

Archbishop Lori announces mergers for three sets of parishes

Archbishop William E. Lori announced the merger of three sets of parishes around the archdiocese, effective July 1.

- Augustine Parish, Elkridge, and Ascension Parish, Halethorpe, will merge into the Catholic Community of Ascension and St. Augustine.
- Crucifixion, Good Shepherd and Holy Trinity parishes in Glen Burnie will become Christ the King Parish.
- Francis of Assisi, Brunswick, and St. Mary, Petersville, will formally unite as St. Francis of Assisi-St. Mary Parish.

The Glen Burnie parishes have been working together for approximately a decade, as far back as the pastorships of Monsignor J. Bruce Jarboe and Monsignor Richard J. Bozelli.

Father C. Lou Martin, pastor of the new Christ the King, said that for several years, the parishes called themselves the Catholic Church of Glen Burnie and appended “at Crucifixion,” at “Holy Trinity” or “at Good Shepherd” to the name.

Father Martin said the new parish is already considering building one new church to adequately serve the community. Each of the three current churches seats only about 250 people, necessitating 10 Masses in English and two in Spanish every weekend. Holy Trinity Church is more than 75 years old and the other two are each more than 40 years old.

He said it will be helpful to be “under one roof.”

Father Martin said the archdiocese suggested about a year ago for the parish to consider building a new church for all.

“They were not forcing it on us, ... but I concur with it,” he said, noting that such a

facility could foster community.

He said the groundwork was laid decades ago by previous pastors and parish pastoral and finance councils.

“The leaders got used to not being defensive about ‘my parish,’ but thinking of the community. I benefited from that when I came here,” Father Martin said.

He said a new name for the parish helps promote the feeling that “everyone is giving up something.” He wanted a strong, God-centered name for the parish, and three names were presented to parishioners for a vote. People at all 12 Masses voted for the names in the same order, with no difference between the “quiet Mass,” the youth Mass or the Spanish Masses, he said.

The paperwork Father Martin received from the archdiocese will note June 11, the solemnity of the Holy Trinity, as the date for the merger, although it’s formally effective July 1.

He acknowledged that while most people accept the changes, “you try not to hurt anybody. We’re trying to build a community of faith. We have to focus on making missionary disciples.”

Monsignor Robert J. Jaskot, pastor of St. Francis and St. Mary, said the two parishes have been operating closely for more than 30 years. “This is merely a formality to recognize that,” he said.

Along with Holy Family Catholic Community in Middletown, of which Monsignor Jaskot is also pastor, the parishes will be part of the pilot phase of pastorate planning announced by the archbishop in May.

Father John Williamson, pastor of the Elkridge and Halethorpe parishes, said that with 2,200 registered families at St. Augustine and 840 families at Ascension, the combined parish will be one of the largest in the archdiocese. Father Williamson has been pastor of Ascension since 2008 and also became pastor of St. Augustine in 2011. Since that time, the parishes have been working together.

“The parishioners for the most part are taking it well,” he said, noting that the two

parishes took it slowly over the past five years to unite some of their ministries.

Since the parishes have been acting as one for years, formalizing the relationship via a merger will make administration easier and save on bank fees and some other expenses.

“It also helps parishes strengthen one another in that we have more activities and ministries going on now than when each parish was free-standing and had its own pastor,” Father Williamson said. “Combining has helped us be one of the larger, more vibrant parishes that we could not do separately.”

The merged parish will also be a pilot pastorate in the parish planning process announced in May.

Father Williamson announced the merger to his parishioners via the May 21 parish bulletin. “This is the final formal step to make official what we have been practicing over the past several years as we build one parish community on two campuses,” he wrote.

Father Williamson noted that parishioners “will notice very little, if any change, July 2” after the merger is formally effective.