for key aspects of parish life, such as prayer, human resources, pastoral ministry, finance, and facilities. The reports also contain the necessary information for Archbishop Mancini to issue decrees of merger for our new parishes. Decrees are actions under the Code of Canon Law (the laws of the Church) where a competent authority gives a decision on a particular matter. Under the Code, only the diocesan bishop can alter parishes. Therefore, in our case these decrees by Archbishop Mancini (the competent authority) will formally create the new parishes by bringing together the territory, assets, and liabilities of the existing parishes (the decision). These decrees are in the process of being written and are on schedule to go into effect on January 1, 2020.

In addition to the work of bringing communities together in this legal sense, additional work was needed to combine administrative and financial realities. Each new parish will become truly one entity with one bank account, one sacramental registry, one set of financial records, one charitable tax number, and one pastor supported by one pastoral council, financial council, and leadership team. Transition financial teams have been working to bring together banking arrangements, accounting practices, book keeping, and tax numbers to be ready for a new fiscal year to start on January 1, 2020.

Many may find it hard to believe, but the canonical and financial mergers are the least difficult parts of this process! The goal for *New Parishes: Stronger Together* has always been about combining resources in order to more effectively accomplish the mission of the Church. This requires more than coming together – the most important part is learning new ways of thinking, acting, and leading. In October, the pastors and parish life coordinators of all of our new parishes gathered for their first of many regular encounters with our bishops. On this day our parish leaders spent time praying with one another, discovering and discussing their strengths, and learning about how to build an effective parish leadership team. These regular gatherings will be key moments of learning and sharing as we develop a more missionary posture. The first goal for parish leaders is to develop parish leadership teams: in every parish, a group of 3-5 people who meet weekly to help the pastor implement the parish pastoral plan and make the best possible decisions. These new leadership teams will be in place in early 2020 and will come together for a day of prayer and formation in late February.

We are close to completing an important step in the missionary transformation of our local Church. The new year will no doubt bring a period of adjustment as we get comfortable in our new reality and work out the inevitable kinks that come from making changes. Yet, the more challenging task of reaching those who have fallen away from the Lord and those who do not know Him at all still remains. Establishing new parishes with a new leadership structure equips us to begin to tackle this challenge, with the Lord's help.